Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America, Volumes 1–5

Edited by
Eugene V. Gallagher
W. Michael Ashcraft

Greenwood Press

Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America

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Volume 1: History and Controversies

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Introduction

Although new or alternative religious movements, or New Religious Movements (NRMs), have always been part of the American religious landscape, they have not always received broad public attention. Most often, their formation, attraction of members, and growth or decline have occurred beyond the harsh glare of prolonged public scrutiny. In some striking cases, however, a new or alternative religious movement has dominated the news for a period of time, usually because the movement itself, or some of its members, became involved in something that was widely perceived to be illegal, immoral, or simply destructive. For example, in the wake of the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Minister Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam became notorious for his comment that Kennedy's murder meant "the chickens had come home to roost." In the 1970s saffron-robed members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, also known as Hare Krishna, became so well known for seeking donations and engaging strangers in conversations in public that they were easily lampooned in the comic film "Airplane." In the 1980s, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, leader of the Unification Church (or Moonies), was found guilty of tax evasion by diverting church funds for his personal use. More recently, in 1993, the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms staged a raid on the home and church of a small group of Bible students outside of Waco, Texas. In addition to the ten lives lost in the botched raid, the 51 day standoff between the students of David Koresh, a group widely known as the Branch Davidians, and agents of the federal government, particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation, culminated in the loss of 78 lives in a fire that consumed the Mount Carmel Center where the Branch Davidians lived. In 1997 followers of Marshall Applewhite, forming a group called Heaven's Gate, joined him in committing suicide so that they could all progress to what they viewed as "the evolutionary level above human." The list of such incidents could easily be multiplied.

In the late twentieth century as new and alternative religious movements continued to receive public attention for elements of their practice or belief that were highly controversial, a dominant image of such groups began to solidify. That image was

fostered by the activism of groups of former members, their families, some professionals in social work and psychology, and various other volunteers. When the opposition to new or alternative religious groups originated with more or less secular individuals, those opponents were generally called anticultists. When opposition originated with Evangelical Protestant Christians, those opponents were usually called countercultists. The tireless work of such activists, anticultist or countercultist, quickly produced a standard understanding of new and alternative religions that united a wide variety of groups under the umbrella category of "cults." In the perceptions of their anticult opponents, cults posed serious threats to vulnerable individuals and, ultimately, to the stability of American society itself. Anticultists and countercultists believed that cults had three prominent characteristics. First, they were led by unscrupulous, manipulative, and insincere individuals who sought only to increase their own power, wealth, and/or sexual enjoyment. Second, cults preyed upon unsuspecting, confused, and vulnerable individuals, often using sophisticated and virtually irresistible tactics of influence. Third, participation in a cult would surely bring harm to individual participants and might also lead them to commit any number of antisocial actions that threatened the public good. The stereotype of the "destructive cult" was aggressively marketed by the loose coalition of anticultists, particularly when disturbing news about any new or alternative religious movement became public. Thus, on the one hand, while a variety of events created a broad interest in learning about individual religious groups, their practices and beliefs, organizational structure, leadership, and many other topics, on the other hand, the predominance of the cult stereotype inevitably skewed the information available, attributed the perceived faults of any one group to all of them, and created expectations that any group labeled a cult must necessarily be worthy of suspicion, scorn, and vigorous opposition. Despite their prodigious efforts at educating the general public, the various anticult and countercult activists have, in fact, promoted much more misunderstanding than accurate understanding of the religious lives of some of their fellow citizens. Consequently, they have helped to create a very hostile environment for anyone whose religious practices do not fit within a so-called "mainstream." The personal and social costs of such religious bigotry may actually be higher than what the activists fear from cults themselves.

This set of volumes on "New and Alternative Religions in America" intends to rectify that situation for the general reader. It aims to present accurate, comprehensive, authoritative, and accessible accounts of various new and alternative religious movements that have been and are active in American society, as well as a set of essays that orient the reader to significant contexts for understanding new and alternative religions and important issues involved in studying them. The presentations are predicated on a simple but fundamental assumption. It is that accurate description and understanding must precede any judgment about the truth, validity, morality, or trustworthiness of any religious group or person. Accurate description demands that the group be presented in terms that it could itself recognize and acknowledge as being at least close to the way it understands itself. Providing an accurate description of the history, organization, practices, and beliefs of a particular group does not, in

any way, constitute an endorsement of that group, but it does provide an indispensable baseline for any further discussion. Such a baseline has often been lost in the public discussions of new and alternative religious movements, because their most bizarre, threatening, or even humorous aspects have been exaggerated. What is missing from such caricatured presentations is a sense of how any person could find such apparently ludicrous, lethal, or laughable groups worth joining. Simple dismissal of new or alternative religions as absurd, erroneous, or pernicious misses the social influence that they can have and demonstrably have had. Whatever an outsider's perception of new and alternative religions might be, many clear-thinking and well-intentioned individuals, throughout American history, have associated themselves with such groups. This set is founded on the idea that members' or participants' reasons for their decisions and their accounts of their experiences form the primary data for understanding new and alternative religions. Both hostile and approving accounts of new or alternative religions from outsiders provide a different sort of data, which reveals the social location and often-controversial careers of new and alternative religions. But neither approval nor criticism by external observers should take precedence over the self-understanding of each group as articulated by its members in establishing a baseline of descriptive accuracy.

Readers of this set of volumes will thus encounter both information and analytical frameworks that will help them arrive at an informed and appropriately complicated understanding of new and alternative religious movements in American history and society. Volume 1 provides a set of analytical perspectives on new and alternative religions, including the history of such movements in the United States, the controversies in which they have often become embroiled, the roles of leaders within the groups and the processes by which individuals become members and also leave their groups, the legal and global contexts in which new and alternative religions function, and a variety of prominent themes in the study of new religions, including roles of gender, children, and violence.

The four volumes that follow generally present accounts of individual groups, many of them well known but some much less so. Each chapter presents information about the origin and subsequent development of the group in question, its internal organization including the predominant type of leadership, its most important practices and beliefs, and controversies that have put the group in the limelight. Volume 2 focuses on groups that have developed out of the broad biblical tradition—Judaism and Christianity—and have achieved such a distinctive status as to be considered, at least by some observers, as independent religious groups rather than simple sectarian variations of more mainstream Jewish or Christian traditions. Volume 2 accordingly raises most acutely the problems of definition that are involved in using the admittedly malleable categories of "new" and "alternative" religions.

The description of a religious movement as *new* or *alternative* only begs further questions. Novelty can be in the eye of the beholder, or in the mind of someone claiming to be innovative. That is, religious movements are judged to be new, alternative, or anything else only in particular contexts and by certain audiences. They may claim, for example, to retrieve and correctly interpret or represent past beliefs

and practices, which have been neglected or forgotten. But their opponents might view the same claims as dangerous and deviant inventions. New religions themselves often manifest a pronounced ambivalence about their own novelty. A fundamental dynamic in new and alternative religions is that they strive to present themselves as both new and old, as unprecedented and familiar. The novelty of new religions cuts both ways; it can just as easily excite the interest of potential adherents as it can strain their credulity. As they spread their messages to those whose interest, approval, and even acceptance they hope to secure, NRMs proclaim both their challenging novelty and their comforting familiarity.

In their sectarian forms, these movements attempt to recapture the lost purity of an idealized past. Sects typically have prior ties to larger religious organizations from which they have intentionally broken off. They aim to return to the pristine origins of the tradition and reestablish its foundations. Sectarian forms of Christianity frequently exhort their partisans to get "back to the Bible"; contemporary Islamic sects similarly yearn for the purity of the times of the prophet Muhammad. Even the Church of Satan, founded by Anton Szandor LaVey in 1966, has spawned sectarian groups that accuse the original Church of Satan of having abandoned its initial commitments and emphases. Sects thus define themselves both in relation to the broader world and in relation to their specific tradition, both of which are perceived to threaten their purity of belief and practice.

In their typology of responses to secularization, Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge contrast cults to sects. Rejecting the polemical definition of cults spawned by their cultural opponents, they define cults as independent religious traditions. Cults may be imports from another culture or independent products of the society in which they develop. Like sects, cults often find themselves in tension or conflict with broader society, simply by virtue of being new and different. Because they, too, want to locate themselves in relation to an authoritative past, cults also lay some claim to previous tradition. What separates cults from sects in their relation to previous traditions is that cults typically do not have a history of institutional conflict and eventual separation. Cults are marked from their beginnings as new entities. Both sects and cults, then, simultaneously declare their novelty and sink their roots in the past. In order to avoid confusion about the term "cult," which has such negative connotations in contemporary American society, this set will keep to the designations of new and alternative religions, which are widely employed by many scholars even though they are somewhat imprecise. The choice of which groups to include in Volume 2, as with the other volumes, is a judgment call. The guiding principle was not only to provide a representative sample of new and alternative religious groups throughout American history, but also to present the groups in sufficient detail to enable the reader to form a complex understanding of them.

Volume 3 investigates groups in the occult or metaphysical tradition, including nineteenth century Spiritualism, the Theosophical Society begun by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in the late nineteenth century, and the contemporary New Age movement. Like the groups discussed in the second volume, those in Volume 3 are part of a broad tradition that has deep roots in

antiquity. For example, in *The Secret Doctrine* Madame Blavatsky included the ancient Vedic sages of India, the Buddha, and a collection of ancient Greek philosophers among the ancient teachers whose wisdom about the nature of human beings and the nature of god was being given its fullest expression in Blavatsky's modern Theosophical system.

The religious movements discussed in Volume 3 typically present a different organizational profile from those in Volume 2. The groups in Volume 2 have made substantial efforts to maintain boundaries between themselves and their surrounding social environment, demanding exclusive allegiance of their members; vesting authority over practice, doctrine, and group life in charismatic leaders; and offering new and improved interpretations of familiar texts already acknowledged to have broad cultural legitimacy. In contrast, the movements in Volume 3 center on individual teachers who attract shifting groups of students with varying degrees of commitment for varying lengths of time, leave the ability to determine the authority or validity of any pronouncements in the hands of individual seekers, and claim to bring to light extraordinary wisdom from previously unknown or underappreciated sources.

Many of the religions that have appeared to be innovative developments in American religious life have actually been transplanted from other cultures where they have often enjoyed long histories. The openness of the United States to immigrants has always been an important factor in promoting American religious diversity. The 1965 repeal of the 1924 *Asian Exclusion Act,* for example, permitted a variety of Eastern religious teachers to extend their religious activities to the United States. Late in his life, for example, Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, made the United States the focus of his efforts to awaken love for Krishna in as many people as possible. Military personnel returning from service abroad, often with spouses from countries where they had been stationed, also helped to introduce new religious practices and movements to the United States. This was the case, for example, with the form of Japanese Nichiren Buddhism known as Soka Gakkai. Even where it is difficult to provide independent corroboration of claimed international ties, they can nonetheless be claimed. A dramatic example here was the assertion that the elusive figure at the origins of the Nation of Islam, W.D. Fard, arrived in Detroit, Michigan, in 1930 from Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The movements in Volume 4 show clearly that religious innovation in the United States always needs to be considered in a broader, global context. That is no less true of the groups discussed in other volumes as well. For example, Ann Lee's small band of Shakers began in Manchester, England; David Koresh gathered Bible students from Australia, England, and other foreign countries as well as the United States. Theosophy's Madame Blavatsky was a Russian émigré. Finally, the Church of Scientology, like many other new religions that have begun in the United States, conducts a vigorous international missionary program.

The frequent movement of individuals, practices, and ideas across national borders could make a focus on new and alternative religions solely in the United States vulnerable to a myopia that could distort the nature and significance of those movements. That caution holds equally for homegrown and imported religions. Few

religions in the contemporary world, no matter what their age or relation to a mainstream, are confined within a single set of national boundaries. Nonetheless, the focus of this set remains on a selection of religions that have had, for one reason or another, a significant impact on religious and social life in the United States. Prominent in that selection is a group of religions that have been independently founded in the United States. For example, although the contemporary revival of Paganism can be traced to the career of Gerald Gardner in England beginning in the 1930s, many influential Pagan thinkers and teachers, such as Z Budapest, Starhawk, and Isaac Bonewits have flourished in the United States. Similarly, the Church of Satan and its subsequent offshoots owe their inspiration to Anton Szandor LaVey, who produced *The Satanic Bible* and other fundamental texts in San Francisco, California, in the 1960s. Also, beginning in the 1950s the prodigious literary output of L. Ron Hubbard gave rise first to the therapeutic system known as Dianetics and then, as his purview broadened, to the Church of Scientology. Other founders of NRMs in the United States, like Marshall Applewhite of the Heaven's Gate group, attracted far fewer adherents than the Church of Scientology but nonetheless carved out a place for themselves in American religious history through their dramatic, and sometimes tragic, actions. Volume 5 thus focuses on both new developments in international movements within the United States, such as the rise of Neo-Paganism, and the conscious construction of new religions, such as the Church of Scientology, by American teachers and organizations.

As this overview suggests, the definition of what counts as a new or alternative religion is frequently open to argument. Many groups that appear dramatically novel to external observers would claim that they are simply being faithful to ancient traditions. Joseph Smith, for example, claimed that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, was a restoration of primitive Christianity. Groups that claim to be innovative often express their messages in the form of fresh interpretations of ancient texts, as with Swami Prabhupada's effort to present the ancient Indian classic, the Bhagavad-Gita, "as it is"; or Rael's contention that the mentions of "Elohim" in the biblical book of Genesis actually refer to extraterrestrial beings who came to earth in space ships. Because of the subjective nature of the categories —new to whom? alternative to what?—it will always be difficult to delimit precisely which groups definitely do, and do not, "count" as new or alternative. Moreover, in popular discourse, where the category cult is frequently used but appears devoid of anything other than emotional content, and in interreligious arguments, where cult easily expands to include "virtually anyone who is not us," attempts at substantive definitions give way entirely to polemics. Discussion of new and alternative religions in the United States thus always refers to a shifting and vigorously contested terrain where categories like "alternative religion" or "cult" and implicit comparisons like those implied by "new religious movement" are used to establish, reinforce, and defend certain kinds of individual and group identities, even as they threaten, compromise, or erode other kinds of individual or group identities.

No mapping of such terrain can hope to be definitive. Too much is in flux. Those who enter the terrain need trustworthy and experienced guides. The essays in these

five volumes provide just such guidance. Experienced, authoritative, and plainspoken, the authors of these essays provide both perspectives on some of the most prominent general features of the landscape and full descriptions of many, but by no means all, of the specific areas within it. Those who want to explore the terrain of new and alternative religions in the United States will find in this set multiple points of entry. They may want to focus on a specific local part of the larger area, such as the Theosophical tradition, the Branch Davidians, or Heaven's Gate. On the other hand, they may want to investigate the characteristic dynamics of the broader field, such as the processes of conversion into and defection from groups or the interactions between new and alternative religions and their cultural opponents. There is much to explore—much more than can even be covered in these five volumes. But this set aims to equip the would-be explorer with enough tools and knowledge to make the exploration rewarding and worthwhile.

New Religious Movements in American History

Timothy Miller

"Nothing is new under the sun," said the ancient preacher, and so it is with religious movements. As long as there has been religion, which is as long as the human race has been around, there have been new and unconventional religions, or New Religious Movements (NRMs). The first Americans, the indigenous peoples who arrived thousands of years ago, developed an enormously diverse array of religions, and those who have come later have only added to the land's vast mosaic of beliefs and
practices.

NRMS IN COLONIAL AMERICA

Many of the early post-Columbian American immigrants—Spanish, French, Dutch, English—were religious dissenters. Every schoolchild knows, or should know, that the Puritans of New England came here because they wanted to put into practice the unconventional religious outlook that had landed them in hot water at home in England. Once they got to America, their ideas dominated their new colonies, the most prominent of which was the Massachusetts Bay Colony. They were quickly confronted by new dissenters who disputed the dominant Puritan establishment—notably Roger Williams, who believed in religious freedom and in fair treatment of American Indians, and Anne Hutchinson, who dared to challenge prevailing orthodoxy and claimed direct revelations from God. Both were banished from Puritan Massachusetts.

Dissenters soon came from abroad as well. In 1648, just a few years after the settlement of New England, George Fox began to proclaim his belief that one could have a direct and personal relationship with God, unmediated by any clerical or civil authority. Fox spoke of an inner light, a direct communication of the divine with the individual human heart. Beliefs like that do not mesh well with highly organized religious hierarchies and theologies, and Fox's new movement, the Society of Friends (or Quakers), in their early days a fairly vocal and even rowdy bunch, quickly

encountered opposition. But soon there were organized Quaker groups in England, and in 1656 the first of their missionaries landed in Massachusetts Bay Colony. The authorities acted quickly and deported the first two Quakers, Mary Fisher and Ann Austin, but eight more Quakers arrived two days later, and, although they were quickly deported, in the meantime they made a convert.

Fighting the menace on their doorstep, the Massachusetts Bay Colony leaders made Quakerism a capital crime in 1658, and, before that ghastly law was repealed, four Quakers died for their convictions. Welcome to the world of religious dissent.[1]

Things were not so bad in every time and place. Roger Williams, expelled from Massachusetts, went on to found Rhode Island and declared it a safe haven for all—even Quakers and, most unusual for that time period, also the Jews. Williams was appalled by Quaker teachings, incidentally; until his last days he argued against Quaker doctrines. But he never denied the Friends the right to practice their religion freely.

In 1681 William Penn, a Quaker convert, opened his new colony, Pennsylvania, to all believers. Soon Pennsylvania, even more than Rhode Island, sheltered many unconventional religious groups. Early on, in 1694, a group of Rosicrucian/Christian mystics established a monastic church in the Wissahickon Creek Valley west of Philadelphia (at a site now within the city limits); the group, which never had an official name, is usually referred to as the Society of the Woman in the Wilderness. They used a telescope to scan the skies for signs of the Second Coming of Christ and lived austerely, separated from the rapidly developing urban life of Philadelphia. Gradually their movement faded, but a revival of sorts took place when the German immigrant Conrad Beissel came to join the Wissahickon mystics in 1720, and finding little activity among them started his own movement 60 miles farther west, at Ephrata, Pennsylvania. Beissel's Protestant monks and nuns practiced their own austere faith until the end of the eighteenth century, and a noncommunal church continued for many decades thereafter.[2]

In the meantime, a few miles to the south another group of dissenting Christian communitarians made their home on a tract of land called Bohemia Manor in what is now Maryland. Known as Labadists, they were followers of the radical French Catholic priest (who later turned Protestant) Jean Labadie. The Labadist gospel emphasized austerity and self-denial, and the American leader of the movement, Peter Sluyter, was a difficult autocrat, but this communal faith lasted for decades, from 1683 until at least 1722.[3]

THE ARRIVAL OF THE ANABAPTISTS

Pennsylvania, with its remarkable policy of religious toleration in a world generally marked by enforced religious conformity, continued to attract many types of religious dissenters. Another movement that arrived fairly early, in 1683, and one of the most influential of them all, was that of the Anabaptists, whose name means "rebaptizers" after their policy of adult baptism. The Anabaptists arose during the early days of the Protestant Reformation, in the 1520s in Switzerland, and soon thereafter in

other places in Europe. They had several distinctly radical beliefs, such as the separation of church and state, pacifism, and refusal to swear allegiance to any civil government. The largest group of Anabaptists, called Mennonites after their early leader Menno Simons, settled in Philadelphia and in the counties to the west of the city. They were soon joined by the Amish, founded in Switzerland in the 1690s, who represented a separatist strain of the Anabaptist faith and who have lived in fairly isolated communities ever since.

Some Mennonites today have adapted to contemporary society, becoming modern farmers (or even city dwellers), voting in elections, and wearing contemporary clothes. Others cling, in varying degree and type, to older ways. The Amish, however, maintain their distinctiveness. Although they, too, have a wide range of practices, the Old Order Amish, now numbering in the hundreds of thousands, still use horses and buggies for transportation, reject such modern conveniences as electricity and telephones in their houses, and retain their historic practice of shunning members who fall from the strict path of Amish life. Today they are thriving as never before.[4]

THE SHAKERS

Several other religious minority groups arrived in the American colonies in the decades after the Anabaptists' arrival. One of the most visible of them was the United Society of Believers in the Second Coming of Christ, or, more simply, the Shakers. The Shakers began in England as a fervent group of millennial activists who eventually decided to relocate to the tolerant American colonies. Under the leadership of Ann Lee, who eventually came to be considered Christ in the Second Coming, the Shakers crossed the Atlantic in 1774. By 1780 they had gathered at a communal retreat near Albany, New York, and began a decades-long evangelistic campaign. In the first 40 years of the nineteenth century they built some 20 communal villages, little models of heaven that were largely self-sufficient and removed from the corrupting influences of secular society. The Shakers were celibate, depending on converts for new members, but their excellent hand craftsmanship did not compete well as the age of factories progressed. Nevertheless, the Shakers have survived and even prospered for over 225 years, and the last communal Shaker village in Maine continues to bear witness to this enduring tradition.[5]

RADICAL PIETISM

The nineteenth century witnessed a profusion of NRMs. In the preceding few decades in Germany and other parts of Europe a new movement had arisen called Pietism, a protest against the cold formality of the Lutheran state churches. The Pietists wanted to inject warmth, spirit, and personal vitality into daily religious life. The more radical of the Pietists left the state churches entirely, forming independent religious societies.

The first large Pietist group to flee the confining ecclesiastical environment of Europe and establish an outpost in the new world was the Harmony Society. George Rapp gathered a substantial congregation around his vigorous message in Württemberg and had several run-ins with the authorities that led him and his followers to emigrate. In 1804 the Harmonists migrated to a tract of land they purchased north of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Within a few years the Rappites, as many called them, built a thriving communal village called Harmony. But after only a decade Rapp decided that the community needed to move to the western frontier, and thus they settled in Indiana, near the confluence of the Wabash and Ohio Rivers. There they built the town of New Harmony, and for a decade the Harmonists thrived in Indiana. Then in 1824 Rapp declared that they should move again, this time back to a site in Pennsylvania just a few miles from the original Harmony. The final village was called Economy, and there the Harmonists lived out their lives until the last of the celibate brother and sisters brought the movement to an end early in the twentieth century.[6]

Other Pietist groups made their marks as well. Rivaling the Harmonists in numbers and longevity were the Inspirationists of what became the Amana Society. Their distinctive doctrine was that God could raise up prophets in the present just as in the past. And so prophets did arise, men and women known as "*Werkzeuge,*" or "tools," one of whom, Christian Metz, oversaw the group's emigration from Germany to the United States in the early 1840s. They lived in a communal settlement called Ebenezer on the outskirts of Buffalo, New York, at first, but soon decided to move west, and in 1854 and 1855 settled in a rich river valley in eastern Iowa. There they built seven communal villages and lived in religious and social unity until hard economic times during the Depression forced them to end their communal ways in 1932. Nevertheless, hundreds of Amanans still live in the villages today; the church continues, as does the business that makes refrigerators and microwave ovens that was started decades ago by creative members of the society.[7]

The Separatists of Zoar made a similar migration from Germany to the United States, settling in Tuscarawas County, Ohio, in 1817. They endured until 1898, and their village remains a charming museum.[8] A similar group from Sweden settled in Illinois and created the communal town of Bishop Hill, which lasted for several decades despite the early murder of its leader Eric Jansen by a disgruntled marginal member in 1850.[9] Yet another group, many of whose members were disgruntled Harmonists who left George Rapp's Economy, coalesced under Wilhelm Keil and founded their communal religious settlement, Bethel, in Missouri in 1844. Keil eventually led part of the community to Oregon, where they founded a community called Aurora, and both settlements endured until well after Keil's death in 1877.[10]

REVIVAL FIRES AND NRMS

The first half of the nineteenth century was a particularly fertile time for the creation of NRMs. It was the era of revivalism: parts of upstate New York were particularly impacted by the fervor of the day and became known as the "burned-over

district" because the waves of revival enthusiasm repeatedly passed through the area like a fire burning through a forest.

One of the most prominent movements resulting from that time and place was Adventism, based in a belief that the Second Coming of Christ would occur in the very near future. William Miller, the leading Adventist, worked out an elaborate system of biblical analysis, and on the basis of that analysis he predicted, eventually, that the return of the Lord would take place on October 22, 1844. The grand event failed to happen on schedule, but after several years of puzzlement and even despair many Adventists regrouped under the leadership of Ellen White, a visionary who laid down new laws for those who continued to expect an imminent coming of Christ. One of her precepts was that the Jewish sabbath was the proper day of worship, and their practice of worshipping on Saturday gave the group the name of Seventh-Day Adventists. They have thrived ever since, still preaching their millennial message, albeit without a specific date for the end of the world.[11]

Like many other NRMs, Adventism had an influence beyond its own membership. Today tens of millions of Americans believe that a dramatic Second Coming will occur in the very near future. Many Adventist groups apart from the Seventh-Day church are thriving, none more than the Jehovah's Witnesses.

A generation after the early Adventist enthusiasm peaked, Charles Taze Russell, a prosperous hat salesman, founded his own Adventist group in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Russell, like Miller, on the basis of his own interpretation of certain biblical passages, set a date for the glorious millennial occurrences. He said that spectacular end-of-the-world events would occur in 1914. That date, like 1844, did not apparently usher in the millennium, but the Witnesses continued to believe that important forces were set in motion and that the culmination would take place imminently. And so the movement proceeds today: Jehovah's Witnesses continue to believe that the end of the world as we know it is at hand.[12]

THE EMERGENCE OF THE MORMONS

The Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses notwithstanding, no group that emerged from the burned-over district had a larger or longer-lasting impact than the Mormons. The founder, Joseph Smith, was a teenager who moved with his family from Vermont to the vicinity of Palmyra, New York, when he began having spiritual visions. Eventually, he said, he was led to dig up a box of "golden plates" that had inscriptions in an unusual form of hieroglyphics. In due course he "translated" the inscriptions with miraculous tools, and finally published the work as the *Book of Mormon,* a purported history of pre-Columbian America in which the first Americans—today's American Indians—were descended from ancient Hebrew peoples. In 1830 Smith founded a new church that he said was a divinely inspired recreation of early Christianity.

The Mormon faith grew rapidly. Soon the headquarters moved from New York state to Kirtland, Ohio; the main body of Mormons then moved to several locations in Missouri, where they encountered entrenched hostility from local residents, and

then to Nauvoo, Illinois, on the Mississippi River. There they created a thriving city run by Mormon church leaders, but in 1844 Smith was murdered and the church splintered.

Mormon factions spread far and wide. One of them, under the leadership of Smith's own family, eventually established a church headquartered in Independence, Missouri, just outside Kansas City. This tradition was formerly called the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and today is known as the Community of Christ. But the largest group of Mormons followed Brigham Young to Utah, where they prospered spectacularly. They wrested a living from the inhospitable desert and laid the foundations for a worldwide NRM. A century and a half later, the Mormons are no longer social outcasts, a status they suffered especially because of their early practice of plural marriage, or polygamy, in which men could have multiple wives. They also recently abandoned the denial of equal spiritual opportunity to African Americans. Today they are pillars of American, and world, society.[13]

ONEIDA

Many other groups appeared in the wake of the religious fervor of the burned-over district. In the early 1850s the Oneida Community initiated its remarkable three-decades-long experiment in religious community outside Oneida, New York. Oneida's founder, John Humphrey Noyes, descendent of a prominent New England political family, became a Perfectionist, maintaining that he had been freed, by the grace of God, from the burden of sinfulness. His religious community first gathered near Putney, Vermont, but in 1848 the members moved to Oneida. Life was difficult for the first several years, but then the Oneidans began to make animal traps—the best in the business, thanks to the inventiveness of a community member—and eventually they branched out into silverware, which was an even more prosperous business than traps.

Animals traps and silverware aside, however, the sensational core of Oneida's life was its practice of "complex marriage" in which every man was married to every woman in the community of several hundred members. Noyes believed that a perfect world would not countenance exclusive relationships, but rather that everyone would love all others equally. The system worked remarkably well for more than three decades, but outside critics and internal crises eventually made life difficult for the community, and in 1881 it closed, although the silverware business continues to bear the Oneida name.[14]

ANABAPTISTS, AGAIN

The last of the major Anabaptist groups arrived during the heyday of the Oneida Community. The Hutterites (named for an early leader, Jacob Hutter) from their founding in 1528 were distinctive for their commitment to communal living, with all property held in common. Like the other Anabaptists, the Hutterites were long

persecuted in Europe. In 1770 they moved to Russia with a promise from the Russian empress Catherine the Great that they could practice their religion freely, live in communal settlements, educate their own children, and be exempt from military service. A century later the Russian government withdrew those privileges, and the Hutterites had to move again. This time they migrated to South Dakota, where 443 of them settled in three colonies (and a larger number gave up communal living to settle on individual farms). They lived quietly, their numbers growing modestly, until World War I, when anti-German and antipacifist persecution forced most of them to flee to Canada. In the 1930s some were invited to return to the United States. Since then the Hutterites have expanded robustly. They now have over 400 colonies, each with a population of around 100 persons farming several thousand acres of land, in six states and four Canadian provinces. Like their spiritual siblings, the Amish and Mennonites, they have prospered in the New World.[15]

SPIRITUALISM, THEOSOPHY, AND METAPHYSICAL MOVEMENTS

In the meantime another new spiritual direction was charted with the rise of Spiritualism, a movement whose most distinctive belief was that living humans could communicate with spiritual beings and especially with the dead. The origins of the movement lay in the "spirit rappings" experienced by Kate and Margaret Fox in 1848 in their family home in Hydesville, New York—strange knocking noises that were interpreted as messages from beings in another dimension. Although the "rappings" of the Fox sisters were later discredited, Spiritualism attracted a widespread American following, and it has been with us ever since, with its testimony that life goes on after death and that communication with dimensions of life other than the immediately visible ones is possible. The original Spiritualists were Christians, but much of the movement today, now often called "channeling," could be considered a New Age spiritual movement not exclusively rooted in any traditional world religion.[16]

Around the time Spiritualism began to acquire a following, classical Asian religious texts became available in English translation to the general public. Hindu and Buddhist scriptures soon found readers in certain circles of educated Americans, most notably, perhaps, among the American Transcendentalists: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, and others. In the 1870s Spiritualism and the new Asian religions came together in one of the most innovative of American NRMs, Theosophy. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky was a Russian who was said to have traveled to some of the world's most exotic locales, learning from a wide array of spiritual teachers, and in 1875 she and Henry Olcott founded the Theosophical Society in New York City. Theosophy resembled Spiritualism in its reception of messages from distant spiritual beings, which Theosophists called "Masters," and Buddhism and Hinduism greatly influenced its spiritual outlook. After Blavatsky's death in 1891 the movement splintered; one branch built a beautiful communal enclave at Point Loma near San Diego, another did the same in Hollywood and then Ojai, California, and still others developed loyal followings in locations around the world.

Theosophy remains one of the most unusual and creative of all of the American NRMs and has influenced dozens of other NRMs.[17]

Another innovative religious school of thought that developed in the era of Spiritualism and Theosophy was New Thought. Its origins, many would say, lay in the philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg, the eighteenth century Swedish scientist and metaphysician who taught a doctrine of correspondence that events in the material world have correlations with events in the spiritual realm. As a religious movement, New Thought developed with the work of Phineas P. Quimby, a spiritual healer in Belfast, Maine, who believed that sickness was caused by wrong thinking and thus could be counteracted mentally. Among Quimby's patients was Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, about whom more is written below. It was one of Eddy's students, Emma Curtis Hopkins, who became the leading shaper of New Thought through her teaching of many students and her assignment of missionaries to all parts of the United States. Many separate organizations embodied New Thought principles over the ensuing century. The largest and most visible of them is the Unity School of Christianity, founded in Kansas City by Myrtle and Charles Fillmore, students of Hopkins, in 1886. Like other New Thought organizations, Unity has no creeds or mandatory teachings; individual members are encouraged to search for truth within their hearts. New Thought retains that breadth of outlook in its many organizations today.[18]

Christian Science's history and beliefs are somewhat similar to those of New Thought, but has distinctive ideas of its own as well as a more rigid belief and organizational structure than most New Thought churches do. Eddy was initially influenced by Quimby, then developed her own NRM after she experienced what she interpreted as a miraculous cure following her fall on ice in 1866. In the 1870s she founded organizations that promulgated her ideas, and in 1892 she organized the current Christian Science Church, then as now headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts. Christian Science denies the reality of the material world; all that truly exists is mind. God is referred to as the Divine Mind. Christian Scientists are best known for their healing practice that involves spiritual treatment and only in a few unusual cases permits conventional medicine. The numbers of Christian Scientists are declining today, but the influence of the church and of Eddy's ideas is widespread. The many prophets of boundless human potential, of positive thinking, and of a metaphysical type of spiritual healing all owe a debt to Christian Science.[19]

NATIVE AMERICAN NRMS

One other cluster of NRMs that emerged in the nineteenth century deserves mention as well. When Euro-Americans subdued and "modernized" indigenous peoples, suppression of traditional Native American religions was the order of the day. Many churches worked hard to convert Native people to Christianity and were fairly successful at that. But the suppression and marginalization of traditional American Indian religions was accompanied by cultural disintegration and grinding poverty. Into this situation came many Native American prophets who proclaimed NRMs for

Native peoples. Often the prophets were attached to specific tribes and confederations, as was the case with Handsome Lake of the Iroquois and Kenekuk of the Kickapoo. Generally the prophets offered a message of encouragement—that better times lay ahead—and urged self-help to improve the lot of Indian people.

Two new Native American religions, however, went far beyond tribal boundaries. The Ghost Dance of 1890 was inspired by the visionary experiences of Wovoka, a shaman among the Northern Paiute of Nevada. To dispirited Native people Wovoka preached hope: if they would live more virtuously and perform a certain ceremonial dance, a golden age would return to Native America and the Euro-American oppressors would be vanquished. The message spread rapidly, nowhere more vigorously than among the Sioux, some of whom adopted a particularly militant form of the Ghost Dance. But it came to a tragic halt when U.S. Army troops massacred over 100 peaceful Ghost Dancers at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1890.

Even then, however, another transtribal NRM had begun to spread among Native Americans. The Native American Church, which combines Christianity with various traditional tribal religions, is best known for its sacramental use of peyote, whose active ingredient, mescaline, produces effects similar to those of LSD. Long practiced in Mexico and a small part of the American Southwest, peyote religion spread rapidly from the 1880s onward, after the influential Comanche chief Quanah Parker claimed that he was healed by use of peyote medicine. Native American Church members had repeated conflicts with state and federal authorities over their use of a generally illegal substance in worship, but the religion spread to all areas of the United States where Native Americans lived and is a major unifying force among Indian people today.[20]

ASIAN TEACHERS ARRIVE

Non-Asian Americans had limited exposure to Asian religions in the mid-nineteenth century, but at the end of that century these religions became more visible. The key event in the spread of Hindu and Buddhist ideas was the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893. Among the delegates to the gathering was a young swami named Vivekananda. To put it simply, he stole the show, proclaiming a warm, tolerant, all-embracing version of Hinduism. He was the first Asian spiritual teacher to attract a substantial following among non-Asian Americans, and his Vedanta Societies survive to this day. Other Asian masters made American converts as well. Vivekananda returned to India and died young, but other swamis took his place. In 1927 Swami Paramananda began broadcasting his message to the public on radio, and in the late 1930s Swami Prabhavananda attracted the prominent British writers Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, and Gerald Heard to his Hollywood Vedanta Center. Their presence and writings attracted yet more Americans to the expansive Vedanta teachings.[21] Another swami who arrived under separate auspices in 1920, Paramahansa Yogananda, developed an even larger following than the Vedantists, especially because of the impact of his best-selling *Autobiography of a Yogi.*[22]

Buddhism was not far behind Hinduism in finding an American constituency. The first American Buddhists were Japanese and Chinese people who arrived on the West Coast in the 1840s, but they did not attempt to spread their traditions beyond their own ethnic groups. When several Buddhist monks attended the Chicago World Parliament in 1893, however, Buddhism's fortunes in the United States changed. Although these monks did not make the spectacular impact that their Hindu counterpart Vivekananda did, they set the stage for a great flowering of Buddhism some decades later. Japanese Buddhist teachers founded the first American Zen centers in the 1920s, and the contact between Americans and Japanese fostered by the American occupation of Japan after World War II spread Japanese Buddhism, and Zen in particular, to more Americans. The new Zen presence in the United States attracted the interest of several Beat writers. The poems and novels of Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder, and others made Buddhism very attractive to counterculturalists. Thus, both Hinduism and Buddhism created foundations that would mushroom in the last third of the twentieth century.[23]

ISLAM COMES TO THE UNITED STATES

Islam first came to the United States with African slaves whose religious expression was suppressed by most slave owners, and it did not reappear on the American scene until the late nineteenth century. Muslims, especially after September 11, 2001, coped with terrible cultural conflicts and image problems. Nevertheless, their numbers grew steadily, and they may soon eclipse Judaism to become the second largest American religion, after Christianity. The first Muslim immigrants arrived in the late nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century they established mosques in scattered and often isolated locations such as Ross, North Dakota, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Toledo, Ohio. More immigrants came later, and gradually Islam became visible in many American cities. As with Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam's largest growth came in the latter decades of the twentieth century and involved converts, especially many African Americans, as well as immigrants and their descendents.[24]

One offshoot of Islam made important inroads in the United States beginning about the same time that its parent tradition arrived. The Baha'i Faith had its origins in Persia (now Iran), where a man who took the honorific name Baha'u'llah declared himself a prophet in the mid-nineteenth century. The first Baha'i believers arrived in the United States in 1894, and they and their successors were successful in spreading their faith. The simplicity of two central Baha'i teachings—first, that the human race is one and all people are equal, and second, that all of the major religions are true and divinely founded—enjoyed popular appeal in the United States, and American Baha'i membership now exceeds 100,000, with local congregations throughout the country.[25]

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

NRMs became more and more visible as the twentieth century progressed. The most spectacularly successful religious innovation of all, and arguably America's

greatest contribution to the world's religious fabric, was Pentecostalism, which rose meteorically over the century. Pentecostalism's beginning was humble. It started in a Bible school led by a young Holiness pastor named Charles Parham in Topeka, Kansas. Parham, who earlier was involved in faith healing, became convinced that persons who believed they were saved should bear outward manifestations of that transformation. He and his students concluded that the outward sign would be glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, a phenomenon recorded in the biblical Book of Acts but largely absent from Christianity after the first century. They prayed for such a spiritual gift on New Year's Eve, 1900, and on the first day of 1901 one of Parham's students, Agnes Ozman, became the first tongue speaker of modern Pentecostalism. The movement remained isolated and unknown, however, until a later Parham student named William Seymour took the new concept to Los Angeles and presided over the Azusa Street Revival in 1906, whence this dynamic NRM quickly spread worldwide.

For decades Pentecostal believers were scorned by members of more staid churches. They attracted the criticism of other Christians because of their emotional and incomprehensible talking, the physical exercises that often accompanied glossolalia (and that gave rise to the derisive term "holy rollers"), and the faith healing that seemed to reject medical science—not to mention early Pentecostalism's interracial meetings and women leaders. In the late 1950s, however, a new wave of Pentecostalism, now usually called the Charismatic movement, began to appear in non-Pentecostal churches. Soon Episcopal, Baptist, and Catholic Charismatics were gathering in huge numbers, and new churches—independent local "megachurches," in many cases—added to the surge as well. Today the Pentecostal/Charismatic wing of Christianity is so large and influential that it has moved beyond the status of a NRM and exerts an enormous cultural influence throughout the world. A century ago, however, observers would not have predicted such a dynamic future for a movement whose first adherents were bitterly reviled by everyone in the "good" churches.[26]

AFRICAN-AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

It was not only in Pentecostalism that African Americans became active in NRMs in the early twentieth century. Just as NRMs—often practiced in secret—developed among the slaves, they arose among the now-freed slaves and their descendents and were especially vigorous among the African Americans, who in increasing numbers migrated to northern cities.[27] Some of the black NRMs were Christian variations; some rejected Christianity altogether as a slave religion that had been forced upon an imprisoned people.

One non-Christian religion that found a following among postslavery African Americans was Judaism, whose central ethical theme is freedom. The first black Jews appeared in the 1890s; one of the earliest prophets of the movement was William Saunders Crowdy, who developed a following in Kansas and then in eastern cities. Crowdy taught that African Americans were descendents of the lost tribes of Israel.

He developed a novel religion that observed the Jewish Sabbath and holidays. Later several other prophets enunciated their own variations on that theme.[28]

But black Judaism was largely eclipsed by black Islam. In 1913 Timothy Drew, who took the name Noble Drew Ali, founded the Moorish Science Temple in Newark, New Jersey. He published his own Holy Koran and claimed that black Americans were not Africans but Asiatics, descendents of the Moors of north Africa. Other Islamic movements followed, most notably the Nation of Islam, founded by the mysterious W.D. Fard in Detroit in 1930. Fard vanished in 1934, but his lieutenant, Elijah Poole, who took the name Elijah Muhammad, built a powerful movement called the Nation of Islam. They taught that a disciplined black population would soon overthrow its white oppressors and return to its rightful position of leadership. Today the separatist Nation of Islam still has an African-American following, although even more black Americans converted to conventional Islam and joined local mosques.[29]

Beyond the Jews and Muslims, even more distinctive African-American religions appeared on the scene as well. One of the most innovative religious founders was Father Divine, born George Baker, who attracted thousands of members to his Peace Mission Movement, which peaked in the 1930s. Peace Mission members believed Father Divine to be God, and they devoted their entire lives to the cause, moving into celibate communal "heavens" and working in Peace Mission businesses. Eventually the movement declined, especially after Father Divine's death in 1965, but his widow, known as Mother Divine, continues to lead the faithful.[30]

NEW VERSIONS OF JUDAISM

African Americans were not alone in creating innovations in Judaism. Jews from more traditional Jewish backgrounds brought new practices and outlooks to their ancient traditions, and the new movements prospered in the twentieth century. The most notable among them is Hasidism, which arose in eastern Europe in the eighteenth century. Local Hasidic groups developed around the authority of charismatic leaders called rebbes in rural communities isolated from urban areas. Most Hasidim remained in their homelands until the rise of Hitler before World War II forced them to flee to the United States. Here they tried to retain their village closeness in urban settings, most notably in Brooklyn, New York. Hasidism tends to be insular: members wear clothing that makes them immediately identifiable, they educate their children in their own schools, and they strictly observe many religious practices, such as observing a kosher or traditional diet. The names of the various Hasidic groups—Lubavitcher, Satmar, Bratzlaver—reflect their places of origin, and their inwardly focused communities have thrived in their new homes. Other Jewish NRMs emerged as well, but none have the distinctive visibility of Hasidism.[31]

THE 1960S AND AFTER

As strong as NRMs were in American history, nothing earlier compared in sheer quantity and visibility with the NRMs that arose during the 1960s and after. There

are several reasons for that religious profusion. One was a change in immigration laws in 1965 that made Asian immigration easier; among those Asians came many spiritual teachers who spread new Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and other ideas and practices to spiritually hungry Americans. Another reason for the profusion of NRMs in the 1960s was the exodus of Caribbean peoples to the United States, some of them fleeing from Fidel Castro's Communist regime in Cuba and others fleeing desperate poverty in Haiti and other countries. These Caribbean peoples brought distinctive religions with them. But the largest factor in the surge was simply the great cultural upheaval that took place in American society in the 1960s and early 1970s. Suddenly traditional values of all kinds were questioned as never before, and a mood of experimentation swept through the land, especially among young people. New and experimental interest in drugs, sex, and political protest was paralleled by an openness to NRMs, many of which were newly available for exploration.

The NRMs from Asia tended to be the most visible of the 1960s-era spiritual movements. Indian teachers were prominent: Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta, for example, arrived from India in 1965 to spread a kind of Hinduism popularly called Krishna Consciousness, or Hare Krishna, and soon his followers or devotees were singing, dancing, and begging in public in their saffron robes. Their numbers were never great, but they built temples and communal farms across the United States and eventually raised families and assumed their place in the American religious mosaic.[32] Swami Satchidananda arrived in 1965 and by 1969 was prominent enough to appear on stage at the Woodstock Festival, the landmark rock concert that epitomized the counterculture. His following grew throughout the 1970s. At the end of that decade he established a permanent spiritual community called Yogaville in Virginia. The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi began touring the world to promote what came to be known as Transcendental Meditation in 1958. By the late 1960s he had an extensive organization overseeing the spiritual lives of thousands of American meditators. Similar stories were repeated by hundreds of other Indians who found willing disciples in the United States.[33]

Buddhism expanded in similar fashion. The Zen centers in place before 1960 saw their memberships expand greatly, and new teachers from Japan and Korea established many new ones. Other forms of Buddhism, from several traditionally Buddhist countries, arrived as well. In 1960 Daisaku Ikeda visited the United States to start his Soka Gakkai movement, already thriving in Japan. Eventually tens of thousands of adherents were doing the vigorous chanting and social outreach that characterized Soka Gakkai practice. Meanwhile, the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950 set in motion events that caused many Tibetan Buddhist teachers to flee to India and elsewhere. Some of them eventually reached the United States. The largest and most visible Tibetan Buddhist organization in the United States today is Vajradhatu, founded by disciples of the lama (or Tibetan teacher) Chogyam Trungpa in 1969 and now anchored by Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, the largest center of Buddhist education in the United States.[34]

The new Asian presence was not confined to Hinduism and Buddhism. Sikh teachers came as well, as did gurus from the Sikh offshoot tradition known as Sant

Mat. One of the latter was the Guru Maharaj Ji, who, although a mere 13 years old when he first came to the United States in 1971, was proclaimed a Perfect Master and in the next few years built one of the largest American followings of any Asian teacher in his Divine Light Mission. Sun Myung Moon, a Korean leader who created an innovative version of Christianity mixed with Asian traditions, sent the first missionaries of his Unification Church to the United States in 1959. Teachers of Sufism, the mystical offshoot of Islam, set up several American orders. Subud, from Indonesia, developed a small but lasting presence. Hundreds of groups and movements large and small soon made their homes in the United States.[35]

AFRO-CARIBBEAN RELIGIONS

Caribbean refugees brought NRMs with them when they made their way to the United States in the 1960s and later. The Africans who were taken to the Caribbean as slaves had in many cases taken their traditional religions with them, and over time those religions, mixed with Roman Catholicism, became traditions like Santería and Vodou (or Voodoo). Those similar (but by no means identical) religions center on the interaction of human beings with spiritual entities through rituals and sacrifices. These entities, known as loa (in Vodou) and orishas (in Santería), are invoked during long and intricate ceremonies, and their essence can inhabit the very being of the believer, at least temporarily. These religions remain largely based in the Caribbean populations that brought them to the United States, but their visibility, in shops, for example, that sell essential materials for Vodou and Santería rituals, and in public controversies in which local governments attempted to suppress their ceremonies (especially those involving animal sacrifice in Santería's case), gave them a place of some prominence in the complex matrix of American religions.[36]

Another Afro-Caribbean religion, quite unrelated to Vodou and Santería, is Rastafari, or Rastafarianism, which emerged in the 1930s and 1940s in Jamaica. The origins of Rastafari are complex, but the central theme of the movement is "Ethiopianism," or repatriation to Africa, which is related to a belief in the divinity of Haile Selassie, the late Emperor of Ethiopia. The most visible (or audible) representation of Rastafari is reggae music, popularized worldwide by Bob Marley and others; the most famous precept of the faith, probably, is the sacramental use of Ganja, or marihuana. The movement spread worldwide, and its most visible emblem, dreadlocks (long, matted hair), can be seen just about anywhere.[37]

NATURE RELIGIONS

In the early 1970s feminism and environmentalism achieved public prominence, and a cluster of NRMs arose in their wake. Generally those religions were known as paganism, although their beliefs and practices were so diverse as to defy easy categorization. The early pagans claimed to be resurrecting ancient pre-Christian religions of Europe, especially northern Europe, reinstituting the spirituality of natural forces and feminine power that had been ruthlessly eradicated by Christian

missionaries over the centuries. Those claims were difficult to substantiate, and over time they tended to drop away, but the main pagan themes persevered: these religions were rooted in the earth rather than in the sky (the principal western religions see God and heaven as "up there" somewhere), and they had a strong feminine component, with female deities and female leadership at all levels.

The largest and earliest strain of modern pagan religions was Wicca, or witchcraft. It was founded in the 1920s by Gerald Gardner, a British civil servant who claimed that he was initiated into this supposedly ancient religion by a woman called Old Dorothy. Some of Gardner's students brought his ideas to the Americas. In the early 1960s Tim Zell (now Oberon Zell) founded the Church of All Worlds, the first pagan organization in the United States. Paganism grew slowly at first, but in the 1970s it proliferated, giving rise to many organizations as well as rituals and beliefs. Religions other than Wicca contributed breadth to the pagan world—Asatru (a type of paganism drawing on Norse themes) and Egyptian paganism (enacting rituals thought to date back to the time of the Pharaohs), for example.

Pagans often worship outdoors, and their ritual calendar follows the seasons, observing solstices, equinoxes, and times midway between those celestial events. Some adherents worship entirely or partially in the nude to achieve close contact with the forces of nature. Rituals tend to be festive, and pagans are perhaps the most tolerant religionists in the United States, welcoming persons of all sexual orientations, occupations, and political persuasions. They tend to keep low profiles because their practices are often condemned as Satanic or at least heretical. But pagans deny any Satanic connections; indeed, they say they are less Satanic than Jews or Christians because they do not even recognize the existence of an evil entity standing in contrast to a good God. Nevertheless, the pagan religions are definitely not Christian, and thus their practitioners are criticized regularly, especially by conservative Protestants.[38]

Satanists do exist, but their numbers are quite slim. The San Francisco-based Church of Satan, headed by the late Anton LaVey, was the best known of the modern organized Satanist groups, but its hedonistic creed and flamboyant rituals seemed to embody more showmanship than invocation of evil.[39] In the 1980s a wave of panic over alleged Satanic atrocities swept over the United States, its perpetrators (some of whom claimed to be former Satanists themselves) alleging that huge numbers of human sacrifices were being conducted by vast rings of evil Satanic practitioners. Those claims, however, eventually collapsed as it became evident that there was no actual evidence that such crimes had ever taken place and that many of the claims had been based on psychologically dubious "recovered memories."[40] The unjust vilification of pagans often lingered, however.

SCIENTOLOGY

One religious movement that defies easy categorization is Scientology, which features a psychological self-help program. The central concepts of Scientology were created in the early 1950s by L. Ron Hubbard, a science fiction writer. Hubbard

believed in reincarnation and argued that many of our psychological problems had their origins in our past lives; other problems came from early childhood. He developed a device called an e-meter, a sort of lie detector, that supposedly could help a person identify psychological problems and work through them. The goal, originally, was to become "clear," or a fully actualized human being who had conquered his or her psychological impediments, although later levels of attainment beyond clear were added to the system. Scientology is known for its celebrity adherents—John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and Tom Cruise, to name only three—and for its conflicts with governmental authorities the world over. It has many powerful supporters, as well as many vehement detractors. But without question, Scientology is prominent among the newest of American NRMs.[41]

RETURNING TO BEDROCK: CONSERVATIVE NRMS

Some movements that seem "new" within the contemporary American religious matrix actually seek to embody very old ways—to reject modern innovations in favor of what is perceived to be the authentic, time-tested truth. Sometimes the old is embodied in new clothing; sometimes it simply seeks to return to what once was, with old cultural forms as unchanged as possible.

One cluster of NRMs seeking to return to earlier ways is broadly known as Catholic Traditionalism. The Catholic Church, the world's largest nongovernmental human organization, has slowly but surely adapted to changing social and cultural trends throughout its history. From 1962 through 1965, the Second Vatican Council met in Rome and adopted a series of new, more modern, policies and ritual practices. Perhaps the most visible and controversial of these revisions was the changing of the language of the mass, the central Catholic ritual, and the translation of that language into vernacular languages spoken around the world. Although most Catholics embraced this and other Vatican II changes readily, some were horrified at the church's seeming departure from eternal truth. The most aggrieved formed a series of organizations, some within the church and some not, to preserve the old ways, including the historic Latin mass (known as the Tridentine mass, after its promulgation in the wake of the Council of Trent in 1570).

Some of the conservative Catholic organizations, such as the influential Opus Dei movement, remain solidly within the church. Others, however, withdrew entirely, convinced that the Roman church was hopelessly misguided. The most extreme traditionalists are known as "sedevacantists" (meaning "empty seat"), who argue that the church is so far adrift that the whole institution is a false church, and that there is no true Pope sitting on the throne of St. Peter in Rome today (hence the "empty seat"). A few such groups have actually elected their own popes. Although the various traditionalist groups are neither large nor highly visible, they seem destined to provide a conservative Catholic voice for years to come.[42]

Protestantism similarly had many movements during its history that returned to a perceived pristine purity of old. One good example is the Holiness movement, which arose late in the nineteenth century among Methodists who believed that their

church had experienced unacceptable liberalization and who saw themselves as returning to the original teachings of Methodism's founder, John Wesley, especially in demanding that members avoid sinful behaviors. Such denominations as the Free Methodists, the Church of the Nazarene, and the various groups with "Holiness" in their names (Pentecostal Holiness, Fire-Baptized Holiness) represent the enduring legacy of the Holiness critique.[43]

A more recent movement dressed traditional ways of thinking in modern garb. The Jesus Movement arose in the late 1960s among young people who dabbled in hippie life but eventually found it spiritually empty and turned to evangelical Protestantism for meaning. These "street Christians" thus combined conservative Protestant beliefs with such countercultural symbols as long hair, exuberant clothing, rock music, and communal living. Many conservative Protestant churches did not welcome the rather disheveled newcomers, but others did. Gradually the Jesus Movement blended into the growing world of evangelical Protestantism.[44]

A very different return to tradition took place among the Mormons in the twentieth century. One of the distinctive Mormon practices of the nineteenth century was polygamy. The federal government conducted a powerful campaign against polygamy in the 1880s, and the Mormon church capitulated, renouncing its unconventional marital practices in 1890. Many Mormons, however, continued to believe that polygamy was commanded by God and must be maintained. Dozens of alternative polygamy-practicing Mormon churches thus came into existence. The largest of them, the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, was headquartered in Colorado City, Arizona, on the Utah-Arizona border. It recently had over 5,000 resident members there, and more elsewhere, and has attracted considerable controversy by building a new community, complete with a Mormon temple, near El Dorado, Texas. When religious denominations abandon sacred traditions, some believers will inevitably try to reclaim them.[45]

NRMS AND THEIR CRITICS

NRMs have always been controversial. Christianity itself was severely persecuted during its first three centuries of existence. The early Anabaptists were fiercely opposed, many of them executed, for their beliefs. Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson were expelled from early Massachusetts for their departures from orthodoxy. Early Quakers were executed for their "errors." The Shakers were ridiculed and persecuted from their earliest days; ex-members like Mary Dyer, and other critics like Nathaniel Hawthorne, published bitter attacks against these unconventional Christians now remembered primarily for their furniture.

No NRM was more bitterly attacked than Mormonism. The Mormon founding story, of golden plates and wildly fanciful early American history, evoked a chorus of disdain, and once rumors that Mormons were sexual deviants (polygamy started early in the movement's history) began to circulate, the agitation against Mormonism became virulent, and many members, including the founder, were murdered.

In wartime, members of pacifist religious bodies were jailed, even killed. Jehovah's Witnesses ended up in court repeatedly for such offenses as refusing to salute the American flag, something that they considered an idol in competition with their undivided devotion to Jehovah or God.

And so it has been throughout history: those who are different are often condemned. In recent times calumny was heaped on NRMs—on Unification Church members, Hare Krishna devotees, and hundreds of others. They were condemned for "brainwashing" their converts, although objective evidence for such practices is slim. They were accused of greedily wanting their members' money, even though most religions seek substantial contributions from their adherents.

Persecution does eradicate some groups, but many more fall by the wayside for the same reasons that most human organizations come and go, and some survive to evolve into respectable membership in the larger religious community. The bottom line, though, is that NRMs are as durable as religion itself. They have found millions of adherents throughout American history and have been vibrant examples of the diversity that has long characterized American religion.

NOTES

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4. On the Mennonites, see Calvin W. Redekop, *Mennonite Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). On the Amish, see John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society,* 4th ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

5. See Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

6. Karl J.R. Arndt wrote exhaustively on the Harmony Society and published his history in several lengthy volumes. For the period that includes Rapp's lifetime, see Arndt, *George Rapp's Harmony Society, 1785–1847* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965).

7. See Jonathan Andelson, "The Community of True Inspiration from Germany to the Amana Colonies," in *America's Communal Utopias,* ed. Pitzer, 181–203; Peter Hoehnle, *The Amana People: The History of a Religious Community* (Iowa City: Penfield Books, 2003).

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15. The standard monograph on the Hutterites is John A. Hostetler, *Hutterite Society,* rev. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

16. See, for example, Ruth Brandon, *The Spiritualists* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1984).

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24. See, for example, Yvonne Haddad, *The Muslims of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

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34. In addition to Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake,* see, for example, Charles S. Prebish, *American Buddhism* (North Scituate, MA: Duxbury, 1979).

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Leadership in New Religious Movements

Eugene V. Gallagher

In many ways, leadership in New Religious Movements (NRMs) is little different than it is in more established religions or even in other social contexts. It is claimed, exercised, contested, and transformed through very similar processes. Anticult and countercult activists, however, persistently focused on what they perceived as a virtually universal reliance on dangerous forms of charismatic leadership in "cults." Margaret Singer, for example, asserted that "a cult is a mirror of what is inside the cult leader" and described "cult leaders" as "master manipulators."[1] But that overly narrow focus obscured both the diversity of forms of leadership in NRMs and their similarities to leadership in other social groups. Although there are examples of new religions in which authority and power were concentrated in a single leader, at least for a time, there are many other instances of differing and more complex forms of leadership. This essay provides a fuller survey of the kinds of leadership that appear in NRMs and the processes by which aspiring leaders established and defended their claims to power and authority, maintained their positions of influence, and guided the lives of their followers. It also examines the conflicts that arise between competing contenders for leadership and the transformations that occur during an individual leader's career or a group's history. Finally, it will return to the issue of evaluating the leadership of NRMs, particularly since that theme has been so prominent in the polemical literature written about new religions and their leaders.

One of the distinctive features of specifically religious leadership is its appeal to supernatural or extraordinary forces as the basis for that leadership. Religious leaders draw on diverse resources to support their claims. Those sources can include direct personal interaction with what leaders identify and followers acknowledge as sacred. They may also include the authorship, reception, or interpretation of authoritative collections of stories and other traditions in either written or oral form, the ability to devise and perform specific ritual actions, the establishment and interpretation of religious law, and the communication of moral or intellectual insight. All claims to religious leadership are evaluated, either implicitly or explicitly, by the audiences

to whom they are directed. These audiences include the followers or believers within a particular religious tradition or group, people who are personally sympathetic to that tradition or group but not formally aligned with it, and observers of that tradition or group like journalists, scholars, or members and leaders of other religious groups. Religious leaders achieve and maintain their positions of influence only through sustained interactions with specific audiences. Consequently, religious leadership is not immune to critique and competition. Individuals and groups, often themselves acting on religious convictions, can challenge religious leadership, attempt to diminish the status of individual leaders, limit their effectiveness, and even provoke or accomplish their overthrow. Insurgent leaders who compete for primacy within a group may claim greater intimacy with the divine, the correct interpretation of sacred tradition, greater ritual power, more accurate legal interpretation, or superior moral vision. Even when it appears to be entirely stable and thoroughly entrenched, religious leadership always exists within an emotional and spiritual environment where claims and counterclaims are repeatedly ratified or undermined by audiences who are often well versed in the specific issues of contention because of their personal experiences, familiarity with tradition, or intellectual and moral acuity. Religious leadership, then, is always embedded in an array of social processes that can sustain, augment, or decrease its power. Those processes can be particularly evident in NRMs because of their initial small scale and urgent need to establish themselves as credible alternatives to the religious status quo. Like other leaders, the leaders of new religious movements are made, remade, and unmade in their interactions with those whom they would recruit and retain as followers, as the following examples will show.

CLAIMING RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Probably the most dramatic and striking claim to religious leadership is one that is presented as being thrust suddenly upon an unsuspecting individual in a dramatic encounter with the sacred. The experience of Joseph Smith (1805–1844) is a case in point. Beginning in 1820 Smith, then a young teenaged boy, had a series of visionary encounters with God, Jesus Christ, and angels that convinced him of his religious mission. His visions eventually led him to unearth the gold plates from which he translated the Book of Mormon and to establish the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A statement from the angel Moroni in 1823 neatly sums up the impact of Smith's experiences; Moroni simply informed Smith that "God had a work for [him] to do."[2] Smith believed that his visions were proof that none of the Protestant denominations then competing with one another locally merited his affiliation and that he himself should restore the primitive Christian community described in the Book of Acts in the New Testament. Smith first revealed his new religious message to the members of his immediate family, who supplied him with his first converts. Joseph's father, for example, confirmed the young man's impression that he had received a divine commission and urged him to follow the angel Moroni's

instructions.[3] Soon, a few others became impressed with the new scripture that Smith revealed to the world, and they became converts as well. The testimonies of the early witnesses to Smith's experience of revelation are included at the beginning of editions of the Book of Mormon today as the "testimony of three witnesses" and "the testimony of eight witnesses," which assert that the witnesses "have seen the plates which contain this record" and that "they have been translated by the gift and power of God."[4] The support of those early converts was crucial to the survival and then the prospering of the religious movement started by Smith in upper New York State.

In his classic and still influential analysis, the sociologist Max Weber included claims like Smith's under the heading of charismatic authority. He distinguished it from both bureaucratic or legal authority and traditional authority. Bureaucratic authority rests "on a belief in the 'legality' of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands." Traditional authority depends "on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them."[5] In contrast to these two forms of authority, Weber described charismatic authority or charisma as based "on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order ordained by him."[6] Despite frequent misreadings of his work, Weber clearly viewed charisma not as a static quality of an individual's personality but as a product of the social interaction between would-be leaders and their potential followers. Weber stressed that "it is recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma."[7]

Another example of charismatic authority is the founder of the UFO group called the Raelians. As with Joseph Smith, an individual was jolted from his daily life by an unanticipated encounter with the sacred. In December 1973 a race car driver and journalist was walking near an extinct volcano outside of Clermont-Ferrand, France. Claude Vorilhon (b. 1946) recalls that "suddenly in the fog, I saw a red light flashing; then a sort of helicopter was descending towards me."[8] He soon learned that this was not a helicopter, but a flying saucer. During the next six days of intensive instructions, Vorilhon learned that the craft was piloted by alien beings who were the true creators of life on earth. In a close parallel to Smith's experience, Vorilhon was given both a religious mission and a book to demonstrate his credibility. An alien, identified as one of the Elohim mentioned in the biblical book of Genesis, told him that "you will tell human beings the truth about what they are and what we are.… You will write down everything I will tell you and you will publish the writings in book form."[9] Armed with the authority conferred upon him by the extraterrestrials, as well as a new book that provided unprecedented insight into familiar scriptures, and a new name, "Raël" began to pursue his mission. Unlike Smith's, Raël's initial converts did not come from his immediate family, but they did recognize in his pronouncements an authentic religious message that claimed their allegiance. One person simply said that after hearing Raël speak, "I recognized 'Jesus speaking in his own era.'"[10] Expressing the tight fit between his own observations and what he heard

from Raël, another convert asserted that "I find everywhere around me confirmation of the messages."[11]

Although many people, especially those who are deeply suspicious of charismatic leadership, associate experiences like those of Smith and Raël with the leaders of virtually all NRMs, there are, in fact, many other ways that leadership is claimed. The career of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), provides a good example of the traditional legitimation of leadership. Although Prabhupada, who was then 26, was urged to dedicate himself to spreading the knowledge of Krishna beyond India when he met the guru Bhaktivedanta Sarasvati, he delayed the beginning of his missionary activity for a career in business until he was 69.[12] Only in 1965 did Prabhupada begin to spread the message of Krishna Consciousness in the United States. Prabhupada always insisted that he was bringing traditional knowledge about Krishna to the West; he portrayed himself as part of a "disciplic succession" that went back not only to his own guru but eventually to the god Krishna himself.[13] Prabhupada offered to accomplish for others what his own guru had done for him, and what his predecessors in the succession had previously done: awaken the consciousness of Krishna. The title of Prabhupada's most well-known book, *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is,* nicely captures his insistence that he was simply representing traditional wisdom and not proposing innovative interpretations of it.

Prabhupada offered a religious message that was both disarmingly simple and involved deep dedication to religious practice. He said that the awakening of religious consciousness was achieved by the disciplined chanting of a simple mantra, "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare." But Prabhupada also insisted that full consciousness of Krishna developed only within the context of the guru-disciple relationship: "one who is serious about understanding spiritual life requires a guru."[14] Disciples reinforced Prabhupada's claim to authority when they gave testimonies to his guidance in chanting like "when you chant Hare Krishna you become purified. Your awareness is acutely intensified. Your awareness of everything: your spiritual awareness, your physical awareness, your awareness of everything around you."[15]

Although Weber's ideal type of bureaucratic authority rarely if ever appears at the beginnings of new religions, it often comes into play as a new movement strives to make the transition from its founder(s) to a second generation. Fragmentation of the group is an ever-present possibility, especially if no concrete plans for succession are made, and the very survival of the group may be at issue. Founding leaders may delay concrete plans for succession for many reasons, including a desire to hold on to their power, an unwillingness to accept their own mortality, genuine indecisiveness about who is fit to succeed them, or even the millennial hope that the world will be transformed in their own lifetimes, thus eliminating the need for a successor. When specific plans are not made, competing approaches to succession can easily develop. Noting that "the single most divisive issue that [the] Latter Day Saint church has ever dealt with was the untimely death of its founder," Steven L. Shields observed that in the ten years before his death Joseph Smith "provided for at least eight different

methods of succession in the leadership of the church."[16] It should not be surprising, then, that not all of the first generation of Mormons followed Brigham Young on the Great Trek to the Salt Lake Basin in Utah, following Smith's death in Illinois. Those who eventually accepted the prophet's son, Joseph Smith III, as their leader and thus implicitly endorsed the notion of the traditional legitimation of authority formed the Reorganized Church of the Latter Day Saints, now called the Community of Christ and headquartered in Independence, Missouri. Other splinter groups led by prominent Mormons also formed in the years after the prophet's murder in 1844.

Sometimes, however, founders provide for their succession. Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910), for example, planned for the continuance of the Christian Science Church by composing *The Manual of the Mother Church* and by asserting that members should "never abandon the By-laws nor the denominational government of The Mother Church."[17] Explicitly equating the authority of the *Manual* with her own authority and both with that of Scripture, Eddy assured the members of her Church that "if I am not personally with you, the Word of God, and my instructions in the By-Laws have led you hitherto and will remain to guide you safely on."[18] But even Eddy's concerted efforts to turn her personal charisma into a structure that would continue after her death were not able to prevent defections from her church to various New Thought movements that were organized during her lifetime as well as the formation of a dissident Christian Science movement by Annie Bill, who presented herself as the leader of the true Mother Church.[19] As the histories of the Mormons and Christian Scientists suggest, the transition from the first generation of a new religion to the second is rarely smooth. It typically involves some uncertainty about both the transfer of authority and the potentially new forms that the legitimation of authority will take. It is not uncommon for contending claimants to authority to appeal to different sources of legitimation. The period after the death of a founder often witnesses an intense burst of creativity that closely matches the ferment of the establishment of a group, as members strive to adapt their fundamental convictions to a new situation and remake the structures within which they live their religious lives.

The creativity of new religions is also evident in the fabrication of forms of leadership that do not fit neatly, or at all, into the classic categories devised by Weber. Perhaps the most noteworthy example comes from contemporary neo-Paganism, which one observer has described as a highly diverse movement that is both "non-authoritarian and non-dogmatic."[20] In such a situation, precisely what counts as leadership becomes a tricky matter. Although Zsuzsanna Budapest is probably "the closest thing that feminist spirituality has to a founder,"[21] and she herself claims to be part of a traditional lineage of practitioners of the "Old Religion," she insists that her form of Paganism "is not a one-book religion like Christianity, and not a one-mantra religion like the Krishna cult, but a body of knowledge which revels in variety, creativity and joy."[22] She does not shy away from exercising leadership, acknowledging that "my ministry is my gift and my divine act; it is where I am Goddess,"[23] yet she leads much more by example and suggestion than by command. Based on her own experience within contemporary Paganism and her observation

of others in "the Craft," Starhawk, another important figure in neo-Paganism, developed an alternative description of power and authority. Starhawk identifies "power-over" as the type of authority that strives to command and compel. She contrasts it to "power-with," or "the power of a strong individual in a group of equals, the power not to command, but to suggest and be listened to, to begin something and see it happen."[24] That distinctive form of diffused and democratic leadership, Starhawk argues, comes from "power-from-within," which itself results from "our sense of connection, our bonding with other human beings, and with the environment."[25] Starhawk's observations show that contemporary Pagan leadership, is "non-dogmatic and non-authoritarian," and that she has also developed a theory about the nature of leadership itself.

EXERCISING AND MAINTAINING RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Individuals in NRMs thus appeal to a wide range of sources to support their leadership claims. Those claims can range from descriptions of direct interaction with extraordinary or supernatural beings, through appeals to an unbroken train of tradition that eventually leads back to the gods themselves, to the diffused power of a group of strong individuals. But claiming leadership is one thing; exercising it and maintaining it are definitely others.

David Koresh (1959–1993), the leader of the Branch Davidian Adventist group at the time of its tragic conflict with the American government in 1993, claimed unprecedented insight into the meaning of the Christian Scriptures, particularly the last book of the Bible, Revelation. He asserted that "every book of the Bible meets and ends in the book of Revelation."[26] Koresh focused on Revelation 5, which describes a book sealed with seven seals in the right hand of a divine figure seated on a heavenly throne. Largely as a result of a revelatory experience that he had while visiting Israel in 1985, which he allusively described as an ascent into the heavens, Koresh was convinced that he could not only interpret Revelation's obscure symbolism but that he himself was the Lamb mentioned in chapter 5 as the only one capable of opening the sealed book. Koresh's leadership of the Branch Davidians rested on that foundation, but he had to demonstrate his leadership anew virtually every day. His preferred forum for that demonstration, and the central activity for those in residence at the Mount Carmel Center outside of Waco, Texas, was the "Bible Study," which often lasted for several hours or more. In those sessions Koresh frequently quoted the Bible from memory and built a mosaic of passages that drove home his message of God's impending judgment of the world.

Koresh's repeated demonstration of his ability to make sense of the scriptures maintained, reinforced, and extended his leadership of the group. Nearly all of the residents of Mount Carmel were Seventh-Day Adventists, and well-versed in the Bible. Those who came to study with Koresh insisted that he showed them biblical details that they never saw before. One of the members closest to Koresh, Steve Schneider, remarked of his fellow Bible students that "the reason they came here, all that they are and what they want to be revolves around what they see him

[Koresh] showing from that book."[27] Another member, David Thibodeau, who did not have an Adventist background, claimed that his coming to Mount Carmel "really has nothing to do with David's charisma,… it's just opening the book for myself, seeing what it says and saying, wow, is this guy found in the book, you know, and all the Psalms, you, you, really got to sit down and listen to him talk, I mean with the book open."[28]

Thibodeau's final comment shows how Koresh maintained his leadership. In the community's daily life, Koresh's leadership depended less on his claim to an extraordinary visionary experience than on his repeated ability to make sense of the millennial message of the Bible. Koresh's authority was tested every time he conducted a Bible Study because the community members, like Thibodeau, could sit and listen to Koresh "with the book open" and compare what Koresh said against what they read. Every time his students accepted Koresh's interpretation of the Bible, his authority was reinforced. Those who did not accept his interpretations either had to struggle to reconcile conflicting viewpoints or, eventually, leave the group. And more than a few did leave over time. In the Bible Studies, Koresh's supreme self-confidence that he was chosen for a religious mission, and his facility in interpreting biblical texts, met the deep yearning of many in his audience for a thorough renovation of this world; more often than not that interaction ratified and even increased Koresh's standing within the group.

Although they rarely assemble lasting communities around them, those individuals who claim to channel messages from various disincarnate beings have a similar relationship with their audiences. Channeled entities often espouse an understanding of leadership that seems closer to that of Starhawk than to Smith's or Raël's understanding of their prophetic mission. For example, Ramtha, the 35,000-year-old being channeled by JZ Knight (b. 1946) asserts that "I am not a sage, I am not a fortuneteller, I am not a priest. I am but a teacher, servant, brother unto you."[29] Nonetheless, the most successful channelers develop loyal clienteles, apparent from the number of workshops, books, audio and videotapes, CDs, and other paraphernalia that they offer for purchase.[30] Every time someone clicks on a Web site, enrolls in a workshop, or buys one of the items offered for sale, the stature and status of both the person doing the channeling and the channeled entity are reinforced. Since channelers usually do not develop lasting groups, they are even more immune to the corrosive effects of defections or challenges to their authority from within the band of the faithful. Their popularity and authority tend to fluctuate with the market.

The defection of members from the Branch Davidian community when Koresh announced his "New Light" revelation, which called for celibacy among all male followers and gave Koresh a sexual monopoly on the women in the group, indicates that the demands of leadership and the interests of the audience are not always in harmony.[31] Leaders may offer guidance that followers do not accept, demand commitments that seem inappropriate, chart a path for the future that some may not want to follow, or otherwise fail to maintain and direct the energies and commitments of their audiences. In some cases the prospect of group disintegration or

other kinds of failure to achieve the group's mission provokes leaders to take drastic measures.

One of most notorious examples of leadership spiraling into violence and community disintegration occurred at the Peoples Temple Agricultural Mission in Jonestown, Guyana, in 1978. By the time that the Rev. Jim Jones (1931–1978) and a group of nearly 1000 followers relocated the headquarters of the Peoples Temple from California to that remote jungle outpost, the group had a long and winding history. Jones originally founded the Peoples Temple Full Gospel Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1955, where he was an advocate for racial integration and agitated for a socialist-style redistribution of wealth. In the late 1960s the group moved to northern California and Jones's socialism moved well beyond Protestant orthodoxy. During its California heyday, the Peoples Temple added to its ranks both well-educated white professionals and people from the margins of society who found Jones's preaching against racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination very attractive. By the time the group relocated to Guyana, 75 percent of its members were African American and only 20 percent were Caucasian.[32] Jones long used a variety of flamboyant techniques, including staged faith healings, forced confessions, and dramatic sermons in which he dared God to strike him dead if he was wrong, to retain the attention and support of his flock. Under the pressure of defections of top-level aides, stinging portrayals of the Peoples Temple in the media, and mounting opposition from families, friends, and supporters of members, Jones undertook more drastic measures to hold the loyalty of his group. Along with Jones's increasing dependency on prescription medication and the backbreaking labor necessary to maintain the fragile jungle community, Jones believed that some of those closest to him were betraying him, and he felt besieged by external opponents. That made his leadership position precarious and Jonestown an exceedingly fragile and volatile community. Soon after arriving in Jonestown, Jones began periodic "white nights" in which he tested his followers' collective and individual willingness to die for the cause of Peoples Temple rather than experience harassment, arrest, or invasion. When the fact-finding mission of Rep. Leo Ryan (R-CA) erupted in violence on November 18, 1978, and claimed Ryan's life as well as the lives of four others traveling with him, Jones's preparations came to a horrible conclusion, and more than 900 members of the community died in a coordinated set of murder-suicides.

Anticult polemics describe the deaths at Jonestown as the logical extension of the pathological form of charismatic leadership that is characteristic of virtually all cults,[33] but more careful analysis of the Jonestown tragedy created a more complex picture of the factors that prompted both Jones's personal downward spiral and his followers' acceptance of his final directives. Far from establishing a model of leadership in all "cults," Jones's interactions with his community were shaped by the distinctive elements of his own personality, the context he shared with his followers, their own substantial commitments to the mission of Peoples Temple, and an array of other factors particular to the people involved and their context. Mary McCormick Maaga, for example, argues that because of his physical and mental decline "in Guyana Jim Jones became more important symbolically as a mascot of

cohesion than as a leader in the managerial sense."[34] Maaga also carefully uncovers the complex web of leadership in the movement, noting in particular the crucial role played by Jones's largely female inner circle in the administration of Jonestown. Thus, she interprets the final murder-suicides less as evidence of the hypnotic power exercised by a charismatic leader than as evidence of a "belief in Jonestown that the leaders of Peoples Temple were not willing to forsake."[35]

The ever-shifting exercise of leadership in contemporary Paganism provides a counterpoint to those instances where power and authority are heavily concentrated in a single individual. Margot Adler, author of an important early chronicle of neo-Paganism and herself a practitioner, captures the fluidity of neo-Pagan ritual leadership in a vignette about her visit to a coven in England. When the group assembled for a ritual, one of the participants asked, "Who's the High Priestess?" Adler, who only recently arrived via a transcontinental flight and had never met any of the members of the group before, was shocked to have someone point to her and say, "She is."[36] Such ad hoc vesting of ritual authority in an individual is clearly more typical in some religions than in others, but Adler's experience provides a noteworthy caution against any assertion that leadership in new religions always involves an individual's desperate attempts to maintain an iron grip over a group of followers.

CONTESTING RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Another mark of the complexity of leadership in NRMs is the frequency with which it is challenged and contested. However much leaders may strive for stability, they are always enmeshed in processes of reasserting and reaffirming their authority, often in the face of substantial dissent and criticism. The history of the Branch Davidians provides a good example. From the time that the Davidian Adventist group was founded by Victor Houteff (1885–1955) in 1929 to 1988 when Koresh secured his position at the head of the group, it went through a series of dramatic leadership changes. Following a model of traditional transferal of authority, Houteff was succeeded by his wife, Florence Houteff. When Florence's prediction of the end of the world in 1959 was not fulfilled, the group lost many of its members. Florence moved away, and in the early 1960s a number of different people contended for leadership of the remaining Davidians. In the mid-1960s, the leadership of the remaining group of about 50 stalwarts at the Mount Carmel Center was eventually claimed by Ben Roden (d. 1978). He appealed to a charismatic experience of revelation in support of his claim to authority. Roden, in turn was succeeded by his wife, Lois, who introduced distinctive innovations into the theology of the group. While Lois was serving as the prophet and teacher for the group, Koresh, born Vernon Howell, became a member and quickly a favorite of Lois. His accession to leadership was accompanied by suggestions that he consummated a sexual relationship with the elderly Lois, and attended by a series of conflicts, sometimes violent, with Lois's son George. Koresh mixed traditional legitimations of his claim to authority, based on his relationship with Lois Roden, with charismatic claims about his commissioning during his

1985 ascent into the heavens. George, on the other hand, appealed to traditional grounds for his claims, believing that the mantle of leadership should have passed from father to mother to son. Only when George Roden was imprisoned in 1988 was Koresh's path to leadership cleared. But the next five years saw serious challenges to Koresh's position. The most serious was occasioned by Koresh's controversial "New Light" proclamation in 1989. Marc Breault, a member from 1986 and close confidant of Koresh, could not accept the new message. He wrote later that he "was seriously beginning to doubt whether God has ever talked to this guy."[37] Breault and his wife left the group, and he eventually became a dedicated opponent of Koresh, collaborating with the news media and law enforcement to expose what he saw as Koresh's excesses. Once he left the Branch Davidians, Breault claimed that his activities were directed by God. Though Breault himself disputes what they have said, some surviving Branch Davidians believe that Breault wanted to establish himself as a prophetic figure who would replace Koresh.[38]

Even if Breault's motives cannot be clearly established, undoubtedly Koresh's death on April 19, 1993, inspired another clash over leadership among the few remaining Branch Davidians. Livingston Fagan was one of Koresh's faithful students. He left the Mount Carmel Center during the siege in order to present the group's message to the world. Now writing from prison, he continues to produce papers and pamphlets that constitute an orthodox representation of Koresh's teachings. Fagan's attempts to codify and explicate Koresh's teachings stem from his conviction that the time of charismatic inspiration for the Branch Davidians is now past. But another imprisoned survivor, Renos Avraam, takes a different approach. Identifying himself as the "Chosen Vessel," he claims fresh charisma and portrays himself as Koresh's successor, building upon his teachings with new revelations.[39] Koresh held on to his position of leadership despite the challenges of George Roden and Breault, but it remains unclear whether one of the claimants to succeed Koresh will be able to attain primacy and reinvigorate the group.

Leadership of the Nation of Islam has also been contested. The transition from the shadowy figure of W. D. Fard, who disappeared mysteriously in 1934 after a brief preaching career, to Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975) was relatively smooth. During his long tenure as the head of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad greatly extended Fard's teachings, developed an organizational structure, and attracted many converts to the Nation's teachings about the true identity and history of African Americans. His most famous convert was the former convict Malcolm Little (1925–1965). As Malcolm X, he enjoyed a meteoric rise within the hierarchy of the Nation of Islam and became accepted by many as its foremost spokesman. Malcolm's prominence created some tension with Elijah Muhammad, who perceived a threat to his leadership. A series of tense interactions, along with Malcolm's growing dissatisfaction with Elijah Muhammad's inability to follow his own ethical teachings, led to Malcolm's departure from the Nation of Islam. Less than a year after leaving, Malcolm was assassinated on February 21, 1965, probably by members or former members of the Nation of Islam and perhaps to eliminate the threat he posed to Elijah Muhammad's leadership.[40]

Ten years later the death of Elijah Muhammad provoked a transformation in the leadership of the movement. Wallace Dean (W.D.) Muhammad (b. 1933) immediately succeeded his father in 1975, but he led the movement into mainstream Islam and substantially transformed the official understanding of both Fard and his father in the movement. In 1978, acting on the sectarian desire to recover the lost purity of the movement's beginning, Louis Farrakhan (b. 1933) split from W.D. Muhammad to form his own organization. Farrakhan claimed both traditionally sanctioned authority, by claiming to be the "spiritual son" of Elijah Muhammad, and charismatic authority, by describing revelatory ascent into the heavens in a spaceship.[41] Although Farrakhan is the most publicly prominent, other members of the Nation of Islam reacted negatively to W.D. Muhammad's rapprochement with mainstream Islam, and at least one other splinter group, led by Silis Muhammad, was formed.[42]

Leaders of NRMs can be challenged by critics outside of their groups, such as the activists in the anticult and countercult movements or other opponents, and also by dissidents within their group. Such challenges are tightly focused and limited to specific points of doctrinal interpretation, ethical practice, or ritual observance, or they address the fundamental legitimacy of a leader's position. When challenged, leaders fall back on the fundamental sources of their authority and power, however they might be conceived. At stake is not only the position of the individual leader, but also the integrity of the group. Any challenge has the potential to divide the group. Divisions are generally understood by incumbent leaders to weaken the group and by insurgent leaders as opportunities to recapture the original purity of commitment that has faded over time. Challenges to leadership, no matter how they occur, are the keys to the transformations of religious movements.

TRANSFORMING RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Although the leadership transition precipitated by the death or disappearance of a founder is by far the most dramatic occasion for the transformation of leadership, there can be many other kinds of transformation, even within the first generation, as leaders develop a sense of their missions and try out their ideas on different audiences. Even leaders who rely on strong forms of charismatic legitimation are not above exercising a pragmatic calculus about what works to inspire a particular audience—and what does not. An incident from the careers of Marshall Applewhite (1931–1997) and Bonnie Lu Nettles (1927–1985), the leaders of the group that came to be known as "Heaven's Gate," bears that out.

Applewhite and Nettles were quite frank about their own evolving sense of mission. As early as 1972 Applewhite claimed that he had a vision in which he learned "where the human race had come from and where it was going."[43] In 1988 "the Two" reported that as their sense of mission deepened, they "consciously recognized that they were sent from space to do a task that had something to do with the Bible, an update in understanding and prophecy fulfillment."[44] For a time Applewhite and Nettles identified themselves as the "two witnesses" mentioned in Revelation 11, where the text recounts that they are given by God the power to prophesy, that they

will be murdered because of their mission, but that they will be resurrected after three and a half days. Applewhite and Nettles abandoned that particular mission, however, when they encountered other teachers who also claimed to be the two witnesses of Revelation.[45] They recalled their experience in this way: "'Well, we think that we might be fulfilling the task that was referred to as Two Witnesses in the book of Revelation.' And this student just hit the ceiling because her two teachers were the two witnesses. (Laughs) So, goodness alive, did that do a number on our heads! We thought 'Gracious, we don't want to do that again.' And it's like, whether we were or not, it was good for us to experience that."[46] Those comments from Applewhite and Nettles are remarkable for their forthright admission of their tentativeness and uncertainty about their own identity and mission. As they tell it, they had a general sense of "chosen-ness" that they tested both against their own unfolding experience and against the reactions of others. While that degree of honesty may be rare in claimants to religious leadership, it does lead to interesting questions about the inner turmoil that can accompany an apparently unshakable sense of mission.

A leader's evolving sense of self and mission can be one source of the transformation of religious leadership, but the communal and organizational structures in which leadership is embedded can also change, sometimes dramatically, in the course of a leader's career. Like the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Unificationist movement began with an extraordinary revelation delivered to a young, teenaged boy. On Easter morning, 1936, in Korea, Sun Myung Moon (b. 1920) experienced a vision of Jesus Christ that led him to a complete revision of salvation history. Like Smith, Moon eventually founded an organization to help him implement his vision. The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity was established by Moon and four followers in 1954. For more than a half century, Moon has presided over a complex web of organizational structures designed to facilitate the recruitment, retention, and direction of followers in order to hasten the transformation of this world in accordance with the will of God. During that time, the movement's center of activity moved from Korea to the United States and beyond, and the Rev. Moon is increasingly straightforward about the messianic claims that he makes for himself as the Lord of the Second Advent and for him and his wife as the True Parents of humankind. While the overall goal of unifying humanity in preparation for the imminent transformation of the world has remained constant, as has Rev. Moon's position as the unquestioned leader of Unificationism, few other things within the movement are stable. A massive labor of transcription and translation of the speeches of Rev. Moon substantially increased the body of sacred knowledge available to members and nonmembers alike, which both complicates Unification doctrine and secures the position of the Rev. Moon. The focus on uniting people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in dramatic mass marriages of Blessing ceremonies has intensified. Evangelization efforts lead well beyond the shores of Korea, Japan, and even the United States, as the movement has undertaken substantial programs in South America and elsewhere. Thus, while it appears that both the leadership of Unificationism

and its ultimate goals have remained unchanged for more than a half century, the specific processes and structures through which leadership is exerted is in constant flux. Even an introductory-level examination of the inner workings of the Unificationist movement will show that the simplified portrait of "cult" leadership so often retailed by opponents of NRMs as involving an all-controlling charismatic leader and an ever-subservient flock is simply inadequate to explain what goes on among Unificationists.[47]

Any form of leadership that persists through time will manifest some degree of change. But attention to the structural forms through which leadership is exercised, as well as to the leaders themselves, can sometimes reveal substantial continuities within a diverse array of groups. The progression from the "I AM" movement through the Summit Lighthouse to the Church Universal and Triumphant provides a case in point. "I AM" began in 1930 when an "Ascended Master" contacted Guy Ballard (1878–1939) on Mount Shasta in California, in an experience reminiscent of the leadership calls of Smith and Moon. Until his death in 1939 Ballard continued to receive messages from the very talkative Ascended Masters, which he dutifully published in a lengthy series of books. Although Ballard's wife, Edna (1886–1971), attempted to keep the "I AM" movement alive, she was enmeshed in a prolonged legal battle throughout the 1940s in which she and her husband were accused of mail fraud for sending false teachings through the U.S. mail.[48] Those legal troubles at least contributed to the fragmentation of the "I AM" movement. Over time a number of people claimed that they, too, received messages from the Ascended Masters. Geraldine Innocente, for example, formed a group called the Bridge to Freedom, from which one member, Francis Ekey, split off to found the Lighthouse of Freedom. That group's newsletter included even more messages from the Ascended Masters, originally attributed to an anonymous source. Eventually the source was identified as Mark L. Prophet (1918–1973), who in 1958 at the urging of the Ascended Master El Morya, formed his own group, the Summit Lighthouse.[49] Prophet, in turn, both tutored his wife Elizabeth (b. 1939) in the teachings of the masters and prepared her to assume the role of co-messenger with him. On his death in 1973 she became the unquestioned leader of the group and the next year renamed it the Church Universal and Triumphant. Elizabeth soon accorded her own husband the status of an Ascended Master and embarked on an independent career as a messenger for what she called the Great White Brotherhood.[50] Despite the frequent changes in the names of the organizations and the actual leaders, there remained a remarkable consistency, from Guy Ballard in the 1930s to Elizabeth Prophet in the 1970s and beyond, in the sources to which the messages were attributed, the forms in which they were received, the substance that they communicated, and the status that the reception of the messages conferred on messengers who received them. In a real sense, the Ascended Masters continued to lead a series of movements, whose outward shifts in name and leadership belied an inner continuity. Specific leadership, then, becomes less important than the relative consistency of a message that flows through a changing array of human channels.

EVALUATING LEADERSHIP

The need to evaluate leadership in NRMs is framed by many anticult activists as an urgent public issue. Margaret Singer was perhaps the most prominent and influential opponent of NRMs until her death in 2003. She believed that NRMs tried to defraud gullible individuals and induced unhealthy mental states in their followers. She also said that NRMs mobilized larger groups of people to vote in certain ways, raising questions of personal freedom, because these NRMs exercised "coercive persuasion" over the minds of their followers, and, ultimately, this became a matter of life and death, because of their ability to lead followers to sacrifice everything for the good of the group and leader.[51] In Singer's presentation, the leader of a "cult" must be condemned, since the belief system of such a group is nothing more than "a tool to serve the leader's desires, whims, and hidden agendas."[52] In a similar vein, anticult writer Steven Hassan describes himself simply as a "human rights activist" who functions as a counselor for people enmeshed in "cults" and therefore suffering from the effects of "coercive persuasion," "mind control," or their rough equivalents.[53] Like Singer, Hassan focuses on the influence of leaders, claiming that "charismatic cult leaders often make extreme claims of divine or 'otherworldly' power to exercise influence over their members."[54] For Singer, Hassan, and others who make similar arguments, the nature of leadership within NRMs reveals the pathology of leaders themselves as well as the problems of the groups that they form and so tightly control. The key to combating the insidious "menace" of new religions, as Singer describes it in the subtitle of her book, is to unmask the leader's delusions, pretensions, and manipulations. Once that is accomplished, the anticult activists are convinced, any right-thinking person will not only resist the lures of "cult" membership but expose and oppose such deviant and deceptive groups and their leaders.

The deep suspicion of charismatic leadership by activists like Singer and Hassan is echoed by some scholars with backgrounds in psychology and psychiatry. While acknowledging that his argument may not apply to all "gurus," Anthony Storr, for example, asserts that "many gurus have been entirely unworthy of veneration: false prophets, madmen, confidence tricksters, or unscrupulous psychopaths who exploit their disciples emotionally, financially, and sexually."[55] Jones, Koresh, and Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, the Indian leader of a communal religious group that was headquartered in rural Oregon in the 1980s, are among the examples that he cites. Storr paints a frightening picture of life under the direction of a guru. He asserts that "belief in a guru, while it persists, entirely overrules rational judgment. Dedicated disciples are as impervious to reason as are infatuated."[56] Thus, Storr extends his largely negative evaluation of the leaders of NRMs to the members of the groups they have led.

Robert Jay Lifton provides a more focused investigation of what he calls "guruism" in his study of Aum Shinrikyo, the Japanese group led by Shoko Asahara (b. 1955) that was responsible for the lethal release of sarin gas in the Tokyo subway system in 1995. Putting a different spin on the relation between leader and followers, Lifton argues that the guru "needs disciples not only to become and remain a guru but to hold himself together psychologically. For the guru self often teeters on the edge of

fragmentation, paranoia, and over psychological breakdown."[57] Lifton offers a more psychologically subtle understanding of charisma than that proposed by Singer, Hassan, or Storr, proposing that "at the heart of charisma is the leader's ability to instill and sustain feelings of vitality and immortality, feelings that reach into the core of each disciple's often wounded, always questing self."[58] But the array of additional examples that he assembles under the rubric of "guruism," including Charles Manson, Jones, Applewhite, Timothy McVeigh, and Robert Mathews of the far right violent revolutionary group, The Order, serves to heighten the suspicion of any individual identified as a guru.

Analysts like Lifton and Storr raise serious questions about the potential psychological risks involved in accepting certain kinds of leadership, as well as about the psychological health of some individuals who become leaders. They are less successful, however, in telling us which specific cases those questions might profitably be raised and when, on the other hand, they may well be inappropriate. Their explicit and implicit generalizations tend to foster, whether they intend it or not, a generalized suspicion of all leaders who stand outside an implied "mainstream." Such generalized suspicion is a major analytical principle for anticult activists like Hassan and Singer. When raised to its highest level of generality, well-founded criticism of a *few* leaders is extended to *all* leaders, with a corresponding loss of specificity, accuracy, and persuasiveness. Such overgeneralization ignores the abundant diversity of leadership forms in new religions on the assumption that all "cults" must be the same. While there may be much to learn from the critical analyses of psychologists like Lifton, the uncritical expansion of their carefully supported claims by others obscures rather than clarifies the processes by which leadership is claimed, exercised, maintained, and challenged in NRMs.

Evaluation of leadership in new religions need not be as critical as the polemics of anticult activists or scholars like Storr and Lifton. Clearly those who accept and act on the claims to leadership made by various individuals in NRMs find much that is positive in their messages. In some cases, as with Jones and Koresh, followers may even discount personal weaknesses and character flaws in their leaders because of what they see as a true and compelling message. And that message may take on a life separate from the leader who originally delivered it. Outside observers, as well, have noticed positive aspects in the leadership of NRMs. More than a few observers note that new and alternative religious movements often offer women more opportunities to exercise leadership than is the case in mainstream religious groups. From Ann Lee's identification as the "Second Appearing of Christ in female form" by the Shakers in the eighteenth century through Eddy's founding of the Church of Christ, Scientist, and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's establishment of the Theosophical Society in the nineteenth century, to JZ Knight's channeling of Ramtha and the profusion of female teachers in both neo-Paganism and the broader feminist spirituality movement in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there are many examples of women assuming leadership roles in new religions.[59] Because new religions necessarily pose alternatives to the religious status quo, among the arrangements that they may critique are the identification of God or the divine as exclusively male, the restriction

of religious leadership positions to males only, or other forms of the subordination of women. But new religions may also reflect the predominant gender dynamics of the societies in which they originate; the mere fact of its newness does not guarantee that a religious movement will be critical of the various dimensions of patriarchy.[60]

NRMs may also offer an opportunity for marginalized racial or ethnic groups to exercise religious leadership. The Nation of Islam, for example, provided leadership opportunities for Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and Louis Farrakhan, among many others. These individuals would never have been able to lead groups in the larger white power structure in the United States. Similarly, Afro-Caribbean religions, like Vodou and Rastafari, offer members a comprehensive religious framework that both validates their racial identity and offers them contexts for the exercise of leadership that they might not find elsewhere.

Evaluation of leadership in new religions thus depends very much on the lenses through which it is viewed. For those who are suspicious of challenges to the status quo, either because of personal experience or a more general anxiety about potential social change, new religions might well represent the kind of "social problem" that Singer and others think they are. For those more tolerant of diversity and pluralism, NRMs may represent points along a spectrum of acceptable religious options. For those who perceive themselves in one way or another to be disenfranchised by the religious status quo, new religions may represent attractive alternatives in which previously frustrated aspirations can be actualized.

Therefore, all judgments are shaped by particular perspectives. Blanket statements about the "menace" of new religions or invariably manipulative "cult leaders" need to be balanced by careful attentiveness to the testimony of leaders themselves and their followers. Any evaluative statement about leadership in new religions becomes part of the field of claims and counterclaims within which leadership is always exercised; it is never the last word.

NOTES

1. Margaret Singer, with Janja Lalich, *Cults in Our Midst: The Hidden Menace in Everyday Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 258 and 17, respectively.
2. "Joseph Smith—History," section 33, www.scriptures.lds.org/js_h/1.
3. Ibid., section 50.
4. See "The Testimony of Three Witnesses," *Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830, 1971 printing).
5. S.N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber: On Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 46.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 49.
8. Raël [Claude Vorilhon], *The Message Given to Me by Extra-Terrestrials: They Took Me to Their Planet* (Tokyo: AOM, 1986), 4.
9. Ibid., 7–8.
10. Raël [Claude Vorilhon], *Let's Welcome Our Fathers From Space: They Created Humanity in their Laboratories* (Tokyo: AOM, 1986), 194.

11. Ibid., 186.
12. See Larry Shinn, *The Dark Lord: Cult Images and the Hare Krishnas in America* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 34–39.
13. See A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita as It Is* (Los Angeles: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1983), 34, for the full list of the disciplic succession.
14. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *The Science of Self-Realization* (Los Angeles: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1968), 63.
15. As quoted in E. Burke Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 100.
16. Steven L. Shields, "The Latter Day Saint Movement," *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements,* ed. Timothy Miller (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 60
17. As quoted in John K. Simmons, "Charisma and Covenant: The Christian Science Movement in its Initial Postcharismatic Phase," ibid., 107. For the *Manual* itself, see www.mbeinstitute.org/Manual.htm.
18. Simmons, "Charisma and Covenant."
19. See ibid., 116–120.
20. Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today,* rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), viii.
21. Cynthia Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess: The Feminist Spirituality Movement in America* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 55.
22. Zsuzsanna Budapest, *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries* (Berkeley, CA: Wingbow, 1980), 227.
23. See Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*, 91.
24. Starhawk, *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 9; see 8–10.
25. Ibid.
26. David Koresh, "The Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation," *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious freedom in America,* ed. James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 191–203, quotation from 197.
27. The negotiations between the FBI and the Branch Davidians during the February 28 to April 19, 1993, siege were tape recorded. Transcripts of those tapes are available in the Reading room of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Washington, D.C. headquarters in the Hoover Building. References are given to the tape number, date of recording, and page of the transcript. Tape 129, 15 March 1993, 43.
28. Tape 87, 7 March 1993, 26.
29. As quoted in J. Gordon Melton, *Finding Enlightenment: Ramtha's School of Ancient Wisdom* (Hillsboro, OR: Beyond Words, 1988), 58.
30. See, for example, www.lazaris.com or www.ramtha.com.
31. On Koresh's "New Light" see Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?* 68, 81, 86, for example.
32. See David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: an Interpretation of Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 10.
33. See the breathtakingly general statement of Rabbi Maurice Davis: "the path of segregation leads to lynching every time. The path of anti-Semitism leads to Auschwitz every time. The path of the cults leads to Jonestowns and we watch it at our peril." As quoted in Marcia Rubin, "The Cult Phenomenon: Fad or Fact," *Smashing the Idols: A Jewish Inquiry into the Cult Phenomenon,* ed. Gary D. Eisenberg (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1988), 28.

34. Mary McCormick Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown: Putting a Human Face on An American Tragedy* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 89.
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36. See Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon,* 96.
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Affiliation and Disaffiliation Careers in New Religious Movements

David G. Bromley

The study of New Religious Movements (NRMs) over the last several decades provides the opportunity to reexamine why individuals join religious groups of all kinds, a process called conversion in many religious traditions. Basically, conversion refers to changing from one religious tradition to another or from being part of no religious tradition to adopting any religious tradition. However, conversion usually has a more specific meaning. Within religious traditions, conversions typically refer to transformative spiritual experiences that result from encounters with the divine. Accounts of such personal encounters with the divine are celebrated as a quintessential religious experience. Secular scholarship retained the notion of a radical, dramatic, fundamental personal transformation without presuming a transcendent source. A variety of metaphors, such as a "reorientation of one's soul;" a transformation of an individual's "root reality," a sense of "ultimate grounding, a "universe of discourse;" or a "paradigmatic shift" are employed to capture the essence of this transformation.[1] The objective is to distinguish these radical transformations from more mundane changes in membership between socially and culturally similar religious groups. Historically, there was less theory and research on leaving religious traditions. Conversion was usually understood to be a one-way process, a discovery of "the Truth" that then became the basis for one's personal identity through life. There has been, of course, some research on apostasy, which religious traditions usually defined as "falling from the faith," which carried a negative connotation, and which was actively discouraged within religious traditions. In recent decades research on leaving religious traditions grew as denominational membership switching has became a more pronounced trend in contemporary western nations. Under these conditions, individuals are likely to change religious affiliations throughout their lives, much in the same way that people in western societies get married several times, serially, before they die. Roof and McKinney estimate that about 40 percent of Americans change denominational affiliation at least once during their lifetime.[2] However, most individuals who change religious affiliations do not experience a major identity shift. Instead, they remain within their faith traditions and move to

a closely related branch of the tradition. While research on conversion traces directly back to William James's classic work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), there was a surge of interest in the topic over the past several decades.[3] Much of the research on conversion was influenced by the appearance of controversial NRMs during the 1960s and 1970s. There is little doubt that conversion is the most researched topic in the study of NRMs and that most scholarship on conversion occurred in the past several decades.[4] John Saliba (1990) identified over 200 published articles on conversion by the early 1980s, and virtually all of them were published during the prior decade.[5] As the study of NRMs gained momentum, researchers noted the high rate of membership turnover in most groups, and exploration of the leave-taking process began.[6]

The study of NRMs created an opportunity to reexamine the question of how individuals join and leave religious groups of all kinds, as well as the individual and larger social meanings of such changes. The answers are somewhat surprising and call into question traditional understandings of conversion, specifically whether the process of joining and leaving religious groups is best understood through the theoretical lens of conversion. For that reason the processes of joining and leaving religious groups are referred to here as affiliation and disaffiliation. This approach considers different types and degrees of affiliation and disaffiliation, as well as how much individuals and the groups with which they affiliate shape this process. This approach also gives equal attention to affiliation and disaffiliation; linking the two processes leads to the concept of affiliation-disaffiliation careers.[7] In this chapter I consider, in turn, the affiliation and disaffiliation processes. Following a discussion of the findings on those related processes, I examine the public controversy surrounding NRM affiliation-disaffiliation, the brainwashing-deprogramming debate.

AFFILIATION WITH NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

Several questions dominated research on affiliation with NRMs: What is the significance of affiliation for NRMs as organizations? What are the social and cultural influences on NRM affiliation rates? How can the NRM affiliation process be best described? Are there differing degrees of involvement in NRMs? Are there different types of affiliation with NRMs? And what is the balance of individual versus group influence in the affiliation process?

What Is the Significance of New Members for NRMs?

NRMs acquire new members in one of two ways, through birth or affiliation. Since many contemporary NRMs typically formed with a leader and a small coterie of young, unmarried followers, recruiting new members was the main way to grow, at least initially. The most prominent NRMs that appeared early in the 1970s, The Family International (originally the Children of God), the Family Federation for World Peace (the Unificationist movement), and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishna) all began in this fashion. Each of these

movements grew at a very rapid rate during the 1970s, attaining total memberships of 5,000 to 15,000 members before either reaching a plateau or experiencing a net loss of members. The stagnation of membership growth was largely a product of the decline in numbers in the youth-based counterculture toward the end of the 1970s, which sharply reduced the pool of potential affiliates.

Membership increases can also be achieved through internal growth; that is, a high birth rate. Most movements eventually encourage or permit family formation, but NRMs typically deferred family formation during the movement development process. Once family formation is encouraged, groups may experience a second wave of membership growth if they can retain maturing children's loyalty. Family size in both Unificationism and The Family was larger than in mainstream families, with the result that both movements' size ultimately depended more on procreation than recruitment. By contrast, the Osho movement (originally the Rajneesh) discouraged marriage and childbearing. Had that movement not disintegrated, it would have faced a significant challenge in maintaining growth. During its formative years, the Hare Krishna movement both deferred marriage and childbearing and later was not very successful in retaining children born within the movement. Therefore, the movement's membership base declined as recruitment rates fell off, and many teenage children left the movement. It is not surprising, therefore, that those groups that grew most successfully over the long-term generally succeeded through a combination of procreation and conversion. Historically, the Mormons are a good example, since their extraordinary growth is based on both active proselytization and larger than average family size.

New affiliations confirm for group members the truth and power of their message and way of life. A steady infusion of new members bolsters the confidence of existing members that their movement will succeed and that their own sacrifices for the movement are warranted during the long and arduous process of movement building. Further, convincing others of the truth of the message is reinforcing for the recruiters themselves, heading off any doubts that might emerge. Successful recruitment by NRMs thus energizes groups. Recent converts tend to bring to religious groups intensity and commitment that may have dissipated among longer term members. Particularly given the high membership turnover rates that characterize most NRMs, successful recruitment means that the movements are populated by eager young recruits for much of their early history. Second generation members are likely to be less passionate. One of the dilemmas that religious groups face is how to maintain a high level of commitment in second generation members. The Family International was relatively successful in retaining young adults in the movement, mostly by maintaining distance from the "corrupting" influences of mainstream society and by giving young members a significant leadership role within the movement.[8]

Recruitment success has potentially negative consequences for religious groups as well. Committing members to recruitment campaigns is costly, because the rate of return typically is very low and defers other aspects of movement building that might improve the membership retention rate. When all-consuming recruitment is

required simply to maintain a movement, a likely result is that members will ultimately tire of the incessant effort. The available evidence suggests that where NRMs engage in public recruitment campaigns, they may well have to contact 1000 individuals in order to gain one new member who will remain in the movement.[9] A major problem posed by public recruitment of the kind that NRMs often employed is that it is a nonselective process. New recruits are accepted largely on the basis of willingness to make an immediate commitment to join the group. The source and depth of individuals' interest in the movement, the durability of their commitment, the personal assets and liabilities that they might bring to the group—all remain undetermined for some time.

Another problem that accompanies recruitment success is how to create a place in the organization for new recruits. If recruitment campaigns are successful, at some point there must be viable organizational niches for new affiliates to fill. To the extent that movements devote their primary energy to growth, they often defer building the organization. Ironically perhaps, the push to create growth in the membership may undermine the organizational work necessary to create long-term stability for members. Unificationism solved one aspect of this problem by creating an international network of corporations in which members could find employment within the movement itself, producing a measure of integration between religious and work life.[10]

Finally, where affiliations involve leaving one distinct religious tradition for another, and thus provide a shift in social and cultural moorings as well as personal identity, affiliations are likely to bring the recipient groups into conflict with the institutions (churches, families, political groups) that recruits left. Indeed, conversions have the same potential for divisiveness and conflict that occur when individuals marry across class, racial, or nationality lines. This happened to a number of NRMs that became the early focal point of social opposition, such as Unificationism, The Family International, and Hare Krishna. All three movements became the targets of the anticult movement and governmental efforts to constrain their activities.

What Are the Social and Cultural Influences on NRM Affiliation?

Although theory and research on affiliation focused largely on personal transformation, a variety of social and cultural factors may influence the rate of conversion and affiliation because social and cultural factors influence both the availability of movements and the availability of potential affiliates for them.

During the 1970s the age range of the population was a determining factor. There was a surge in the young adult population. Young adults were more likely to join social movements of all kinds because they had fewer institutional commitments, such as property ownership, occupational careers, marriage, and children, all of which constrain adults just a few years older. Teenagers and young adults also tended to detach from family religious traditions once freed from parental control. The age

groups between 15 and 30 typically had low rates of traditional forms of religious participation, which created the potential for their recruitment by NRMs. It was, of course, precisely in this age group that virtually all NRMs had their greatest recruiting success.

Another factor that influences the availability of potential recruits is the extent to which established institutions can successfully retain the loyalty of their members, how legitimate those institutions are perceived to be, and how effective they are. Much is written on the "cultural crisis" of the 1960s and 1970s. Robert Bellah referred to this crisis in terms of a disruption of the very American civil religion that endowed American culture and institutions with a sacred legitimacy, and Stephen Tipton found a crisis in moral meanings.[11] Survey data from the 1960s and early 1970s demonstrate that this period was one of exceptional alienation from established institutions, including churches. In his analysis of this period Robert Wuthnow argued that, in response to a loss of legitimacy by established institutions, many people experimented with new cultural and social affiliations, which he described as a "consciousness reformation."[12] This, indeed, was a time of great ferment and experimentation.[13] If NRMs, New Age groups, communal groups, and intentional communities are combined, there is little doubt that the decade between 1965 and 1975 witnessed the greatest outpouring of collective experimentation in American history. Alternative groups of diverse kinds were appealing to American youth, whereas under other conditions they might have been less attractive. During the early 1970s, the combination of a large pool of young adults and alienation from established institutions yielded a steady supply of potential recruits for NRMs.

But movements must also be available for growth to occur. In the case of contemporary NRMs, two factors were especially importance. One was the influx of Asian movements in the wake of the *Immigration Reform Act of 1965* that eliminated decades of severe restrictions on Asian immigration. The result was a surge of Asian immigrants and the establishment in the United States of a number of traditional and new Asian religions. These Asian religions were attractive to potential affiliates since they offered a profound critique of Western culture at the very moment that there was a pool of alienated young adults exploring cultural alternatives.[14] As cultural outsiders, these Asian movements both attracted great interest and provoked sharp opposition. The other element of movement availability involves the movement's ability to grow wherever they are planted. This quality is substantially influenced by the strength of traditional, mainstream religious institutions in a given location. In the continental United States, NRMs were most successful on the West Coast, where established religions traditionally were weakest. Many movements started in that region, then gradually spread to other parts of the country. Ironically perhaps, immigration also sometimes altered NRMs. Hare Krishna is an interesting case. That movement started largely with a youthful American membership. However, Indian immigrants who often lacked access to Hindu temples discovered the movement, and Hare Krishna gradually moved in the direction of becoming an ethnic tradition for diasporic Indians.

What Is the Meaning of Affiliations with New Religious Movements?

One of the central questions that has intrigued NRM scholars is how to understand the ways that individuals affiliate with NRMs. Such dramatic shifts in identity and loyalty have a mysterious and threatening quality about them. Among the various explanations, two of the best involved focusing on the shift in social networks and the shift in personal identities.

Work by John Lofland and Rodney Stark examined the shift in social networks.[15] Based on their early participant observation research on the Unificationist movement before it achieved its rapid growth in the 1970s, Lofland and Stark developed an influential explanation for affiliation with religious movements. They argue that individuals initially are predisposed to religious seeking because they are dissatisfied with their present lives. Individuals might respond to this tension in a variety of ways, such as entering secular therapy, making new friends, or altering their lifestyle. However, if individuals identify the problem as spiritual in nature, then they are adopting a "religious problem-solving perspective." Having defined the problem in religious terms, individuals are then likely to engage in religious seekership if they are dissatisfied with their current religious affiliation. In addition, individuals are most likely to identify a specific group with which to affiliate if they perceive a cultural connection between their own world view and that of a specific group they have encountered.

Even if dissatisfied with their lives, individuals will initially pursue solutions to their life problems very diligently in the face of disappointment. They become more motivated to change their relationship networks when they exhaust all possibilities for satisfaction or success within their current relational networks. At this juncture they reach what Lofland and Stark designate as a "turning point in life." They now become more open to creating social bonds with members of the new group they have discovered. In bonding with a new group, Lofland and Stark observed that, for Unificationism at least, people commonly created emotional bonds with other movement members before accepting group doctrines; they also observed that preexisting friendship networks were a primary source of such bonds. As ties with the new group were strengthened, individuals correspondingly weakened their previous relationship bonds, in part to avoid conflicts with friends and family. Lofland and Stark assert that at this point in the affiliation process individuals are symbolically attached to the group, professing belief and receiving acceptance. However, the process is not complete until intensified involvement within the new group solidifies the individuals' commitment beyond verbal professions of faith. In sum, then, from Lofland and Stark's perspective, the process of joining NRMs consists of a shift in their relational networks.

David Snow and Richard Machalek describe NRM affiliation as a reconstruction of personal identities.[16] If individuals want to join a new group that operates on the basis of a very different mythic system and conceives of individual essence in a radically new way, then recruits must jettison their old identity and create a new self that is consistent with group beliefs (biographical reconstruction). Recruits who

reconstruct their identities are likely to be single-minded in the sense that they see the cause of events, their own actions, and others' actions as attributable to a single cause, such as divine will or sinfulness. The other significant attribute new recruits exhibit is the replacement of metaphorical with literal reasoning, so that recruits think that they possess absolute truth. Put another way, recruits move from a relative to an absolutist perspective on the world. Finally, recruits embrace the convert role by redefining their personal interests as identical to collective interests of the group.

Lofland and Stark as well as Snow and Machalek explain affiliation with religious movements from different perspectives, the former from a shift in social networks and the latter as a transformation of the self. Lofland and Stark view symbolic identity (pledges and commitments to the group) as emerging out of the social relationships forged between individual and group. Snow and Machalek conclude that a joiner's adoption of a role in the group emerges out of a redefinition of the self. These two theories thus raise a number of intriguing possibilities. Since both theories have many components to the process of affiliating with an NRM, people clearly exhibit varying degrees of involvement in NRMs. Conversion is the final step in a sequence and may or may not occur in any given case. The two theories suggest that a redefinition of one's self and an involvement in an NRM's social network are critical, although each emphasizes one over the other. However, taken together the two theories suggest that joiners can do the work of self-redefinition without becoming deeply involved in an NRM social network or the reverse. This implies that joiners can follow different types of affiliation. Finally, both theories suggest that joiner and group each play a role in the process. If so, of course, the way that the process operates may vary by group. It is precisely these issues that have been explored in other research on conversion.

Are There Different Degrees of Involvement in NRMs?

If conversion incorporates both the identity transformation delineated by Snow and Machalek and the social network transformation described by Lofland and Stark, research suggests that many, and probably most, instances of joining NRMs do not meet that standard. Individuals may make the kind of verbal professions of faith that are expected by the group but may not experience the kind of internal transformation that is conveyed by the concept of conversion. Alternatively, recruits may participate in rituals and organizational activities without any transformation occurring. A number of scholars suggest precisely these kinds of possibilities. Richard Travisano, for example, distinguishes between conversion and alternation.[17] According to Travisano, the two processes are qualitatively different: conversion involves the complete disruption of a previous identity, while alternations consist of lesser transformations of identity that can be accomplished within the individual's existing "universe of discourse." Other scholars draw similar distinctions, such as conversion and adhesion and conversion and consolidation.

Research evidence suggests that NRMs are populated by individuals with varying degrees of involvement. Bromley and Shupe found that individuals who joined the

Unificationist movement were typically attracted by any of several factors: one specific aspect of the movement theology, a specific member with whom they identified, or a communal group living arrangement.[18] Their involvement was limited as they tended to act out movement role expectations in order to fit into the group, and they varied significantly in their acceptance of group doctrines. Most never moved past this initial level of involvement, which suggests a pattern of alternation rather than conversion in most cases. Some members did move toward core member status, embedding themselves in the communal group, learning and accepting the complex theology, and enacting movement defined role expectations. However, the overwhelming majority simply dropped out within a few months.[19] Far from being monolithic, NRMs tend to be composed predominantly of new recruits with different levels of involvement and a substantial coterie of members who are in the process of leaving. In the initial stages of their development, most NRMs probably have a relatively small number of core members. Verbal professions of commitment and conformity with role expectations mask this diverse and unstable mix.

Are There Different Types of Affiliation?

Connection to the group takes different forms. Several social scientists have explored this possibility. One of the most useful analyses of participation in NRMs was constructed by John Lofland and Norman Skonovd.[20] They identify six types: intellectual, mystical, experimental, affective, revivalist, and coercive. In intellectually based affiliations, individuals experience little social pressure as they privately explore the group's doctrine through written materials or lectures. This process of intellectually exploring the movement's beliefs is likely to take place over an extended time and produces a sense of illumination as the person connects intellectually with movement doctrines. As a result, those who enter a group intellectually accept the movement's belief system prior to actually participating in the group. Mystical affiliations come the closest to fitting the traditional conception of a religious conversion as an instantaneous, radical transformation of individuals that permanently changes their sense of reality. The archetypal transformation of this type in Christianity, of course, is Saul, who experiences a radical transformation on the road to Damascus and becomes the disciple Paul. In mystical conversions the group does little to determine the outcome. Instead, individuals in a transformative moment are overcome by feelings of awe, love, and fear in some combination and rededicate their lives to what they understand to be a divinely ordained purpose. Again, a change in beliefs precedes a change in behavior. A closely related form is the revivalistic affiliation, which resembles the mystical conversion in most respects. The distinguishing feature is that group pressure is high as potential members are urged to make a choice that will save their souls. The revivalistic affiliation therefore has a greater component of fear than an unmediated mystical encounter with the divine.

In sharp contrast to mystical affiliations, experimental affiliations take place over an extended time period, often weeks or months. However, like mystical affiliation, there is little substantial group influence. People in this mode are motivated by

curiosity to explore participation in the group, and they only gradually come to accept group beliefs. Those who join from affective motivation are like experimentalists in that they also are drawn to a movement on a basis other than its beliefs, in this case feelings of caring, support, admiration, or a sense of community. In the affective situation, group pressure and emotional involvement are more intense than experimental conversions. Internal group bonds draw the individual into an increasingly closer relationship to the group and its members.

Lofland and Skonovd assert that coercive affiliations are rare. However, if they did occur, they would resemble the brainwashing process that is described later in this chapter. This would require intensive, long-term pressure by the group based on fear for one's personal or spiritual safety, a set of characteristics that most scholars who study NRMs conclude are not typical of the NRMs they observed. Acknowledging that people join these movements by different means is critical to understanding these movements. The diversity of entrees into NRMs indicates that viable brainwashing explanations are unlikely. This diversity also suggests that members are connected to NRMs in different ways.

What Is the Balance of Individual and Group Influence in NRM Affiliations?

There has been a sharp debate over the extent to which affiliations with NRMs are the product of individual choice or are the result of group and environmental influences on them. The overwhelming majority of NRM scholars rejected the "mind control," "coercive persuasion," "brainwashing" explanations for affiliation that minimize individual initiative in the process, and adopted explanations that attribute primary agency either to the "religious seeker" or to an interactive relationship between seeker and group.

In *Radical Departures* Saul Levine interviewed over 800 individuals who joined NRMs.[21] He concluded that his respondents were active agents who wanted to break free of parental control and forge their own independent identities. Their actions indicated individualism and autonomy, albeit through dramatic means. Consistent with other findings on NRMs, most left the NRM within two years and resumed more traditional lifestyles. Roger Straus highlights the seekership process in which a potential joiner engages.[22] According to Straus, religious seekers search their personal networks and the mass media looking for potential religious choices. They then refine their search and begin experimenting with one or more religious groups. As part of their experimentation, they learn appropriate insider language and symbolic frameworks used in NRMs. They then engage in "bridge-burning acts" through which they create distance from former relational networks. In some cases they go on to actively represent the group and solicit other potential recruits.

Several researchers who began their research utilizing passive models of joining subsequently shifted in the direction of more activist models. James Richardson and his colleagues initially utilized a "thought reform" model based on Robert Lifton's work in studying the Jesus Movement but concluded that the data did not

conform to that model.[23] Richardson eventually became a staunch advocate of a more activist perspective.[24] Lofland and Stark's initial and highly influential theory of conversion based on research on the Unificationist movement presumed a passive actor subject to a variety of social forces.[25] Lofland later actively encouraged students and colleagues to adopt a more activist model of conversion.[26] A few other researchers moved in the opposite direction, but this position has not been widely adopted by scholars of NRMs.[27]

The emphasis on individual initiative in how people join NRMs should not obscure the capacity of groups to socialize their members. Abundant evidence points to the fact that groups have the capacity to shape members' behavior in sometimes profound ways.[28] However, individuals do seek out groups, participate in their own socialization, and retain their capacity for making choices. Were this not the case it would be difficult to explain the process of leaving.

Leaving NRMs

Social scientists use a variety of terms to refer to leaving a religious organization or tradition (exiting, withdrawal, defection, deconversion, leave-taking, apostasy, disengagement), but there are only a few dozen studies on this topic compared with the hundreds on how people join. Scholars initially focused on the joining process because the popularity of NRMs was unexpected in light of social scientists' predictions of continuing secularization of society and in response to claims by anticult movement activists that NRM members were brainwashed. As research on movement development proceeded, it became apparent that for most people NRM membership was temporary and experimental. This finding heightened interest in determining how often, and in what manner, people left NRMs. Three of the major questions related to leaving NRMs are as follows: What is the significance of leaving for NRMs? What factors cause it? And what is the nature of the process?

What Is the Significance of Leaving NRMs?

The loss of adherents is just as important as the gaining of new members in the initial stage of NRM development, because growth occurs only if joiners outnumber those who leave. While a number of NRMs experienced extremely rapid growth when they initiated aggressive recruitment campaigns, most also continuously lost members. Eileen Barker found that of those individuals who agreed to attend a Unificationist movement sponsored workshop (a small percentage of the individuals whom recruiters approached in public places) a mere five percent were affiliated with the movement on a full-time basis a year later.[29] Galanter reported similar results in his research on Unificationism: only six percent of affiliates remained four months after recruitment.[30] In both studies individuals left within days or weeks. Although no systematic data on leave-taking exists for most contemporary NRMs, apparently the rate of defections varied between 50 and 100 percent annually during the NRMs' high growth periods. This means, of course, that NRMs grew only as long as

recruitment rates remained very high. As soon as recruitment rates fell, movements decreased in size and also had fewer members to deploy for recruitment or other movement activities to stem these losses. This reversal of fortunes eroded members' confidence in the ultimate success of the movement and the wisdom of their personal sacrifices for the cause. A good example is the early history of Heaven's Gate. After a period of initial success in recruiting, the group leaders ("Herf" Applewhite and Bonnie Lu Nettles) went into seclusion and sent members in small teams to recruit new members. However, in the absence of their leaders, members were unsuccessful in recruiting; discouragement, dissension, and defections soon followed.[31]

The loss of members may have different implications for NRMs, depending on who the leave-takers are and how and why they choose to leave. In some cases individuals leave independently of one another over a period of time. By contrast, the Branch Davidian movement, which recruited whole families during that movement's growth years, later lost whole families when discord broke out within the group. The impact of whole families leaving on this NRM was immediate and substantial. The effects of membership loss on a group also depend in part on the identity and standing of those who leave. For example, in the Hare Krishna movement, when an initiating guru left, devotees of that guru usually did so as well. The loss of leading figures can change the direction of an NRM. In the early stages of Scientology's development, members disagreed over whether to treat practitioners' reports of experiences in past lives as credible. Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard's decision to treat these reports as valid not only alienated several of his close associates but also was one of the reasons that Scientology declared itself a religion rather than simply a therapy. In some cases loss of members can pose a political threat. In 1973 a group of young adult members of Peoples Temple, called the "gang of eight," left the movement. They assailed Jim Jones for his alleged racism and unorthodox socialism, and movement leaders feared that the defectors would go public with their accusations and bring the socialist leanings of the group to the attention of governmental authorities.[32] Membership turnover may have some positive consequences for NRMs under certain conditions. One positive effect is that turnover increases the opportunities for recent recruits to assume leadership positions, particularly as established members leave. Membership turnover also creates the potential for change in NRMs when members with vested interests in current policies and relationships leave. Of course, the reverse can also occur if high ranking leaders use the exit of midlevel leaders to consolidate their own power. Finally, membership turnover creates a base of recent recruits who bring energy to a movement and increase movement solidarity. In some cases movements deliberately discouraged potential new recruits. Jones tried to create defections so that the Peoples Temple would develop the kind of radical solidarity he viewed as necessary for the sacrifices that members would be required to make.[33]

What Factors Lead to Leaving NRMs?

Case studies of NRMs identified many factors that lead people to leave NRMs. These include challenges to charismatic authority, continuing demands for

individual self-sacrifice for the NRM, crises and scandals within the NRM, and a breakdown of NRM solidarity.[34]

Charismatic authority in an NRM can be undermined in a variety of ways. One potentially threatening event is the death of the founder-leader. While movements typically succeed in surviving the founder's death, there sometimes are membership losses in the transition.[35] This occurred in the Hare Krishna movement at the death of Prabhupada in 1977. No other leader could match his charismatic authority, and some members drifted away from the movement. Another potential source of conflict is prophetic failure, which erodes members' convictions in the truth and power of the NRM's message. In the case of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments in Uganda, the failure of predicted apocalyptic events in 2000 precipitated rebellion by members, defections, and demands for repayment of donations. In this macabre case, movement leaders actually murdered several hundred members in response to the rebellion.[36] Another type of threat to charismatic authority occurs when movement leaders conclude that their control over their followers is compromised. When a set of upper echelon leaders began pursuing policies that The Family's founder, Moses David Berg, decided were contrary to his instructions, he demoted many of them.[37] Some of these leaders left The Family and became its public opponents.

Some NRMs tried to strengthen group solidarity by requiring various types of self-sacrifice. One of the most common forms is regulation of individuals' sexual relationships. Particularly in communally organized groups, mandating either celibacy or free love has the effect of thwarting relationships that would diminish individuals' primary loyalty to the group. In the early years of Hare Krishna, for example, being a renunciate devotee was regarded as the highest status in the group and "householders" (married men) were regarded as having lesser commitment. Similarly, Unificationism members were required to invest several years in the movement as "brothers and sisters" before being eligible for blessing (marriage) by Rev. Moon. Blessed members typically lived apart, once they were married, resuming their missionary work. Some members were unwilling to make the personal sacrifices required by the movement and left while others engaged in secret sexual liaisons that led to their exit or expulsion. By contrast, during one period of its history, The Family adopted the practice of "flirty fishing," where members (usually female) tried to recruit new members by demonstrating God's love for them through whatever means were necessary. In many cases women in the group had flirtatious or sexual relationships with potential converts. Many members left The Family International when this practice was announced and when individual women felt pressured to participate.[38]

Defections also occur in response to scandals. Janet Jacobs (1989) reports numerous cases of members becoming disillusioned when they learned that leaders who enforced demands for celibacy on followers had secret sexual relationships themselves.[39] This was particularly alienating when the followers believed that they were the sole object of leaders' affections.[40] For the Branch Davidians, one of the factors that led some members to seek outside intervention against David Koresh was his sexual involvement with young girls as part of an initiative to create the House of

David, children fathered by the messiah. In another case leaders of one branch of the Hare Krishna movement were discovered to be financing their activities by distributing illegal goods, encouraging devotees into prostitution, and dealing in illegal drugs. Although the leaders were punished, the result was member disillusionment with what they regarded as inexcusable moral turpitude.[41] In the Unificationist movement, revelations that Rev. Moon fathered a child out of wedlock produced cynicism and defections among followers who had remained celibate for years at his request.[42] Although such scandals do not necessarily produce immediate defections, they often lead members to reassess their commitments and then decide later to leave the NRM. When members feel they were personally betrayed, they sometimes become public opponents of NRMs once they leave and get either public sympathy or support from governmental agencies to launch investigations of their allegations.

If movement solidarity breaks down, people will leave a NRM. One relatively widespread practice in NRMs was to expand the movement to new parts of the United States or to other nations so that NRMs could proclaim their global status. When individuals or small teams of individuals were sent abroad, as both The Family and Unificationists did, their contact with other members and the group's daily lifestyle was broken.[43] Under these conditions members may gradually drift away from the NRM or realize that life outside of the NRM is more pleasurable to them. In a slightly different scenario, the leaders of Heaven's Gate at one point informed members that they themselves were leaving, and instructed small groups of members to operate on their own. The result was that once members lost contact with the NRM and its leadership, defections began to occur rather quickly. Connection to an NRM is also weakened when members must engage in external employment in order to finance the NRM. This occurred in Hare Krishna and Love Family, resulting not only in weaker individual ties to the movement but also economic inequalities that alienated those with fewer resources.

What Are the Explanations for Leaving NRMs?

The explanations for leaving NRMs are similar to explanations for joining. Again, some researchers emphasized a change in social networks while others focused on a shift in personal identity.

Bromley describes the process in terms of leaving the organization and reintegrating into conventional social networks.[44] This process begins with "disinvolvement" based on doubt about NRM membership. Doubts may occur over doctrinal disagreements, feelings of alienation, or disagreements over principle. Of course, a degree of ambivalence is common in all social relationships and is common in struggles for spiritual growth. As a result, first doubts are likely to be handled by resorting to repression, avoidance, or rationalization. If doubts recur or intensify, members may begin to distance themselves emotionally, symbolically by modifying distinctive dress or language, or socially by strengthening relationships outside of the group. NRMs counter these practices with either sanctions or encouragement, which may temporarily interrupt the leave-taking process, or the individual may find a niche

within the NRM that eliminates the source of conflict. Indeterminacy may continue for awhile, however, since individuals may, for example, continue to accept movement doctrine even while rejecting what are perceived as immoral actions (such as financial or sexual improprieties) by some members or leaders.

If over time a resolution is not found, the leave-taking process moves to the pivotal stage, "precipitating event." A member's continued dissatisfaction creates tension within the group as well as personal tension for the member who is unhappy with the NRM. That tension must constantly be managed on both sides. Therefore, at some point the individual must either overcome his or her doubts or take steps leading toward a break with the NRM. In many cases the precipitating event appears to be trivial to outside observers, but for the person, and perhaps the group, that event symbolizes a conflict that cannot be resolved. The precipitating event, such as a simple disagreement over a work assignment or a personal relationship, provides the impetus needed to propel the person across the membership boundary and into the stage of "separation."

For the large number of NRM members who were merely experimenting with NRM membership, the transition back to life in the mainstream may be relatively easy. The separation stage is filled with personal turbulence for longer-term members who were more deeply invested in the group. They face rejection by their former colleagues, ambivalence about their own decision, and uncertainty about reentering relationships they had rejected in favor of the NRM. Such individuals frequently experience a sense of personal failure, loss of community, and severe feelings of anxiety and panic. These problems tend to gradually moderate over time if individuals can rejoin conventional society, but it is not uncommon for former members to seek out counseling or ex-member support groups to ease this transition.

Skonovd describes the leave-taking process in terms of successive withdrawal of self-identity from a movement.[45] From this perspective, leaving begins with crises brought on by factors internal to the movement (disruption of the movement environment or isolation from the movement, interpersonal conflicts within the movement, or exhaustion of energy and commitment) or external factors (the lure of educational or employment opportunities or affective ties with family and friends). These conflicts precipitate a reevaluation of one's NRM identity and commitment, which may be met with various types of psychological coping mechanisms (avoidance, rationalization, withdrawal from the conflict). Lack of resolution moves the individual to a state of disaffection, and the individual develops rationales for further disengagement from the NRM. With the emotional bond now severed, the individual makes the decision to withdraw and develops a plan for leaving permanently. Following withdrawal, the individual is involved in cognitive transition between the NRM and conventional society. Cognitive reorganization paves the way for reintegration into a conventional lifestyle.

These two explanations for leaving show that the process of separating from a NRM is as complex in nature as joining a NRM. The process involves both social separation and identity separation. While these two processes typically occur in tandem, that is not necessarily the case. It is not uncommon for NRM members to

conclude that the NRM betrayed its own ideals and the members withdraw from active involvement while continuing to believe in the doctrine and the rightness of the NRM. In other cases members become extremely disillusioned and psychologi-

organizations (NGOs) and takes part in governmental and private sector initiatives focusing on issues of concern to the Church.[127]

From its earliest days, the Church of Scientology understood that it could amplify its voice in national and international policy debates, as well as to market its services, through businesses, organizations, or interest groups that had no visible ties to the Church. Church critics today list more than 100 such front organizations,[128] although this figure seems greatly exaggerated. Some of the Church's service groups do not carry the name Scientology in their titles, but are well known as Church organizations. These service groups, housed since 1988 under the aegis of the Association for Better Living, include Narconon (founded in 1966) and its sister organization Criminon.[129] By the 1990s, these programs were thriving international concerns whose Web pages do not obscure the involvement of the Church of Scientology.[130] More controversial is the Applied Scholastics curricular development program, which has met with some resistance in the United States, but which is global in scope.[131]

The Citizens Committee on Human Rights (CCHR) inhabits more of a grey area.[132] This organization was established by the Church in 1969 to spearhead the Church's offensive (or more accurately perhaps, counteroffensive) against the psychiatric profession. This is the cause that Scientologists invest with their greatest passion, and today, as its high tech multimedia Web page indicates, is a full fledged global offensive peopled by concerned citizens and survivors or relatives of "psychiatric abuse" real or imagined. How many of these members or subscribers are Scientologists is impossible to estimate. The bottom of the top page of the CCHR Web site carries, in small letters, the line: "Established in 1969 by the Church of Scientology." The top page also carries in much bigger boxes links to every region of the world. It is significant that the top page also (as of July 2005) offers a lavish 48-page report available for download in PDF format titled "Harming Artists" with a picture of the late singer Kurt Cobain.[133] Twenty more of these reports, including one on the CCHR organization itself, and others on such topics as the damage done by psychiatric drugs, the responsibility of psychiatry for racism and terrorism, and sexual abuse of patients perpetrated by psychiatrists, are available as well.[134]

The most public and most resonant front in this, the oldest battlefront of the Scientology wars is that which pits Scientologist artists against the psychiatric profession. In 2005, for example, almost four decades after the founding of the CCHR, actor Tom Cruise made international headlines with his outspoken criticism of the psychiatric drug Ritalin. In one interview, Cruise achieved more publicity for a critical tenet of Scientology belief than all of the Unification Church's academic conferences put together. The general public was not greatly moved by Cruise's arguments —especially when he focused criticism on actress Brooke Shields for taking the drug for postpartum depression. But the issue suddenly became front-page news when it became the focus of discussion in major newspapers and national news programs around the world.[135]

The Church's organizing zeal hardly stops with organizations like the CCHR. Scientology's takeover of the Cult Awareness Network (CAN) was noted above, but

CAN's current Web pages say almost nothing about the Church of Scientology's involvement, and its continued use of the CAN name might well be construed as deceptive. When the takeover occurred, a number of recognized academic authorities were approached to become Board members by Nancy O'Meara from Scientology's Church of Spiritual Technology. None of these Board members remain today, according to the CAN Web page accessed in July 2005:

> The Board has consisted of from 5–9 people since the beginning of the organization. The Chairman of the Board is a Baptist minister named George Robertson. The Secretary of the Corporation was originally Mark Lurie a member of the Movement for Spiritual Inner Awareness. It is now Stan Koehler a Buddhist. The Treasurer of the Corporation is Nancy O.Meara [sic], a Scientologist. Other Board members include a woman with a degree in psychology and man who is Jewish.[136]

The identification of Ms. O'Meara is the only time the term "Scientology" appears in the CAN top page.[137]

Other Scientology front groups that seem to be less than overt include Ebony Awakening (a putative African-American civil rights group),[138] the Concerned Businessmen's Association of America,[139] and the World Literacy Crusade.[140] All may do laudable work, but none carry any clear identification with the Church, and all are given generic titles. The uninformed might think these organizations have no connection to the Church and might join the group in the belief that they are taking part in an independent interest organization focused on an issue that is important to the new member.[141]

Scientology's Celebrity Centers are arguably the most important Church organizations. The Church lists 13 such centers, with the mother ship located naturally enough in Hollywood. All offer the normal range of Scientology services, but with additional courses designed specifically for artists in every field.[142] Whether a result of living in Los Angeles during the golden era of Hollywood, or because of it may have been evidence of the genius of L. Ron Hubbard, or because it may be yet another example of the Americanness of the Church, as early as 1955 the Church focused on serving celebrities great and small.[143]

The Church was strikingly successful in bringing actors, musicians, writers, and artists from a number of fields into the fold, and it has gained much from the association. Conversely, much of the literature, and virtually all of the press coverage, centering on the celebrity Scientologists is strikingly negative, with the Tom Cruise vs. Brooke Shields Ritalin debate and the actor's using the publicity tour for the "War of the Worlds" film to publicize his Scientology beliefs only the latest chapters in an ongoing saga.[144] But lost in the debate is the fact that whatever the merits of Scientology's religious technology or whatever the depth of its theology, for these very successful people, Scientology works. It hardly seems to detract from their art, and given the tabloid nature of life in the spotlight,[145] celebrity Scientologists appear to lead rather exemplary lives.

They also make a great deal of money. Recall the American nostrum that we value most that which is purchased most dear. Scientology definitely does not provide its

services for nothing. But of greatest value of all to the Church, in a culture of celebrity, fame opens the doors of power. Thus, celebrity Scientologists have found the ear of the rich and the powerful, and are able to lobby for Scientology causes with greater effect than, say, Rev. Moon's professors or the Family's attractive but anonymous Flirty Fishing women. In the forefront of these efforts, working with professional lobbyists in battling the European anti-Scientology legislation, and in the halls of the American Congress (and the Clinton White House, unsurprisingly), such high profile Scientologists as Isaac Hayes, John Travolta, and Chick Corea have made considerable impact, although they have not enjoyed a great deal of success outside the United States.[146] In this as in virtually every other aspect of the Church, Scientology anticipated the processes of globalization with uncanny prescience.

A THEORETICAL REPRISE: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

The dominant thesis regarding the contemporary process of globalization is synthesized neatly by Peter Beyer:

> The globalization thesis posits, in the first instance, that social communication links are worldwide and increasingly dense. On perhaps the more obvious level, this means that people, cultures, societies and civilizations previously more or less isolated from one another are now in regular and almost unavoidable contact. This leads to a twofold result. On the one hand, we see the conflicts that arise as quite diverse and often contradictory cultures clash within the same social unit. On the other hand, globalizing sociostructural and cultural forces furnish a common context that attenuates the differences among these ways of life.[147]

Deriving from the observation that the quickening pace of interaction brings previously isolated individuals, social groups, and cultures into increasingly intimate contact is the idea, also posited by Berger and Huntington, that "…increasingly there is a common social environment shared by all peoples on earth, and that this globality conditions a great deal of what happens here…"[148] Globalization theory therefore suggests a marked degree of discontinuity between what *was* then and what *is* now.[149] The three cases that we have discussed here—the Family, the Unification Church, and the Church of Scientology, however, do not seem to fit so easily into this paradigm. Particularly for the latter two, much continuity exists between the Cold War then and the globalized now. To understand why, we must descend deeper into globalization theory.

Beyer points out that the globalization thesis is built upon the framework of the modernization thesis, which holds that in the Western world, radical social changes have brought about a new type of society with the following characteristics:

1. a capitalist model and modern intuitional base which has been exported throughout the world;
2. the nation-state model;

3. the ascendance of scientific rationality as a *zeitgeist* [world view] which underpins the explosion of modern technology; and most important
4. the emergence of a "new social unit that is much more than a simple expansion of western modernity."[150]

Implicit in the modernization thesis is homogenization. Think again of Hunter's image of a global elite jetting around the world, but in every country landing in identical airports, staying in international hotel chains, and meeting in interchangeably decorated board rooms.[151] Applied to religion, Beyer says that under globalizing pressures to homogenize, religious globalization must follow one of two possible paths. On the one hand lies the particularist path—the view that the fundamentals of a religious tradition are unchanging, and that extrinsic changes in response to globalizing pressures will be viewed and adapted to the tradition through the lens of a particular religious faith. Down this path lies religious "fundamentalism" and perhaps Samuel Huntington's dreaded "clash of civilizations."[152] More hopeful from Beyer's point of view is a universalist (my term) response that embraces global culture.[153] Noting that globalization in the western world is an indigenous process culminating centuries of sociopolitical development while in the rest of the world it is an exogenous process, imported and in a very real sense imposed by the political, economic, and cultural power of the West, Beyer sees both the globalizing and particularizing paths as likely, with the reaction of a given religious tradition conditioned on the geography and stage of development of the society being impacted by global culture.[154]

Which brings us to the point at which we began this study: how is (if at all) the globalization process reflected in NRMs in general and in our three case studies in particular? Lorne L. Dawson provides the best capsule summary of the sociological literature beginning with the secularization debate and leading through the literature on cults to the literature on globalization. However, most pertinent to this discussion is a point to which Dawson only alludes: with modernity there has always been a persistent substratum of seekers whose quest is to "remagicalize" the world.[155] Going further, as Colin Campbell stated so well in the early 1970s, in every society there is a "cultic milieu" of seekers whose quest for ultimate truth produces a diffuse oppositional milieu which will resist assimilation into the dominant culture.[156] Ironically, the revolution of communications technology that fuels the processes of globalization has served to bring this oppositional milieu into greater contact with the dominant cultures than ever before.[157]

What does this mean when applied to our three case studies?

The Family certainly appears to bear out the homogenization (or universalist to use a more amenable term) thesis. Having emerged from their antinomian period in the post–David Berg era, the group increasingly resembles an apocalyptic Christian communal group that operates on a global scale. They seldom proselytize, while the practice of internal sexual sharing appears to be limited to consenting adults, and not extended to children, prospective converts, or even to new members of the group. The organization is dealing with—albeit with difficulty—the immense

damage that was done to the children growing up in the Family during the antinomian period.[158] Their theology remains imprinted with the American experience, but given the fact that Americanization is so much a part of the globalization process, this is hardly a handicap. Moreover, with the creation of the Family Care Foundation that claims to offer relief services in over 50 countries,[159] the radical makeover of the group from a true cult to a religious NGO appears to be well underway. This would seem to be a case of Beyer's homogenization of a religious tradition via the process of globalization writ large.

Although the process is far less advanced, the Unification Church, too, seems to bear out the universalist/homogenization thesis—a process that will undoubtedly accelerate when Rev. Moon passes from this world into the heavenly regency currently occupied by his son, Hueng Jin. Like the Mormons before it, the Unification Church has become increasingly mainstream in the United States. Through the *Washington Times,* the Church has a voice in public affairs in Washington, D.C., the American capital, and it is becoming increasingly hard to differentiate from other elements of the Republican faith-and-values coalition. Its academic outlets teach a curriculum not much different from those of secular universities, and its theology in the post-Moon era will, like that of the Family, become ever more difficult to differentiate from that of any other conservative Protestant denomination.

For both the Family and the Unification Church, the key to their following Beyer's homogenization in response to globalization strategy lies in their Christian roots, to which they are inevitably returning. Evangelical and Pentecostal forms of Christianity are, after all is said and done, the United States' most successful global religious export.[160]

Scientology, on the other hand, has not responded to the pressures of globalization by becoming universalist in any sense of the term. Scientology mirrors many of the facets of global culture less as a reaction to the process of globalization than as a result of having *presaged* these processes long before they came on the radar screen of academic theorists. Scientology—so deeply immersed in the business, entertainment, communications, and global politics of globalization—remains nonetheless as deeply oppositional as it was in the heady days of the original Sea Org, sailing seemingly aimlessly over the seas under the idiosyncratic command of L. Ron Hubbard himself.

When, in some not so distant future, the Family and the Unification Church have become indistinguishable from, say, a fundamentalist/evangelical campus ministry like the Campus Crusade for Christ, Scientology will remain, unique and alone, zealously guarding its patents and scrutinizing with an eye on legal redress every word said or written about them. Sea Org members will look forward to fulfilling every clause of their 100,000-year contracts, and a new generation of celebrities will sing the Church's praises, while new generations of disillusioned apostates will carry on the battle against a faith in which they have invested so much. Should the entire world become a virtual monochrome dream of look-a-like franchises run out of identikit corporate boardrooms, and should all of the world's governments find common cause—at least in the interest of preserving the power of local elites—there will always be a Church of Scientology to look into the distant future and see another

way. In a fascinating irony for this most American of faiths, the emerging global culture that the Church in so many ways portended will not be the kind of place where Scientologists, with their passion for privacy, secrecy, and the primacy of intellectual property will find amenable. They remain defiantly particularist in the face of global homogenization, and for that even their severest critics might one day find something about the Church to grudgingly admire.

NOTES

1. For success stories, see Timothy Miller, *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements, SUNY Series in Religious Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

2. Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2003.

3. For an important theoretical treatment of new religious movements and globalization, see Lorne L. Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements and Globalization: A Theoretical Prolegomenon," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 4 (1998): 580–96. Not atypically for *JSSR,* the article is important but not for the faint of heart or the sociologically challenged. Once girded by Dawson to come to grips with theory, however, the essential volume is Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992).

4. Even this assertion is not new. Virtually every text on globalization and religion opens with this mantra. For example, John Wolffe, *Global Religious Movements in Regional Context,* vol. 4, *Religion Today* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 1.

5. Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington, *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6.

6. For a good description of the process, see Irving Hexham and Karla O. Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures: Making the Human Sacred* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 41–58.

7. For an insightful essay that discusses the historical dynamics that underlie the modern process of religious globalization, see José Casanova, "Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization," *Sociology of Religion* 62, no. 4 (2001): 415–42. On the history of Christianity, the universe of texts is almost unlimited, but I have always been partial to Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church,* 4th ed. (New York: Scribner, 1985).

8. For a capsule history of the group, see J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions,* 4th ed. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1993), 292–93. The most recent history of the Family by William Sims Bainbridge is highly recommended, although it is strangely silent on the aspects of the history of the group that the Family would rather see fall down the memory hole. See William Sims Bainbridge, *The Endtime Family: Children of God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002). The early participant observer research of David Van Zandt is the best starting point in researching the Family; David E. Van Zandt, *Living in the Children of God* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991). On the Web, see Religious Tolerance.Org http://www.religioustolerance.org/fam_love.htm; and the Religious Movements Homepage http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/Family.html. On the memory hole itself, see the two "Pubs Purge" documents from 1991 and 1996, http://www.exfamily.org/pubs/misc/pubspurge.shtml.

9. Gordon Melton, "The Modern Anti-Cult Movement in Historical Perspective," in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization,* ed. Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Lööw (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002), 265–89. For a wider discussion of the anticult movement, see Anson D. Shupe, David G. Bromley, and Donna L. Oliver, *The Anti-Cult Movement in America: A Bibliography and Historical Survey,* vol. 130, *Garland Reference Library of Social Science* (New York: Garland, 1984).

10. For a fuller discussion of sexuality in the family, see James D. Chancellor, *Life in the Family: An Oral History of the Children of God,* 1st ed. (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000). For an early discussion, see Stephen A. Kent, "Lustful Prophet: A Psychosexual Historical Study of the Children of God's Leader, David Berg," *Cultic Studies Journal* 11, no. 2 (1994): 135–88. The Kent article occasioned some controversy. See the exchange between Kent and Gordon Melton. Stephen A. Kent and Theresa Krebs, "When Scholars Know Sin," *Skeptic* 6, no. 3 (1998): 36–45, http://www.apologeticsindex.org/c25.html; and J. Gordon Melton, "Mea Culpa! Mea Culpa!: J. Gordon Melton Answers His Critics," http://www.cesnur.org/testi/melton98.htm. For a devastating tell-all memoir from David Berg's daughter, see Deborah Davis and Bill Davis, *The Children of God: The Inside Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub., 1984). And for a later memoir, see Miriam Williams, *Heaven's Harlots: My Fifteen Years as a Sacred Prostitute in the Children of God Cult* (New York: Eagle Brook, 1998). The *Davidito Book,* like the *Mo Letters,* which focused on child sex, was destroyed by the Family but remains accessible to researchers in closed archives such as that of the University of Alberta.

11. Much has been written of the Family—sex, after all, sells—but the movements' own materials best document the history of the group. The *Mo Letters* might be seen as snapshots of the moods and fancies of the leader and his immediate circle, but of greater interest is the Family's own internal history. See the 2-volume *Book of Remembrance* (Zurich: World Services, 1983). The subtitle of the volumes is "Our Family Tree: The History of Our Family, 238 Years! 1745–1983," which traces the Family back to the conversion of "Three Jewish Brothers, Adam, Isaac and Jacob Brandt" to the Old German Baptist Brethren, a Protestant sect in Germany known popularly as the Dunkers after their enthusiastic form of baptism. It is important to note that Berg finds his family roots in a dissident Protestant sect as the spiritual beginning of the Family. The date 1745 refers to the passage of Berg's family to America, making the idea of flight from religious persecution a key trop in the Family's self view. *Book of Rembrance,* Vol. I, 8. On the Dunkers, see http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/brethren.html.

12. "*THE FFING/DFING REVOLUTION!* DO 2313—An *Unbeatable* Combination!—The *Book* Is the *Hook*!" *MO Letter* 2313, Vol. 17 (n.d.), http://www.exfamily.org/cgi-bin/gf.pl?fmt=dyn&t=pubs&m=14&s=0&r=cgi-bin/pubindex.pl. Videos of these get-togethers were taken and feature much singing and dancing, as well as a few bare breasted women, but nothing that would seem excessive at, say, a Grateful Dead concert in the United States circa the 1970s. They were among the videos taken from the Philippines by Ed Priebe and Daniel Welsh. These videos were different from the "Love Videos" that showed nude women and little girls dancing for Father David's birthday, or the FFing ministry videos that were part of the same haul. These seem more like video reports or postcards sent from the field to Father David at whatever place he happened to be residing at the moment. See Chancellor, *Life in the Family,* 28–30.

13. Chancellor, *Life in the Family,* 15–16.

14. Ibid., 26–29, for a brief description of these travails.

15. For a concise, very useful timeline, see "COG History Timeline and Overview," http://www.exfamily.org/hist/hist_overview.shtml.

16. Litnessing was undertaken in response to a *Mo Letter,* "Shiners? or Shamers?" Davis and Davis, *The Children of God,* 114. David Van Zandt's participant observer work in the Family coincided with the litnessing revolution, and thus his book is the best scholarly account of the era. See Van Zandt, *Living in the Children of God.*

17. "COG History Timeline and Overview," http://www.exfamily.org/hist/hist_overview.shtml.

18. Chancellor, *Life in the Family,* 156.

19. Ibid., 157.

20. James Davison Hunter and Joshua Yates, "In the Vanguard of Globalization: The World of American Globalizers," in *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World,* ed. Berger and Huntington, 333–34.

21. http://www.thefamily.org/index.php3. For the link to the global mission page, http://www.thefamily.org/work/.

22. Edwin Bryant and Maria Ekstrand, *The Hare Krishna Movement: The Postcharismatic Fate of a Religious Transplant* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). For a microcosmic look, see the best of all possible examples in the best of all possible countries: Kimmo Ketola, "Neohinduism in Finland: An Overview of Trends and Patterns," in *Beyond the Mainstream: The Emergence of Religious Pluralism in Finland, Estonia and Russia,* ed. Jeffrey Kaplan (Helsinki: SKS, 2000), 241–54. Most recently, ISKCON has abandoned the saffron robes for business suits while "doing business" in major airports.

23. For this aspect of the Peoples Temple, hear Noah Adams et al., *Father Cares, the Last of Jonestown* (Washington, D.C.: National Public Radio, 1981), sound recording. Tapes Q352, Q596, and Q787, taken from the tapes recovered in Guyana and obtained by a *Freedom of Information Act* (FOIA) request from the FBI, contain references to the much overstated Soviet connection to the Guyana compound. For the available tapes, see http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/.

24. David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown,* rev. ed., *Religion in North America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003).

25. As of 2004, native Finnish speakers (almost the only kind—it is a difficult language to learn) comprised no less than 91.89 percent of the population, and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church claims no less than 83.8 percent of the population (a dramatic fall in Finnish terms from the stunning 95.1 percent it claimed in 1950). Finland is a homogenous country indeed. See Statistics Finland for these and other details of Finnish life, http://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/taskue_vaesto.html#Foreigners.

26. Susan Palmer makes much the same observation about Unificationists in Canada. Few of the women she came in contact with in her research were actually Canadian. See Susan J. Palmer, *Moon Sisters, Krishna Mothers, Rajneesh Lovers: Women's Roles in New Religions* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 92.

27. For an overview of the NRM scene in Finland, see Kaplan, *Beyond the Mainstream.* For a cook's tour of the same, see Jeffrey Kaplan, "Radical Religion in Finland?" *Nova Religio* 5, no. 1 (October 2001): 121–42.

28. Marriage is the second of Three Blessings in Unification Theology. The Three Blessings are the following: (1) the perfectibility of man; (2) the ability to have an ideal family; and (3) dominion over all creation. See "An Introduction to Life and Teaching of Sun Myung Moon," http://www.unification.org/ucbooks/intro.html#two.

29. Ronald H. Bayor, *The Columbia Documentary History of Race and Ethnicity in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Ronald T. Takaki, *Debating Diversity: Clashing Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America,* 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

30. John Stickler and Soma Han Stickler, *Land of Morning Calm: Korean Culture Then and Now* (Fremont, CA: Shen's Books, 2003).

31. Frederick Sontag, *Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1977), 130.

32. They have also drawn fierce criticism of the Church. See the article in the Christian intellectual journal *First Things:* K. Gordon Neufeld, "Peddler of Paradise," *First Things* 129 (January 2003): 12–14. The controversy dogged the Church from its earliest days in Korea as well. See Nansook Hong, *In the Shadow of the Moons: My Life in the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Family* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998), 31–32.

33. For the Unification Church's presentation of the doctrine, see "The Blessing of Love: Love, Marriage and World Peace," http://www.unification.org/the_blessing.html. Rev. Moon most accessibly explains the meaning and role of True Parents in Sontag, *Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church,* 142–43. For the internal view of the blessed event, see Hong, *In the Shadow of the Moons,* 65.

34. For a wonderful example, see the story of Clotilde, the Christian wife of the fifth century pagan Frankish king Clovis, or Bertha, the Christian wife of the contemporaneous Anglo-Saxon pagan king Ethelbert, in the equally wonderful book: Mary T. Malone, *Women & Christianity,* vol. I, *The First Thousand Years* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 177–81.

35. The best outsider overview remains Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing?* (Oxford; New York: B. Blackwell, 1984). For the early history of the movement from an insider's perspective, see Michael L. Mickler, *A History of the Unification Church in America, 1959–1974: Emergence of a National Movement* (New York: Garland, 1993). Mickler's book began as a Master's thesis and is still foundational for academic studies to follow. The book is now available for download from the Church at http://www.unification.org/ucbooks/Huca/index.html.

36. For a very good, concise discussion of the subject, see Joseph Fichter, *The Holy Family of Father Moon* (Kansas City, MO: Leaven Press, 1985), 65–71. For detailed studies from Church sources, see Gene G. James, *The Family and the Unification Church* (Barrytown, NY: Unification Theological Seminary; Distributed by Rose of Sharon Press, 1983); Richard Quebedeaux, *Lifestyle, Conversations with Members of the Unification Church* (Barrytown, NY: Unification Theological Seminary; Distributed by Rose of Sharon Press, 1982); James H. Grace, *Sex and Marriage in the Unification Movement: A Sociological Study* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1985); and Kathleen S. Lowney, *Passport to Heaven: Gender Roles in the Unification Church* (New York: Garland, 1992). The latter, however, is a dissertation more focused on feminist theory and the author's earnest efforts to relate herself to theory than a useful study of the movement. For a primary source discussion, see Sun Myung Moon, *The Kingdom of God on Earth and the Ideal Family* (New York: Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1977); cf. from the Unification Church Web site "True Love and True Family," http://www.unification.org/ucbooks/TLTF/index.htm.

37. For Rev. Moon, "restoration" is a synonym of "resurrection," which he sees as the culmination of a millennial process that will restore perfect balance in the world, as God intended before the Fall. The process will encompass, in order, family, society, tribe, nation, and, ultimately, the world. Sontag, *Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church,* 154. The blending

of Confucianism, Korean shamanism, and Christianity is hard to miss in Unification thought. J. Stillson Judah notes this as well, adding strong Daoist elements and noting that, in common with other Korean NRMs, Unification theology is marked by nationalism, messianism, terrestrial utopianism, and a synthesis of Korean and foreign religious traditions. See J. Stillson Judah, "Introduction to the History and Beliefs of the Unification Church," in *The Unification Church in America: A Bibliography and Research Guide,* ed. Michael L. Mickler (New York: Garland Pub., 1987), 3–7.

38. Palmer, *Moon Sisters, Krishna Mothers, Rajneesh Lovers,* 75–83.

39. Ibid., 84.

40. Ibid., 87; cf. for a more first person account, which notes that none of this is necessarily binding on the Moon family, see Hong, *In the Shadow of the Moons,* 65–66.

41. Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Western Intellectuals in Search of the Good Society,* 4th ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

42. Richard H. Shultz and Roy Godson, *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1984).

43. For an engaging journalistic account, see Tim Reiterman and John Jacobs, *Raven: The Untold Story of the Rev. Jim Jones and His People* (New York: Dutton, 1982).

44. Rebecca Moore, *A Sympathetic History of Jonestown: The Moore Family Involvement in Peoples Temple* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1985); and Rebecca Moore and Fielding M. McGehee, *The Need for a Second Look at Jonestown*, vol. 41, *Studies in American Religion* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1989). For varying perspectives, see J. Gordon Melton, *The Peoples Temple and Jim Jones: Broadening Our Perspective* (New York: Garland Pub., 1990); and Min S. Yee and Thomas N. Layton, *In My Father's House: The Story of the Layton Family and the Reverend Jim Jones* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1981).

45. For useful histories, see Claudia L. Bushman and Richard L. Bushman, *Mormons in America, Religion in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

46. On the movement itself in the context of the world of the Heredim, see Samuel C. Heilman and Manachem Friedman, "Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Jews: The Case of the Heredim," in *Fundamentalisms Observed,* vol. 1, *The Fundamentalism Project,* ed. Martin E. Marty, R. Scott Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 197–64. For a discussion of the congressional act designating a day for the late Lubavitcher Rebb, Manachem Schneerson, see Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America: Millenarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 45. The argument could be made that the religious Zionist wing of the Israeli settlement movement, by acting in the Holy Land and having key supporters in the United States, has become more important—and more politically adept—than the Chabad (Lubavitcher) movement. The argument, however, is complex and must await another anthology. For an introduction to the issues, see Gideon Aran, "Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)," in *Fundamentalisms Observed,* ed. Marty, Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 197–264.

47. Sontag, *Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church,* 152–154. President Park was an authoritarian leader who cleaved closely to U.S. policy, while the KCIA, as the name suggests, was closely modeled on the American CIA. Park was assassinated in 1979.

48. It was really too obvious to miss. See F. Clarkson, "Rev. Moon Buys a College, Hires Spooks & Moonies," *Covert Action Quarterly* 42 (Fall 1992): 39, for a somewhat tongue-in-cheek echo of the observation.

49. Sontag, *Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church,* 158.

50. Ibid., 157. Rev. Moon's vision seems to have been something of a projection of the Confucian idealization of education and the role of the intellectual in society, which is far truer of Korea than the United States. Perhaps the most notable accomplishment of the Church in this respect was the acquisition of the University of Bridgeport in Bridgeport, CT (http://www.bridgeport.edu/pages/1.asp), an accredited but debt-ridden institution of higher education. Funding for the acquisition came from the Professor's World Peace Academy (discussed below), and it joins such other Church academic institutions as Sun Moon University in Korea ("Our dream is of a bigger world" and is notable for its top page which features a picture of a lovely Korean woman with an equally lovely western woman, with the latter uncannily balancing two weighty textbooks on her head, http://grus.sunmoon.ac.kr/english/main.asp), the Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, NY (http://www.uts.edu/), and several elementary and secondary institutions.

51. For front organizations and the use of agents of influence, see Shultz and Godson, *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures,* 111–31 and 32–48, respectively.

52. A *Newsweek* article, for example, notes: "According to a poll commissioned by his own attorneys, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon ranks with the late Rev. Jim Jones as among the most detested religious figures around." Kenneth L. Woodward and Patrice Johnson, "Rev. Moon's New 'Friends,'" *Newsweek,* May 3, 1982, 88.

53. For a remarkably detailed and highly readable account, see Carlton Sherwood, *Inquisition: The Persecution and Prosecution of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1991).

54. http://www.unification.net/misc/orgns.html; cf. "From the Unification Church to the Unification Movement, 1994–1999: Five Years of Dramatic Changes," http://www.cesnur.org/testi/moon_1199.htm.

55. "Soviet Active Measures in the 'Post-Cold War' Era 1988–1991," A Report Prepared at the Request of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations by the United States Information Agency, June 1992. http://intellit.muskingum.edu/russia_folder/pcw_era/index.htm#Contents. For the other side of the question, or simply for the sake of nostalgia for a simpler time, V.N. Saprykov, *Peaceful Coexistence: Supporters and Opponents, Soviet Peace Programme* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Pub. House, 1979).

56. http://www.pwpa.org/General/history.html.

57. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paragon_House. The Church's voice is amplified by the *Washington Times,* a conservative Washington D.C. daily (http://www.washtimes.com/).

58. Spencer S. Hsu, "Warner 'Deceived' on Rev. Moon Event: Aide Says Senator's Office Would Not Have Sanctioned Gathering at Dirksen Building," *Washington Post,* July 24, 2004, 8, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A10166-2004Jul23.html?referrer=email.

59. Rev. Sun Myung Moon, "Proclamation of the Messiah," http://www.unification.org/ucbooks/POM/POM-01.htm.

60. Hong, *In the Shadow of the Moons,* 148–49. Hong, a participant in the event, describes it as a poorly staged soap opera recreation of a Yi Dynasty (c. 1392–1864) costume drama.

61. Ibid., 136–37. For a more tongue-in-cheek rendition, including the violent Zimbabwean "medium" who was for a time believed by the Church to be the earthly vessel in which Hueng Jin had chosen to return—apparently with the objective of administering physical beatings to the faithful—see Nancy Cooper and Mark Miller, "Rev. Moon's Rising Son," *Newsweek,* April 11, 1988, 39.

62. The aggressive and litigative stance of the Church from the 1970s rise of its Guardian Office through its hostile takeover of the Cult Awareness Network in 1998 makes the Church a delicate research topic. Scholarly trepidation with regard to Scientology is stated bluntly by Douglas Cowan:

> This paper began, as I suspect so many do, in a bar. Nearly five years ago, at the annual AAR meeting, three colleagues and I were sitting over drinks with a representative of the Church of Scientology, and at one point she asked, "Why don't academics write more about Scientology?" Without hesitation and without consultation, we all answered virtually in the same breath: "Because you threaten to sue us if we say things you don't like!"

Douglas E. Cowan, "Researching Scientology: Academic Premises, Promises, and Problematics," http://www.cesnur.org/2004/waco_cowan.htm. However, a few good studies have emerged. Of these, most recommended to the uninitiated is J. Gordon Melton, *The Church of Scientology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in cooperation with CESNUR, 2000). This short (less than 75 pages) booklet really speaks volumes for the movement. It carefully sets out the basic facts of the Church's history, attempting to tread the fine line between neutrality and credulity. Melton's somewhat strained effort to find credence in the Church's claim that founder L. Ron Hubbard was made a full blood brother by the Blackfoot Indians at the age of 6 on p. 2 is a case in point. (The Church's Biography Museum in Los Angeles includes a tableau of the precocious 6 year old lecturing a group of rapt Blackfoots around a camp fire, which suggests how attached the Church is to this biographical claim. Interestingly, Hubbard's parents are never depicted in the museum, and questions to the guide about them elicited no response. At the least, they were rather more liberal with their son's wanderlust than most American parents would have been.) For a good discussion of the Church's hagiographic treatment of its founders, see Cowan's "Researching Scientology"; cf., Church of Scientology International, *What Is Scientology? The Comprehensive Reference on the World's Fastest Growing Religion* (Los Angeles, CA: Bridge Publications, 1992), 624. Melton's book reads like the product of careful committee negotiations over virtually every sentence. It is, in short, a wonderful book, both for what it says and for what it would like to say but to which it must in the end only allude. The booklet should, however, definitely be read together with Melton's entry on Scientology in his *Encyclopedia of American Religions.* See J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions,* 7th ed. (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 311–13. The most uninhibited academic study of Scientology remains Roy Wallis, *The Road to Total Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of Scientology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977). Several scholarly reports on the Church are available and are distributed by the Church. The most notable of these is Bryan Wilson, "Religious Toleration & Religious Diversity," http://www.neuereligion.de/ENG/collection/diversity/. The text can also be found in Church of Scientology International, *Scientology: Theology & Practice of a Contemporary Religion* (Los Angeles: Bridge Publications, 1998), 111–46. The primary sources issued by the Church of Scientology are too voluminous to note. The quality of the releases, though, seems to vary between those issued on the more popularly oriented Author Services, Inc., which preserves Hubbard's writings—and he was a stunningly prolific and very accessible author—and later on more technical works issued through Bridge Publications. For good introductions, though, the place to start is probably with the breakthrough work, *Dianetics,* now revered as virtually sacred text by the Church. L. Ron Hubbard, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* (Los Angeles, CA:

Bridge Publications, 2000). One stop shopping for all things Scientological is the massive and beautifully bound and illustrated Church of Scientology International, *What Is Scientology? The Comprehensive Reference on the World's Fastest Growing Religion.* There is no shortage of hostile accounts of the Church by outsiders and apostates (not to mention on the Web, which is the most active front of the Scientology Wars). Two of the better of these are Robert Kaufman, *Inside Scientology; How I Joined Scientology and Became Superhuman* ([New York]: Olympia Press, 1972); and Russell Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1987).

63. The argument follows that of Beyer and is fully elucidated in the conclusion to this chapter. See Peter Beyer, *Religion in the Process of Globalization* (Wèurzburg: Ergon, 2001).

64. Frank Fèuredi, *Therapy Culture: Cultivating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004).

65. http://www.religioustolerance.org/scientol.htm.

66. A vast literature could be referenced here, but suffice for an introduction Melton's handy booklet, Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 45–46. The battle with psychiatry figures prominently in the globalization efforts of the Church and is examined below. In the self-view of the Church, however, the medical establishment is viewed more ambiguously than would seem apparent on first glance. Hubbard had offered to share his insights with both the American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association. Both passed on the opportunity. Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 12–13. On the other hand, there is as much envy as hostility in the Church's stance, as a display at the L. Ron Hubbard biographical museum in Los Angeles demonstrates. That display shows in wax figures a young L. Ron Hubbard expounding on his theories to an attentive audience of doctors (who look rather nineteenth century with morning coats and long beards). For the Scientology view of diet and food, see Church of Scientology International, *What Is Scientology?,* 189–96.

67. For a number of such success stories, see Juha Pentikäinen, Jurgen F.K. Redhardt, and Michael York. "The Church of Scientology's Rehabilitation Project Force," http://www.cesnur.org/2002/scient_rpf_01.htm.

68. http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/scientology.html, although this source expresses skepticism about the number of adherents. They may not be inaccurate from the perspective of the Church, however. In Finland, Kari Koivisto claimed 10,000 Finnish Scientologists—an astonishing number in tiny Finland. When questioned, however, Mr. Koivisto explained that anyone visiting a Church office, attending a meeting or seminar (which might be overt or under a false flag), or who in any other way came in contact with church members and left a name were counted as "members." Jeffrey Kaplan, "Radical Religion in Finland?," 133. While in 1999 this method of counting heads would have seemed deceptive, today it well reflects the convergence of interest groups and individuals around issues or problems. Membership organizations in the traditional sense of the term are increasingly passé. On the 133 countries, http://www.authenticscientology.org/.

69. http://faq.scientology.org/so.htm. For a fine study of Sea Org, see J. Gordon Melton, "A Contemporary Ordered Religious Community: The Sea Organization," http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/melton.htm. These are core members, indeed, with each signing contracts with the Church that link the member with the institution for no less than 100,000 years in a version described by one Sea Org member in Los Angeles. Gordon Melton notes that the contract is for a billion years. But after the first couple of eons, who's counting?

70. Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 11–12.

71. Ibid., 43. Melton alludes to problematic aspects of Sea Org, in particular to various forms of abuse that its members have suffered, both on the boats themselves and later in Scientology residential centers, with a particularly egregious case arising from the death of a young woman, Lisa McPherson, in Clearwater, FL. On these issues generally, see Stephen A. Kent, "Scientology—Is This a Religion?" *Marburg Journal of Religion* 4, no. 1 (1999). http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/kent.html. On the latest ramifications of the McPherson case, see Susan Taylor Martin, "Scientology Case Takes Its Toll," *St. Petersburg Times,* July 9, 2005, http://www.sptimes.com/2005/07/09/Tampabay/Scientology_case_take.shtml. For the response of the McPherson Family, see Lisa McPherson Trust International, http://lisatrust.bogie.nl/.

72. For a very amusing illustrated history of the device, see "Religious Gadget Thursday: The E-Meter," *Gizomodo Gadgets Weblog,* http://www.gizmodo.com/gadgets/gadgets/medical/religious-gadget-thursday-the-emeter-109772.php.

73. Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 14–17. The intensity of the war in the United States was probably greater than the Scientologists had bargained for, but, even so, their audacity was impressive. For a taste of what they were up against in the United States alone, see the massive trove of FBI documents recovered through a FOIA request and available for public perusal at the Operation Clambake anti-Scientology site, http://www.xenu.net/archive/FBI/table.html. The first FBI mention of Hubbard dates from 1940 and is a letter from Hubbard dropping a dime on someone he suspected of Nazi sympathies. J. Edgar Hoover's form letter of appreciation, and the notes on the follow-up field investigation are included here as well. The letter leaves a bad aftertaste in the twenty-first century mind, but was considered good citizenship in the 1940s and 1950s. Indeed, such popular radio serials of the era as "This Is Your FBI" and "The FBI in Peace and War" urged citizens to do just this weekly, helpfully informing the public that the telephone number of the local FBI office was on the front page of the phone book; cf. on this incident, Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah,* 87. The FBI files contain more than 5,000 documents. The number of documents generated in Europe and beyond can only be imagined, but as the FOIA exists only in the United States, future historians will be left with the task of sorting through these papers.

74. "The Church of Scientology," http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/scientology.html. For a fuller discussion, see Stephen A. Kent, "The French and German Versus American Debate over 'New Religions,' Scientology, and Human Rights," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 6, no. 1 (2001).

75. The Church of Scientology International was formed in 1981 as an outcome of the arrest of key members of the Church's guiding guardian office. Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 21–22.

76. The reference here is to the immortality of the individual (thetan) in Scientology Theology. Church of Scientology International, *Scientology: Theology & Practice of a Contemporary Religion.* The text is a comprehensive overview of Scientology beliefs and contains eight scholarly reports as appendices.

77. Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 57–58.

78. Melton notes the economic dimension of the Scientology controversies, ibid., 59–60. A more popular, and more negative, treatment can be found in the *Time Magazine* cover story, Richard Behar, "Scientology: The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power," *Time,* May 6, 1991, http://www-2.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Fishman/time-behar.html.

79. Vince Lombardi, the Green Bay Packers coach who guided the team to victory in the first two Super Bowls, is perceived in Wisconsin in soteriological terms, and a thorough

familiarity with his thought is an unwritten rule for residence in the Fox Valley. On Colsen's quote, the one-time aide to President Nixon who was otherwise best known for his professed willingness to walk over his own grandmother to ensure the reelection of the President, had a sign adorning his office wall with the quote in question. http://dave.burrell.net/quotes.html. Chuck Colsen today is head of an evangelical prison ministry and a frequent guest on Christian broadcasting programs.

80. Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Fall of the Wall," *Nova Religio* 1, no. 1 (1997): 139–46.

81. Church of Scientology International, *What Is Scientology?,* 657.

82. For a detailed discussion of all of these issues, see Stephen A. Kent, "The French and German Versus American Debate Over 'New Religions,' Scientology, and Human Rights," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 6, no. 1 (January 2001), http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/kent2.html; and Leisa Goodman, "A Letter from the Church of Scientology," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 6, no. 2 (January 2001), http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/goodman.html. Gordon Melton covers some of these issues as well. See Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 62–63. For a discussion of the European legislation against Scientology, see Massimo Introvigne, J. Gordon Melton, and Centro studi sulle nuove religioni, *Pour En Finir Avec Les Sectes: Le Dâebat Sur Le Rapport De La Commission Parlementaire,* 3. âed. ed. (Paris: Editions Dervy, 1996).

83. Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 15–16.

84. Ibid., 20.

85. For rather harshly judgmental descriptions of these goings on, see Douglas Frantz, "The Shadowy Story Behind Scientology's Tax Exempt Status," *New York Times,* March 9, 1997, http://www-2.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Cowen/essays/nytimes.html; and Richard Behar, "Scientology: The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power," *Time,* May 6, 1991. More evenhanded treatment may be found in Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 19–21.

86. Melton, *The Church of Scientology;* cf. Frantz, "The Shadowy Story Behind Scientology's Tax Exempt Status"; and Behar, "Scientology: The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power." On the general competence of the FBI in this era, see Joseph L. Schott, *No Left Turns* (New York: Praeger, 1975). While the Schott book is humorous, it should be more seriously noted that the Scientology infiltration took place contemporaneously with what would become a purge at the CIA, with head of counterintelligence James Angleton furiously trying to unearth a Soviet mole whom he was convinced had burrowed deep into the Agency. In the process, he probably did more damage to the Agency than the phantom mole ever could have accomplished. The FBI was on the periphery of this conflict, but was going through similar issues of its own. That the Scientologists—rank amateurs in the intelligence game—could have so effortlessly penetrated the FBI speaks volumes for the state of U.S. counterintelligence in this period.

87. They did not go down too hard, though. J. Gordon Melton points out they were eventually convicted of only "relatively minor" crimes and sentenced to "only" 4–5 years hard time, with fines of $10,000 on top of it. Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 20.

88. Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah,* 310.

89. Joseph P. Kennedy, http://www.bartleby.com/66/36/32436.html.

90. Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 20–21.

91. Douglas Frantz, "Scientology Denies an Account of an Impromptu IRS Meeting," *New York Times,* March 19, 1997, http://www-2.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Cowen/essays/denial.html.

92. Elizabeth MacDonald, "Scientologists and IRS settled for $12.5 million," *Wall Street Journal,* December 30, 1997, http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Cowen/essays/

wj301297.html (accessed July 20, 2006).. The Scientology court documents are archived at http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Cowen/essays/irslegal.html (accessed July 20, 2006). For the documents pertaining only to this case, see http://www.xenu.net/archive/IRS/ (accessed July 20, 2006). New articles relating to the case are archived at http://www.lermanet.com/scientologynews/ (accessed July 20, 2006).

93. See Introvigne, Melton, and Centro studi sulle nuove religioni, *Pour En Finir Avec Les Sectes: Le Dâebat Sur Le Rapport De La Commission Parlementaire;* and Kent, "The French and German Versus American Debate over 'New Religions,' Scientology, and Human Rights."

94. On the Interpol front, see Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 50–51, and Stephen A. Kent, "The Globalization of Scientology: Influence, Control and Opposition in Transnational Markets," *Religion* 29, no. 2 (1999): 151–52. The Scientology view can be found in Church of Scientology International, *What Is Scientology?,* 393–94 and 531.

95. For a good example of this prescience, see "The Open Door to Piracy," *Freedom Magazine* 28, no. 1 (n.d.), http://www.cyberspacefreedom.org/piracy.htm.

96. A number of sources could be referenced here—the Scientology netwars is deserving of a dissertation in itself—but several are good sources of links to necessary sources. First, the Religious Movements Homepage, "The Church of Scientology," http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/scientology.html, although some of these links are outdated. From the Church of Scientology, "Briefing RE: The Church of Scientology and the Internet, 30 June 2000," http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/scientology_briefing.html, and "Freedom of Speech at Risk in Cyberspace," *Freedom Magazine* 28, no. 1 (n.d.), http://www.cyberspacefreedom.org/index.htm. This issue has several articles on the netwars from the Scientology perspective. For a wider, and much more passionate, discussion of the issues raised by the trading of charges of "copyright terrorism" between the Church and its critics, see Massimo Introvigne, "'So Many Evil Things': Anti-Cult Terrorism via the Internet," http://www.cesnur.org/testi/anticult_terror.htm.

97. Bryan Wilson, "Religious Toleration & Religious Diversity," and J. Gordon Melton, "Mea Culpa! Mea Culpa!: J. Gordon Melton Answers His Critics," both make this point convincingly.

98. Stephen A. Kent, "Scientology—Is This a Religion?," *Marburg Journal of Religion,* http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/kent.html.

99. Kent and Krebs, "When Scholars Know Sin," http://www.apologeticsindex.org/c25.html.

100. On the racist anthropology of the period, see Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992). For a nineteenth century popular anti-Catholic text, see the erotic (by nineteenth century standards) Maria Monk, Theodore Dwight, J.J. Slocum, and William K. Hoyte, *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal, Anti-Movements in America* (New York: Arno Press, 1977). For a more learned anti-Catholic treatise of the same period, see William Cathcart, *The Papal System: From Its Origin to the Present Time. A Historical Sketch of Every Doctrine, Claim and Practice of the Church of Rome* (Philadelphia: Cathcart and Turner, 1872). The text that ties these themes most explicitly to NRMs, including the strong suggestion that the Catholic Church should be considered a "cult," is the first edition of the classic anticult text: Jan Karel Van Baalen, *The Chaos of Cults; a Study of Present-Day Isms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938).

101. Church of Scientology, "Briefing RE: The Church of Scientology and the Internet, 30 June 2000," http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/scientology_briefing.html.
102. In this sense, J. Gordon Melton is exactly right in saying that the texts were released not in the interests of free speech, but rather to embarrass the Church of Scientology. J. Gordon Melton, "Mea Culpa! Mea Culpa!" For a good apologia for the Church's theological perspective, see http://www.theta.btinternet.co.uk/.
103. http://www-2.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Fishman/Declaration/. Scientology's efforts to prevent Google from linking to the Operation Clambake site, which archives the FOIA requested FBI files on Scientology is a marker of this futility. Google for a time acceded to Scientology's demand that the links be erased, but after complaints from surfers, the links were restored, and the Operation Clambake site http://www.clambake.org/ is going strong as well; cf. "Scientology Versus the Internet," *Wikipedia,* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientology_vs._the_Internet. It is a relatively easy matter to pressure an Internet provider to refuse to host a site, but the attempt invariably arouses the ire of previously uninterested advocates of free speech on the net and soon mirrors of the proscribed material are popping up everywhere, spreading the material far beyond its original or intended audience.
104. "Scientology Versus the Internet," *Wikipedia,* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientology_vs._the_Internet. The Church incorrectly sets the genesis of the site at 1993, claiming it was falsely registered in the name of David Miscavige by one Scott Goehring. Church of Scientology, "Briefing RE: The Church of Scientology and the Internet, 30 June 2000," http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/scientology_briefing.html. For a 1991 pseudonymous post, see http://www.theta.btinternet.co.uk/. Generally, however, the sources are in agreement and are used together for this discussion.
105. In the early days of the technology, the Usenet space became the repository for all that was great and all that was vile about the Internet. It was a bastion of free speech, and it provided a supportive community for victims of every sort of illness or abuse. But it was also a repository for violent and pornographic material, including child pornography. In some senses, Usenet has cleaned up its act since then, but in reality the most illicit of materials simply migrated to more sophisticated technologies and became harder for authorities to monitor. For a very tame flavor of the level of alt.religion.scientology discourse, see http://bernie.cncfamily.com/sc/hate.htm.
106. Details of all these cases can be found in "The Church of Scientology and the Internet, 30 June 2000," http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/scientology_briefing.html.
107. Ibid. "Scientology Versus the Internet," *Wikipedia,* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientology_vs._the_Internet. Anyone with colleagues or curious friends in Sweden in this period was offered CD-ROMS containing this material as I recall. How many takers there were is unknown and unknowable, however.
108. "Scientology Versus the Internet," *Wikipedia,* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientology_vs._the_Internet (accessed July 20, 2006).
109. Space precludes a detailed description of the intense and very personal war against the organized anticult movement. Suffice it here to say that, following a successful lawsuit against the Cult Awareness Network by one Jason Scott who had joined a fundamentalist Christian Church, the Church of Scientology came in possession of the judgment and used it to roll up the old CAN, putting in its place a Scientology-run group of the same name that claims to be a clearinghouse for religious freedom. On the battle, see Gordon Melton, "The Modern Anti-Cult Movement in Historical Perspective," in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization,* ed. Kaplan and Lööw, 273–84; and Kaplan, "The Fall of the Wall."

For a taste of the scholarly invective surrounding the case, see Anson Shupe and Susan E. Darnell, "CAN, We Hardly Knew Ye: Sex, Drugs, Deprogrammers' Kickbacks, and Corporate Crime in the (old) Cult Awareness Network," http://www.cesnur.org/2001/CAN.htm; and Kent and Krebs, "When Scholars Know Sin." For the invective emanating from Scientology in this period, see Church of Scientology International, *The Cult Awareness Network: Anatomy of a Hate Group: An Analysis of Violence and Crime Incited by the Cult Awareness Network* (Los Angeles, CA: Freedom Magazine, 1995).

110. http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/intlrel.htm. The first U.S. Special Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom was Robert Seiple, appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1999.

111. Cynics noted that the most visible and heartfelt expressions of support for human rights generally and religious freedom specifically seemed to center on oil producing states. Witness the *Sudan Peace Act,* which sailed through Congress just months after the announcement of a significant oil discovery in that unfortunate nation. One of the cannier observations of this connection was made by the Unification Church owned *Washington Times.* See "Sudan's Oil War," *The Washington Times,* July 27, 2001, http://www.uscirf.gov/mediaroom/editorials/editorials_archive/072701_sudan.html (accessed June 20, 2005). The Act itself was passed in 2002. For the text, see http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/14531.htm.

112. For a good overview of NRMs in the former communist nations of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, see Peter Torok. "The Familiarity of New Religious Movements in Central-Eastern Europe," http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/torok.htm.

113. Kent, "The French and German Versus American Debate over 'New Religions,' Scientology, and Human Rights." Europeans noted that the United States virtually alone had refused to sign on to UN legislation protecting the rights of children. To this was added the sad spectacle in 2004 in which the annual U.S. State Department list of nations that violate human rights occurred simultaneously with the revelations by the *New York Times* that the American government was in effect operating a "torture taxi" through its rendition program delivering suspected terrorists for "interrogation" to the very countries that the State Department report criticized for employing torture. The contradiction was just too jarring to be missed. On these issues, see Jeffrey Kaplan, "Islamophobia in America?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (forthcoming).

114. The Solar Temple murder/suicides of 1994 were key, bringing home to Europeans that religiously motivated mass suicide was not a purely American phenomenon. See "The Solar Temple," http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/solartemp.html; and Jean-Francois Mayer, "Our Terrestrial Journey is Coming to an End: The Last Voyage of the Solar Temple," *Nova Religio* 2, no. 2 (April 1999): 172–96.

115. Kent, "The French and German Versus American Debate over 'New Religions,' Scientology, and Human Rights." Specifically, Kent documents incidents in Canada, Greece, Denmark, and France. The French case charged that Scientologists had "succeeded in infiltrating the environment of a former state president…." An identical case occurred in Finland, where one member of the Presidential Guard (roughly equivalent to the U.S. Secret Service, although minus the trademark dark shades and earpiece), Kari Koivisto, was a Scientologist. Koivisto found several fellow guardsmen who were interested, and soon there was a group of Scientologists around the President. As in France, there was never any evidence of wrongdoing by these guardsmen, but when the news hit the press all were forced to resign their positions. Jeffrey Kaplan, "Radical Religion in Finland?," 129. In his own brief autobiography, written for the 1999 Beyond the Mainstream conference in Helsinki, Koivisto writes:

> Kari Koivisto was born in 1953 in southwestern Finland. After having graduated from secondary school, he started Police College. His police career included different tasks in traffic and security areas. After Police officers' academy in 1986, he worked as an assistant chief of the bodyguard of the President of Finland and he resigned in the year 1989 to dedicate his life to helping others using L. Ron Hubbard's teachings. This was also the year he established the citizen's commission on human rights in Finland. Since then, that organization has grown considerably and is nowadays well known for its good results to protect human rights on the field of mental health. Since he was a little boy he had looked for an answer to the question "who am I?" He came into Scientology in 1986 and found the answer. Kari Koivisto has worked for the church since 1997 taking care of external and interfaith matters in Finland.

116. The Church of Scientology provides in depth discussion and documentation of each of these controversies through its Human Rights Office. See http://www.humanrights-france.org/.

117. The Greek case is particularly interesting. For a useful—if at times painfully legalistic—discussion, see Kyriakos N. Kyriazopoulos, "The Legal Treatment of Scientology's Church in Greece," http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/kyriazopoulos.htm.

118. "Council of Europe Debate on Scientology and Other Cults: Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 5 Feb 1992," http://www-2.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Cowen/audit/cofe92.html; Massimo Introvigne, "Why France? Historical and Ideological Roots of the French Anti-Cult Scare," http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/introvigne.htm; Massimo Introvigne, "Blacklisting or Greenlisting? A European Perspective on the New Cult Wars," http://www.cesnur.org/testi/greenlist.html; Massimo Introvigne and J. Gordon Melton, eds., Pour en finir avec les sectes. Le débat sur le rapport de la commission parlementaire; and, for primary sources (archived by anti-Scientology sources), "Scientology vs. National Governments," http://www.factnet.org/Scientology/govreports.htm?FACTNet.

119. For contrasting views of these changes in the brainwashing thesis, see the various articles in Thomas Robbins and Benjamin David Zablocki, *Misunderstanding Cults: Searching for Objectivity in a Controversial Field* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

120. Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); and Paul Heelas, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality, Religion and Spirituality in the Modern World* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005). For the Finnish microcosm, see Pauliina Mikkonen, "New Age in Finland: A View Through Finnish New Age Magazines," Kaplan, *Beyond the Mainstream,* 319–32.

121. Kent, "The French and German Versus American Debate over 'New Religions,' Scientology, and Human Rights."

122. For a brilliant discussion of these issues, see David Chidester, *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005). Chidester's argument is particularly applicable to Scientology: the faith may not be "authentic" (i.e., it may have been created with, as the German ambassador suggests, the intention of making a tidy profit), but it nonetheless has come to be an authentic faith for many people. In the process, it has come to meet the criteria of the various academic definitions of "religion," including the one offered by Chidester himself. Moreover, this author correctly points out that Americans deify cold cash ("In God We Trust") in a way that is at once fascinating and deeply off-putting to the rest of the world. Thus, the book could shed much light on the tone and tenor of the Scientology Wars in Europe.

123. Having worked and researched in Finland and Sweden extensively over the last decade, I can testify anecdotally to how ingrained these anti-American stereotypes are in everyday discourse. The invasion of Iraq brought them bubbling to the surface, even at the governmental level. For statistical chapter and verse, see the Pew Global Attitudes Survey, http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=247.
124. Berger and Huntington, *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World.* The introduction of Berger and Huntington makes this point, and each of the essays in the volume amplifies this basic theme from the perspective of different countries.
125. Fredrick H. Buttel, "Some Observations on the Anti-Globalization Movement," *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 38, no. 1 (February 2003): 98.
126. In particular, the Center for the Study of New Religions (Cesnur) in Italy, http://www.cesnur.org/.
127. It can also work with other religious groups, such as the Unification Church's International Coalition for Religious Freedom, http://www.religiousfreedom.com/. The ICRF web page does not make reference to the Unification Church.
128. See for the maximal view "Scientology's Many Front Groups—No more than an effort to fool people into getting involved with $cientology," http://www.lermanet.com/cos/frontgroups.html. More temperate is "Some Scientology Front Groups," http://www.holysmoke.org/cos/fronts.htm.
129. Church of Scientology International, *What Is Scientology? The Comprehensive Reference on the World's Fastest Growing Religion,* 407–21.
131. Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 44–46; cf. the Narconon Web site, http://www.narconon.org/about_narconon.htm, and the Criminon Web page, http://www.scientology.org/en_US/world/betterment/criminon/pg005.html.
131. Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 47–48; cf. the Applied Scholastics Web page, http://www.scientology.org/en_US/world/betterment/applied-scholastics/. For a hostile view of the organization, see the Scientology v. Education Web site, http://www.studytech.org/home.php.
132. Melton, *The Church of Scientology,* 48–50.
133. http://www.cchr.org/.
134. http://www.cchr.com/. Click tab "publications" (accessed July 20, 2006).
135. Richard Leiby, "A Couch Tom Cruise Won't Jump On: Actor Lambastes Psychiatry on 'Today,'" *Washington Post,* June 25, 2005, C01. For the record, Shields responded in a *New York Times* op-ed: "…I'm going to take a wild guess and say that Mr. Cruise has never suffered from postpartum depression." Brooke Shields, "War of Words," *New York Times,* July 1, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/01/opinion/01shields.html?ex=1122868800&en=9e6c5c4dfeecb40b&ei=5087&excamp=GGGNbrookeshields. The Ritalin campaign was not simply a Scientology offensive. The popular cartoon series *South Park* dedicated an episode in 2004 to lampooning the use of the drug on children, warning of the side effect of seeing a giant pink Christine Aguilera bug—a frightening prospect indeed.
136. http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/WhoWeAre.html.
137. For a critical view, see "About the Scientology-backed 'Cult Awareness Network,'" http://www.apologeticsindex.org/c19.html.
138. Still very much a work in progress: http://www.ebonyawakening.com/news.htm.
139. http://www.cbaa.org/.
140. http://www.worldliteracy.org/.
141. It is no longer fashionable in the post–Cold War world to note that Lenin used to refer to such idealists attracted to Soviet front organizations as "useful idiots."

142. Church of Scientology International, *What Is Scientology?,* 353.
143. See the Church of Scientology Celebrity Center web page for the Los Angeles Center, http://www.celebritycentre.org/. The page provides an introduction to the faith and a bit of publicity for celebrity Scientologists' latest projects, http://www.celebritycentre.org/en_US/news/index.html. The accompanying tour of the facilities gives the nonentity web surfer at least a taste of how the other half lives, http://www.celebritycentre.org/en_US/tour/index.html. For further evidence of the Americanism of the Church, see by contrast the London Celebrity Center, which adopts the American rather than the British spelling of the word "center," http://www.scientology-cclondon.org/. The year 1955 is from Stephen A. Kent, "Scientology—Is This a Religion?," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 4, no. 1 (July 1999), http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/kent.html.
144. See the interview in the German popular magazine *Der Speigel* in which the actor and his director, Stephen Speilberg, hold forth on their passions for Scientology and the Shoa (Holocaust) Foundation, respectively: "Actor Tom Cruise Opens Up about his Beliefs in the Church of Scientology," *Spiegel Online,* April 27, 2005, http://service.spiegel.de/cache/international/0,1518,353577,00.html.
145. Enjoy, for example, Kenneth Anger, *Hollywood Babylon,* Bell 1981 ed. (New York: Bell Publishing Co., 1981); cf. Stephen Davis, *Hammer of the Gods: The Led Zeppelin Saga* (New York: W. Morrow, 1985); or Albert Harry Goldman and Lawrence Schiller, *Ladies and Gentlemen—Lenny Bruce!* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), for chapter and verse.
146. Stephen A. Kent, "Hollywood's Celebrity-Lobbyists and the Clinton Administration's American Foreign Policy Toward German Scientology," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 1 (Spring 2002), http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/scientologyprint.html#_ftn9; cf. Kent, "The French and German Versus American Debate over 'New Religions,' Scientology, and Human Rights."
147. Beyer, *Religion in the Process of Globalization,* 2.
148. Ibid., 7.
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid., 8.
151. James Davison Hunter and Joshua Yates, "In the Vanguard of Globalization: The World of American Globalizers," in *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World,* ed. Berger and Huntington, 333–34.
152. The term "fundamentalism" is problematic outside the Protestant Christian tradition that brought it into being, but that bag of worms is for another day. On Huntington and his critics, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); and Samuel P. Huntington et al., *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate* (New York, NY: Foreign Affairs, 1996).
153. Beyer, *Religion in the Process of Globalization,* 9–10.
154. Ibid., 9.
155. The idea comes from Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990); cf. Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements and Globalization: A Theoretical Prolegomenon," 4. Dawson expresses his frustration that theorists of globalization such as Roland Robertson never really address new religious movements (9), and Beyer—more approachable for the nonsociologist than Robertson—also notes the topic only in passing.
156. Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization," in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization,* ed. Kaplan and Lööw, 12–25.

157. For a good working model, see Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
158. Stephen A. Kent, "Generational Revolt by the Adult Children of First-Generation Members of the Children of God/the Family," *Cultic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2004): 56–72.
159. http://www.familycare.org/.
160. James Davison Hunter and Joshua Yates, "In the Vanguard of Globalization: The World of American Globalizers," in *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World,* ed. Berger and Huntington, 324–30.

Critiquing Cults: An Historical Perspective

J. Gordon Melton

As New Religious Movements (NRMs) arose, beginning in the sixteenth century when a variety of Anabaptist, mystical, and apocalyptic movements appeared in Europe, a critique simultaneously appeared. In general, that critique was specific, targeting each group both for its believed theological deviance and negative social affect. Thus, Thomas Müntzer (d. 1525) and his followers were targeted for their premillennial beliefs and their participation in a violent revolutionary movement. The Anabaptists were charged with deviation on a variety of doctrinal points and for attacking the authority of both the bishops and the magistrates.[1]

This form of critique continued into the nineteenth century. In each country, a single church remained the church of the majority and had more or less official connections with the state. Each of these churches saw itself as speaking for the entrenched powers that governed society, protecting the social order, and maintaining the religious identity of the public. Those assumed roles of former state churches continue in most European countries to the present and pervaded the thinking of North American church leaders well into the twentieth century.

Through the nineteenth century in the United States, intense polemics were produced against what were perceived as false deviant religions, the Latter-day Saints (or Mormons) and Spiritualists being the primary targets, though by the end of the century, Christian Science and Theosophy came on the scene as well. Then, at the end of the nineteenth century, a change occurred. Some of the critics of the growing number of NRMs began to see them as a collective and perceived them as a threat to the stability of the social order and the identity of the nation. And the new social threat was given a name—cults—and as the century came to a close, Episcopal minister A.H. Barrington produced the first book dealing with the problem, *Anti-Christian Cults.*[2]

THE BEGINNINGS OF COUNTERCULT CONCERNS

The development of a view that a group of "cults" existed that threatened Christianity found a response within the emerging Fundamentalist movement in the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mainstream Protestantism experienced a major transition as intellectual leaders grappled with the implication of the new sciences and the development of comparative and critical tools for the study of religion. As individual ministers and seminary professors professed their acceptance of biological evolution, historical views of the development of the Bible, and doubts about the miracle stories of the New Testament, conservative voices complained that the very people to whom they should be looking for guidance were accepting heresy and should be removed from office. In the context of the time, conservatives believed that considerable damage could be done to the faith of churchgoers by people who were pouring completely new content into Christian language or dropping Christian language altogether for some alien religion.

As World War I drew to an end, a countercult movement emerged within the bounds of Fundamentalism, its first text generally being viewed as *Timely Warnings* by William C. Irvine (1906–1964), frequently reprinted over the next half century under its later title, *Heresies Exposed* (1973).[3] *Timely Warnings* was unique in that it attempted to catalogue all of the current heresies and offer a refutation of each. Irvine gave priority coverage to Modernism, the group the Fundamentalists accused of dropping traditional Christian affirmations that they claimed were incompatible with the findings of modern science and historical research. Also, as Irvine noted, most of the NRMs of the day retained some claim on the Christian heritage, however much they diverged from the orthodox theological tradition. Mormonism added a new revelation, Christian Science poured new meaning into old symbols, and Unitarianism merely discarded a few of what it considered outdated Christian doctrines. Even Spiritualism, which among the NRMs of the time most departed from the tradition, attempted to picture itself as a biblical faith by drawing on accounts of human intercourse with spiritual entities from the spirits of the deceased to angels in the biblical record.[4]

Irvine set the direction of future critiques of NRMs—evaluating each group according to how much it deviated from orthodox Christian standards. That critique could begin with those doctrines considered fundamental to the faith—the Trinity, the virgin birth of Jesus, Christ's substitutionary atonement—and then continue to more detailed contradictions with specific biblical passages interpreted literally. Many later works simply compiled biblical quotations placed against quotations from an NRM's literature.

Irvine's book spawned a number of Fundamentalist texts, some concentrating on a specific heresy[5] and others expanding coverage of the spectrum of groups.[6] These books led directly to the most influential countercult text, *The Chaos of Cults* by Christian Reformed minister, Jan Karel Van Baalen (1890–1968).[7] Van Baalen's text is noteworthy for the serious manner in which he approached the topic. He obviously conducted considerable primary research on each group and attempted to present a clear picture of the group's history and beliefs. He also suggested that each group's appeal was due to its focus upon a single truth (i.e., Christian teaching), which contemporary Christians largely neglected. Spiritualism, for example, called attention to the existence of a spirit world and life after death. Van Baalen also

introduced an idea to which later countercultists continually returned. Should Roman Catholicism, with its continued accumulation of traditions with little or no biblical base (for example, the heightened veneration of the Virgin Mary), be included in the consideration of deviant cults?

The Chaos of the Cults went through numerous reprints, had at least three major revisions, and led to the production of a second, smaller volume summarizing its contents. It was in place as the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy ended in the 1930s with the withdrawal of many theological conservatives from the larger denominations and the setting up of a number of Fundamentalist denominations.[8]

THE RISE OF CONTEMPORARY COUNTERCULTISM[9]

By the end of the 1930s, the Fundamentalist community divided into three camps. First, a number of them remained in their positions within the larger Protestant denominations. Second, some separated from the older denominations while insisting that no contact continue with those who remained behind. Third, a far larger group left the denominations but continued fellowship with fellow Fundamentalists who for a variety of reasons could not leave their denominational home. During the 1940s, this third group became the new Evangelicals. Evangelicals created an identity around a school (Fuller Theological Seminary), a magazine (*Christianity Today*), and an ecumenical fellowship (National Association of Evangelicals).[10]

The three groups that became quite visible in the 1940s had reasons to draw sharp boundaries between each of the warring camps. The Fundamentalists and Evangelicals had the toughest job—simultaneously justifying their withdrawal from established denominations while distinguishing themselves from each other. The Evangelicals had the harder task, holding fast to traditional affirmations while attempting to be theologically creative and pursue a dialogue with the modern fast-changing intellectual world and its culture. In spite of the loss of its organizational base, by engaging the world, Evangelicals hoped to continue to be an influence in transforming it.

The perceived need for boundary maintenance by Fundamentalists and Evangelicals set the stage for the emergence of Walter Martin (1928–1989) and a new level of concern for cults. For just as Fundamentalists and Evangelicals strove to define themselves against the larger reality of the old denominations, Martin called attention to an equally important threat, the growing attraction of people to groups that looked Christian but which, on closer examination, denied the essentials of the faith—just as did the Modernists.

The countercult movement as it emerged in the 1950s is best seen as a boundary maintenance movement. It found its dynamic in the common orthodoxy shared by Fundamentalists and Evangelicals opposed to doctrinal deviation. The founding members of the movement, with one foot in Fundamentalism and one in Evangelicalism, tried to say that just as modernism in the older churches was a great threat to orthodox faith, so was the growth of cults—theologically deviant NRMs.

THE CAREER OF WALTER MARTIN

By far the leading voice in developing contemporary countercultism was Walter Ralston Martin, a Fundamentalist Baptist minister who began his cult-fighting career in 1955 with a small volume, *The Rise of the Cults: An Introductory Guide to the Non-Christian Cults.* He quickly followed with a set of more substantive books on what he saw as the major cults then active in the United States: *The Christian and the Cults* (1956), *The Christian Science Myth* (1956), *Jehovah of the Watchtower* (1959), *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventists* (1960), and *The Maze of Mormonism* (1962).

In 1960 he founded an independent ministry, Christian Research Institute (CRI), to facilitate his special ministry concerning cults. By the time Martin published his more comprehensive volume, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (1965),[11] he was the titular leader of a small but growing movement of Evangelicals who wanted to draw distinctive boundaries between Christian orthodoxy and the various unorthodox, non-Christian options that were becoming more well-known in the culture. The countercultists hoped to convert members of such groups to their Evangelical faith.

Martin's track record positioned CRI to respond when cults became a high profile issue in the larger society in the 1970s. In 1974, he moved to California and over the next decade emerged as the patriarch of a burgeoning popular movement built around literally hundreds of small organizations and individual ministries devoted to evangelizing members of the growing spectrum of NRMs. While most of these remained focused on Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, several of the new organizations, such as the Spiritual Counterfeits Project based in Berkeley, California, also attempted to handle the broad gamut of religions that came from Asia after 1965.

Just as the countercult movement was growing, its position as the primary movement critiquing NRMs was challenged by a new secular activist movement that was focused entirely on the new generation of NRMs then emerging as the Baby Boomers came of age, as immigration laws relative to Asia changed, and as a new generation of homegrown religions arose.

The development of new and alternative religions in the United States was altered by a series of laws passed in the first decades of the twentieth century that prevented migration from Asia. The culminating *Asian Exclusion Act of 1924* was in force until the fall of 1965. With barriers to immigration removed in that latter year, hundreds of thousands of Asians moved to the United States and included in their numbers some religious missionaries (usually arriving under such titles as swami, bhagwan, yogi, guru, pir, sensei, or master). This wave of teachers encountered the postwar Baby Boomers, who, unable to integrate into the culture (especially the job market), developed a new subculture, the street-people culture. The street people were especially visible along the Pacific Coast, and each summer their numbers were swelled with college kids (especially those rich enough not to have to work all summer) who idealized the lifestyle of the street people and chose to spend their summer holiday with them.

Thus in the United States, as NRM leaders began to pour into the country at the end of the 1960s, they joined those indigenous leaders already actively working with

this self-selected "lost" generation living on the streets. Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977) (Hare Krishna) began in Greenwich Village, Yogi Bhajan (d. 2004) (Sikh Dharma) in Los Angeles, and the Unification Church in Eugene, Oregon, and Washington, D.C. They were joined by several groups founded in the United States, most prominently the Church of Scientology and the groups of the Jesus People movement, as well as the imports from Europe (Wicca, Friends of Meher Baba). Earlier Alan Watts (1915–1973), who became the great popularizer of Zen, migrated from England. Each of these groups adapted itself to the generation on the streets, and their love of psychedelic drugs, and took a high percentage of their initial recruits from among them. The actual number of young adults who stayed in the NRMs was low, but just enough dropped earlier career plans that by the early 1970s a few upset parents began to voice their anger publicly and quickly found that they were not alone. The first networks of what was to become a national movement began to emerge.[12]

DEVELOPING THE CULT AWARENESS MOVEMENT

In the early 1970s, informal groups of parents began investigating a Jesus People group formed in Southern California by David Berg (1919–1968). Following some months of wandering across the United States, Berg emerged as Moses David and his followers as the Children of God.[13] In 1972, parents concerned about their offspring's involvement in the group formed The Parents Committee to Free Our Sons and Daughters from the Children of God, later shortened to Free the Children of God (or FREECOG), the first of the new generation of secular cult awareness groups. When parents failed to woo their children from the group, they tried more coercive measures, including the intervention of law enforcement agencies.[14] Their efforts were somewhat blunted when most of the Children of God left the United States in 1974. However, FREECOG's efforts brought out support from parents whose young adult offspring affiliated with other new groups. Thus FREECOG evolved into the more broadly based Volunteer Parents of America, which in turn was superseded by the Citizens Freedom Foundation (CFF), arguably the most successful of the 1970s cult awareness groups. CFF, based in California, inspired similar groups around the country.

By the mid 1970s, attempts were made to construct a national umbrella organization that could coordinate the efforts of the many local groups and make some larger impact. In 1976 the Ad Hoc Committee Engaged in Freeing Minds was able to entice Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) to hold hearings at which parents and others could present their complaints. However, both the committee and a second national organization, the International Foundation for Individual Freedom, proved unable to overcome loyalties to local groups and soon passed from the scene.

This cult awareness movement (sometimes called the anticult movement or ACM) of the 1970s never satisfactorily resolved its essential internal conflicts. First, some parents opposed NRMs because they did not want their offspring to associate with any group other than the one in which they were raised. Others, seemingly the larger

percentage, were angered that their young adult offspring rejected the direction offered by their parents, stopped work on building "normal" careers in business or the professions, and instead joined NRMs for whom they became full-time workers. Neither concern was of particular interest to government authorities. Since parents needed the coercive power of the government to remove their children from NRMs, they began to strategize on ways to get the government aligned to their concern.

Meanwhile, as the secular cult awareness groups formed, the Christian countercult movement was well underway. In fact, prior to the mid-1970s, the countercultists produced almost all of the material on the subject of cults, certainly that circulating outside of sociology departments in universities. Additionally, a few of the Christian countercult groups had both a stable organization and a national distribution system for their literature. At one level, it appeared that a strong coalition was in the making. However, Christian countercult literature also presented problems for the new anticultists. Since the latter could not build a program around their true concern (disapproval of their children's choices), they had to generate a polemic against cults in general. Christian literature also broadly attacked cults, but centered the attack upon some older, more successful groups and included some large influential groups such as the Mormons and Unitarians, and even Roman Catholics. Each time the cult awareness movement gained an audience with legislators, asking them to act against cults, their efforts were undermined by the Christian literature. When that literature was circulated around a state assembly, outspoken legislators tended quickly and tactfully to withdraw support from any legislation that suggested disapproval of the religious affiliation of their fellow legislators.[15]

At the same time, some of the more prominent Christian writers on cults, such as Martin, clearly understood that those who branded conversionist groups like the NRMs as manipulative and deceitful could easily turn on Evangelical Christian groups and attack them on the same ground.[16] Thus, only a few Evangelicals joined sociologist Ron Enroth in aligning themselves with the new anticultists.[17]

PROGRAM AND IDEOLOGY

Even before finding a perspective that provided a launching pad for a broad assault upon NRMs, anticultists found a tactic that offered some alleviation of their problem—deprogramming. In its very first newsletter, the CFF defined deprogramming as

> … the process of releasing victims from the control of individuals and organizations who exploit other individuals through the use of mind control techniques. Once released, the victims, rid of the fear that held them in bondage, are encouraged to again think for themselves and to take their rightful place in society, free from further threats to their peace and security.[18]

Not covered by the formal definition, deprogramming, as touted by CFF, involved the detaining of the subject (sometimes kidnapping the subject off the street) and forcing him/her to participate in an intense harangue denigrating the subject's

religious group and its founder/leader. The victim of deprogramming was suddenly cut off from any support supplied by other members of the group and confronted with the emotional outpouring of parents and other family members begging them to renounce the group and straighten up their lives. By the late 1970s, the number of deprogrammings was increasing steadily. Ted Patrick, the man who "discovered" the deprogramming process, quit his job with the State of California and became a full-time professional deprogrammer in late 1971. His book, *Let Our Children Go!,* describing and popularizing his work appeared in 1976.[19]

By the mid 1970s, the leaders of the cult awareness movement freely used the term "brainwashing" to describe the process of becoming and remaining involved in an NRM. Potential members were described as psychologically vulnerable individuals who combined an intense youthful idealism with an inability to adjust to their social situation, especially in college.

According to the developing polemic, it was this naive young individual who was attacked by the cult. The first step was, through deceit, to trick the person into attending a group event. There, without revealing their true goals, group leaders began a subtle process of manipulation that included staged smiles, openness, and happiness expressed by members of the group. Before the potential recruit could think about what was occurring, he/she would be enticed (coerced) into membership and then held in that membership by the repeated application of subtle psychological techniques. The recruit gradually lost his/her ability to choose another way. The understanding of this process was, in fact, developed from a superficial presentation of the recruitment process of one group, the Unification Church of Rev. Sun Myung Moon (b. 1920), which often recruited street people by first inviting them to dinner. Only after the potential recruit gained a favorable impression of the group did a discussion of group belief and practice begin. However, as a whole, NRMs had a more standard approach that began with an introduction to the group. There was, in fact, no way to hide what was occurring when one first visited a Hindu temple whose members adopted Indian dress.

Early anticultists found substantiation for the use of brainwashing as a descriptive term from psychologist Robert Jay Lifton's book, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism,*[20] which described the processes of thought control used in Korean prison camps on American POWs imprisoned during the Korean War and compared them with the various practices operative in different social groups, including revivalistic religious groups.

Not only was deprogramming seen as necessary to "freeing" a person psychologically trapped in a group, but some form of continued postdeprogramming counseling was also recommended. This added perspective on the problems of people who were deprogrammed led to the formation of several rehabilitation centers, the most famous being the Freedom of Thought Foundation in Tucson, Arizona, and they continue to be an important part of deprogramming efforts.[21]

In spite of the developing secular argument against the cults, government authorities as a whole turned a deaf ear to parental pleas. The 1970s were fast coming to a

close, and the cult awareness movement appeared to be dying a slow death. Then everything changed.

JONESTOWN AND THE REVIVAL OF ANTICULTISM

On November 18, 1978, Congressman Leo J. Ryan (1925–1978), those who had accompanied him to Guyana to visit the communal settlement of the Peoples Temple, and some 900 followers of the Temple including its leader Jim Jones (1931–1978) died in combined acts of murder and suicide. In spite of the many books that have appeared, including several by survivors, what occurred at Jonestown is still far from clear. Some facts, such as how many died by murder and how many by suicide, may never be known. Whatever questions remain concerning the events at Jonestown, the tragedy of Jonestown played a key role in the revival of the cult awareness movement. As the story of the disaster at Jonestown began to unravel in the media, the group suddenly became a cult. It was the subject of a U.S. Senate hearing and then a Congressional investigation, and, over the next two years, cult awareness advocates worked to turn it into the symbol of everything that was bad about NRMs. The year 1979 became a bumper year for books on the issue of cults. Attacks on NRMs through state legislatures were launched, and, finally, a more or less stable national cult awareness organization finally emerged.

Senator Robert Dole took the lead in responding to Jonestown. Even before Congress prepared for hearings on Congressman Ryan's death, Dole organized a set of hearings based upon the suggestion that Jonestown was a harbinger of tragedies about to break forth from youth-oriented NRMs such as the Unification Church. The hearing, originally designed to provide a platform for cult awareness spokespersons, turned into a sideshow as spokespersons for NRMs demanded equal time, and as civil libertarians and a new group of scholars who studied NRMs through the 1970s emerged in public to counter the major accusations against the cult with the data of their research. Dole's zeal and public support for the anticultists was considerably softened by the entrance into the hearings of a senator from Utah, Orrin Hatch, who happened to be a Mormon.

Also, in the wake of Jonestown, anticult bills appeared in Massachusetts, Illinois, Minnesota, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Texas, Maryland, Oregon, and, most importantly, New York. These bills varied widely in their sophistication and support. Most were defeated at the hearing stage as civil libertarians, representatives of mainline churches, and experts on NRMs mobilized against the legislation. The one exception was New York, where the Unification Church, the best known and most disliked of the several NRMs, had its headquarters and seminary. The Unification Church was an issue in the state as it pursued a state charter for the seminary at Barrytown; and in 1977, a state assemblyman sponsored one of the more frivolous anticult bills that would have made it a felony for anyone to found or promote a "pseudo-religion," whatever that was. The 1980 New York legislation, generally known as the Lasher bill for its author Assemblyman Howard Lasher, would have amended the mental

health codes to allow parents widespread powers of conservatorship for purposes of deprogramming their offspring, specifically adult offspring, who joined one of the NRMs. The bill passed the assembly twice but was vetoed by the governor on both occasions. By the time of the second veto, it had become obvious that such legislation was not going anywhere nationally, and further efforts that were taking a significant amount of anticult resources were abandoned.

Most importantly, the Jonestown tragedy revitalized the cult awareness movement and provided the motivation for its reorganization. Taking the lead in that restructuring was the old Citizens Freedom Foundation (soon to become known as the Cult Awareness Network, or CAN) and the relatively new American Family Foundation. In November 1979, a date appropriately chosen to coincide with the first anniversary of Jonestown, 65 people from 31 cult awareness groups met in Chicago, Illinois, to reorganize the ineffective International Foundation for Individual Freedom. IFIF was too decentralized to accomplish its self-assigned task, but participants reached an agreement to seize the initiative provided by Jonestown. After some debate they decided to reorganize around the Citizens Freedom Foundation, the strongest of the regional groups. CFF became the Citizens Freedom Foundation–Information Services, and the 1979 meeting was designated as the first of what became annual national meetings. Regional affiliated groups in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Southern California agreed to assume different tasks.

The new organization still did not provide the strength many felt was needed by the movement, and in 1983 a five-year plan was placed before CFF's leadership. It suggested that CFF needed to build a more stable organization, one that could gain legitimacy in the public eye as the most knowledgeable source of information on cults. Four specific goals were set: gain financial stability, develop professional management, create an efficient communications system, and publish a quality newsletter. As a first step in implementing this program, in 1984, CFF changed its name to Cult Awareness Network of the Citizens Freedom Foundation and soon became known simply as the Cult Awareness Network (CAN). A central headquarters was established in Chicago, and an executive director hired (Cynthia Kisser remained in her position from 1987 until CAN was closed following the Scott case in 1996). The national office was organized to respond to inquiries from the media, academia, and individuals. An aggressive public relations program was initiated to place CAN before the public.

Simultaneously with the reorganization of CFF, the American Family Foundation (AFF) was founded under the leadership of John Clark. Clark (d. 1999), a psychiatrist in practice in Weston, Massachusetts, was the leading public spokesperson for the cult awareness movement through the 1970s, but was largely silenced after receiving a formal reprimand from the Massachusetts Psychiatric Association related to his anticult activities. In contrast to the more activist approach of CFF/CAN, AFF was conceived as an organization of professionals who focused upon research and education. It provided a place where academics, psychological professionals, and social scientists could relate to the movement and launched a program of public education and issued a set of publications centered upon *The Advisor,*

its newsletter, and the *Cult Studies Journal,* modeled upon standard academic journals.

The emergence of AFF and the reorganization of CAN signaled an important transition in the cult awareness movement. The many cult awareness groups that formed across the country in the 1970s were created and led largely by parents concerned with the membership of their sons and daughters in the more controversial of the NRMs. These groups were relatively small, and at any particular moment, a small minority of parents was concerned about their offspring's association with these groups. By the early 1980s, only a few were able to sustain any zeal, either because their problem was resolved or because they decided to live with the unhappy situation.

However, along the way, parents discovered a variety of experts willing to join their cause. The most important of these were psychological professionals, some of whom were quick to identify with the plight of the disturbed parents. These professionals became expert witnesses in court cases and addressed the legislative hearings attempting to investigate the cults. Meanwhile, through the early 1980s, in large part as CFF implemented the goals of its five-year plan, these professionals also assumed control of the new CAN. After 1984, the majority of the board members and speakers at the annual conference were professionals (a natural change given the attempts of the organization to gain legitimacy). Though CAN and AFF developed as quite separate organizations, they worked together on many fronts, developed interlocking boards, and combined lobbying efforts in Washington, D.C. Outsiders had difficulty distinguishing them.[22] Basically, while AFF focused upon public education, CAN assumed a more activist role in spreading the cult awareness perspective in the media and relating directly to parents who had relatives in various NRMs.

The transition to professional control of CAN was also somewhat dictated by the intense controversy over deprogramming, which hit CFF in the early 1980s. The spread of deprogramming created a strong reaction. People who were successfully deprogrammed denounced the treatment they received from deprogrammers. Christian countercult spokespersons criticized deprogramming for its use of "un-Christian tactics." Most importantly, CAN's leadership realized that it was legally vulnerable for the activities of members, including deprogrammers. Already in 1981, the organization took steps to separate itself from the practice of deprogramming and advocated what is usually termed "exit counseling," a form of counseling into which the member of the cult enters voluntarily.

In the United States, by the mid-1980s, the actual number of deprogrammings dropped significantly, though they continued to occur with the aid of the informal network built around CAN's most activist members across the country. Through the 1980s, CAN's office in Chicago, while formally denying any association with deprogramming, freely referred people to activist members known to keep lists of deprogrammers. These activists then referred members to deprogrammers. Deprogrammers, especially those who lacked a public profile, relied upon referrals through the CAN network for a steady supply of paying clients.[23]

THE RISE AND FALL OF BRAINWASHING[24]

In the mid-1970s, the primary understanding of destructive cults as centers engaged in brainwashing their members through what was variously termed "coercive persuasion," "mind control," and/or "thought control" was developed. Central to that development was the trial of newspaper heiress Patty Hearst (b. 1954) in San Francisco, California, in 1975. Hearst was kidnapped by a radical political group, the Symbionese Liberation Army, and endured an intensive indoctrination program that included considerable personal abuse. However, eventually Hearst converted to the group and participated in a bank robbery where she was photographed carrying a weapon. When finally captured, she was tried for armed robbery.[25]

During the trial, the defense suggested that Hearst was brainwashed and thus not responsible for her actions. The jury rejected that argument and convicted her. However, Margaret Singer (1921–2003), one of the psychologists who testified at that trial, even though for technical reasons was not allowed to speak on the brainwashing issue, testified the following year as an expert in a case in which a conservatorship was sought over five members of the Unification Church. She testified that the members, all young adults, were victimized by artful and designing people who subjected them to a process of coercive persuasion. As a result, the five should, she recommended, be sent for a period of reality therapy to the Freedom of Thought Foundation in Tucson.

Singer later founded a counseling service for former members of NRMs, most of whom were separated from their groups through deprogramming. Through the early 1980s she developed her concept of brainwashing, which became the keystone of the cult awareness polemic against cults. The testimony of Singer and several colleagues who accepted and reinforced her perspective was crucial in a series of multimillion dollar judgments against a string of NRMs. She became a professional witness who devoted herself full-time to legal consultation.

Singer's work became the subject of intense debate in both psychological and sociological circles. Her initial assertions were received as if they constituted a new and radical theory. Given its implicit rejection of some strong trends in psychology over patient rights, the burden of proof was placed upon Singer to provide supporting evidence of her perspective. The result of that debate was the overwhelming rejection of her approach to NRMs by her academic colleagues, though a handful of psychological professionals such as Louis J. West were vocal supporters.[26] However, through the 1980s Singer's thought was accepted by the courts and strongly influenced the deliberations of juries.

At the same time, the conflict between Singer and the great majority of her academic colleagues who studied NRMs finally led to a series of actions that resulted in the collapse of her work on brainwashing. Those events began in 1983 when a proposal was made to the American Psychological Association (APA) that a task force be established to examine and report on the techniques of coercive persuasion being used by various psychological and religious groups. In 1984 the "Task Force on Deceptive and Indirect Methods of Persuasion and Control" with Margaret Singer

as chairperson was established. The Task Force report was submitted for review in 1987. Both outside reviewers and two members of the Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility for Psychology concurred in the inadequacies of the report, and the Board rejected it. In a memorandum to Singer and the committee members dated May 11, 1987, it cited the report for its lack of both "scientific rigor" and an "even-handed critical approach." It noted that, given the evaluation of the report, members of the committee could not use their work on the committee to credential themselves in the future.

The action of the APA affected a court case in 1989–1990, *U.S. v. Fishman.* In his defense, which concerned the relationship between Mr. Fishman and the Church of Scientology, Fishman called upon Singer and another colleague, sociologist Richard Ofshe, to testify to the deleterious effects of the Church of Scientology's manipulation of him. The key document in the case became a lengthy restatement of the position of the previous APA brief and an analysis of the writings and statements of Singer written by psychologist Dick Anthony. Anthony argued persuasively that Singer postulated a "robot theory of brainwashing" that lacked scientific support.[27] The court accepted his arguments, and, as a result, Singer and Ofshe were denied the stand. Fishman's defense collapsed. As a result of the Fishman ruling, published in 1990, both Singer and Ofshe were subsequently denied the stand in several additional cases. Clearly, the Fishman case set a precedent for courts to accept the position of the great majority of scholars of NRMs rather than the perspective of Singer and others sympathetic to her idea of brainwashing.

The ruling in the Fishman case, soon affirmed by similar rulings in other cases, meant that brainwashing could no longer be used to defend the practice of deprogramming. This fact had some significant consequences a few years later. In the meantime some equally significant changes occurred.

Possibly the most important event in the years after the Fishman ruling, though not immediately connected to it, was the Church of Scientology's 1992 settlement of its long-term dispute with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). This dispute cost the church millions of dollars and tied up the church's legal resources. Once the IRS problem was settled, the church turned its attention to CAN, which it blamed for many of its problems. A variety of Scientologists joined CAN and attended its annual meeting. However, as Scientologists were identified, they were systematically denied entrance to the gathering. One by one the Scientologists sued for breach of contract (attendance at the meeting being listed as a benefit of membership). As each case was filed, the process of discovery went forward. And Scientology's lawyers began deposing key people in the CAN network. Though none of the cases got past a first hearing in the court, each case produced several dispositions, and, as the number of cases mounted, CAN lost its legal insurance. The depositions began to reveal the way CAN facilitated deprogrammings in stark contrast to its stated public policy.

The major consequence of Scientology's information gathering came in a most unexpected event. Priscilla Coates, a longtime CAN operative on the West Coast, took a referral from CAN's national office that she passed on to deprogrammer Rick Ross. He then attempted to deprogram Jason Scott, a member of a Pentecostal

Church in Seattle, Washington. Ross was unsuccessful, and in 1995 Scott sued. Learning of the case, the Church of Scientology loaned one of its lawyers, Rick Moxin, to Scott, and Moxin brought in all the data gathered on CAN's operation into the case. He won a five-million-dollar judgment, one million of which went against CAN. The Scott case bankrupted CAN. A coalition of cults it had attacked bought its assets and now run a new Cult Awareness Network that is active in religious freedom causes.

The demise of CAN was a most significant event in the overall effort of the cult awareness movement to mobilize public support against those groups that were labeled cults. That movement preceded the formation of CAN, and the movement continues. AFF continued in the wake of the fall of the brainwashing theory developed by Singer and attempted to find either new approaches to brainwashing or another theory that would be useful in describing what its members consider the destructive nature of cult life. A variety of different approaches have been offered by scholars such as Paul Martin, Janja Lalich, Benjamin Zablocki, and Steven Kent,[28] but none of the alternatives found significant support among courts, academia, or others.[29] Meanwhile, the number of cases in which brainwashing was introduced as a substantive part of the case has significantly diminished, though they did not entirely disappear.

Meanwhile, through the 1980s and 1990s, as the drama around brainwashing and CAN unfolded, the Christian countercult movement moved forward.[30] Not active on the legal front, Christian countercultists primarily worked to warn Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christians of the beliefs and practices of NRMs with the aim of dissuading any of them attracted to an NRM from leaving the church and joining it. The countercult effort peaked in the 1990s with hundreds of countercult groups publishing and distributing millions of pieces of literature throughout the Christian community.

The countercult movement, however, was having its own problems. In the last years of his life, Martin led efforts to form the Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR), an organization that attempted to bring the many countercult ministries into a fellowship that could provide a number of services and generally improve the countercult position within the Evangelical movement as a whole. At the same time, the movement began to see its role primarily as one of providing an apologetic basis for countering cults rather than fostering missionary work among members of NRMs.

However, EMNR ran into a variety of problems, especially as it attempted to reign in the excesses of some ministries and deal with some questionable financial practices of others. One by one, some of the larger ministries withdrew, including, following Martin's death, his own organization. EMNR was beset with some key disagreements over whether to align more closely with the secular anticult movement and adopt some form of brainwashing theory to the understanding of cults. Most recently, a number of EMNR's longtime leaders developed a different approach to NRMs, emphasizing evangelism rather than simply writing harsh apologetics. Thus, as the

new century began, a number of EMNR's leaders withdrew and began operating separately.

CONCLUSION

A decade after the Jason Scott case, one can see how the demise of CAN brought to an end (at least in North America) the cult wars. The controversies that surrounded NRMs did not end, but the ongoing debates largely moved out of the courts. An effort to recreate CAN in the late 1990s proved a failure.[31] One last gasp effort in 1998–1999 to get the state of Maryland to adopt some anticult legislation also proved a failure.[32]

CAN's sister organization, the AFF, continues to operate, and some former deprogrammers continue to run exit counseling services. Neither AFF nor the counseling services provoked the critique that CAN and deprogramming did, and scholars previously labeled "cult apologists" now regularly attend AFF meetings. Though cult awareness organizations and cult experts will persist into the foreseeable future, their ability to oppose the spread and activities of NRMs in North America seems destined to fade. They apparently still have some voice in Europe, where the cult wars to some extent continue, though in a very different context than in North America.[33]

NOTES

1. On the criticism of the new religions of the sixteenth century, see George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962).

2. (Milwaukee: Young Churchman, 1898).

3. William C. Irvine, comp., *Timely Warnings* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1917); Irvine, *Heresies Exposed* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 29th printing, 1993).

4. This approach to presenting Christianity within Spiritualism continues to the present. See, for example, the essays on "The Bible and Psychical Research," in *Life, Death and Psychical Research,* ed. J.D. Pearce-Higgins and G. Stanley Whitby (London: Rider, 1973), 101–93. Favorite passages are I Samuel 28 and Matthew 17:1–9.

5. See, for example, Rochard l. Swain, *The Real Key to Christian Science* (New York: Revell, 1917); James H. Snowden, *The Truth about Christian Science* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1920); Jane T. Stoddart, *The Case Against Spiritualism* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1919).

6. See, for example, Gaius Glenn Atkins, *Modern Religious Cults and Movements* (New York: Revell, 1923); or Charles W. Ferguson, *The Confusion of Tongues: A Review of Modern Isms* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1929).

7. Jan K. Van Baalen, *The Chaos of Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1938; 27th printing, 1975).

8. The importance of the pre-1960 clashes between NRMs and the powers that be are covered in Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). He demonstrated the manner in which tensions early in the twentieth century presaged the cult wars of the 1980s and 1990s.

9. On the history of the larger cult awareness movement (or the anticult movement) in the United States, see Anson D. Shupe and David G. Bromley, *The New Vigilantes: Deprogrammers, Anti-Cultists, and the New Religions* (Beverley Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980); Anson D. Shupe and David G. Bromley, *A Documentary History of the Anti-Cult Movement* (Arlington, TX: Center for Social Research, University of Texas at Arlington, 1985); and J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia Handbook of Cults in America* (New York: Garland, 1986).

10. On the origin and development of evangelicalism, see Mark Ellingsen, *The Evangelical Movement: Growth, Impact, Controversy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988); and Derek J. Tidwell, *Who Are the Evangelicals?: Tracing the Roots of the Modern Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994).

11. Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1965).

12. On the emergence of a new generation of NRMs at the end of the 1960s see Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah, eds., *The New Religious Consciousness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Jacob Needleman and George Baker, eds., *Understanding the New Religions* (New York: Seabury, 1978); and Steven M. Tipton, *Getting Saved from the Sixties: Moral Meaning in Conversion and Cultural Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

13. On the Children of God (now known as The Family International) see James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Sex Slander and Salvation: Investigating the Family/Children of God* (Stanford, CA: Center for Academic Publication, 1994).

14. While a decade later, the successor organization to the Children of God, The Family International, became known for their questionable sexual practices (especially the use of sex for evangelism, or flirty fishing) and in the mid 1980s face charges of sexual child abuse, at this stage of the cult controversy, the group was primarily charged with taking young adults out of a normal career trajectory.

15. The extensive Christian countercult movement based in the Evangelical denominations in the United States is beyond the scope of this essay. With a few prominent exceptions, its spokespersons kept their distance from CAN, refrained from participation in activist programs based either on deprogramming or on government action, and continues to emphasize its doctrinal differences with all non-Trinitarian Christian belief systems.

16. Cf. Walter R. Martin, *The New Cults* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House, 1980). Recent events in Europe have, of course, confirmed the accuracy of Martin's predictions concerning attacks upon Evangelicals as cults.

17. Cf. Ronald Enroth, *Youth Brainwashing, and the Extremist Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977).

18. "What Is Deprogramming?" *Citizens Freedom Foundation News* 1, no. 1 (November 1974): 1.

19. Patrick, Ted, and Tom Dulack, *Let Our Children Go!* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976).

20. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961).

21. At present, the primary rehabilitation center for deprogrammed cult members is Wellspring Retreat & Resource Center at Athens, Ohio, headed by Christian psychologist Paul R. Martin. Martin is the author of *Cult Proofing your Kids* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993).

22. It should be noted that the psychologists and other professionals who identified themselves with the anticult movement have a distinct problem. Almost none of them ever studied the groups that they were now to evaluate as experts. Their knowledge of NRMs came almost totally from the stories of ex-members, accounts heavily distorted by the deprogramming

process. Their appraisals received constant negative critiques from the growing number of scholars who actually studied these and were broadly familiar with the literature, both pro and con, on different groups. The work of these scholars (which by the mid-1980s numbered in the hundreds) was a major irritant for the anticult movement and in the end led to the destruction of the brainwashing hypothesis.

23. CAN's continued involvement in referring people to deprogrammers was demonstrated in the Jason Scott case in 1995, and led to the sizable judgment against it. Also, in 1993, during his trial after a botched deprogramming attempt, it was revealed that, contrary to its stated public policy, CAN had paid deprogrammer Galen Kelly a monthly stipend for many months during the 1990s.

24. On the history of brainwashing and the saga of CAN see David G. Bromley and James T. Richardson, eds., *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1973); J. Gordon Melton, "Brainwashing and the Cults: The Rise and Fall of a Theory," http://www.cesnur.org/testi/melton.htm (accessed December 15, 2005); and especially Anson Shupe and Susan E. Darnell, *Agents of Discord: Deprogramming, Pseudo-Science, and the American Anticult Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006).

25. On Hearst see Shana Alexander, *Anyone's Daughter* (New York: Viking Press, 1979); Marilyn Baker and Sally Brompton, *Exclusive! The Inside Story of Patricia Hearst and the SLA* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); Patricia Campbell Hearst with Alvin Moscow, *Every Secret Thing* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982).

26. The details of the anticult position were best presented in the collection of papers in David A. Halperin, ed., *Psychodynamic Perspective in Religion, Sect, and Cult* (Boston: J. Wright, 1983). The critique can be seen in Bromley and Richardson, eds., *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy.* By 1984/85, the issue was largely decided and while anticult scholars continued to publish and circulate papers reflecting the anticult perspective, these were published almost exclusively by anticult organizations such as AFF and found little audience in the larger scholarly community.

27. See Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Law, Social Science and the 'Brainwashing' Exception to the First Amendment," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 10 (1992): 5–29, for a discussion of this phase of the controversy.

28. See, for example, Janja Lalich, *Bounded Choice: True Believers and Charismatic Cults* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Benjamin Zablocki, "Toward a Demystified and Disinterested Scientific Theory of Brainwashing," in *Misunderstanding Cults: Searching for Objectivity in a Controversial Field,* ed. Benjamin Zablocki and Thomas Robbins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001): 159–214; and Stephen A. Kent, "Brainwashing Programs in The Family/Children of God and Scientology," in *Misunderstanding Cults,* 349–78. Steven Kent wrote several papers proposing very different approaches to "brainwashing."

29. The post-CAN attempts to revive consideration of brainwashing may have been a situation of too little too late. The approaches are in some cases mutually exclusive, especially the approaches of Kent and Zablocki, but more importantly, with the discontinuance of deprogramming, the need for a theory of brainwashing to defend the actions of anticult activists has simply withered away. None of the new theories have, to date, faced a hearing in a trial to determine if they are persuasive and strong enough to withstand cross-examination.

30. The most substantive study of the countercult movement is by Douglas E. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness: An Introduction to the Christian Countercult* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

31. Margaret Singer attempted to rehabilitate her reputation with a book-length defense of her position, *Cults in Our Midst: The Hidden Menace in Our Everyday Life* (San Francisco:

Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995), with Janja Lalich. She never, however, attempted a systematic refutation of the criticism of her position put together by Anthony and others, though she had ample opportunity. No longer able to testify in court, she sued the American Psychological Association and a number of scholars who voiced their criticisms of her work, but her case was tossed out of court with prejudice, and she had to pay the court costs of the defendants.

32. On the Maryland effort, see Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Cult Wars in Maryland: An Introduction to the Task Force to Study the Effects of Cult Activities on Public Senior Higher Education Institutions," http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/cultsect/mdtaskforce/cultwars.htm#intro.

33. On the history of the European phase of the cult awareness (or anticult) movement see James A. Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to the New Religious Movements* (London: Tavistock, 1985); and James T. Richardson, ed., *Regulating Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2004).

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Evangelical Christian Countercult Movement

Douglas E. Cowan

> The only reason for becoming familiar with other religions and other religious writings would be in order to show those who follow these false systems wherein the error lies and thereby to rescue them.
>
> *—Dave Hunt*

> In other words, the First Amendment only works as long as we accept Christian principles. If it does not, then it gets what it gets—all kinds of religious evils protected by the very amendment which God intended to bless the nation.
>
> *—John Ankerberg and John Weldon*

> This means that those today who participate in false religions like Hinduism and Islam are not viewed by God as groping their way toward Him, but are viewed as worshiping a false God.
>
> *—Ron Rhodes*

INTRODUCTION

The Local Church: A Countercult Vignette

The Local Church movement was founded in Shanghai, China, in the late 1920s by Nee Shu-tsu, who later called himself Watchman Nee, the name by which he is best known in the west. Dramatically converted to evangelical Christianity in 1920, Nee's beliefs were deeply affected by the dispensational theology of both the Keswick Revival and the Plymouth Brethren. Early in his career, though, not unlike other religious reformers, he concluded that denominational competition among churches—which was no less fierce on the mission fields of China than it was anywhere else—was unbiblical, and that the principal division among Christians should be geographic and neither doctrinal nor ecclesiastical. That is, there should be only one *local* church to which all Christians in that area belong. Today, hundreds of thousands of believers worldwide gather in local churches, guided and inspired by

the voluminous teachings of Watchman Nee and his closest partner in the work, Witness Lee. Local Church theology is strongly evangelical and holds to the Bible as the "complete and only divine revelation," as well as to belief in the Trinity, the need for the spiritual regeneration of all people, and the virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, physical resurrection, and imminent return of Jesus Christ.

On December 31, 2001, however, after numerous attempts to resolve their concerns amicably, The Local Church and nearly 100 Local Church congregations in the United States filed a defamation suit against Harvest House, an evangelical Christian publisher, and two of its best-selling authors, countercult apologists John Ankerberg and John Weldon. At issue was the entry Ankerberg and Weldon included on The Local Church in their *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions,* which Harvest House published.[1] Seeking more than 130 million dollars in damages, The Local Church claimed that its presence in a book devoted entirely to exposing what the authors regard as devious and dangerous "cults" was defamatory, egregiously misrepresenting their beliefs and practices, and maliciously impugning the reputation of their founders, Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

Unfortunately, in these matters The Local Church was no stranger to the courtroom. Nearly 15 years earlier, Witness Lee and The Local Church in Anaheim won a multimillion dollar judgment against another countercult apologist, Neil Duddy, for his book, *The God-Men.*[2] At that trial, numerous scholars of new religions testified on behalf of The Local Church, and Justice Leon Seyranian found that the "defendants intended to convey to the readers all of the false statements set forth above or recklessly disregarded the false and defamatory meanings that would be conveyed to the readers."[3] Handing down his decision, Justice Seyranian awarded Witness Lee and the other plaintiffs nearly 12 million dollars in compensatory and punitive damages—only a fraction of which they were actually able to collect.

In their suit against Harvest House, Ankerberg, and Weldon, The Local Church contended that the authors' introduction to the *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions,* which claims among other things that cults are responsible in part for "the ebb of Christian influence in America,"[4] for the ruin of "tens of millions of lives,"[5] and that Satan "spiritually speaking, reaps significant rewards from cult membership,"[6] defames their organization because anyone who reads that introduction will quite reasonably associate those characteristics with all the groups discussed in the book. Following Justice Seyranian for a moment, whether Ankerberg and Weldon actually believe what they have written about The Local Church or not, and it seems clear that they do, the larger question is whether their work "recklessly disregarded the false and defamatory meanings that would be conveyed to the readers." Given the evangelical history and beliefs of The Local Church, in each of their numerous letters prior to filing the suit, the plaintiffs voiced the same, relatively uncomplicated concern: "We do not know why you chose to include us in a book of cults."[7]

Why, indeed?

This chapter explores the evangelical Christian countercult, one of two principal countermovements that have emerged in North America in response to the appearance and proliferation of new religions, especially in the latter half of the twentieth

century. Admittedly, within the broader spectrum of evangelical Christianity in North America, principally the United States, the countercult is something of a fringe movement.[8] Prior to the advent of the Internet, there were never more than a few hundred countercult apologists, with certainly fewer than 50 publishing commercially or consistently. Because of the rather exclusive religious vision of evangelical Christianity, though, and the general level of suspicion in the evangelical community about alternative religions, the countercult makes itself felt in a number of different ways and has had an influence far beyond its relatively small numbers. Walk into almost any evangelical bookstore, for example, and you will find shelves devoted to "Spiritual Warfare," "Spiritual Counterfeits," or "Cults and World Religions," as well as a seemingly endless supply of books on every non-Christian religion imaginable. Numerous countercult organizations such as the Spiritual Counterfeits Project (SCP), the Christian Research Institute (CRI), Personal Freedom Outreach, Mormonism Research Ministry, Answers in Action, the Berean Call, Watchman Fellowship, Saints Alive in Jesus, and the Utah Lighthouse Ministry regularly publish books, magazines, newsletters, videos, and audiotapes on what they regard as the ongoing problem of cults in America. Some, like Saints Alive or the Utah Lighthouse, concentrate on one or two religions—in these two cases, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Others, like Ankerberg and Weldon, attack any religious group they consider at variance with their particular brand of evangelical Christianity —which countercult apologists all but invariably refer to as "biblical Christianity." Some countercult literature, like the glossy *Christian Research Journal,* is readily available in large chain bookstore as well as specialty Christian shops. Others, like the *Watchman Expositor, The Berean Call,* or the *Saints Alive in Jesus Newsletter* are available by subscription only. Still others, such as the Apologetics Index, the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, or the Resource Center for Theological Research, can only be accessed online. Many countercult apologists choose to confront targeted religionists directly, picketing or handing out anti-Mormon leaflets at the opening of new Latter-day Saints temples, for example, or organizing "mission trips" to engage visitors to religious festivals put on by suspect groups. This kind of aggressive, confrontational proselytizing, however, has resulted in considerable tension within the evangelical community and something of a split among current and former countercult apologists. With the ready availability of Internet access, countercult evangelism on the World Wide Web has become increasingly popular, and hundreds of countercult Web sites have appeared in recent years. Offline, on the home front, the church-based "congregational cult seminar" is a staple of evangelical countercult activity, often demonizing target groups while boosting evangelical confidence in the superiority of their own religious world view.

Though relatively small within the larger orbit of evangelical Christianity, the countercult is still a complex subculture, ranging from fully orbed professional organizations that employ full-time staff and enjoy access to print, radio, television, and Internet media to amateur apologists who operate on shoestring budgets and publish their material on low-cost Web sites, and whose methods range from confrontation with putative cult members to printing endless reams of material decrying

this new religion or that. It has experienced significant enough internal tension to provoke conflict apologists over doctrine and method, to the point where some former participants have left the movement and actively sought alternate paths for their relations with new religions.

In this chapter, I do three things. First, since they operate from very different premises and in very different ways, I distinguish the evangelical Christian countercult from its more well known counterpart, the secular anticult movement. Second, I discuss the countercult's main beliefs, practices, and some of the controversies that have surrounded it. Third, I briefly consider internecine conflict in the countercult, and the changing vision that some former participants have for missionary activity among new religions.

EXITS AND MIGRATIONS: THE SECULAR ANTICULT AND THE CHRISTIAN COUNTERCULT

With the undeniable emergence of new religions in North America, two distinct countervailing movements have also appeared, both of which believe their mission is to warn the public about the dangers of these so-called "cults" and rescue those who have been supposedly taken in by deviant religious groups. These are first the *secular anticult*—which is best known perhaps for the coercive deprogramming tactics it employed from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s and included such groups as the Council on Mind Abuse, the old Cult Awareness Network[9] (CAN), and the American Family Foundation[10]—and second the principal focus of this chapter, the *evangelical Christian countercult,* devout believers who regard the growth of any new religion as a clear and present danger not only to Christianity, but to North American society at large. Although the general public might be more familiar with the secular anticult, with its lurid tales of charismatic leaders and brainwashed followers, historically the evangelical countercult has done far more to categorize and stigmatize new religious movements in the United States.

Just a few years after the publication of *The Book of Mormon* in 1830, for example, Eber Howe responded with a self-published treatise, *Mormonism Unvailed,* in which he "exposed" the flaws and fallacies in the nascent Latter-day faith.[11] The year 1899 saw the publication of George Hamilton Combs's *Some Latter-Day Religions.*[12] "For climacteric comicality," wrote Combs, a Disciples of Christ minister from Kansas City, Missouri, "Mormonism should be awarded the palm … Untruth was never more picturesque."[13] New religions of the nineteenth century—principally Christian Science, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah's Witnesses), and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—figured prominently in *The Fundamentals,* the series of booklets published between 1910 and 1915 as a reaction to theological liberalism, Biblical criticism, the theory of evolution, and the rise of alternative religious practice in the United States. In 1923, Gaius Glenn Atkins published *Modern Religious Cults and Movements,*[14] and in 1935, William Irvine's *Heresies Exposed* appeared.[15] In 1938, Christian Reformed minister Jan Karel van Baalen published the first of the "encyclopedic" treatments of suspect religious groups, *The Chaos of*

Cults: A Study in Present-Day Isms.[16] Although much of van Baalen's prose is less polemical than that of his countercult descendents, he was as clear as they are where the boundaries between true faith and false religion were drawn, and he consigned all religious traditions other than his particular stream of Christianity to a rather generic "paganism." "What, then, is the great difference between Christianity and paganism?" he asked in the introduction to the first edition of *The Chaos of Cults.*[17] "There can be no doubt but that Christianity stands apart from all other 'great religions' in that it teaches a God-made salvation while all others are autosoteric."[18] This last point is crucial in understanding the position from which the evangelical countercult approaches all other religious traditions.

While, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these authors and critics were not part of a self-identified countercult movement, they laid much of the conceptual and ideological foundation on which the evangelical countercult movement as it emerged after World War II was built, and to them the postwar countercult movement owes a considerable (and often unacknowledged) intellectual debt. Before discussing the modern evangelical countercult in more detail, however, it is important to discriminate in a general way between it and the secular anticult.[19] These distinctions emerge principally in the different ways each answers three central questions: What is a cult? Why do people join cults? And what is to be done when they do?

By and large, in all its activities the secular anticult movement is guided by what has come to be known as the "brainwashing hypothesis," the belief that new religions have an almost magical ability to effect complete, seemingly permanent personality changes in those with whom they come in contact. Through coordinated and intentional programs of "thought reform" or "thought control," the secular anticult alleges that new religions rob recruits of the ability to make independent decisions, to distinguish between right and wrong, and to function outside the control established by the group. A cult, in these terms then, is any group that operates in this way. Michael Langone, the executive director of the American Family Foundation (now the International Cultic Studies Association), defines a cult as

> a group or a movement that, to a significant degree, (a) exhibits great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea, or thing, (b) uses a thought-reform program to persuade, control, and socialize members, … (c) systematically induces states of psychological dependency in members, (d) exploits members to advance the leadership's goals, and (e) causes psychological harm to members, their families, and the community.[20]

Langone is quick to point out that according to this definition the particular beliefs of a group do not necessarily categorize it as a cult, and therefore cults need not be religious in nature, but may be "psychotherapeutic, political, or commercial."[21] Though there are a number of conceptual problems with Langone's definition—not least of what constitutes "a significant degree" of devotion or control—it is not difficult to see how the secular anticult understanding of "cultic" recruitment follows logically from it. Members join cults and remain within them because they have been "persuaded, controlled, and socialized" into "the group's unique pattern of

relationships, beliefs, values, and practices"[22] and because they have been "systematically induced" into a "state of psychological dependency."

The evangelical Christian countercult, on the other hand, largely rejects the brainwashing hypothesis, noting, as Gretchen Passantino does, that it is simply too subjective, too prone to its own abuse. "*Doctrinal* aberration," writes Passantino almost epigrammatically, "should distinguish the cults from Christianity, not mere social aberration."[23] Though many countercult apologists claim that their use of the term "cult" is not meant to be derogatory, they freely substitute such equally questionable phrases as "spiritual counterfeit," "false or heretical religion," or "spiritual fraud." In *Cult Watch,* for example, Ankerberg and Weldon state that "for our purposes a 'cult' may be loosely defined as a religious group having biblically unorthodox and/or heretical teachings and which may fail to meet basic ethical standards of Christian doctrine or practice."[24] For Hank Hanegraaff, president of the Christian Research Institute, the largest professional countercult organization in North America, "a cult is any group that deviates from the orthodox teachings of the historic Christian faith being derived from the Bible and confirmed through the ecumenical creeds."[25] Alan Gomes, a professor at Talbot School of Theology who is also the series editor for the *Zondervan Guide to Cults and Religious Movements,* contends that "cults must be defined theologically, not behaviorally; examining the group's doctrinal system is the only way to determine whether it is a cult."[26] Conversely, Rob Bowman, a former CRI staff member, argues that "cult" is a term simply too loaded with cultural baggage to be helpful in describing these groups. "When referring to heretical religious groups," he contends, "I prefer to call them heretical religions, or pseudo-Christian religions, or heretical sects. These labels are more descriptive and less prejudicial than the label of cult."[27] While it is unclear just how Bowman's suggestions are any less prejudicial than "cult," what is clear from these few examples is that evangelical Christianity—as interpreted by the countercult apologist—is the benchmark against which deviance is measured, and any religious group can be considered cultic to the degree that it deviates from that norm. If the secular anticult relies on a putative psychosocial definition, the evangelical countercult grounds its opposition to other religious groups—whether new religions or established world faiths—in its theological understanding of the unique, exclusive, and all-sufficient nature of conservative Protestant Christianity.

For the evangelical countercult, the reasons why people join these groups are similarly unequivocal. Rather than brainwashing or thought control per se, countercult apologists see themselves engaged in spiritual warfare, soldiers on the front lines of a cosmic struggle between good and evil, God and Satan. "Despite whatever good intentions New Agers may have," writes Douglas Groothuis, "it is Satan, the spiritual counterfeiter himself, who ultimately inspires all false religions."[28] "Christians are involved in literal, spiritual warfare," he continues; they "are in combat conditions, with no demilitarized zones available this side of heaven."[29] "In spite of apparently wide differences among the cults," argues Dave Hunt, a prolific countercult writer and coauthor of *The God Makers,* one of the most pernicious examples of countercult polemics,[30] "beneath the surface, they all rest on a common foundation: the four lies

Satan used to trick Eve."[31] "Satan," he concludes, "is the author of every cult and false religion, and his imprint is clearly seen on them all."[32] Evangelical sociologist Ronald Enroth concurs, writing in *Youth, Brainwashing, and the Extremist Cults* that "from the Christian perspective, the so-called new age cults represent the most recent manifestation of an age-old struggle—the battle between God and God's adversary, Satan."[33] Ron Rhodes is another popular countercult apologist, like Bowman a former researcher at the Christian Research Institute, and the author of a number of books published by Harvest House under the rubric *Reasoning from the Scriptures with ….*[34] He writes that "if this disease goes unchecked,"—by which he means the alleged apathy of "true" Christians in the face of "the cancer of cultism [that] has been free to spread at an incredible, unprecedented rate in America"[35]—"you can count on the continued deterioration of America as well as the continued *culting* of America. If Christians do not act, *the cults will.* The war is on—and you as a Christian will be either a soldier in the midst of the conflict or a casualty on the sidelines."[36]

How one enters into the conflict and how one answers the question "What is to be done?" show the third level of distinction between the two groups. As I have noted elsewhere, "deliverance is the axis around which many of the other differences between the two movements revolve."[37] Although both the secular anticult and the evangelical countercult want to see people leave suspect groups, they differ significantly in their approach to the problem of exit and what it means to leave a cult. The secular anticult has been severely and quite rightly criticized for its practice of forcible exit—the kidnapping, enforced confinement, and abusive "deprogramming" of adult members of new religions. Though this kind of criminal behavior took place in North America principally from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, and has largely ceased with the bankruptcy and dismantling of the old Cult Awareness Network, it still occurs in other countries.[38] While the secular anticult has professionalized somewhat and attempted to distance itself from its more unsavory past, reconceptualizing deprogramming as "exit counseling" and "thought reform counseling,"[39] the basic purpose for which it exists remains the same: to facilitate the removal of adult members of new religions from the groups they have freely chosen to join. Once that exit is secured, however, and as long as the individual does not join another suspect group, the secular anticult basically loses interest in the case.

For countercult apologists, on the other hand, coming out of a suspect group is only half the battle. Conversion to evangelical Protestant Christianity is the ultimate goal. Countercult apologists are not satisfied simply to see individuals leave new religions, and their mission is not complete until they have convinced former members to embrace the kind of evangelicalism espoused by the apologist. According to the evangelical countercult, all world views, all faith choices, and all religious traditions other than conservative Christianity are ultimately flawed and will place one's eternal salvation in jeopardy. It is, therefore, incumbent upon true Christians, those who are not willing to stand on the sidelines while the spiritual conflict rages around them, to inform themselves about the new religions by which they are confronted, and to attempt to convince members of those groups to convert to evangelicalism as the

opportunity arises. Ron Rhodes, for example, points out that countercult apologists "can provide well-reasoned evidences to the non-believer as to why he ought to choose Christianity rather than any other religion. Apologetics can be used to show the unbeliever that all the other options in the smorgasbord of world religions *are not really options at all,* since they are false."[40] This conceptualization of the problem leads to the two principal functions of the evangelical countercult as it is both historically and currently constituted: the *apologetic-reinforcement,* which acts to keep Christian consumers of countercult material secure in the presumed superiority of their religious choice and the concomitant inferiority of all others, and the *apologetic-evangelistic,* which acts to confront and convert members of target groups. No matter how complicated the resulting exegesis or explanation becomes, however, evangelical countercult epistemology is predicated on a very simple equation: we are right, and you are wrong.

COUNTERCULT APOLOGETICS: WORLD VIEW MAINTENANCE AND EVANGELICAL CONFRONTATION

Organizationally, as I alluded to above, there are a number of axes along which the evangelical countercult may be explored and examined. Are we dealing with an individual apologist or a multistaff corporation? Is the organization professional, semiprofessional, or avocational? Does it operate solely online, or does it exist in the "real world" as well? What religious groups does it target? Is it concerned with only one group, like the Utah Lighthouse Ministry, or does it contend for the faith against any and all comers, like the Christian Research Institute? Is it operated by former members of particular groups, by people who have never known any faith home but evangelical Christianity, or some combination of both? How does it disseminate its apologetics? The advent of the Internet and the ready availability of low-cost Web hosting, for example, has vastly increased the number of semiprofessional and avocational apologists seeking to enter the field. Where, once, countercult apologists depended on the willingness of publishers such as Harvest House to release their material, or took the decidedly less attractive route of print self-publication, now, scores of evangelical Christians are mounting the cybernetic ramparts in defense of their faith.[41] Finally, is its primary focus proselytization of new religious adherents, the provision of information about new religions to fellow evangelicals, or something in between?

Apologetics and World View Maintenance

"All socially constructed worlds," writes Peter Berger in his classic work, *The Sacred Canopy,* "are inherently precarious"[42]—including, and perhaps especially, religious world views. Since the early part of the nineteenth century, scores of new religious movements have emerged in North America to challenge the cultural dominance of the Christian Church. While none has ever been able to compete with Christianity in terms of participant numbers or social influence, at the level of the individual

adherent each new religion represents a challenge to the exclusivity, superiority, and inevitability of the Christian world view. That is, soteriologically speaking, if there are other "ways to salvation" available, ways that are perhaps more attractive than Christianity, what compelling reason is there to stay in the Christian church? At its most basic level, the evangelical Christian world view is predicated on an exclusive claim to religious significance and soteriological efficacy. This claim is challenged in an equally basic way each time a new religion appears on the block and each time its adherents make their own religious claims—which are often implicitly or explicitly at odds with those made by evangelical Christians. Thus, demonstrating the flawed or fraudulent nature of all religious competitors becomes a primary mechanism in the maintenance of an evangelical Christian world view. Consider, for example, Douglas Groothuis and Craig Hawkins.

Like many countercult apologists, Groothuis believes that unless one's world view is predicated on a very particular Christian foundation, it is, by definition, false, and will ultimately demonstrate itself inadequate in providing adherents both the tools for a successful spiritual life and the assurance of salvation. In *Confronting the New Age,* Groothuis advocates what he calls "negative apologetics," which rather than offer positive reasons for embracing Christianity, "[presents] *reasons against* non-Christian perspectives."[43] For Groothuis and most of his countercult colleagues, "if non-Christian world views are largely based on false ideas, the weakness of those world views can be highlighted through argumentation," and "any world view not based on the truth of God's revelation in the Bible will prove itself faulty at key points."[44] For the evangelical countercult, Groothuis's equation is simple: "Your perspective doesn't make sense; and it doesn't fit the facts. Therefore, you shouldn't believe it."[45] His consideration of how these differences in world view will affect people in the long term is equally unambiguous: "Those who embrace Christ as Savior will live forever with him; those who continue to rebel against God will suffer eternal punishment."[46]

Craig Hawkins's contribution to the *Zondervan Guide to Cults and Religious Movements* series, *Goddess Worship, Witchcraft, and Neo-Paganism,* illustrates this logic very clearly in the arguments he provides for evangelicals to use when attempting to counter the religious claims of contemporary pagans. His final section on "Refutation of Arguments Used by Neo-Pagans to Support Their Positions on Revelation" is entitled "The Biblical Position on Divination." Here, he writes:

> a. Divination (as well as spiritism …) and those who practice it are expressly condemned in the Bible … b. Since divination is not permissible, *a fortiori* it is not a legitimate source of revelation, but only of deception. c. In the spirit of Deuteronomy 13:1–4, we are to reject all real or imagined revelations, whether originating through divination or otherwise, that contradicts the teachings of the Bible.[47]

While this may be an accurate interpretation of passages from Christian Scripture from certain evangelical perspectives,[48] it hardly provides an *a fortiori* argument for the preeminence of Christian revelation, and rather highlights the circular argumentation that informs much countercult reasoning. This is exemplified even

more clearly under Hawkins's "Arguments Used to Prove the Biblical Doctrine of Revelation":

> 1. God's definitive revelation to us is in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the second person of the trinity (Heb. 1:1–3). 2. The Bible is a true and authoritative revelation … 3. The Bible is sufficient revelation … 4. Since the revelations of neo-paganism violate or contradict the Bible, they are not true.[49]

As should be readily apparent, this is sophistry masquerading as logic. These are not arguments designed to convince anyone who does not already accept the premises on which they are based. That is, they are primarily intended to reinforce what evangelical Christians already believe about their faith, rather than provide a foundation from which to convert the followers of other faiths. Countercult apologists very often present their arguments as though they are meant for evangelism, as though they will be successful in converting new religious adherents.

Apologetics and Countercult Evangelism

However countercult ministries are socially organized, two types of evangelistic activity characterize their efforts: *proactive* evangelism, which revolves around planned encounters with adherents of different religious traditions, and *reactive* evangelism, which often uses countercult materials produced specifically to respond to an unplanned encounter with such an adherent.

Few countercult apologists simply trawl the streets looking for unsuspecting "cultists" to evangelize. Among other things, for what activists would regard as maximum effect, proactive evangelism requires a particular adherent population amongst which apologists can operate, a specific site at which their proselytization can take place, and, often, specialized training for those who want to engage in this type of activity. Anti-LDS ministries, for example, regularly target temple openings and festivals celebrating Latter-day Saint history and culture. For nearly 20 years, countercult activists have passed out evangelical tracts to visitors at the annual Manti, Utah, Miracle Pageant, which reenacts the sacred mythistory of the Latter-day Saints. During the 1980s and early 1990s, Saints Alive in Jesus, a countercult organization founded by former Latter-day Saint and *The God Makers* coauthor Ed Decker,[50] also sponsored yearly anti-Mormon conferences and "mission trips" to Utah. And, for many years, anti-Mormon activist Rob Sivulka has picketed a wide variety of LDS venues wearing a tee shirt or carrying signs emblazoned with his online ministry addresses—mormoninfo.org and josephlied.org—and shouting a variety of Bible verses at passersby. Not surprisingly, many Latter-day Saints, and not a few non-Mormon visitors, react negatively to this kind of confrontational activity. Indeed, reflecting on his experience of the 2005 Manti pageant and Sivulka's behavior there, John Morehead, former President of Evangelical Ministries to New Religions and who now practices what he calls an "incarnational missions strategy," was appalled (and not a little embarrassed) at the kind of disrespectful attitude it exemplifies.[51]

Despite the occasionally high profile aspect of proactive evangelism, reactive evangelism, and the materials designed to support it, is much more common in the countercult community. Indeed, a prominent subgenre in evangelical countercult apologetics is literature aimed specifically at discrediting competing religious world views when adherents of those world views interact with evangelicals (for example, when Jehovah's Witnesses or LDS missionaries knock on one's door). The Lutheran publishing house Concordia, for example, has released a number of small booklets in what it calls "The Response Series," which includes entries on a wide variety of faiths. Responding to what the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod regarded as an urgent need "for specialized literature to assist in the 'evangelization of persons who belong to anti-Christian sects and cults,'"[52] each booklet provides an overview of the group under consideration and suggests ways in which its views may be contrasted with "biblical Christianity." Many prominent countercult apologists have contributed to the *Zondervan Guide to Cults and Religious Movements* series, which follows a Thomist pattern of position description, argument, and refutation. For example, under "The Doctrine of God" in Hawkins's *Goddess Worship, Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism,*[53] we find "*A. Four Primary Neo-Pagan Positions on God Briefly Stated,*" "*B. Arguments Used by Neo-Pagans to Support Their Positions on God,*" "*C. Refutation of Arguments Used by Neo-Pagans to Support Their Positions on God,*" and "*D. Arguments used to Prove the Biblical Doctrine of God.*" In answer to the question, "Why this series?" Zondervan editors write: "This is an age when countless groups and movements, old and new, mark the religious landscape in our culture, leaving many people confused or uncertain in their search for spiritual truth and meaning. Because you may not have the time or opportunity to research these movements fully, these books provide essential and reliable information and insights."[54]

On the other hand, rather than a question-and-answer approach, in *How to Answer a Jehovah's Witness,* Robert Morey has simply reprinted extracts from Jehovah's Witness literature and then underlined what he regards as particularly significant passages, all of which are designed to discredit Witness teachings. Instructing potential apologists that the "first step is to undermine the reliability of the New World Translation in the mind of the Witness,"[55] he counsels his readers to reinforce constantly that the Witness "is repeating something he learned from a false prophet."[56] Once the Witness has been confronted with these prepackaged arguments for the superiority of evangelical Christianity that Morey provides, "he will not be so arrogant; rather, he should be more submissive in spirit."[57]

Numerous resources based on similar premises of "How to answer a Jehovah's Witness" (or Mormon or Catholic or Buddhist, and so on) offer set-piece "dialogues" designed for a wide variety of religious adherents. Others, however, offer little more than cut-and-paste evangelism and do not require even the least understanding from those who would use them. If the intensive training provided for activists who want to confront Latter-day Saints at temple openings occupies one end of what we might call the preparedness spectrum, at the other end is advice for successful Internet evangelism offered by Matt Slick, the proprietor and sole author of the Web site, Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (www.carm.org).

> The Internet is full of chat rooms, and those chat rooms are full of cultists, atheists, Muslims, relativists, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc., and they are all opposing the truth of God's word. Unfortunately, too many Christians don't have the resources or knowledge to be able to provide answers. That is what this section is for. The purpose of this page is to provide quick cut and paste answers to common objections against Christianity as well as provide documentation for cult teachings. Each answer has been boiled down to a maximum of 255 characters, including spaces, to allow it to be pasted on all chat systems.[58]

In Slick's version of reactive countercult evangelism, potential apologists need not even understand what they are saying, let alone comprehend the questions to which they have been asked to respond. Rather, their "evangelism" requires them to do nothing more than cut, paste, and repost the prepackaged responses provided by Slick. They become "instant experts" in the very worst tradition of the World Wide Web.

Whether proactive or reactive, the rhetorical framework in which countercult activists such as these most often couch their behavior is *dialogue*. In 1985, for example, Ed Decker began a radio program in Utah called "Let's Dialogue," which punned the well-known Latter-day Saint periodical, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought,* but through which Decker and his colleagues believed they had finally "brought the truth of the real gospel to Zion."[59] "We have gone into this battle for souls as only zealots can," Decker continues, maintaining that the rather short-lived program was intended to "develop a fresh line of positive dialogue with the LDS people."[60] For most evangelical apologists, however, "positive dialogue" means only that which serves the countercult mission—the conversion of adherents to their particular brand of Christianity. There is no possibility of two-way communication, and little chance that the countercult apologists might find something of value for themselves in the beliefs and practices of others. Mike Oppenheimer, founder of Let Us Reason Ministries, puts this most bluntly. Writing online of recent attempts at rapprochement between evangelicals and Latter-day Saints,[61] and epitomizing the manner in which many countercult apologists approach their mission, Oppenheimer contends that "there is no real dialogue if it does not forge toward an admission of being wrong and bring repentance,"[62] that is, unless Latter-day Saints confess the errors of their ways and convert to evangelical Christianity. Dave Hunt, a prolific countercult apologist, agrees, opining that "the only reason for becoming familiar with other religions and other religious writings would be in order to show those who follow these false systems wherein the error lies and thereby to rescue them."[63]

This kind of lopsided "dialogue" once again illustrates the principal purpose for which countercult apologetics exists: to reinforce the superiority of an evangelical Christian world view in the face of the challenge represented by the myriad religious alternatives currently available. Faulty logic, however, and confrontational proselytism are not the only controversies by which the Christian countercult has been plagued throughout its history. Clustering under the broader rubric of "bearing false witness," many countercult apologists have also been criticized for (a) misrepresenting their academic and ministerial credentials; (b) the antipathetic and polemical

nature of countercult writings; and (c) the fraudulent representation of target religious groups.

Countercult Controversies

Considered by many the father (now arguably the grandfather) of countercult apologetics in North America and the man who has done more to influence evangelical response to new religions than anyone else, Walter Ralston Martin (1928–1989) presents a fascinating introduction to many of the controversies that have haunted the evangelical countercult movement. Although many of these are still the subject of dispute, at various times in his career Martin claimed ordination in a number of different Baptist denominations, and presented himself as a matrilineal descendent of Brigham Young.[64] Perhaps the most consistent controversy to have dogged him throughout his countercult career and since his death has been his claim to academic credentials his many critics contend he did not legitimately possess, and his constant use of "Dr." long before he received even the unaccredited degree he had.[65] Similar concerns have been raised about some of Martin's countercult colleagues. Both John Ankerberg and John Weldon appear to have seriously overstated their academic credentials. Not only are Hank Hanegraaff's ordination credentials in question, he has also been accused of plagiarism by former employees of CRI. William Schnoebelen, who claims to have been an Old Order Catholic priest, a Wiccan High Priest, a Satanist High Priest, a Master Mason, and a Temple Mormon, has (not surprisingly) been accused of simply inventing a past to gain countercult credibility. And James White, a prolific countercult author and polemicist, has had the authenticity of his degree publicly challenged on the Internet.[66] These examples highlight the larger issue of credibility in the evangelical countercult community. That is, on what authority do countercult apologists make the claims they do? As I have noted elsewhere, "since there is no real accrediting body" in the evangelical countercult, "no official *magisterium,* indeed no formal requirement for special education of any kind, the problem becomes that much more complex. Anyone who wants to can hang out a shingle (or launch the Internet equivalent thereof) that reads: 'Countercult Apologist: Slaves to Sin Saved Here.'"[67]

Rather than genuinely seek to understand the attraction of new religions, to appreciate their appeal for devotees and adherents, many countercult apologists simply engage in consistent patterns of demonization, letting their polemic, rather than their argument, reinforce the problematic nature of the groups in question. Using emotional, value-laden, often violent language, it becomes difficult for the target audience (whether a reader or a hearer) to separate the flow of the argument from the tenor of the rhetoric. While examples of this are legion within the countercult, consider Ron Rhodes, who uses antipathetic language of this type with cavalier abandon. Rhodes writes, for example, about "the cancer of cultism"[68] that has afflicted the United States. While "Hinduism has infiltrated the United States,"[69] Islam has "invaded"[70]—both of which terms highlight immigrant populations that are already stigmatized. Indeed, according to Rhodes, there is "a deluge of cultic and occult

groups vying for the American mainstream," and "a cultic and occultic penetration of America's businesses, health facilities, and public schools."[71] Finally, in a passage worth quoting at length, Rhodes raises the level of his rhetoric even further.

> The winds of change are rapidly escalating toward hurricane force on the religious landscape in America today, and the implications should send chills down the spine of every concerned Christian. The reality is, however, that many Christians are indifferent—not only regarding the counterfeit religions sweeping across our land, but also regarding the church. As the ominous dark clouds continue to gather on the horizon, many Christians go merrily about their way, utterly oblivious to the danger that lies all about them.[72]

"It was a dark and stormy night …" is, in essence, Rhodes's message, and the cults are a clear and present danger in North America. Once again, though, there is more implied here than simply spinal chills and vague fundamentalist angst. Supported by the tenor of the rhetoric is an ethical imperative that calls into question the integrity and sincerity of Christians who are not caught in the web of concern and paranoia that Rhodes spins about them. Antipathetic language reinforces the demonization of the world view or group to which one is opposed and which has presented itself as a problem of practical life. In the context of duelling world views, it also serves to reinforce once again the boundaries of the primary group to which the target audience—i.e., evangelical/fundamentalist Christians—belongs. Demonstrating what many regard as the unmitigated arrogance of countercult apologetics, a topic I have discussed at length elsewhere,[73] Ron Rhodes even contends that "those today who participate in false religions like Hinduism and Islam are not viewed by God as groping their way toward Him, but are viewed as worshiping a false God."[74]

Third, recognizing that Rhodes and his colleagues are certainly entitled to their opinions, there is also the problem of blatant false witness, simply lying about those religions one regards as suspect. For this, we turn to one of the evangelical countercult's most prolific, and problematic, authors, Dave Hunt. While, usually, Hunt veils his false witness in evasion, in oblique words and phrases such as "seems to indicate," "appears to be," and "apparently demonstrates," not infrequently he steps outside equivocal language and makes statements that are quite simply false. He claimed, for example, that the Jesuit priest-paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin had been "declared a heretic even by the Roman Catholic Church."[75] Though silenced for this work, Teilhard was never declared a heretic. Hunt accused an Alabama nursing school of including "voodoo and witchcraft … among the folk remedies studied by candidates for a bachelor's degree in nursing."[76] And, in *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist,* he wrote that "Satanists now have their own chaplains in the U.S. Armed Forces."[77]

Although the rhetoric of the evangelical countercult ranges from the extremes represented by such apologists as Dave Hunt and Ron Rhodes to more academically inclined and less polemical entries on the field, all are guided by very similar understandings of the ontological superiority of the evangelical Christian world view, the

danger represented by alternative religious movements that challenge that superiority, and the desire to convert new religious adherents to that world view.

INCARNATION VERSUS CONFRONTATION: EVANGELICAL CHALLENGES TO THE CHRISTIAN COUNTERCULT

Challenges to the manner in which the evangelical Christian countercult conducts itself have come from a number of quarters. Not surprisingly, like The Local Church and its lawsuit against Harvest House, new religions that have been the target of countercult attack have responded in various ways. Latter-day Saints, for example, have roundly criticized the countercult, both in print and on the World Wide Web, for its continual portrayal of their church as a cult and for the way its faith has been consistently and egregiously misrepresented.[78] In 1984, a state board of the National Conference of Christians and Jews condemned the film *The God Makers,*[79] saying that it "[relied] heavily on appeals to fear, prejudice, and other less worthy human emotions," and that it was "a basically unfair and untruthful presentation of what Mormons really believe and practice."[80] My own work, which seeks to understand the countercult within the broader theoretical framework of a sociology of knowledge, has been virtually dismissed as the uninformed ravings of a "cult apologist."

These challenges, however, have not always come from the outside. Internecine conflicts have often thrown one countercult apologist against another. Dave Hunt, for example, has repeatedly criticized the Christian Research Institute for not condemning the Roman Catholic Church, which Hunt regards as the world's largest, most dangerous cult. And, since Martin's death in 1989, the CRI has been plagued with controversy, most over the presidency of Hank Hanegraaff and the manner in which he has run the organization. Over 30 former employees formed the "Group for CRI Accountability" and charged Hanegraaff with a range of offences, including numerous counts of wrongful termination, financial mismanagement, and abuse of his authority as president. Rather than result in dialogue between contending parties, like their interaction with new religions, these challenges have largely entrenched differences between participants in the countercult movement.

A Kinder, Gentler Countercult?

Some members and former members of the evangelical countercult admit that the approach they have followed since the founding of the Christian Research Institute has not worked. That is, though the confrontational countercult continues to post the occasional conversion, the rise of new religions far outstrips any opposition the countercult apologists can mount. Nearly 30 years after Ronald Enroth wrote that the emerging presence of new religions—what he labeled "new-age cults"—"indicate a demonic conspiracy to subvert the true gospel of Jesus Christ through human agents whose eyes have been blinded by the evil one,"[81] he edited *A Guide to New Religious Movements,*[82] which he says explicitly "should not be seen as an attempt

to discredit new religious movements."[83] Rather, this work seeks "a more holistic approach"[84] to the issue. While this "more holistic approach" includes some discussion of social scientific research on new religions, it incorporates aspects of the secular anticult's functional definition of the phenomenon and is still predicated on apologetic-evangelism, on "[helping] serious, caring Christians … introduce people in those groups to Jesus our Lord…."[85] Does this represent a "kinder, gentler" aspect of the evangelical Christian response to new religions?

Yes and no.

For many years, John Morehead worked with Watchman Fellowship, a countercult organization not dissimilar to the CRI and based in Arlington, Texas. Recently, however, the more he observed how many of his countercult colleagues dealt with adherents of new religions, how the internecine strife between countercult ministries was diluting whatever witness they hoped to have, and how the logical and practical problems inherent in confrontational countercult apologetics were so easily exposed, the more concerned he became about the countercult enterprise as a whole. As President of the Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR) from 2001–2003, he began to work actively for a shift in direction, in emphasis, and, perhaps most importantly, in methodology. In several papers outlining what he describes as a "missiological paradigm for 'counter-cult' ministry,"[86] Morehead's argument, simply put, was that the current countercult approach, described by another evangelical critic as "heresy-rationalist apologetics"[87] and exemplified by the apologists discussed in this chapter, represents precisely the opposite of a compassionate, caring missiology that seeks first to understand adherents of alternative religions, second to establish firm relationships built on trust and mutual respect, and only third to engage in conversations aimed at evangelization. Morehead argued that the countercult community must turn its academic eyes outward and begin to engage social scientific research into new religions. Also, it must do something it had to that point manifestly refused; it must begin to listen to its critics. By and large, though, Morehead's concerns were not well received by his colleagues at the EMNR nor by other members of the countercult community, who countered that he had been corrupted by "cult apologists" (perhaps principally the current author)[88] and was thus diluting the message of Christ and abandoning the countercult mission.

As a result of this, Morehead (and a few colleagues sympathetic to his argument) left both the Watchman Fellowship and the Evangelical Ministries to New Religions, and no longer considers himself a member of the countercult movement, developing and practicing instead what he refers to as an "incarnational missions strategy." This strategy he describes as "an approach to Christian service based on principles derived from the life of Jesus in his relationships, both with those who followed him and those who rejected him."[89] Key to this approach—which represents the antithesis of that taken by his former countercult colleagues and explored in this chapter—is an "emphasis upon relationships," a serious consideration of the intimate relationship between theology and culture, and, perhaps most importantly, humility in epistemology, rhetoric, and personal character.[90] As this incarnational missions

strategy has developed, Morehead has become increasingly critical of the countercult movement.

This brief closing vignette highlights three important facts about the evangelical Christian countercult. First, evangelical Christian response to new religions is varied, ranging from the overt, proactive, and entrenched intolerance of countercult apologists Ankerberg, Weldon, Rhodes, Hunt, and others discussed in this chapter to the more open, responsible approach advocated by Morehead and his colleagues. This range is important to recognize in the context of a religiously plural culture, especially since many new religionists understand evangelical culture no more clearly than evangelicals understand them and are as apt to paint Christians in similarly monochromatic colors. Second, the countercult itself is not monolithic. Though Morehead no longer considers himself part of the countercult movement, his work has called attention to problems within that community from an insider perspective. While countercult apologists might (and do) dismiss the critiques of an agnostic social scientist on the basis of his necessarily outsider viewpoint, it is much more difficult to discount the carefully considered objections of someone like Morehead. And, finally, the manner in which those who do remain firmly in the countercult community have responded to Morehead's concerns only indicates that the principal function of countercult apologetics—to maintain and reinforce the exclusivity of a particular Christian world view in the face of all challenges, no matter where they come from—also remains firmly in place.

NOTES

1. John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1999).

2. Neil T. Duddy and the SCP, *The God-Men: An Inquiry into Witness Lee & the Local Church*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981).

3. *Witness Lee et al. v. Neil T. Duddy et al.* Readers interested in the testimony of the Duddy case may also see *The Experts Speak* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1995); and J. Gordon Melton, *An Open Letter Concerning the Local Church, Witness Lee and The God-Men Controversy* (Santa Barbara, CA: The Institute for the Study of American Religion, 1985).

4. Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions,* xvii.

5. Ibid., xx.

6. Ibid., xvi.

7. Daniel E. Towle, Richard W. Taylor, and Andrew Yu, letter to Robert C. Hawkins, January 11, 2001; photocopy of typescript.

8. It should also be noted that the often virulently confrontational approach evangelical countercult takes to new religions seems located primarily in the United States. More dialogical approaches, for example, are reflected in the work of Ross Clifford and Philip Johnson, *Jesus and the Gods of the New Age* (Oxford: Lion, 2001); John Drane, *What is the New Age Saying to the Church* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1991); John Drane, *What is the New Age Still Saying to the Church* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1999); and Ole Madsen, "Theology in Dialogue with New Age or the Neospiritual Milieu," in *Theology and the Religions: A Dialogue*, ed. Viggo Mortensen (Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 257–86.

9. In 1996, what is known as the *old* Cult Awareness Network, the anticult organization that developed out of the Citizens Freedom Foundation in the mid-1980s, lost its assets in a bankruptcy that resulted in part from a civil lawsuit brought by a victim of CAN's coercive deprogramming. Those assets, which included nearly 400 boxes of CAN files and the right to use the Cult Awareness Network name, were purchased at auction by the Foundation for Religious Freedom, an organizational unit of the Church of Scientology. See Anson Shupe and Susan E. Darnell, "CAN, We Hardly Knew Ye: Sex, Drugs, Deprogrammers' Kickbacks, and Corporate Crime in the (old) Cult Awareness Network" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Houston, TX, October 2000, www.cesnur.org/2001/CAN.htm); Anson Shupe and Susan E. Darnell, "Agents of Discord: The North American-European Anticult Connection" (paper presented at the annual meeting CESNUR, London, England, April 2001; available at www.cesnur.org/2001/CAN1.htm); Anson Shupe and Susan E. Darnell, "The Attempted Transformation of a Deviant Occupation into a Therapy: Deprogramming Seeks a New Identity" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Norfolk, VA, October 2003, www.cesnur.org/2003/shupe_darnell.htm).

10. Founded in 1979, the American Family Foundation changed its name in 2004 to the International Cultic Studies Association "to better reflect the organization's focus and increasingly international and scholarly dimensions" (www.csj.org).

11. Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed* (Painesville, OH: Author, 1834).

12. George Hamilton Combs, *Some Latter-Day Religions* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1899).

13. Ibid., 205.

14. Gaius Glenn Atkins, *Modern Religious Cults and Movements* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1923).

15. William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed: A Brief Critical Examination in Light of the Holy Scriptures of Some of the Prevailing Heresies and False Teachings of Today* (New York: Loiseaux Bros., 1935).

16. Jan Karel van Baalen, *The Chaos of Cults: A Study in Present-Day Isms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1938).

17. Ibid., 18. Van Baalen's *magnum opus* went through four editions between 1938 and 1960, each updated and expanded by the author.

18. Ibid., 18.

19. For a fuller delineation of these two movements, see Douglas E. Cowan, "Exits and Migrations: Foregrounding the Christian Counter-cult," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 17, no. 3 (2002): 339–54; Douglas E. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness? An Introduction to the Christian Countercult* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003); and Douglas E. Cowan, "Constructing the New Religious Threat: Anticult and Countercult Movements," in *New Religious Movements: A Documentary Reader*, ed. Dereck Daschke and W. Michael Ashcraft (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

20. Michael D. Langone, "Introduction," in *Recovery from Cults: Help for Victims of Psychological and Spiritual Abuse*, ed. Michael D. Langone (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), 5.

21. Ibid., 5.

22. Ibid., 5.

23. Gretchen Passantino and Bob Passantino, "Critiquing the Cult Mind-Control Model," in *Kingdom of the Cults*, gen. ed. Hank Hanegraaff, 4th ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1997), 55; emphasis in the original.
24. John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Cult Watch* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1991), iv.
25. Hank Hanegraaff, "What is a Cult?" www.equip.org/free/CP0200.htm (accessed June 14, 2005).
26. Alan Gomes, *Unmasking the Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 47.
27. Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *Orthodoxy and Heresy: A Biblical Guide to Doctrinal Discernment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992), 113–14.
28. Douglas R. Groothuis, *Confronting the New Age: How to Resist a Growing Religious Movement* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 38.
29. Ibid., 39.
30. Ed Decker and Dave Hunt, *The God Makers* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1984).
31. Dave Hunt, *The Cult Explosion* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1980), 239. Though this book was published a quarter-century ago, Hunt's position has not changed.
32. Ibid., 239.
33. Ronald Enroth, *Youth, Brainwashing, and the Extremist Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977), 202.
34. See, for example, Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah's Witnesses* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1993); *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Mormons* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995); *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2000); and *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Masons* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2001).
35. Ron Rhodes, *The Culting of America* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1994), 218.
36. Ibid., 219; emphasis in the original.
37. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness?,* 24.
38. See Shupe and Darnell, "Agents of Discord: The North American-European Anticult Connection."
39. See Shupe and Darnell, "The Attempted Transformation of a Deviant Occupation into a Therapy."
40. Rhodes, *The Culting of America*, 230; emphasis in the original.
41. On the rise of countercult apologetics on the Internet, see Cowan, *Bearing False Witness?,* 115–30; and Douglas E. Cowan, "Contested Spaces: Movement, Countermovement, and E-Space Propaganda," in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, ed. Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 255–71.
42. Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1967), 29.
43. Groothuis, *Confronting the New Age,* 67.
44. Ibid., 67.
45. Ibid., 67.
46. Ibid., 98.
47. Craig S. Hawkins, *Goddess Worship, Witchcraft, and Neo-Paganism, Zondervan Guide to Cults and Religious Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998); ibid., 34.

48. Once again, it is important to note that not all evangelicals agree with this kind of blanket, syllogistic condemnation of other religious traditions. On this issue particularly, see, for example, Philip Johnson and Simeon Payne, "Evangelical Countercult Apologists versus Astrology: An Unresolved Conundrum," *Australian Religion Studies Review* 17, no. 2 (2004): 73–97.

49. Hawkins, *Goddess Worship,* 35–36. N.b., The two sets of ellipses in these quotations enclose groups of Bible verses offered by Hawkins as proof of his propositions.

50. On Decker, see Cowan, *Bearing False Witness?,* 136–41.

51. See John W. Morehead, "Reflections on the Divide in LDS Evangelism in Utah: Why I Practice and Incarnational Missions Strategy," *Cornerstone Magazine* (2005), www.cornerstonemag.com (accessed July 10, 2005).

52. Erwin Kolb, in L. James Rongstad, *How to Respond to… The Lodge* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), 5.

53. Hawkins, *Goddess Worship,* 41–48.

54. Ibid., back cover.

55. Robert Morey, *How to Answer a Jehovah's Witness* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1980), 19.

56. Ibid., 19.

57. Ibid., 19.

58. Matt Slick, "Why Internet Apologetics and How To Use this Section," Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, www.carm.org/cut/intro.htm (accessed July 6, 2005).

59. Ed Decker, "Broadcasting Behind the Zion Curtain," *Saints Alive in Jesus Newsletter* (May–June, 1985): 1.

60. Ibid., 1.

61. In a November 2004 speech that was widely publicized in the evangelical world (and as widely criticized among countercult apologists), Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, apologized to Latter-day Saints for the evangelical history of bearing false witness against them, and for the many and often serious ways in which evangelicals have misrepresented them and their beliefs. For a sample of countercult response to Mouw's remarks, see Ronald V. Huggins, "An Appeal for Authentic Evangelical-Mormon Dialogue," "Mormons in Transition," www.irr.org/mit/authenticdialogue.html (accessed July 10, 2005); Bill McKeever, "Are 'We Evangelicals' Guilty of Bearing False Witness When It Comes to Explaining Mormon Doctrine?" Mormonism Research Ministry, www.mrm.org/multimedia/text/richard-mouw.html (accessed July 10, 2005); Mike Oppenheimer, "Dialogue or A Widening of the Road?" Let Us Reason Ministry, www.letusreason.com/current55.htm (accessed July 5, 2005).

62. Oppenheimer, "Dialogue or A Widening of the Road?"

63. Dave Hunt, *In Defense of the Faith: Biblical Answers to Challenging Questions* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 68.

64. Martin was confronted once on his radio program, *The Bible Answer Man,* about this claim and challenged to produce evidence to support it. He declined to do so, and this accuser maintains that Martin simply fabricated the connection to Brigham Young in order to gain credibility among potential LDS converts; see Robert L. Brown and Rosemary Brown, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive: A Study in Anti-Mormon Deception,* vol. 3, ed. Barbara Ellsworth (Mesa, AZ: Brownsworth Publishing, 1986), 9–27, 82–84.

65. See Brown and Brown, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive,* 2–65; Christian Research Institute, "Does Dr. Walter Martin Have a Genuine Earned Doctor's Degree?" CRI Statement DM100 (1993), www.equip.org/free/DM100.htm (accessed July 5, 2005).

66. On Ankerberg's academic credentials, see Cowan, *Bearing False Witness?,* 202–204; on Weldon, see Daniel C. Peterson, "Constancy amid Change," review of *Behind the Mask of Mormonism,* by John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *FARMS Review of Books,* 8, no. 2 (1996): 60–98; on Hanegraaff and accusations of plagiarism, see Robert M. Bowman, Jr., "Is the Good News Bear a Copycat? Hank Hanegraaff and Plagiarism," www.atlantaapologist.org/copycat.html (accessed July 5, 2005); and Cowan, *Bearing False Witness?,* 195–97; on Schnoebelen and his claims to have been a Roman Catholic priest, a Wiccan High Priest, and a Mason before becoming a fundamentalist Christian, see Edward L. King, "Bill Schnoebelen," www.masonicinfo.com/schnoebelen.htm (accessed July 4, 2005); on White, see Gary Shields, "Does James White Have a Genuine Doctorate?" www.shields-research.org/Novak/james.htm (accessed July 5, 2005).

67. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness?,* 113.

68. Rhodes, *The Culting of America,* 218.

69. Ibid., 21.

70. Ibid., 22–23.

71. Ibid., 218.

72. Ibid., 27.

73. See "The Apologetic Hubris of Orthodoxy," in Cowan, *Bearing False Witness?,* 54–60.

74. Ron Rhodes, *The Challenge of the Cults and New Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 292.

75. Dave Hunt, *Occult Invasion: The Subtle Seduction of the World and the Church* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998), 121.

76. Hunt, *Cult Explosion,* 118.

77. Hunt, *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1990), 44.

78. See, for example, Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Gilbert W. Scharffs, *The Truth About "The God Makers,"* 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1989).

79. Ed Decker, *The God Makers* (Jeremiah Films, 1982). The film, which was shown in evangelical churches across the country, preceded the publication of Decker and Hunt's *The God Makers.*

80. National Conference of Christians and Jews, *Programs in Pluralism* (March–April, 1984): 4.

81. Enroth, *Youth, Brainwashing, and the Extremist Cults,* 202.

82. Ronald Enroth, ed., *A Guide to New Religious Movements* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

83. Ibid., 12.

84. Ibid., 14.

85. Ibid., 13.

86. John W. Morehead, "Moving Together Beyond the Fringes: A Paradigm for EMNR's Viability in an Age of Religious Pluralism," www.emnr.org/papers/Moving_Together.pdf (accessed July 16, 2005); "Reflections on the Divide in LDS Evangelism in Utah" (unpublished); "Tired of Treading Water: Rediscovering and Reapplying a Missiological Paradigm

for 'Counter-Cult' Ministry," www.emnr.org/treading_water.html (accessed July 15, 2005); "Transforming Evangelical Responses to New Religions: Missions and Counter-Cult in Partnership" (paper presented to the annual meeting of the Evangelical Missiological Society, Orlando, FL, 2002). See also Irving Hexham, Stephen Rost, and John W. Morehead, ed., *Encountering New Religious Movements: A Holistic Evangelical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2004); Phillip Johnson, Anne C. Harper, and John W. Morehead, ed., *Religious and Non-Religious Spirituality in the Western World ("New Age"),* Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 45 (Sydney, Australia: Morling Press, 2004). I acknowledge John Morehead's ongoing conversation in the preparation of this essay.

87. Phillip Johnson, "The Aquarian Age and Apologetics," *Lutheran Theological Journal,* 34, no. 2 (2000): 52–54.

88. One of the decisions many members of the EMNR continue to hold against Morehead was his invitation to myself and J. Gordon Melton to present our research on the countercult movement at their 2002 annual meeting. Indeed, even as Melton and I arrived in Louisville for the conference, there was some discussion about whether we would be allowed to present. See Douglas E. Cowan, "The Countercult in Conversation: Reflections on Louisville" (paper presented to the 2002 CESNUR International Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah), www.cesnur.org/2002/slc/cowan.htm (accessed July 1, 2005).

89. Morehead, "Reflections on the Divide in LDS Evangelism in Utah."

90. Ibid.

New Religious Movements and Violence

Catherine Wessinger

New Religious Movements (NRMs), by virtue of their novelty, inherently are in some degree of tension with the wider societies in which they are located. NRMs may differ from mainstream religions in terms of their theologies or philosophies, new revelations, sources and structures of authority, gender roles, sexual arrangements, and child rearing. Some "new religions" are "old religions" that have been imported into new contexts by immigrants and/or missionaries who gain converts. Others represent theological innovations within their native traditions.

The tensions experienced by an NRM may be minimal and exist simply because the believers have different outlooks and practices from those of larger society. The tensions may become pronounced if people in the dominant culture perceive the beliefs and practices of an NRM as being dangerous and offensive, or if the members of the NRM actively seek to overthrow the status quo.

Whereas the majority of NRM members are law-abiding, dramatic instances of violence involving unconventional religious groups occur from time to time. Sometimes the violence is due almost exclusively to factors internal to the group. However, in most cases, *the quality of the interactions between people and agencies in the wider society and NRM members is crucial to contributing to violent outcomes.* In these instances, the violence occurs due to complex combinations of factors originating inside the group (endogenous) with other factors originating outside the group (exogenous).[1] In these scenarios NRM members are not necessarily the ones who initiate the violence. Sometimes NRM members are attacked by law enforcement agents and/or citizens; sometimes the members respond violently to such attacks; sometimes NRM members initiate violence to preserve their "ultimate concern" from failure; sometimes NRM members engage in violent revolution. Rarely do these dramatic violent incidents occur in the absence of precipitating factors involved in the very tense interactions between group members and actors in the wider society.

Many, but not all, NRMs that become involved in violence possess millennial beliefs that put the believers in tension with the dominant society. Millennialism—the belief that there will be an imminent transition to a collective salvation effected

by superhuman means with varying degrees of human cooperation[2]—has great power to induce people to join NRMs and conform to their demands concerning behavior in order to be "saved." Since millennial ideologies represent radical critiques of the status quo, millennialists live in varying degrees of tension with society.

The term "ultimate concern" in the history of religions refers to an ideological system's goal of salvation. The ideological system may be religious or political or both. All religions have ultimate concerns, and all ultimate concerns express human beings' longing to achieve permanent well being and freedom from suffering. This salvation may be considered to be earthly or heavenly; most people want both earthly well being and continued well being after death. The ultimate concern is the most important thing in the world for the believers.[3]

Individuals often shift and change their specific ultimate concerns in response to circumstances, but the unifying characteristic is the ongoing desire for well being, either for oneself or for one's people or both. Some believers hold so tightly to their ultimate concerns that they become willing to die or kill for their concept of salvation. This is true of people participating in socially dominant ideologies as well as in smaller groups and movements.

People commit violent and hurtful acts in mainstream religions as well as marginal ones. However, when violence occurs in relation to unconventional religious groups, it confirms the "cult" stereotype held by the public, whereas when violence occurs in dominant and accepted religions, it usually does not discredit the religion as a whole.

We will see that understanding the dynamics of violence involving NRMs sheds light on key conflicts on the international scene.

MILLENNIALISM AND VIOLENCE

The religious pattern that scholars term "millennialism" represents the perennial human impulse to achieve permanent well being. Millennialism is the audacious hope that salvation will be accomplished, not singly, but for a group; hence, it is concerned with a "collective salvation." Some degree of supernatural or superhuman agency is believed to be involved in accomplishing the collective salvation, but humans may be seen as having particular roles to play. Religions with intense millennial expectations expect the transition to occur *soon;* hence, millennial views are often effective in prompting people to convert to entirely new religions.

If the transition to collective salvation is expected to involve destruction of the old order to wipe away evil and create a new order in which there will be no suffering, this pattern may be termed "catastrophic millennialism." The term "apocalypticism" is used here as a synonym for catastrophic millennialism.[4] If there is optimistic confidence in human progress guided by a superhuman agent into the collective salvation, this pattern may be termed "progressive millennialism."[5]

In general, catastrophic millennialists are more likely to possess radical dualistic world views, seeing "good" locked in a battle with "evil," which translates readily into an "us versus them" outlook. Extremely rigid dualistic world views expect and may

promote conflict. Progressive millennialists, while not immune to dualistic perspectives, are more likely to see the world as a unity of interdependent parts.

A range of behaviors is associated with both catastrophic millennialism and progressive millennialism. Catastrophic millennialists may wait in faith for divine intervention, and progressive millennialists may believe they are guided by a superhuman agent to engage in social work to create the new world. Catastrophic millennialists and progressive millennialists may arm themselves for self-protection and fight back if they are attacked. Both catastrophic millennialists and progressive millennialists may engage in revolutionary violence to destroy the old order. At this extreme end of the spectrum, both types of revolutionary millennialists possess radical dualistic world views. They believe it is important to destroy enemies both inside and outside the movement to accomplish the collective salvation. Robert Ellwood has noted that revolutionary progressive millennialists aim to speed progress up "to an apocalyptic rate."[6] Revolutionary catastrophic millennialists feel called by God or a higher power to destroy the current social order so that social salvation can be created. Although revolutionary catastrophic and progressive millennialists differ in terms of their general pessimism or optimism concerning whether society is devolving or progressing, there will be little difference in terms of violent, and even paranoid, behaviors to accomplish the transformation.

Millennial groups that become involved in violence may be *assaulted groups, fragile groups,* or *revolutionary movements.* These are dynamic categories that are *not mutually exclusive.* Groups and movements may possess aspects of more than one of these categories simultaneously and shift from one to another in response to changes in circumstances. The fluidity of these categories is highlighted in the following cases discussed. These distinct categories are nevertheless useful for identifying the parties who initiate the violence.

In today's world connected by rapid communications and travel, events involving NRMs inside the United States impact public perceptions and expectations about NRMs outside the United States and vice versa, even among NRM members. The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God (MRTCG), which caused the deaths of at least 780 people in Uganda in 2000, had connections within the United States in the person of one of its leaders, Father Dominic Kataribaabo, who earned a Master's degree at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Leaders of the MRTCG were quite aware of the news coverage of the fire that consumed the Branch Davidians in Texas in 1993. Joseph Di Mambro, the leader of the Solar Temple based in Switzerland that had members in France and Quebec, said of the Branch Davidians before the Solar Temple's group murders and suicides in 1994, "In my opinion, we should have gone six months before them … what we'll do will be even more spectacular."[7] The People's Republic of China (PRC) has defended its persecution of Falun Gong practitioners by citing the American government's treatment of the Branch Davidians in 1993. Conversely, Falun Gong practitioners in the United States have worked to call international attention to the abuse of their fellow practitioners in the PRC, and the American government has urged the PRC to respect human rights and freedom of religion of PRC citizens.

NRMs involved in violence outside the United States may have their origins inside the United States, such as the members of the American church known as Peoples Temple, who committed murder and mass suicide at Jonestown in Guyana in 1978.

Aum Shinrikyo's release of deadly gas on the Tokyo subway in 1995 increased the concerns of many governments to try to prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction by religiously motivated terrorists, and this concern proved well founded in light of the al-Qaida attacks on American soil on September 11, 2001, and the ongoing international conflict with al-Qaida and related radical Islamist groups. We live in an interconnected world, and events concerning NRMs and violence reverberate across national boundaries.

ASSAULTED MILLENNIAL GROUPS

It is important to remember that many millennial groups do not initiate the violence that engulfs them. Millennial groups are assaulted in many times and places by law enforcement agents or citizens, who perceive them to be dangerous for a variety of reasons, and the millennialists may choose to fight back in a variety of ways.

For instance, the Israelites were a community of black South African believers who followed a prophet named Enoch Josiah Mgijima. He gathered his flock on government-owned land at Bulhoek. When the group refused to disperse, preferring to obey God rather than the secular law, police officers, thinking that the Israelites' dance gestures were threatening, opened fire on them on May 24, 1921, killing 183 and wounding nearly 100 people. The Israelites fought back, but caused minimal injuries to the police officers due to their inferior weapons.[8]

A similar incident happened at Wounded Knee in South Dakota on December 29, 1890, when American troops, made skittish by the Native American Ghost Dance, which was misinterpreted as being a war dance, opened fire on a band of Lakota Sioux killing 153 and wounding 44; the Lakota Sioux fought back and the soldiers suffered 25 dead and 39 wounded.[9]

Mormons in nineteenth century America were pressured increasingly to move west from the place of the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New York state. In 1833 in Missouri, Mormons were repeatedly beaten, killed, and driven out of their homes. At first the founding prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., instructed Mormons not to retaliate, but after Missourians continued to attack Mormons, in 1838 Joseph Smith encouraged Mormons to fight back. When Mormons began raiding "gentile" towns and burning homes, the governor of Missouri issued an order saying that Mormons "must be exterminated, or driven from the state…."[10] This "extermination order" was followed by the massacre of 18 Mormons at Haun's Mill by members of the Missouri Militia. The Mormons were forced to leave Missouri. After the Mormons built a town and worship center at Nauvoo, Illinois, further conflicts led to the murder of the founding prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., and his brother on June 27, 1844, at the hands of a mob of militiamen. The majority of the Mormons led by Brigham Young moved to Utah, where in 1857 heightened fears about an impending invasion by American troops helped create a wartime

atmosphere that motivated Mormon men and Paiute Indians to carry out a massacre at Mountain Meadows of about 120 settlers, including approximately 50 children and adolescents, who were passing through Utah. The man later convicted of leading the massacre implied that he was acting on the orders of Brigham Young.[11] The Mountain Meadows massacre is a tragic example of millennialists committing violence in response to past assaults against them and in anticipation of future assaults.

Members of assaulted millennial groups can be provoked to violence that they believe is necessary for self-defense and to preserve their ultimate concern.

The Branch Davidians

The violent conflict in 1993 between the Branch Davidians and federal agents at the Branch Davidians' Mount Carmel residence outside Waco, Texas, represents the largest loss of life during a law enforcement action on American soil. The Branch Davidian case illustrates the dynamic nature of the categories of revolutionary millennial movement, assaulted millennial group, and fragile millennial group, but there is no doubt that the Branch Davidians endured sustained and aggressive assaults by law enforcement agents. The Branch Davidian case vividly illustrates that the quality of the *interactions* between outside actors with believers inside a group directly contributes to either a peaceful or a violent outcome.[12]

The Branch Davidian case sheds light on how an aggressive law enforcement approach that ignores a group's religious beliefs and ultimate concern can result in tragic violence. The misguided law enforcement approach in the Branch Davidian case stands in contrast to successful law enforcement approaches discussed below in the cases of the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord, and the Montana Freemen, in which believers were enabled to cooperate with law enforcement agents while remaining true to their ultimate concerns.

The Branch Davidians had potential revolutionary features since the group's messiah,[13] David Koresh (1959–1993), predicted that the group would fight in the battle of Armageddon in Israel in 1995 on the side of the Israelis against the United States. However, no evidence exists to indicate that in 1993 the group was preparing to relocate to Israel or that once there they would do anything to initiate violence. Likewise, no evidence suggests that the Branch Davidians were preparing to attack their neighbors in Texas.

The group came to the attention of federal authorities because of weapons accumulated during the course of legal arms transactions that helped support the community. It was suspected that the Branch Davidians were illegally converting semiautomatic weapons into automatic weapons without paying the required permit fees. Many weapons and ammunition were accumulated, but the report by Robert Rodriguez, the undercover agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF or BATF), indicated that he saw no illegal weapons inside Mount Carmel. When Koresh learned that he was being investigated, he extended an invitation through his gun dealer to ATF agents to visit Mount Carmel openly and inspect his weapons, which was ignored.

The ATF affidavit to obtain the warrants contained inflammatory language concerning Koresh as a "cult leader" and the Branch Davidians as a cult in which Koresh abused children, including having sex with underage girls. The allegations of physical abuse of children have not been substantiated by surviving children. Koresh was, in fact, having sex with underage girls with the permission of their parents, as well as with other women he took as his "wives," and he justified these activities by appealing to biblical prophecies that the end-time messiah's children would be the "24 Elders" (Revelation 4:4, 5:10) who would help God judge humanity and rule in God's kingdom on Earth. It should be noted that in this case the sexual abuse of minors did not come under federal jurisdiction. Prior to the violent events in 1993, Texas authorities investigated the Branch Davidians for child abuse and closed the case for lack of evidence. It is also questionable whether the actions taken by federal agents gave sufficient consideration to the welfare of the Branch Davidian children and their mothers.

On February 28, 1993, 76 ATF agents attempted to carry out a "dynamic entry" or no-knock raid against Mount Carmel to deliver warrants and search the premises. A shootout ensued during which five Branch Davidians and four ATF agents died and many were wounded. During the gun battle, Branch Davidian and attorney Wayne Martin, and also David Koresh, dialed 9-1-1, urgently asking that the shooting stop. Later that day, Branch Davidian Michael Schroeder was shot and killed by ATF agents as he attempted to walk back to Mount Carmel. ATF agents alleged that Schroeder opened fire on them, but the evidence was compromised by the FBI commander refusing to give permission for the body to be recovered and the site inspected immediately by Texas Rangers.[14]

Agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrived at Mount Carmel the next day and presided over what became a 51-day siege. The residence was surrounded by tanks, which FBI agents used to destroy property and make threatening maneuvers. The Branch Davidians' access to the outside world was cut off, and they spoke only to FBI negotiators by telephone.

Studies show that the FBI negotiating team and the team carrying out the tactical aspects of the siege and ultimately the final assault were at odds. Whenever negotiators persuaded the Branch Davidians to cooperate in some manner, the Branch Davidians were punished immediately by the tactical team by cutting off electricity, shining bright spotlights at the residence during the night, and using other forms of psychological warfare. This pattern was particularly noteworthy whenever adult Branch Davidians left Mount Carmel. These individuals were dressed in orange prison jumpsuits, shackled, paraded before television cameras, and jailed. On March 21, seven adults came out. The tactical team then blasted high decibel sounds at the residence, angering the Branch Davidians who said that the adults who planned to come out decided not to. Under these circumstances, it is remarkable that 21 children and 14 adults came out during the siege.

After the ATF raid, the wounded David Koresh immediately sent out an audiotape containing his religious message and agreed that if it was played on television and radio that they would come out. The Branch Davidians were preparing to leave

their residence on March 2 when Koresh said that he had received a message from God to wait. The Branch Davidians pointed out that, just as the federal agents took orders from their commanders, they and Koresh had to obey God's orders.

The Branch Davidians believed that it was possible that they were "in the Fifth Seal" of the New Testament book of Revelation (6:9–11), which describes an event prior to Armageddon in which the satanic agents of "Babylon" kill members of the godly community. After a waiting period the rest of the faithful are killed. The Branch Davidians believed that if they were martyred they would be among the first to be resurrected and then would fight with Christ in the Armageddon battle. David Koresh claimed to be the end-time Christ and predicted that he would be killed, then resurrected, to carry out God's judgment against Babylon and gather the saved into God's kingdom.

Two Bible scholars, Dr. Phillip Arnold of Reunion Institute in Houston, Texas, and Dr. James Tabor, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, understood the implications of the Bible passages that were central to the Branch Davidians' interpretations of the conflict. They offered to serve as "third-party intermediaries" between the FBI negotiators and the Branch Davidians. They believed that it was imperative for negotiations to take into account the Branch Davidians' theology and strong commitment to obeying God's will as revealed in the biblical prophecies. They realized that Koresh's interpretations of the biblical prophecies were not rigid and that Koresh's prophetic interpretations could change in response to events. When Arnold and Tabor were ignored by the FBI, they directed a radio broadcast to the Branch Davidians in which they discussed the Bible and its prophecies. They suggested that the waiting period in the Fifth Seal would be much longer than a few months and that Koresh should therefore come out in order to disseminate his message. In their discussion, they mentioned the angel that Revelation 10 describes as holding a "little book."

Koresh went into spiritual retreat during the week of Passover, which ended on April 13. On April 14 Koresh sent out a letter saying that God had instructed him to write a little book containing his interpretation of the Seven Seals of Revelation. After the manuscript was given to Arnold and Tabor for safekeeping, the Branch Davidians would come out. The negotiation audiotape recorded the Branch Davidians cheering at the prospect of coming out. Over the next few days, the Branch Davidians repeatedly requested supplies that would facilitate the typing of the manuscript. On April 16 Koresh informed negotiators that he had completed his interpretation of the First Seal. The requested word-processing supplies were delivered on April 18.

In the meantime, FBI agents, who told Attorney General Janet Reno that negotiations were stalled, prepared to carry out an assault on April 19. That assault began at 6:00 AM with tanks punching holes in the walls and demolishing the building, using grenade launchers to hurl ferret rounds to release chlorobenzylidene malononitrile (CS) gas, and inserting the gas directly through nozzles on the tanks' booms.[15] The young children and their mothers huddled in a concrete room, probably regarded as the safest place in the building. Most other women were on the second floor, while

men were scattered in various locations in the residence. Fires started at 12:07 and 12:08 in at least three areas of the building damaged by tanks. The fires rapidly became one inferno. Fire trucks arrived at 12:34 but were held back by Special Agent in Charge Jeffrey Jamar, allegedly to protect the firefighters from gunfire from the Branch Davidians. After the entire building burned down, the firemen were permitted to start putting out the fire at 12:41.

ATF agents raised an American flag, a state of Texas flag, and an ATF flag on the Branch Davidians' flagpole to mark their victory. FBI agents posed for photographs in victorious postures over the charred ruins in which small red flags marked the bodies. Seventy-six Branch Davidians died in the fire, including 23 children. Two of the children were babies who were born and died during the fire. Nine Branch Davidians escaped the fire, several seriously burned.

FBI agents alleged, on the basis of bug tapes, that some Branch Davidians poured fuel and set the fires. The surviving Branch Davidians alleged that it was likely that the tanks knocked over lanterns containing kerosene. Some experts concluded that CS gas and the solvent it was mixed in were highly flammable, but other government experts testified that these were not flammable.

The negotiation transcripts reveal that, despite the Branch Davidians' belief that they would be martyred eventually, they did not want to die and tried to negotiate a surrender plan that would conform to their understanding of biblical prophecies. Branch Davidian survivor Ruth Riddle was rescued from the fire with a computer disk in her pocket on which was saved Koresh's interpretation of the First Seal, suggesting that the intervention by Arnold and Tabor had succeeded, and that Koresh and the Branch Davidians, indeed, planned to come out after Koresh completed his little book. Probably when the tank and gas assault began, the Branch Davidians reverted to their original belief that they were in the Fifth Seal that predicted their deaths at the hands of Babylon as a prelude to the apocalyptic end-time events.

It is possible that at the end, the Branch Davidians became a fragile millennial group in which some members resorted to violence to preserve their ultimate concern of salvation and make the prophecy of their deaths at the hands of Babylon come true. However, the evidence is by no means conclusive. What can be known with certainty is that the Branch Davidians were assaulted twice by federal agents and subjected to psychological warfare between the assaults. The fire would not have occurred if federal agents had taken into account the Branch Davidians' apocalyptic world view and had not acted like agents of evil Babylon. The radical dualism of the Branch Davidians, which involved seeing themselves as the faithful destined to be martyred by Babylon, was matched by the radical dualism of the federal agents, who saw themselves as the "good guys" who needed to defeat the "bad guys," the Branch Davidians, who were perceived as criminal and "brainwashed cultists" and therefore not fully human. There were casualties on both sides, but federal agents won the battle through the use of overwhelming force that virtually exterminated a religious community.

Falun Gong

Falun Gong is an international movement with practitioners in the United States. Falun Gong practitioners are usually ethnic Chinese, but there are also practitioners of various ethnicities. Falun Gong practitioners have been active in the United States promoting public and government awareness of alleged abuse of practitioners in the People's Republic of China (PRC) since 1999, and officials with the United States State Department have frequently raised concerns with the PRC about reports of the detainment and torture of Falun Gong practitioners and abrogation of their right to freedom of expression.[16] PRC government officials have sometimes accused the United States of being behind Falun Gong's anti-Communist campaign.

Falun Gong came into prominence on April 25, 1999, when more than 10,000 practitioners gathered to perform their meditative exercises at the residence of the highest officials in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Beijing to protest criticism of Falun Gong.[17] This was the largest public demonstration in the PRC since the student protests at Tiananmen Square in 1989. Falun Gong practitioners in China included people from all walks of life and all ages, many of them members of the CCP, the PRC's armed forces, and police. The government estimated that Falun Gong in the PRC had 30 million practitioners, while Falun Gong claimed 60 million, rivaling the size of the CCP. PRC leaders were so disturbed by this sudden mobilization of masses of people committed to a competing ideology that on July 22, 1999, Falun Gong was banned and labeled *xiejiao* (deviant teaching), often translated into English as "evil cult."

Through 2001 Falun Gong practitioners in the PRC continued to stage peaceful demonstrations, particularly in Tiananmen Square, for which they were taken into custody. If they did not renounce Falun Gong, they were sent to prisons, labor camps, and mental hospitals, where allegedly many people were tortured and died. After the public demonstrations diminished, reportedly people continued to be arrested for practicing Falun Gong exercises in their homes and for distributing or possessing Falun Gong literature. Thousands of practitioners were taken into custody and in 2005 Falun Gong alleged that over 2,300 had died due to mistreatment by the authorities.[18]

Falun Gong is an international movement of practitioners of a spiritual cultivation system with strong apocalyptic themes taught by Li Hongzhi (b. 1951 or 1952).[19] Falun Gong cultivation grew out of traditional Chinese *qigong* (or *ch'i-kung*) practices to accumulate *qi* (or *ch'i*) energy for physical and spiritual well being by meditating and performing physical exercises. Falun Gong is a pacifist movement, with an ideology that motivated many practitioners in the PRC to perform their exercises in public places, where they knew they were likely to be arrested.

Falun Gong's ultimate concern is achievement of "Consummation," physical ascension to a heavenly paradise. In response to the suppression of the movement by the PRC, Falun Gong has added the revolutionary goal of eliminating Communist rule in China through peaceful means. Falun Gong practitioners seek to overthrow the Communist government in China by waging spiritual warfare and

witnessing to the truth by holding to the universal principle of Forbearance *(ren)* in the face of oppression. Thus the Falun Gong world view, while nonviolent, through 2001 encouraged numerous practitioners in the PRC to put themselves in harm's way, while practitioners in other countries worked to bring international attention to the abuses of human rights and freedom of religion in the PRC.

Because its members are numerous and spread out geographically, Falun Gong is not likely to initiate violence as a fragile millennial group, although there have been allegations of several incidents of practitioners immolating themselves, the first involving four adults and a 12-year-old girl in Tiananmen Square on January 23, 2001.[20] There have been reports of practitioners going on hunger strikes while in custody and some group suicides among those detained. All these reports emanating from the PRC are impossible to verify. These reports were used by PRC officials to argue that "Falun Gong is a cult that harms human life."[21]

In the PRC Falun Gong is an assaulted millennial movement. The initial suppression by the government appears to have been in response to the demonstrated ability of Falun Gong to mobilize large numbers of people committed to its ideology. To a great extent Falun Gong's radical dualism, belief in the salvific power of suffering, and revolutionary intention have contributed to the continuing assaults of practitioners by PRC agents.

Falun Gong was founded in 1992 by Li Hongzhi, who in 1998 moved to the United States and resides in New York. Master Li utilizes the Internet and travels to "experience-sharing conferences" to communicate his teachings. Despite Li being regarded as the spiritual master of the movement, Falun Gong is nonauthoritarian in organizational structure and relies on volunteers to conduct practice and study meetings, as well as larger conferences, to publish and distribute publications, and to work for freedom of religion and human rights in the PRC.

Falun Gong, "The Cultivation Way of the Law Wheel," uses meditation and physical exercises to cultivate a *falun* (law wheel) in the lower abdomen, considered to be a center of energy connected to universal energy that dispels evil and attracts positive energy. Falun Gong is also called Falun Dafa, "The Great Law of the Law Wheel."

Although the ultimate concern is Consummation, during the present period of apocalyptic tribulations, practitioners oppose evil on Earth, especially represented by the Communist government in China. This period, called "Fa-rectification," will conclude with the destruction of evil, the establishment of the Fa (law or *dharma*) ultimate truth, and the achievement of Consummation by the virtuous. At the end of Fa-rectification, evil people will be destroyed and the righteous Dafa disciples will "ascend into the highest heavens."[22]

Falun Gong practitioners cultivate the universal principles of Forbearance *(ren),* Truthfulness*(zhen),* and Benevolence *(shan). Ren* involves persevering in the face of difficulties and exercising patience and personal self-control while being oppressed. The practice of Forbearance enables the practitioner to grow spiritually and gain merit (good karma). Enduring suffering at the hands of oppressors while maintaining a tolerant attitude toward them is a way for the practitioner to gain good karma

by obtaining the good karma of the oppressors. Hence, persecution, suffering, and even martyrdom lead to spiritual benefits.

As the conflict between Falun Gong and the PRC authorities intensified, both sides demonized one another in their use of language, the PRC painting Falun Gong as an "evil cult" that promoted "superstition" as opposed to scientific truth and Marxism, and Master Li painting Jiang Zemin, the PRC president (from 1993 to 2003), as the embodiment of evil served by henchmen who were reincarnated "minor ghosts from hell."[23]

Beginning in September 2000, messages posted on the Falun Gong Web site encouraged practitioners in the PRC and elsewhere to "step forward" to "validate the Fa." On September 26, 2000, Master Li asserted that those who failed to do so were guilty of breaking away from "humanness," were controlled by demons, and lost forever their chance to achieve Consummation.[24] But by April 2001, Li's statements and the testimonials of practitioners on the Web site indicated a shift from physical protest to spiritual warfare on higher planes by sending forth "righteous thoughts" and exercising superhuman powers. According to Patsy Rahn, this enabled Li and the practitioners to claim victories in the supernatural realms even though practitioners' physical activities in the PRC remained circumscribed. Practitioners were encouraged by the numerous "Retribution of Evil" stories posted on the Web site recounting incidents of oppressors meeting bad ends because of the working of the Fa.[25]

If the graphic information on the Falun Dafa Information Center Web site was correct, in 2005 Falun Gong practitioners continued to be detained, tortured, and murdered in the PRC. Falun Gong practitioners in the PRC are an assaulted millennial group. In response, Falun Gong practitioners internationally work to oppose evil forces that attack Falun Gong practitioners no matter where they are, but they particularly show concern for members in the PRC. Falun Gong practitioners thus oppose the Chinese Communist Party and use nonviolent means to achieve a peaceful revolution in China. Their revolutionary methods include the purity of their characters and practical as well as pragmatic means of political lobbying in various countries to gain support for their struggle. They also stage public protests and contact media outlets to generate publicity for their cause. Thus, the warfare they wage is both spiritual and pragmatic, with a pragmatic emphasis on the media.

A variety of media are utilized by Falun Gong. A number of Falun Gong Web sites spread Li's teachings and make the international public aware of abuses in the PRC. In 2002 and 2003 the PRC accused Falun Gong practitioners of hacking into cable television transmissions in several cities to broadcast their own messages, and of hijacking twice television transmissions from PRC-run Sino Satellite in order to broadcast programming into China.[26] By 2004 Falun Gong practitioners appeared to be behind a newspaper group called The Epoch Times as well as the New Tang Dynasty Television.[27]

Time will tell if Falun Gong practitioners are successful in their peaceful revolution against the Chinese Communist Party. In the meantime practitioners persist in

their self-cultivation efforts so they will achieve Consummation at the end of the catastrophic Fa-rectification period.

FRAGILE MILLENNIAL GROUPS

Fragile millennial groups initiate violence, either against their own members or against those identified as external enemies, to preserve the group's ultimate concern, which is perceived as being in danger of failing usually due to complex combinations of endogenous and exogenous factors.[28] There are varying degrees of internal and external contributing factors in each fragile millennial group. Some groups become fragile due to a predominance of internal problems. Many others become fragile when outside pressures in the form of "cultural opposition"[29] destabilizes a group already suffering from internal weaknesses.

Jonestown

The murders and suicides of 918 people on November 18, 1978, at Jonestown, Guyana, the communal settlement of the Peoples Temple, a church based in the United States and led by Jim Jones (1931–1978), created the paradigm of "the destructive cult" in the public imagination. Peoples Temple aimed to participate in a social revolution in solidarity with Communist revolutions in other countries. The residents of Jonestown felt assaulted and invaded by various opponents. In the end, Jonestown was a fragile millennial group whose members resorted to violence to maintain their ultimate concern of maintaining the cohesiveness of their community at all costs.[30]

Jim Jones was a Communist who clothed his message of equality and social justice in a style and language drawn from Christian Pentecostalism, the Holiness tradition, the Black Church, and the Protestant Social Gospel. As a white man from an impoverished background in Indiana, he identified with African Americans and made their causes his own. Jones and his wife adopted children of different races to create a "rainbow family," but they encountered intense racism in Indiana. Jones moved his church from Indianapolis to Redwood Valley, California, in 1965, seeking greater tolerance for its members and their values and a safe haven from an imminent nuclear war. Peoples Temple expanded in California to gain numerous African American members in San Francisco and Los Angeles, as well as some educated white young adults who were committed to working for social justice and the elimination of racism. Sexual relationships were fluid in the Peoples Temple, and Jones had numerous sexual partners. In 1972 Grace Stoen gave birth to John Victor Stoen, and her husband, Tim Stoen, signed an affidavit stating that John Victor was Jones's biological son. John Victor Stoen would become the subject of a bitter custody battle that contributed to destabilizing Jonestown.

In 1972 Peoples Temple received negative press attention, and the church building in San Francisco was set on fire, probably by white racists. Jones was arrested for lewd conduct in a Los Angeles public bathroom and faced prosecution. In 1974 Jones sent

a small group to initiate the Jonestown agricultural settlement in the jungles of Guyana, a Marxist country. Defectors from Peoples Temple circulated sensationalized stories to the media, and their allegations prompted investigations by the Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service. During the summer of 1977 over 1000 Peoples Temple members, including Jones, moved to their "promised land" in Guyana. Jones taught that they would be safe there from an impending nuclear holocaust that would destroy capitalist nations and enable the surviving Communists to create a just society. Jones asserted that he was the savior sent by the "Divine Principle" of "Socialism."

Jonestown suffered from numerous internal problems in 1978 when the cultural opposition from outside became unbearable. After relocating to Guyana, Jones descended into drug addiction and madness, and he was in danger of losing his status as the messiah of the community due to his own erratic behavior. Farming and survival were hard in the jungle and the able-bodied adults were exhausted trying to fund and provide needed services for the large number of elderly and children.[31] Those who tried to defect were controlled by confinement and/or drugs. Those who succeeded in defecting, mostly white people with the resources to leave, became vocal critics, thus becoming part of exogenous pressures on the Jonestown community.

The cultural opposition to Jonestown included an organization of Concerned Relatives that sought to rescue family members. Grace and Tim Stoen defected and filed a lawsuit to gain custody of John Victor, whom Jones said he would never relinquish. Tim Stoen filed a lawsuit asking for damages of $56 million and hired a detective to investigate Jonestown, as well as a public relations firm to coordinate negative publicity about Jonestown. It was falsely alleged that Jonestown was stockpiling weapons, prompting a United States Customs Service investigation, as well as an Interpol investigation. The possible role of the CIA at Jonestown remains an unanswered question due to the continued classification of government reports on the Jonestown murders/mass suicide. The United States Postal Service held back delivery of checks for the seniors from the Social Security Administration, a crucial source of income for Jonestown. An IRS investigation was imminent, and the Federal Communications Commission threatened to cut off Jonestown's shortwave radio link to the outside world.

Concerned Relatives succeeded in getting Congressman Leo Ryan interested in the situation at Jonestown. He demanded that he be permitted to inspect the community. At first Jones refused, and Jonestown residents wrote letters to Congress protesting the investigations, stating that they were willing to die for their community. Nevertheless, Congressman Ryan entered Jonestown as a representative of the federal government on November 17, 1978, bringing with him the other enemies of Jonestown—members of the press and Concerned Relatives.

Initially the visit went smoothly, and Ryan was impressed with the living conditions. Toward the end of the visit, however, Jones was interviewed aggressively by a reporter before a television camera. As Ryan's party prepared to leave, 16 residents departed with him, most of them long-time Peoples Temple members from Indiana.

This threatened the ultimate concern of the Jonestown residents—to maintain the community at any cost—and called into question Jones's credibility. The Jonestown residents had discussed and written essays months earlier about what they would do if their community was threatened with dissolution. They reached a consensus, agreeing that they should remain together in death, thus making a statement against the corrupt capitalist world, rather than let their commune fail. They practiced "White Night" drills by drinking fruit punch that Jones said contained poison, and then later they learned it was harmless.

On November 18, 1978, the "Kool-Aid" was laced with cyanide. First, some Jonestown men drove through the jungle to intercept Ryan's party at the Port Kaituma airstrip as they were boarding their planes. Opening fire, they killed Ryan, an NBC reporter, an NBC cameraman, a *San Francisco Examiner* reporter, and a defector. They then returned to join the others in the group suicide. The few residents who did not want to commit suicide slipped into the jungle. Apparently, most other able-bodied adults and young people willingly drank the poisoned punch. Young children were injected with the poison. Many of the elderly also probably had no choice. Nine hundred and nine people died at Jonestown including 294 children.

The ultimate concern was preserved, leaving the rest of the world to puzzle about the motivational power of ultimate commitments.

Aum Shinrikyo

The Aum Shinrikyo affair in Japan prompted law enforcement officers and intelligence officials in the United States and other countries to attempt to be more diligent in anticipating and preventing the use of weapons of mass destruction by religious extremists. Aum Shinrikyo led by Asahara Shoko was pursuing the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction in preparation to wage a revolutionary war to overthrow the Japanese government and to establish a Buddhist millennial kingdom called Shambhala. When members released sarin gas on the Tokyo subway on March 20, 1995, however, Aum Shinrikyo was a predominantly fragile millennial group seeking to protect its guru from arrest. Asahara claimed to be an infallible Buddha, and he predicted imminent Armageddon. Salvation came through surrendering totally to Asahara. If Asahara was shown to be flawed or mistaken, the whole religious goal was endangered.

Aum Shinrikyo was founded in 1986, and initially it was a progressive millennial movement that taught that through surrendering to the guru and practicing ascetic disciplines under his guidance individuals could acquire superhuman powers and thus create Shambhala. Asahara turned to apocalypticism as expressed in the New Testament book of Revelation at a time when he felt ill and incapable of saving humanity and when Aum Shinrikyo was failing to achieve recruitment goals he had said were necessary for the world's salvation. Ian Reader has termed the change of methods and outlook when a millennial group is failing to achieve its ultimate concern the "pragmatics of failure."[32] Beginning in 1989 Asahara began to predict imminent Doomsday or Armageddon as the prelude to the collective salvation for

the elect, and as the infallible Buddha and the sole source of salvation his predictions could not be proven wrong if the religion was to be maintained.

Aum Shinrikyo attracted opposition from the general public, the media, and concerned relatives of members, but the degree of opposition was not unusual compared to other NRMs in Japan. However, the radical dualism of the Aum world view increased the perception of opposition in the minds of Asahara and his devotees, and the fact that they were covering up previous murders made them extremely sensitive to the least possibility of investigation.

Aum devotees kidnapped, detained, drugged, tortured, and murdered numerous people before the Tokyo subway attack, all to extend salvation to others and to protect the group's ultimate concern and the guru's authority. Sarin gas was released previously in the town of Matsumoto on June 27, 1994, with the intention of killing three judges scheduled to hear a case against Aum. Six hundred people were injured and seven died in the Matsumoto attack. The 1995 Tokyo subway attack injured over 5,000, and 12 people died.[33] The immediate arrests of Asahara and members of his inner circle put an end to the murderous rampage of Aum Shinrikyo.

Solar Temple

The Solar Temple, a French-speaking group with members in Switzerland, France, and Quebec, experienced strong opposition from former members, anticultists, and the media. They were under police investigation when on October 4 and 5, 1994, it was discovered that a family of former members had been murdered in Quebec and that in Switzerland other members were ritually murdered followed by the suicides of the most committed members. A total of 52 people died in this incident.

The primary leader, Joseph Di Mambro, was depressed because of his declining health and growing opposition to the Solar Temple. Members of the inner circle thought that the group's enemies were preventing the achievement of their ultimate concern of a transition to the Age of Aquarius. As the opposition increased, the group's outlook shifted from belief in a progressive transition to a collective salvation to expectation of apocalyptic catastrophe. They concluded that progressive evolution on Earth was not possible due to humanity's obstinacy, the masters guiding that evolution had abandoned Earth, and the world would be destroyed. The murdered family in Quebec threatened to reveal that appearances of masters during Solar Temple rituals were merely technological tricks, and their baby son named Christopher Emmanuel threatened the messianic status of Di Mambro's daughter Emmanuelle, who was rebelling against restrictions designed to guard her from being contaminated by the corrupt world.

In response to these difficulties, Di Mambro and his most devoted followers arranged to murder their enemies, "help" the weaker members make the "transit," and then committed suicide, believing that they would gain salvation on another planet. In 1995 sixteen more Solar Temple members, including three children, made the transit in woods near Grenoble, France. In 1997, five more believers in Quebec made the transit, but their three teenage children elected not to go.[34]

Heaven's Gate

Heaven's Gate was a fragile UFO millennial group in the United States suffering from the possible disconfirmation of its ultimate concern when the group suicide of 39 members was discovered on March 27, 1997, in a mansion in Rancho Santa Fe, California. They chose to "exit" planet Earth to achieve immortal extraterrestrial bodies on the mother ship piloted by one of their leaders known as "Ti," who had died from cancer in 1985. Ti's death called into question their belief that through their monastic lifestyle they were transforming their human bodies into immortal extraterrestrial ones. In 1997 their surviving leader "Do" felt that his health was failing. This was a problem for the group since Do taught that complete reliance and "grafting" onto him as the second coming of Christ was necessary to enter The Level Above Human (TELAH). After the group experienced repeated failures of predictions that flying saucers would land and pick them up, Do began to teach that the Earth was destined to "be spaded under" and that the members of the "class" would need to exit their bodies to go through Heaven's Gate and enter into immortal life.

The group received opposition from concerned relatives and the media in the 1970s. Ti and Do responded by making the group very reclusive. Any degree of opposition was interpreted as persecution originating from evil "Luciferian" space aliens and the inability of human mammals to comprehend their message of salvation in The Next Level.

As a celibate community of men and women, no children were involved in these suicides, and they made no effort to kill perceived enemies. On May 6, 1997, two other Heaven's Gate believers attempted suicide and one succeeded. Chuck Humphrey concluded that he was spared death to disseminate Heaven's Gate literature on the Internet, CD-ROMs, and audiotapes, and after doing so he exited in February 1998.[35]

Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God

On March 17, 2000, in Kanungu, Uganda, about 540 members of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God (MRTCG) died when their church exploded and burned. The church's windows and doors were nailed shut. Prior to this, members sold their possessions at greatly reduced prices, settled debts, and said they were expecting the Blessed Holy Mary to deliver a special message at Kanungu. Subsequently, authorities found several hundred more bodies buried on various MRTCG properties. The total number of dead came to at least 780.

Because of the scanty information coming out of Uganda on this case, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what happened. Based on the available evidence, John Walliss theorizes that there was very little opposition to this Catholic Marian apparition sect, and that the reasons for the deaths were due primarily to endogenous factors.[36] The messages from Mary predicted an imminent catastrophic "Period of Chastisement." During three days of darkness, the elect would enter into buildings called "Arks" or "Ships" to pray while everyone outside turned into devils and were thrown into hell.

"The redeemed" would emerge to inherit the New Earth, a perfected place for the elect. MRTCG literature predicted that at the end of the year 2000, a new generation would follow the present in a new era; the year following 2000 would be designated the Year One.

It was possible that due to discontent of numerous members who wanted their money and property back (perhaps these were the ones who were murdered and buried in different locations) the date for the transition was advanced to March 16–18, 2000. Some people thought to have died in the church fire, including leaders Credonia Mwerinde (b. 1952) and Joseph Kibwetere (b. 1932) as well as rank-and-file followers, told friends and family that they would be going to heaven soon and there would be no year 2001. Because of the condition of the bodies and the lack of medical records in Uganda, it was impossible to determine whether or not the leaders died in the church fire.[37]

REVOLUTIONARY MILLENNIAL MOVEMENTS

Revolutionary millennial movements aim to overthrow the old order so that they can bring about conditions for collective salvation on Earth. Even with revolutionary millennial movements, the quality of the *interactions* of people, agencies, and states, representing dominant elites or colonial powers, contributes to the believers perceiving themselves as being threatened and oppressed and thus becoming revolutionary. When revolutionary millennial movements become socially dominant, they cause considerable violence and suffering, such as the Taiping Revolution in nineteenth century China, the German Nazis in the mid-twentieth century, and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia in the mid-1970s.[38]

When a revolutionary millennial movement is not socially dominant, its most fervent believers commit acts of terrorism in attempts to spark the desired revolution and draw recruits to join the fight. This pattern can been seen in the Euro-American nativist movement, which includes Identity Christians, Odinists, Neo-Nazis, and secular white supremacists, in the United States, and in the transnational radical Islamist movement, which includes al-Qaida and related groups. Both these broad and diffuse revolutionary movements resist American dominance in terms of secularized culture and economic institutions, which they believe represent the "New World Order," and which disrupt their traditional ways of life and remove people from their sacred lands.

Nativist Millennial Movements

A nativist millennial movement consists of people who feel oppressed by colonizing governments and believe that the dominant culture is removing them from their lands and destroying their sacred, traditional way of life. Nativists hope that their oppressors will be eliminated and their idealized past restored. The idealized past may be highly embellished in the nativists' imaginations. Identity Christians in the United States, for example, believe that white people are the true biblical Israelites.

Islamists, on the other hand, seek to restore the "true" Islamic state based on the model of Muhammad's original *umma* (community).

Nativist millennialists are not necessarily violent. They have the same range of behaviors discussed earlier for catastrophic and progressive millennialists. They may wait for divine intervention; they may work to build their ideal communities peacefully; they may arm themselves for protection and fight back if attacked; they may resort to revolutionary violence. The diffuse Euro-American nativist movement and the transnational Islamist movement display all of these behaviors.

Euro-American Nativist Movement

The term "Euro-American nativist movement" is used here to designate a variety of participants and groups in a white supremacist movement in the United States that does not have a single name in popular discourse. It consists of people with different religious views and approaches to creating a collective salvation for white people in America. Many theorists, theologians, leaders, individuals, organizations, and communities make up this movement: racist and anti-Semitic Neopagans called Odinists; racist and anti-Semitic Christians espousing a faith called Christian Identity; Neo-Nazis and skinheads; tax protesters; people who want to return to the way of life of the pre-Civil War South; disaffected former military men and former police officers; members of citizen militias who believe they must be prepared to protect their families and communities against "jack-booted" federal agents; "Constitutionalists" who believe that the true American Constitution is divinely inspired and reject the post-Civil War Amendments giving rights to people of color and women; "Common Law" activists, who believe they have unlocked the magic power of legal words to manipulate the legal system for their benefit; "Patriots" (secular and Christian); and self-identified members of the "Phineas Priesthood" (Numbers 25:1–9), whose mission is to kill mixed-race couples, abortionists, Jews, homosexuals, and law enforcement agents.[39]

The Euro-American nativist movement gained impetus in the 1980s when federal banking and lending practices caused many farmers and owners of small businesses in rural communities to lose their properties through foreclosures on loans and seizures by the IRS for nonpayment of taxes. But the movement has many urban participants as well. Generally, Euro-American nativists see the "satanic" federal government as being under the control of Jewish bankers, heads of multinational corporations, and media moguls, collectively dubbed the Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG), which the nativists believe is seeking to enslave white Americans to the "New World Order." Believers anticipate an apocalyptic war between the races and between the white "natives" and the federal government. They believe that the white race in the United States is being subjected to genocide and dispossessed of its sacred land and way of life by an illegitimate government controlled by "satanic" Jews.

An important theorist of this movement was Neo-Nazi William Pierce (1933–2002), who exercised great influence through his novels, *The Turner Diaries* (1978) and *Hunter* (1984), which encourage citizens to fight to overthrow the federal

government, either individually or in small cells of warriors. *The Turner Diaries* inspired the founding of The Order or Bruders Schweigen (Silent Brotherhood) by Robert Mathews in 1983. The Order consisted of men who were Identity Christians and Odinists who waged war against ZOG by stealing money from banks and armored cars and produced counterfeit money to fund their terrorism and assist sympathetic white supremacist groups. Among their various crimes, they murdered a Jewish talk show host in Denver, murdered a man suspected of being an undercover agent, and bombed a synagogue. Mathews died in 1984 in a fire in a house surrounded by FBI agents when the agents shot in a flare.

In April 1985 FBI agents peacefully resolved a siege of a fundamentalist Christian community in Arkansas called the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSA) led by Jim Ellison, which had been accumulating weapons, was training a paramilitary force, and was harboring two fugitive members of The Order. Danny Coulson, then in charge of the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team, expressed concern that the children and women inside the CSA community not be harmed and hoped to avoid "going to war" with the group. After FBI agents surrounded the community, innovative negotiation procedures were utilized. These included Coulson negotiating face to face with Ellison as commander to commander, permitting Ellison to come out and go back into the community several times, and bringing in Robert Millar, head of the Christian Identity community in Oklahoma known as Elohim City as a third-party intermediary to persuade the two Order members to surrender. When Ellison and the others came out, they were treated respectfully and not humiliated. Coulson promised that everyone who did not have a warrant for their arrest would be permitted to return to the community after it was searched, and that FBI agents would not destroy property during the search. Ellison and the two Order members were taken into custody and a cache of weapons was recovered.[40] The FBI operation against the CSA was a resounding success, especially when compared with the Branch Davidian debacle.

The shooting of the son and wife of Randy Weaver at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, in 1992 by federal agents,[41] as well as the Branch Davidian incident in 1993, stimulated fearful Patriots to form militias for protection against government agents and prepare to fight in the war against ZOG.

In 1992, because antigovernment groups tended to be infiltrated by federal undercover agents, Louis Beam, a former Ku Klux Klan leader, articulated a philosophy of "leaderless resistance" in which warriors against ZOG formed independent small cells to execute terrorist operations. Timothy McVeigh (1968–2001), a young Gulf War veteran outraged by what federal agents had done to the Branch Davidians, and strongly influenced by Pierce's *The Turner Diaries,* formed a cell and carried out the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on April 19, 1995. That date was the second anniversary of the Mount Carmel fire that killed the Branch Davidians. Also on that date, Richard Wayne Snell, a former CSA member who had planned an aborted CSA attempt to bomb the Murrah building was executed in Arkansas. After watching the news coverage of the Oklahoma City bombing on television, Snell proclaimed, "Hail to this victory!" immediately

before receiving his lethal injection.[42] The Oklahoma City bombing killed 168 people, including 19 children.

In 1996 the FBI conducted another siege of an antigovernment group, the Freemen residing on a farm in Montana that they named Justus Township. These were Identity Christians and Constitutionalists utilizing their unique interpretations of Common Law to wage a war of words against American economic institutions and representatives of the federal government. During the siege they expressed a willingness to fight and die in a confrontation with the FBI in the hope that it would spark the "second American Revolution" against the "satanic" government. Unlike the Ruby Ridge and Mount Carmel incidents, FBI agents adopted a low-key tactical presence and utilized innovative negotiation procedures, including face-to-face dialogues, bringing in a series of third-party intermediaries, and even flying a Freeman to Billings, Montana, to meet with a respected colleague in jail to get his approval for their surrender and then returning him to Justus Township to talk to the other Freemen. In the final terms negotiated, the FBI negotiators found a way to reassure the Freemen that they could continue to pursue their ultimate concern of overthrowing the government by taking their fight into the federal courts.

In 1995 after the Oklahoma City bombing, FBI agents began to meet with members of militias to promote greater trust in government agents and agencies. Their aim was to enable militia members to get to know them as human beings and to dispel rumors. In 1998 legislation was passed by Congress to reform the IRS to eliminate past abuses and make the IRS more responsive to the needs of citizens. The IRS was instructed to be more open to accepting compromise offers and installment payments as opposed to seizing property.[43] After the September 11, 2001, attacks by al-Qaida on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon, FBI attention shifted primarily to dealing with radical Islamist terrorists, but the Euro-American nativist movement remains part of the American religious landscape.

AL-QAIDA

On September 11, 2001, nineteen men from the Middle East (fifteen from Saudi Arabia) simultaneously hijacked four American passenger planes. The passengers of one plane fought with the hijackers, and it crashed in rural Pennsylvania. Two planes hit the World Trade Center towers in New York City, bringing the towers down, and the remaining plane crashed into the Pentagon. Nearly 3,000 people died in the incident. With these events al-Qaida and its leader, Osama bin Laden, became the most prominent participants in a contemporary movement of radical Muslims intent on overthrowing current "apostate" Muslim governments, eliminating the cultural and economic imperialism of Western nations, especially the United States, and creating a collective salvation for faithful Muslims in a "true" Islamic state, the *khilafa* or caliphate, which will properly administer *sharia,* Islamic law.[44] An earlier attempt by radical Muslims to bring down the World Trade Center had been made on February 26, 1993, with a bombing that killed six people and injured over 1000. Since

September 11, 2001, most of the United States' foreign policy can be seen as responding to those attacks on American soil.

Movements to unify the Muslim religion with a pious state are termed "Islamist." Some Islamist movements are focused on creating an Islamic state enforcing *sharia* in their nations only, such as the Islamic revolution in Iran (a Shiite nation) in 1979, or Sunni movements in Egypt. Many Islamists work through democratic means to create their ideal Islamic state. The focus in this section is on the revolutionary transnational Islamist movement, coming out of Sunni Islam, that aims to overthrow current Muslim regimes in order to establish a single Islamic state, the *khilafa.* This movement does not recognize the current national boundaries of Muslim nations as being legitimate. This essay uses the terms "radical Islamist" and "jihadist" to refer to those who are committed to using holy war, including suicide terrorism, to accomplish their goals.

Jihad, meaning "struggle," has numerous interpretations within Islam. It can refer to the internal struggle of a believer to be a "submitter" (Muslim) to God's will, and it can refer to external struggle in holy war against unbelievers. There are passages in the Quran, regarded in Islam as being the Word of God revealed through Muhammad, that encourage Muslims to fight when they are oppressed and removed from their homes; Muslims should fight those who initiate aggression against them (for instance, Quran 2:193; 22:39–40a). The Quran also contains passages that appear to command Muslims to wage war unconditionally against all unbelievers (for instance, Quran 2:216; 2:244).[45]

Radical Islamists are focused on the Jihad of the Sword to accomplish their revolutionary millennial goals. They regard their revolution as a response to Western imperialist invasion and theft of Muslim lands and resources, massacres of Muslims, and destruction of the authentic Muslim way of life, especially on the part of the United States and other states, such as Israel, backed by the United States. To justify their terrorist activities that include attacks against civilian as well military targets, Muslim as well as Western targets, radical Islamists produce statements providing interpretations of Islamic sources, such as the Quran and the sayings of Muhammad, at variance with many traditional Muslim interpretations. Hence, the radical Islamist movement is a revolutionary millennial movement that draws on traditional Muslim sources and values while offering new interpretations and extremist methods.

Arab Muslims initiated the current transnational jihadist movement, but it also includes Muslims who are European, South Asian, Filipino, Indonesian, African, and of African derivation. Despite racial diversity, Muslims see themselves as comprising a "community" *(umma)* (Quran 3:110), often understood in the modern period as being a "nation." Therefore, this radical Islamist movement is a type of "nativist" millennial movement. It sees Western social and economic values as disrupting the traditional Muslim way of life and corrupting Muslim regimes aligned with the West. It accuses Western powers of removing Muslims from their sacred homelands, stealing Muslims' wealth in the form of natural resources, and desecrating Muslim holy lands (notably in Saudi Arabia and Palestine-Israel, but also in Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Iraq).

Radical Islamists see Western countries as *al-ahzab* (the Confederates) aligned against God and his people (Quran 11:17; 33:20; 22; 38:11–12), who join forces with hypocritical Muslim regimes. Radical Islamists wage *jihad* with the aim of defeating these imperial powers, removing false Muslim regimes, and reinstituting an idealized Muslim community, the *umma* founded by Muhammad, in one pious state the *khilafa.*

Radical Islamists had several successful strikes prior to September 11, 2001, including the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City in February 1993; the bombing of an American military base in Saudi Arabia in June 1996 that killed 19 American soldiers; the simultaneous bombings of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998 that killed 264; the suicide bombing of the *USS Cole* in Aden, Yemen, in October 2000 that killed 17 American sailors and injured others. Operations after September 11, 2001, included the bombing of four commuter trains in Madrid in March 2004 that killed 202 and injured more than 1,400[46] and the suicide bombing carried out by three Pakistani British young men and one Jamaican British man on three London subway trains and a bus in July 2005, which killed 54 people.

These are just a few incidents in the broad radical Islamist war against the United States and its allies, including governments regarded as repressive regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Chechnya, the Philippines, Yemen, Kashmir, African countries, Central Asia, India, Indonesia, and, since 2003, Iraq. The transnational radical Islamist war has numerous fronts as well as countless organized participants, with al-Qaida being the most prominent and well funded of the groups within the jihadist world.

A variety of reform movements, thinkers, and fighters preceded bin Laden and al-Qaida. Predecessors include Sayyid Abul-Ala Mawdudi (1903–1979) (Indian, later Pakistani), who in writings from 1930 to about 1960 argued that Muslims had the duty to engage in *jihad* as an international revolution to destroy evil un-Islamic governments and to establish God's kingdom on Earth in the form of an Islamic state, the *khilafa,* that would enforce the *sharia;* Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949) (Egyptian), who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928 aimed at restoring the Islam of the earliest *umma* by means of social reform, welfare projects, promotion of grassroots Islamic education, and democratic political action. Al-Banna argued that violent *jihad* was required when Muslims were oppressed by outside forces; Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) (Egyptian) of the Muslim Brotherhood who asserted that the modern world was in a state of *jahiliyyah* (spiritual ignorance) characterized by rebellion against God and that an organized movement was needed to remove Western influences from Muslim society and create a pure *umma* modeled on the community founded by Muhammad; Abd al-Salam Faraj (1952–1982) (Egyptian), author of *The Neglected Duty,* a booklet in which he argued that *jihad* (against Muslims in Egypt) permitted the killing of noncombatants and that jihadists could legitimately resort to terrorism. *The Neglected Duty* called for the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, viewed as an apostate, to initiate a revolution to establish an Islamic state in Egypt. *The Neglected Duty* was left at the site of the assassination of President Sadat in 1981; and Abdullah Azzam (1941–1989) (Palestinian), author

of *Martyrs: The Building Blocks of Nations,* who mentored bin Laden in Afghanistan during the 1980s war to expel the Soviet military. Azzam believed that the war to expel unbelievers and create a single faithful Islamic state would expand from Afghanistan to other parts of the Muslim world.

Many groups within the contemporary radical Islamist movement work independently of as well as with al-Qaida, and even more groups and leaders will survive bin Laden's passing from the scene.

Osama bin Laden (b. 1957) is the seventeenth son of the wealthy Yemeni contractor, Muhammad bin Laden, who made his fortune in Saudi Arabia working for the royal Saud family. Muhammad bin Laden was a devout Muslim in the Wahhabi tradition, the conservative Muslim movement that dominates Saudi Arabia. In the late 1960s Muhammad bin Laden's company rebuilt the al-Aqsa mosque near the Dome of the Rock on the Haram al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary), the third holiest site in Islam, in Jerusalem. His company also helped renovate mosques at the two holiest cities in Islam, Mecca and Medina, in Saudi Arabia. After Muhammad bin Laden's death, the Saudi Binladen Group continued to renovate and expand those mosques.

Osama bin Laden earned a degree in economics and public administration at King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where beginning about 1979 he associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and was influenced by two Islamist scholars, Abdullah Azzam and Muhammad Qutb, brother of Sayyid Qutb. Muhammad Qutb argued that Muslims needed to wage offensive war against enemies of Islam in order to establish the true Islamic state. Azzam also taught the necessity of creating the *khilafa.*

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, ultimately killing more than a million people and forcing a third of the population (about five million) into exile abroad. The 22-year-old bin Laden went to Afghanistan to witness Soviet aggression against Muslims for himself, then returned to Saudi Arabia to raise money to support the *mujahidin* (warriors) fighting the Soviets. In the early 1980s bin Laden brought construction machinery to Afghanistan for the *mujahidin.* He provided funding for Abdullah Azzam to found Makhtab al-Dhadamat (Services Offices) based in Peshawar, Pakistan, in 1984 to assist the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan. Bin Laden provided funds for thousands of Arabs to fight in Afghanistan, where they gained training and experience in *jihad* that they would take to other parts of the world. The jihadists also gained confidence by helping to defeat a superpower nation. The Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. Bin Laden founded al-Qaida (the Base) in 1989 to train jihadists and to expand the struggle to other countries.

When Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's forces invaded Kuwait in 1990, bin Laden offered to make his jihadists available to the Saudi government to assist in repelling the Iraqis to prevent the stationing of foreign troops on Arabian soil. He was offended when his offer was ignored, and these troops, especially the Americans, came to the "land of the two Holy Places" and remained after the war. Bin Laden left Saudi Arabia in 1991, establishing his base of operations in Sudan. His jihadist Arabs participated in the 1993 battle in Mogadishu, Somalia, that killed 18 American

soldiers and prompted the withdrawal of American troops. This convinced bin Laden that Americans were cowards who were afraid to die.

Al-Qaida sent funds and jihadists to fight in Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Tajikistan, the Phillippines, Jordan, Eritrea, Yemen, Egypt, and Bosnia, and networked with other radical Islamist organizations. In 1996 bin Laden moved his headquarters to Afghanistan, where he supported the Taliban in creating an Islamist state. There he continued recruiting and training jihadists.

Bin Laden's public statements indicate that he believes it is necessary to fight against those who are oppressing pious Muslims. His 1996 "Declaration of War against Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places" complained of the "Zionist-Crusader alliance," a reference to Israel and the United States, which according to bin Laden caused the spilling of Muslim blood in various lands and the theft of Muslims' wealth and land. It protested the American "occupation" of the sacred land of Arabia. Bin Laden stated that he and his organization were persecuted by those attempting to stop his activities. He aimed to "return to the [Muslim] people their own rights, particularly after the large damages and the great aggression on the life and religion of the people." Bin Laden highlighted the following injustices suffered by Muslims: Israelis evicting Muslims in Lebanon; the occupation of Muslim lands; the United States supplying Israel with arms and financial support; and the deaths of more than 600,000 Iraqi children caused by the American-led embargo of Iraq. He accused the Saudi regime of collaborating with the Americans to make oil profits to the detriment of Saudi Arabian citizens. He also accused the Saudi government of not enforcing *sharia.* Bin Laden concluded that it was "essential to hit the main enemy [the Zionist-Crusader Alliance] who divided the Ummah into small and little countries and pushed it, for the last few decades into a state of confusion." After faith in Allah, bin Laden's priority was to drive Americans, the greatest of unbelievers, out of Saudi Arabia, and liberate Palestine, seen as the northern part of the Land of the Two Holy Places, from Israeli domination. As to the mode of fight, Bin Laden commented:

> [I]t must be obvious to you that, due to the imbalance of power between our armed forces and the enemy forces, a suitable means of fighting must be adopted i.e. using fast moving light forces that work under complete secrecy.[47]

Bin Laden noted that, while Americans were afraid to die, Muslim martyrs were assured of rewards in heaven, including marriage to 72 *houris* ("beautiful ones of Paradise") and the ability to intercede for the salvation of 70 relatives. To the Americans he said, "Terrorising you, while you are carrying arms in our land, is a legitimate and morally demanded duty."[48]

The 1998 "Jihad against Jews and Crusaders" statement by bin Laden and associates made similar points. It added that Americans used Saudi Arabia as a base to launch attacks against Muslims in other lands. It complained of Israeli occupation of Jerusalem and the murder of Muslims, as well as the continued deaths of Iraqis due to the embargo. It accused Americans of planning to destroy Iraq. It concluded:

> The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque [in Jerusalem] and the holy mosque [in Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim.[49]

Like the Euro-American nativists, the jihadists resist the evil "New World Order." Bin Laden stated in an interview given to Peter Bergen for CNN in March 1997: "The collapse of the Soviet Union made the U.S. more haughty and arrogant and it has started to look at itself as a master of this world and established what it calls the New World Order."[50]

In early Islam, successes in warfare against unbelievers were seen as vindication that Islam was the expression of God's will. David Cook argues that the expectation of Muslim religious and cultural superiority made the low status of Muslim countries in the nineteenth century and the difficulties of Muslims in the twentieth century especially difficult to accept.[51] The belief that world dominance indicated God's favor for the true faith made these conditions especially humiliating. Raymond Stock reiterates this: "Some of these young Muslim men are tempted by a [Western] civilization they consider morally inferior, and they are humiliated by the fact that, while having been taught their faith is supreme, other civilizations seem to be doing much better."[52] The radical Islamist movement, with its goal of establishing a true Islamic state for faithful Muslims, draws on the values of violent *jihad* and martyrdom found in the Quran and the sayings of Muhammad and uses these to formulate a rationale for violent revolutionary activities to achieve that collective salvation.

The Muslim tradition discourages suicide for its own sake, but values death as a martyr *(shahid)* while fighting for Islam. It was acceptable in Islam to place oneself in circumstances in which death was probable while fighting for God and the faith, with the assurance that martyrs went immediately to heaven, whereas an ordinary Muslim went to sleep at death and had to wait for the resurrection and final judgment before being admitted to heaven.

Cook points out that suicide attacks, what radical Muslims call "martyrdom operations," have been used as a weapon in *jihad* only since the early 1980s. In 1983 Shiite groups used suicide terrorism in the Lebanese war to expel American and subsequently Israeli troops. Beginning in 1994 the Sunni Palestinian jihadist groups, Islamic Jihad and Hamas, used suicide attacks against Israelis. The practice then spread to Algeria, Kashmir, India, Chechnya, and Iraq.

"The Islamic Ruling on the Permissibility of Martyrdom Operations" was written after a Chechnyan woman carried out a suicide attack on June 9, 2000, that killed 27 Russian Special Forces. It discussed Quranic passages, sayings of Muhammad, and views in the different schools of *sharia* to argue that suicide attacks were permissible if specified conditions were met: the attacks must be performed with the sincere intention to uplift God's Word; the desired goal of the attacks could not be effected by any other means; the attacks must result in losses for the enemy or the enemy must be frightened and Muslims emboldened; and there must be prior consultation with war strategists to avoid upsetting a broader

plan. The document stated that the act was considered "worthless" if done without pure intention.[53]

Fragments of a spiritual manual, called "The Last Night," found in the luggage of Muhammad Atta, leader of the 9/11 hijackers, details his intensive prayerful preparation to make sure that the suicide operation was carried out with the correct intention.[54] Through meditations on verses in the Quran and accounts of the battles of the early Muslim community, "the hijackers gradually merge with the pious heroes who made possible Islam's initial triumphs and become their reinstantiation."[55] The constant remembrance *(dhikr)* of God cultivated by pious Muslims is stressed all throughout the operation.

An interview in the July 4, 2005, Special Issue of *Time* magazine with a 20-year-old Iraqi man who gave his name as Marwan Abu Ubeida revealed that suicide attacks continued to be seen as spiritual exercises requiring a great deal of preliminary purification. Whereas most of the suicide attacks in Iraq after the American invasion in March 2003 were assumed to be carried out by foreign jihadists, by 2005 more Iraqis were volunteering to become suicide operatives. Marwan reported that he was not a supporter of Saddam Hussein's regime, but after American troops failed to leave Iraq immediately he became radicalized against Americans and the Iraqis who collaborated with them. He joined the Iraqi insurgency after United States troops fired on a protest gathering in which Marwan was participating, killing 12 and wounding many. When he joined the insurgency, Marwan broke off contacts with his family, and he came to regard his fellow jihadists as his family. After participating in numerous military actions, Marwan applied to become a suicide attacker. He said that the day he was accepted was the happiest day of his life. Marwan supported the transnational jihadist goal of creating a "true" Islamic state free from Western influences. He believed that removing Americans from Iraq was the first step toward achieving that goal.

Marwan reported that in Iraq individuals accepted for suicide missions went through spiritual training guided by field commanders and Sunni clerics. Marwan saw the spiritual exercises as preparation for giving up one's previous life to start a new one. The future suicide attackers studied the Quran and stories about past martyrs. They read texts supporting suicide operations, including *Lover of Angels* by Abdullah Azzam, listened to taped talks by jihadist leaders, and watched videos of successful suicide operations. An operative's final days were spent in seclusion during which he (or she) prayed intensively. A fellow jihadist was often asked to serve as a support during the final days. The operative was trained to stop thinking of the past and think only of his imminent future in heaven. Marwan concluded:

> Yes, I am a terrorist. Write that down. I admit I am a terrorist. [The Quran] says it is the duty of Muslims to bring terror to the enemy, so being a terrorist makes me a good Muslim.[56]

During the summer of 2005 suicide attacks were increasing rapidly in Iraq, with a second assault occurring against children in July as they were receiving candy from American soldiers and multiple bombings daily. In August as the United States

pressed the Iraqis to formulate a Constitution for a unified nation, and Iraqi factions argued over whether or not the *sharia* would be the basis of the new nation, jihadist insurgents intensified their suicide attacks against Iraqi civilians.

When American and British forces invaded Iraq in 2003 to topple the Saddam Hussein regime and to search for alleged weapons of mass destruction (which were never found), even more jihadists joined the radical Islamist movement and traveled to Iraq to fight with Iraqi insurgents. The interview with Marwan in 2005 indicated that Iraqis were also being recruited to al-Qaida in Iraq, which was led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (Jordanian) and appeared to operate independently of bin Laden's leadership.

The reaction of President George W. Bush's administration to the September 11 attacks manifested a radical dualism that mirrored the dualism of the jihadists. Jean E. Rosenfeld has called this type of situation "apocalyptic mirroring," arguing that "holy terror provokes a reciprocal, forceful, religious response."[57] In this case, President George W. Bush's rhetoric drew on the radical dualism of evangelical Christian millennialism to drum up support for his military response. President Bush declared a "war on terror" and spoke of it in terms of protecting and extending the principles of democracy and freedom, i.e., American sacred values. He initially called the war a "crusade," which for Muslims conjured images of the Christian crusades against Muslims in the Middle Ages, and reinforced Muslims' perceptions of Western powers as crusaders seeking to destroy Islam. The invasion of Afghanistan was initially named "Infinite Justice," reflecting a view of it as a holy war, but the name was quickly changed to "Enduring Freedom." Bush spoke of the war on terror as a fight between good and evil in which "there is no neutral ground."[58] Bush even named an "axis of evil"[59]—Iraq, Iran, and North Korea—which motivated North Korea to accelerate its program to manufacture nuclear weapons.[60] The Bush administration appeared oblivious to analyses of various experts stressing that the quality of the *interactions* of the United States with Muslim communities and states determined whether or not more jihadists and suicide operatives were recruited for the struggle to remove their oppressors. According to John R. Hall:

> An apocalyptic war cannot be won. Strategies to win such a war are more likely to fuel it. The goal, instead, must be to act outside of, and thus move beyond, the end of apocalyptic history. How to do so is the world-historical challenge at the beginning of the twenty-first century.[61]

The radical Islamic movement is revolutionary, and it is responding to a sense of being oppressed and persecuted by the Western, especially American, economic, political, and military powers in various parts of the world. It is also assaulted, as Western states wage their "war on terror." Some of the smaller groups within the radical Islamist movement may become fragile, especially if cornered and assaulted by Western militaries. Of great concern is the question of what operatives in the jihadist movement will do if the movement finds itself on the verge of a resounding defeat. Rosenfeld reports that a jihadist commentary[62] asserted that the radical Islamists were "the saved sect" devoted to establishing the "order of Allah," which, according

to a saying of Muhammad, would never be defeated. The commentary asserted that Muhammad said that in the event they are defeated, God will cause the world as we know it to end, carry out the final judgment, and decide who will be admitted to paradise and who will go to hell. Rosenfeld suggests that an imminent devastating defeat of the jihadist movement could prompt some fighters to resort to weapons of mass destruction, if those were available:

> According to this myth, Jihadism can never be defeated. It will prevail on Earth if it defeats evildoers, and if evildoers succeed in eradicating it, Allah will punish the adversaries and reward the faithful at the hour of its eradication. One can only hope that al-Qaida does not plan some act that will hasten the end of the world, if it appears that it is failing to achieve Allah's purpose, because its mission has apocalyptic overtones.[63]

CHARISMATIC LEADERS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS

Millennial movements are often founded and led by individuals who are believed to possess "charisma," a term referring to the quality of a person believed to have access to an unseen source of authority. In other words, it is believed that the leader receives revelation or empowerment from an unseen source of authority, which in an NRM could be God, angels, masters, an abstract principle, or even extraterrestrials. Charisma is always socially constructed and can be verified only by faith. There is no objective means to determine if the person's claims are true. If no one believes an individual's claims of revelation or inspiration, then he or she does not have charisma. But if the person gains even a few followers convinced of the claims, then she or he has become a charismatic leader.

Charismatic leadership of religious groups and movements does not necessarily result in violence. Also, violent millennial movements may not have leaders with charisma in this sense. But sociologists following the formulations of Max Weber have noted the inherent instability of charismatic authority.[64] The leader must work constantly to provide plausible claims to sacred authority, because followers may withdraw their faith at any time. Because of fewer institutional structures of routinized authority in the early stages of a movement, there is greater scope for a charismatic leader's whims and pathologies to play out in harmful ways, *but only if the followers permit it.*

Lorne Dawson argues that charismatic authority can contribute to a violent episode when such a leader makes bad choices about how to maintain his or her charisma in the face of challenges.[65] This can be seen in several of the cases discussed here. Jim Jones was incapacitated and in danger of sabotaging his own community. David Koresh's charisma was based on what appeared to be his divinely inspired ability to interpret the Bible's apocalyptic prophecies. After February 28, 1993, Koresh was severely wounded, but had not died as he predicted. Koresh could not come out and maintain his charisma and messianic identity in the eyes of his followers unless a scenario could be made to fit the biblical prophecies. Asahara Shoko was ill and claimed to have been poisoned by American agents using sarin. Since Asahara claimed to be an omniscient Buddha and salvation came only through surrender to

him, his predictions of Armageddon had to prove correct and he could not be shown to be fallible or imperfect in any way. Joseph Di Mambro was dying of cancer at the time that defectors threatened to reveal the technology behind appearances of the masters and their son threatened his daughter's status as the messianic child. Investigations by authorities into the group merely exacerbated the threat to his charisma and the group's world view. Do of Heaven's Gate believed that he was dying, and he previously taught that the class members could enter The Level Above Human only by "grafting" onto him, thereby cultivating a spiritual and emotional dependence on him.

Challenges to a leader's charisma may come from multiple sources—defectors; dissidents within the group; aggressive cultural opponents such as anticultists, the media, law enforcement agents; and even the illness or incapacity of the leader. Since the leader's charisma is intimately tied to the group's ultimate concern, these factors threaten to destabilize the group, whose leader and members may take extreme measures to protect the leader's charisma and the group's ultimate concern. Seen in this light, the FBI's tactic of demeaning Koresh and his claims to charismatic authority during televised press briefings during the Mount Carmel siege were ill advised.

Revolutionary millennial movements are fueled by participants' grievances and sense of persecution and are not dependent on a single charismatic leader. Some charismatic leaders of smaller groups may arise, but the movement may not be dependent on one overarching charismatic leader. This is the case with the Euro-American nativist movement and also with the radical Islamist movement that includes al-Qaida. Despite the stature of bin Laden in the Muslim world as a pious and brave defender of Islam, the jihadist movement is not dependent on him and will continue after his death.

Both the Euro-American nativist movement and the radical Islamist movement consist of a variety of organizations and leaders, and the most violent of these operate relatively independently of each other although they may network. Falun Gong, which has nonviolent revolutionary themes in relation to the People's Republic of China, is likewise an international movement of like-minded people who volunteer to spread the teachings and organize meetings and publicity. Master Li is seen as a charismatic leader with special access to powers in the spiritual realms, but he is seldom seen directly by followers, who rely primarily on Web site postings to access his teachings. Master Li appears to be a healthy man and is not likely to die soon, but when he does, the movement will no doubt survive, change, and carry on.

THE QUESTION OF BRAINWASHING

Beliefs held by members of NRMs are often seen by outsiders as being so outlandish that the followers must be "brainwashed." The fact that followers often leave such groups belies the allegation that their good sense was overcome by a mysterious power called "brainwashing."

Members of groups may go through intensive educational processes, such as Koresh's lengthy Bible study sessions, Heaven's Gate ascetic disciplines, Aum

Shinrikyo's mental and physical trainings, and Marwan's spiritual preparation for his suicide mission, but these socialization practices can be found in other institutions acceptable in mainstream societies, such as families, congregations, professions, monastic orders, and militaries. These types of socialization efforts are effective with individuals who already share some of the beliefs and values and voluntarily go through the trainings. Aum Shinrikyo attempted to forcibly brainwash people by kidnapping and incarcerating them, subjecting them to viewing of videos and listening to audiotapes repeatedly, and even injecting drugs into them. Many people were severely injured, but no one became a true believer.

Followers will be more inclined to stay with a group that is heading for disaster if there are high "exit costs."[66] When followers have given their livelihoods, financial resources, spouses, families, and identities over to an NRM, it is hard to leave even after becoming disillusioned. Women who bear children for the charismatic leader may find it particularly difficult to leave if they have no outside resources. If followers committed illegal acts for the group, including murder, they are not likely to leave because that would entail their prosecution along with other members of the group. Nevertheless, people lose faith and depart such groups all the time. Thus, they become significant threats to the continued plausibility of attributions of charisma and the group's ultimate concern.

ALTERNATIVE ETHICS

Millennial groups reject the values of mainstream societies and adopt the values of their anticipated millennial kingdom. Outsiders may find the millennial values offensive and even illegal, thus heightening the group's tension with society and the potential for violent conflicts. Sometimes the alternative values and ethics of a millennial movement anticipate future changes in mainstream society to achieve greater justice. Often these conflicts over values relate to issues of sexuality and the treatment of children.

The Peoples Temple strove for the equality of all races in their community, and thus faced opposition from racist white Americans. Peoples Temple members also dispensed with conventional sexual arrangements, and many people had sex with Jim Jones to express their love and loyalty to him and what he stood for. Jonestown residents left their families and livelihoods in the United States to make a communal lifestyle with their new family in Jonestown, which prompted the organization of a group calling itself Concerned Relatives that sought to destroy Jonestown and Peoples Temple and rescue loved ones.

Branch Davidian parents permitted David Koresh to take their daughters, as young as 10 or 11 to 15 years of age, as his wives, and married men also agreed that their wives could become Koresh's wives, believing that the Bible instructed Koresh to sire 24 children who would be the 24 elders who would participate in God's judgment. No doubt sexuality at Mount Carmel, involving Koresh's polygamy and intercourse with underage girls, as well as the possession of an arsenal of weapons, were

offensive to the law enforcement agents and the American public during the 1993 events.

Aum Shinrikyo adopted a doctrine called *poa,* taught by Asahara, that said it was compassionate to kill someone discerned by Asahara as going to commit actions that would create bad karma. It was believed that Asahara's supernatural power propelled the murdered person's soul to a higher realm. Thus, in Aum Shinrikyo, even murder was rationalized as an ethical act by doctrines.

When religious groups and those who oppose them adopt the perspective that the *end justifies the means,* then the conflict is likely to become violent. If religious people believe that *dying is winning,* then dying is likely to be the outcome regardless of which party initiates the violence.

NRMS AND VIOLENCE NOT RELATED TO MILLENNIALISM

When violence occurs in nonmillennial groups, it is due to values and social processes that can be found to contribute to violence in mainstream religious organizations and movements as well.

For instance, E. Burke Rochford has demonstrated that physical abuse of children in the boarding schools of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), a Hindu faith that has attracted many converts in the United States and in other Western countries since the 1960s, occurred from 1971 until 1986 in an institutional and belief context that did not value marriage, women, and children. Instead, the greatest value was placed on male celibacy as the highest form of spiritual life. This situation seems to have parallels with the institutional culture of the Roman Catholic Church, the hierarchy of which in the United States for many years protected supposedly celibate priests (necessarily male) known to bishops as being pedophiles and sexual molesters of underage youths.[67]

SMALL BUT TRAGIC INSTANCES OF MILLENNIALISM AND VIOLENCE

But violence in new religious movements often does not stray far from millennial themes. It appears that extreme actions are highly compatible with the radical dualism of catastrophic millennial outlooks and belief in having access to an infallible source of authority. The latter belief may be termed "fundamentalism." The source of authority regarded as infallible may be scripture, tradition, or claimed revelation coming from an unseen source.

Starvation in The Body

In 1999 a small fundamentalist Christian sect near Attleboro, Massachusetts, that called itself "The Body," consisting of members of the Robidoux family and several other families, permitted one-year-old Samuel Robidoux, the son of Jacques and Karen Robidoux, to die of starvation. The group was headed by Roland Robidoux,

Samuel's grandfather. Another member of the group, Michelle Mingo, a sister of Jacques Robidoux who was stout and plain, had received a revelation when Samuel was ten months old that Karen, who was slim and pretty, should only breastfeed Samuel as penance for her vanity. Karen was pregnant at the time and was told that God would kill her unborn baby if she did not follow God's instructions. Karen was told that she was ordered by God to consume only almond milk, nurse Samuel for 20 minutes every hour around the clock, and sing hymns praising God while she was nursing Samuel. Under these circumstances, Karen did not have sufficient breast milk to nourish Samuel, and he wasted away over 51 days. Group members did nothing to prevent Samuel from starving to death.

Some years earlier, Roland Robidoux had left the Roman Catholic Church, was affiliated briefly with the Worldwide Church of God, and then created his small nondenominational fundamentalist Christian community that developed its own beliefs by studying the Bible. In the 1990s the group was influenced by antigovernment Constitutionalist ideas. Members destroyed their Social Security cards and distanced themselves from the "world" regarded as being under the control of Satan. The group also developed a belief that God sent revelations in the form of "leadings" that could be given to any member of the community. An early leading reported by Michelle Mingo said that God did not want members to wear glasses, and subsequently people were turned out of the group if they resumed wearing glasses.

The community anticipated the imminent apocalyptic end-time events and believed that only the truly faithful would be taken into heaven to be spared the tribulation period. One day Jacques Robidoux received a leading that God wanted them to travel north to find the "promised land"; they should not take any food, diapers for the children, or clothing, but trust in God to look after them. After three days of travel in their vehicles, with their gas running out and their hungry children eating clover from the side of the road, the parents abandoned the trip and returned home. Roland Robidoux asserted that they had not been permitted to reach the promised land because they had failed God's test; they needed to entrust even their children completely into God's hands.

When the leading was received that Samuel was to be breastfed and given water only and denied solid food, Jacques Robidoux made sure that Karen met all the restrictions imposed by God. No one beat Karen, and she was free to leave the community to run errands, but she made no effort to leave to get help for Samuel. She was starving herself, suffered from sleep deprivation, and felt that she had no place to go and furthermore that she had to obey God. Jacques and Karen were otherwise loving parents and prayed intensely that God would perform a miracle to save Samuel.

Jacques Robidoux was convicted in 2002 of first-degree murder for permitting his son to die and sentenced to life in prison. In 2004 Karen Robidoux was convicted of assault and battery, sentenced to two and one-half years, and released for time served; she lost custody of her four remaining children. Michelle Mingo pleaded guilty to being an accessory to child abuse after spending three years in jail and was released.

The children remaining in The Body were removed and adopted by family members outside the group.[68]

This episode illustrates the folly of a group of people placing uncritical faith in divine revelations, and these same dynamics can be discerned in other religions, large and small, as well as in national movements. The context of belief in the imminent catastrophic end time made it appear to be very urgent to comply with God's leadings in order to be saved.

The Lafferty Murders

Upon first glance, the 1984 murders in Utah of Karen Lafferty (age 24) and her 18-month-old daughter Erica by her brothers-in-law, Ron and Dan Lafferty, appear senseless and unrelated to millennialism. However, investigation revealed that all five of the Lafferty brothers, lifelong Mormons, had been influenced recently by fundamentalist Mormon thought (as represented by groups and individuals separate from the mainline Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) as well as Constitutionalist antigovernment ideas. The brothers, including Karen's husband, Allen, began to demand strict obedience from their wives and beat them when it was not forthcoming to their satisfaction. The men quit paying taxes and registering their cars. College-educated Karen disagreed with these changes. She paid her family's taxes, registered the car, and argued theology with Ron and Dan, the older brothers of her husband. She even encouraged Ron's wife to divorce him and move away with their children when things got too bad. It is unclear why Karen stayed in her own marriage. Apparently she did not yet consider the situation intolerable, and she hoped the marriage would work out.

Ron and Dan began taking lessons in a small School of the Prophets founded by a schismatic Mormon prophet who called himself Onias. When Ron received a revelation that God wanted Karen and Erica as well as two other adults to be "removed" because they were standing in the way of God's work, Ron understood this work to be the building of the "City of Refuge" in which the faithful would be protected during the catastrophic end-time events. Dan resolved to carry out the executions. Baby Erica had to be killed also, because, according to Ron, she was a "child of perdition" and "would grow up to be a bitch, just like her mother!"[69] Although the other men in the School of the Prophets and Karen's husband knew of the "removal prophecy," and her mother-in-law knew that Ron and Dan were leaving her home that day to kill Karen and Erica, no one did anything to warn Karen or alert the authorities.

The Lafferty brothers had grown up in a patriarchal household in which they saw their mother beaten regularly by their father. Clearly at issue was a gender conflict in which Karen was viewed by the Lafferty family as being a "bad woman" deserving to die. One is left to speculate that if Karen's child had been a boy that the child would have been spared. Karen and Erica Lafferty were executed on July 24, 1984, a Mormon holiday called Pioneer Day, which celebrates the entry of Brigham Young and the main party of Saints into the Great Salt Lake Valley where they built their

millennial kingdom. Ron beat Karen to the extent that her face was mutilated, and then Dan slit the throats of Erica and Karen.

The violent actions taken by Ron and Dan Lafferty occurred within a context of an expectation of imminent catastrophic end-time events as well as a context in which the brothers believed that God continued to give revelations to his people. The patriarchy of the context was also important in that they believed that God legitimated violence against disobedient women.[70]

Fundamentalist Mormon Polygamy Enforced by Violence

Jon Krakauer reports that fathers and husbands in fundamentalist Mormon communities practicing polygamy have whipped and confined daughters and wives when they resist being married off at young ages to older men they did not choose. He also reports that at the end of the 1990s in the community of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at Colorado City, Arizona, and Hildale, Utah, there was heightened expectation of the imminent catastrophic destruction of the world and the lifting up of the faithful into the Celestial Kingdom. The events on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent war on terror, have renewed optimism that the end time is fast approaching.[71]

In contrast, the mainline LDS Church retains the millennial beliefs found in its scriptures and origins, but these are more "managed"[72] in the sense that the church leadership does not set dates for the apocalyptic events.

CONCLUSION

The types of NRMs associated with violence have usually been millennial groups and movements. Whereas most millennialists are peaceful, many others are involved in episodes of violence or have initiated violence. The radical dualistic world views of millennialists as well as their opponents are important factors in what David G. Bromley terms "dramatic denouements."[73] According to Bromley,

> Dramatic Denouements transpire when a movement and some segment of the social order reach a juncture at which one or both conclude that the requisite conditions for maintaining their core identity and collective existence are being subverted and that such circumstances are intolerable. These relational moments are most likely to occur when the relationship between movement and society is characterized by polarization and destabilization. Parties on one or both sides thereupon undertake a project of final reckoning under the aegis of a transcendent mandate to reverse their power positions and to restore what they avow to be the appropriate moral order.[74]

Radical dualism, often on multiple sides of the conflict, promotes a perspective of good versus evil and allows no compromise in the struggle.

Millennialism involves an ultimate concern about an expected imminent transition to a collective salvation effected by various divine or divinely guided means. Members of assaulted millennial groups hold fast to their millennial goals in the face of opposition and are committed to obeying God's commands over the authority of

human institutions even when they are persecuted; usually their faith is strengthened by the expected opposition from the forces they deem to be aligned with evil. Fragile millennial groups initiate violence to preserve ultimate concerns that are in danger of failing due to various combinations of internal weaknesses and cultural opposition; instead of relinquishing their ultimate concern, believers in fragile groups are willing to utilize violence to make sure that their religious goal does not fail. At the moment of self-destruction the believers may shift from expecting an earthly collective salvation to a heavenly one. Participants in revolutionary millennial movements believe that they must carry out violence to participate in a divine plan to destroy the old order and create the new one for their members. They die assured that their cause is just, and they often look forward to heavenly rewards.

These categories of assaulted millennial groups, fragile millennial groups, and revolutionary millennial movements are not mutually exclusive. A group is likely to possess features of more than one of these categories simultaneously and shift from one to the other in response to events. Nevertheless, the categories remain useful in discerning whether the millennialists or outsiders carried out the predominance of the violent actions.

Charismatic leadership is often associated with movements that become involved in violence, but it is not a necessary or predictive trait. Many charismatic leaders never stimulate violence. On the other hand, especially when salvation is believed to come through the charismatic leader alone, factors that threaten to disconfirm the leader's charisma can contribute to the threatening of the ultimate concern and thereby prompt believers to take violent actions.

When assessing religious groups for the potential for volatility it is important to look at an array of factors that can be clustered into three categories: interaction factors, internal factors, and belief factors.[75] All of these types of factors are vitally important to whether there is a peaceful or violent outcome. It is noteworthy that the majority of the religious groups discussed here, including the Branch Davidians and Falun Gong as assaulted millennial groups, possessed doctrines that asserted that salvation came through dying or suffering for the faith, or, in some cases, killing for the faith.

The challenge for law enforcement agents is to devise means to deal effectively with suspected criminal activity in NRMs without taking actions that contribute directly to violent outcomes. This is precisely the same challenge faced by states today as they attempt to curtail the terrorist activities of the radical Islamist movement. States need to find means to protect public security and apprehend terrorists, while avoiding fulfilling believers' expectations about their evil and oppressive behaviors, thus creating conditions that motivate more people to become violent revolutionaries. The American federal government has been somewhat effective in diminishing the conditions giving rise to the Euro-American nativists' sense of being persecuted by redressing some of the economic pressures on citizens and initiating contacts and dialogues between FBI agents and militia members. Although the Euro-American nativist movement has not disappeared, in the years following September 11, 2001, it has been relatively quiescent. More Patriots were working

through political means to achieve their goals for America. These effective actions within the United States to address an indigenous revolutionary millennial movement may point to actions needed to diminish the factors impelling the transnational radical Islamist movement. No doubt this will require sustained and creative efforts on multiple fronts. In making these efforts it is very important to avoid becoming like the terrorists by resorting to violence to achieve goals motivated by a simplistic "us versus them" outlook. This latter approach only perpetuates the repeated cycle of attacks and retaliations.[76]

The study of the dynamics involving some new religious movements with violence has international political implications for violence and peace.

NOTES

1. Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony discuss endogenous and exogenous factors in "Sects and Violence: Factors Enhancing the Volatility of Marginal Religious Movements," in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 236–59. I am grateful to Patsy Rahn, Jean E. Rosenfeld, Jeff Kenney, Eugene V. Gallagher, and W. Michael Ashcraft for their helpful comments on previous drafts of this essay.

2. The definitions of millennialism given in this article build on the groundbreaking definition offered by Norman Cohn, in *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957).

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

4. "Apocalypse" meaning "revelation" or "unveiling" is the name of the last book of the New Testament. Its symbolic imagery is focused on the catastrophic events of the end time, including the last great battle with evil, resurrection, judgment, and creation of God's kingdom on Earth that will last 1000 years before further catastrophic events will occur to eliminate Satan and those aligned with him.

5. Catherine Wessinger, "The Interacting Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution, and Violence," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 3–39; Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000).

6. Robert Ellwood, "Nazism as a Millennialist Movement," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence,* ed. Wessinger, 253.

7. Jean-François Mayer, "'Our Terrestrial Journey Is Coming to an End': The Last Voyage of the Solar Temple," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 2, no. 2 (April 1999): 173.

8. Christine Steyn, "Millenarian Tragedies in South Africa: The Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement and the Bulhoek Massacre," in Wessinger, *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence,* ed. Wessinger, 185–202.

9. Michelene E. Pesantubbee, "From Vision to Violence: The Wounded Knee Massacre," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence,* ed. Wessinger, 62–81.

10. Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 101.

11. Grant Underwood, "Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: The Mormons," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence,* ed. Wessinger, 43–61; Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven,* 95–114, 123–33, 208–25, 236–43, 245–49, 262.

12. Factual information on the Branch Davidians summarized here is drawn from Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently,* 56–119; Eugene V. Gallagher, "'Theology Is Life and Death': David Koresh on Violence, Persecution, and the Millennium," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence,* ed. Wessinger, 82–100; James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Wright, *Armageddon in Waco;* Jayne Seminare Docherty, *Learning Lessons from Waco: When the Parties Bring their Gods to the Negotiation Table* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001).

13. "Messiah" in Hebrew means "anointed," and in the ancient Israelite religion referred to the king of Israel who was designated by God for that role by being anointed by a prophet. "Messiah" is "christ" in Greek, and the early Christians added a different dimension to the meaning of the word, since they believed that Jesus Christ would accomplish the millennial kingdom. Therefore, the term "messiah" when applied to different religious groups by scholars indicates a person who is believed by followers to be empowered by a superhuman agent (such as God) to create the collective salvation in the millennial kingdom.

14. Dick J. Reavis, *The Ashes of Waco: An Investigation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 192–99, recounts this incident.

15. CS gas is a tear gas or "riot control agent" that burns the skin and inflames the respiratory tract, which may cause death when used in confined spaces. A government report concluded that "CS insertion into the enclosed bunker at a time when women and children were assembled inside that enclosed space could have been a proximate cause of or directly resulted in some or all of the deaths attributed to asphyxiation in the autopsy reports." House of Representatives, *Investigation into the Activities of Federal Law Enforcement Agencies toward the Branch Davidians,* Report 104-749 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1996), 71.

16. Associated Press, "U.S. Disturbed by Falun Gong Reports," August 20, 2001.

17. Factual information reported here is drawn from Patsy Rahn, "The Chemistry of a Conflict: The Chinese Government and the Falun Gong," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14, no. 4 (Winter 2002), 41–65; Gareth Fisher, "Resistance and Salvation in Falun Gong: The Promise and Peril of Forbearance," *Nova Religio* 6, no. 2 (April 2003): 294–311; Catherine Wessinger, "Falun Gong Symposium: Introduction and Glossary," *Nova Religio* 6, no. 2 (April 2003): 215–22; Noah Porter, "Professional Practitioners and Contact Persons: Explicating Special Types of Falun Gong Practitioners," *Nova Religio* 9, no. 2 (November 2005): 62–83; Maria Hsia Chang, *Falun Gong: The End of Days* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

18. It is impossible to verify the statistics provided by Falun Gong. Its Web site, Falun Dafa Information Center, http://www.faluninfo.net/, as of July 14, 2005, alleged that hundreds of thousands of practitioners had been detained, more than 100,000 had been sent to forced labor camps, and there had been more than 2,300 deaths due to torture endured while in custody. The Web site provided graphic photographs of injuries to a young woman, Gao Rongrong, who died in June 2005 from burns allegedly caused by an electric shock baton. The Web site detailed the alleged torture methods used by PRC authorities. The Web site also included Amnesty International Report ASA 17/004/2001 dated December 2, 2001, on torture methods and cases in the PRC. Falun Gong's allegations concerning torture and deaths of practitioners are supported by the accounts reported in Chang, *Falun Gong,* 24–29.

19. Chinese and Japanese names are given in the Asian order of family name first.
20. Falun Gong denies that these people were practitioners.
21. Chang, *Falun Gong,* 28
22. Li Hongzhi, "The Foretelling" (updated), posted February 15, 2002, http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2002/2/15/18801.html, quoted in Rahn, "Chemistry of a Conflict," n60.
23. Quoted in Rahn, "Chemistry of a Conflict," 50.
24. Rahn, "Chemistry of a Conflict," 55.
25. Rahn, "Chemistry of a Conflict," 57–59. See the essays posted on clearwisdom.net entitled "Good Is Rewarded, Evil Provokes Retribution," updated August 13, 2005, http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/85/.
26. Chang, *Falun Gong,* 22; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, "Chinese Satellite TV Hijacked by Falun Gong Cult," July 8, 2002, http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/ppflg/t36611.htm; Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in San Francisco, "China Condemns Falun Gong Cult's Hijacking Satellite Again," August 15, 2003, http://www.chinaconsulatesf.org/eng/zhuanti/flgc/t57867.htm.
27. Patsy Rahn, "Offering Salvation through Secular Protest: The Falun Gong Use of Media, Protest, and Proselytization" (paper presented at the International Association for the History of Religions meeting in Tokyo, March 24–30, 2005).
28. Wessinger, "The Interacting Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution, and Violence"; Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently*; Robbins and Anthony, "Sects and Violence," 236–59.
29. John R. Hall, "Public Narratives and the Apocalyptic Sect: From Jonestown to Mt. Carmel," in *Armageddon in Waco,* ed. Wright, 205–35.
30. This section is based on Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently,* 30–55; Rebecca Moore, *A Sympathetic History of Jonestown: The Moore Family Involvement in Peoples Temple* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985); David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); John R. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1987); Mary McCormick Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown: Putting a Human Face on an American Tragedy* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998); Rebecca Moore, Anthony B. Pinn, and Mary R. Sawyer, eds., *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).
31. One-half of the Jonestown residents either were age 65 or older or were age 19 or younger.
32. Ian Reader, "Imagined Persecution: Aum Shinrikyo, Millennialism, and the Legitimation of Violence," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence,* ed. Wessinger, 158–82.
33. Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently,* 120–57; Reader, "Imagined Persecution"; Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000).
34. Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently,* 219–29; John R. Hall with Philip D. Schuyler and Sylvaine Trinh, *Apocalypse Observed: Religious Movements and Violence in North America, Europe, and Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 111–48; Mayer, "Our Terrestrial Journey Is Coming to an End," 172–96; Massimo Introvigne, "The Magic of Death: The Suicides of the Solar Temple," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence,* ed. Wessinger, 138–57; John Walliss, *Apocalyptic Trajectories,* (New York: P. Lang, 2004), 125–66.

35. Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently,* 233–52; Hall, Schuyler, and Trinh, *Apocalypse Observed*, 111–82; Walliss, *Apocalyptic Trajectories*, 146–66.

36. John Walliss, "Making Sense of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God," *Nova Religio* 9, no. 1 (August 2005): 49–66; Walliss, *Apocalyptic Trajectories,* 203–24.

37. In addition to the essays by Walliss, see also Jean-François Mayer, "Field Notes: The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God," *Nova Religio* 5, no. 1 (October 2001): 203–10.

38. Scott Lowe, "Millennial Ideology Goes East: The Taiping Revolution and Mao's Great Leap Forward," 220–40; Ellwood, "Nazism as a Millennialist Movement"; and Richard C. Salter, "Time, Authority, and Ethics in the Khmer Rouge: Elements of the Millennial Vision in the Year Zero," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence,* ed. Wessinger, 281–98.

39. This section is based on Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently,* 158–217; Jeffrey Kaplan, "Real Paranoids Have Real Enemies: The Genesis of the ZOG Discourse in the American National Socialist Subculture," 299–322; Jean E. Rosenfeld, "The Justus Freemen Standoff: The Importance of the Analysis of Religion in Avoiding Violent Outcomes," 323–44, in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence,* ed. Wessinger; David A. Neiwert, *In God's Country: The Patriot Movement and the Pacific Northwest* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1999).

Eric Rudolph, an Identity Christian, who in 2005 was convicted of bombing a gathering at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia (killing one and injuring 111 people), of bombing a lesbian nightclub (injuring five) and a family planning clinic in Atlanta in 1997 (injuring six), and of bombing another family planning clinic in 1998 in Birmingham, Alabama (killing one and injuring one), probably considered himself a Phineas Priest. He believed his actions were needed to fight against abortion and what he regarded as "aberrant sexual behavior." CNN, "Rudolph's Mother: Son Not a 'Monster,'" August 23, 2005, http://edition.cnn.com/2005/LAW/08/22/rudolph.mother/; CNN, "Rudolph Apologizes for Olympic Bombing," August 23, 2005, http://edition.cnn.com/2005/LAW/08/22/rudolph.sentenced/index.html.

40. Danny Coulson and Elaine Shannon, *No Heroes: Inside the FBI's Secret Counter-Terror Force* (New York: Pocket Books, 1999), 211–313; see also Kerry Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City* (Prescott, Ontario: Voyageur Publishing, 1998).

41. The Weaver family members were Identity Christians, who had moved to a remote area in the Idaho mountains so that they could defend themselves during the expected end-time tribulation. Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently,* 164–65.

42. Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate,* 9.

43. Riker Danzig Tax Update, "The Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, 1999," http://library.findlaw.com/1999/Mar/1/129720.html.

44. This section relies on John R. Hall, "Apocalypse 9/11," in *New Religious Movements in the 21st Century: Legal, Political, and Social Challenges in Global Perspective*, ed. Phillip Charles Lucas and Thomas Robbins (New York: Routledge, 2004), 265–82; David Cook, "Suicide Attacks or 'Martyrdom Operations' in Contemporary Jihad Literature," *Nova Religio* 6, no. 1 (October 2002): 7–44; Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: The Free Press, 2001); J. Gordon Melton and David G. Bromley, "Prologue," in *Cults, Religion, and Violence*, ed. David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xiii–xx; Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Anonymous

[Michael Scheuer], *Through Our Enemies Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, Inc., 2002); Anonymous [Michael Scheuer], *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, Inc., 2004); Jean E. Rosenfeld, "Jihadism: The Religion of bin Laden," unpublished paper; Jean E. Rosenfeld, "Holy Terror: The Religion Factor in an Apocalyptic Age," unpublished paper; Richard Bonney, *Jihad: From Qur'ân to bin Lâden* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

45. See Bonney, *Jihad,* for an excellent survey of the complex and diverse views of *jihad* with Islam.

46. "Timeline: Al Qaeda Attacks on Western Targets," July 7, 2005, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4733944 (accessed July 10, 2005).

47. Osama bin Laden, "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," August 1996, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html (accessed July 10, 2005).

48. Bin Laden, "Declaration of War against the Americans."

49. World Islamic Front, "Jihad against Jews and Crusaders," February 23, 1998, http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm (accessed July 12, 2005). These and other communications from bin Laden are collected in Robert O. Marlin IV, ed., *What Does Al-Qaeda Want: Unedited Communiques* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2004).

Most American troops were withdrawn from Saudi Arabia during the summer 2003 to reduce criticism of the Saudi government by its citizens for permitting foreign troops to be stationed in their sacred land. These American troops were moved to Qatar. Cynthia Kirk, "American Troops to Leave Saudi Arabia," May 3, 2003, *Voice of America,* http://www.manythings.org/voa/03/030503in_t.htm. This did not encourage Osama bin Laden to stop his war to remove American troops and influence from all Muslim lands.

50. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.,* 20. President George Bush (senior) used the phrase "new world order" in a speech before Congress at the conclusion of the Persian Gulf War. He was expressing a progressive vision of the world's future after the Persian Gulf conflict in which he hoped to resolve other conflicts in the Middle East and disseminate American values of freedom, peace, and justice. George Bush, "President Bush's Speech to Congress," March 6, 1991, http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/pal/pal10.htm (accessed July 13, 2005).

51. Cook, "Suicide Attacks or 'Martyrdom Operations.'"

52. Quoted in Thomas L. Friedman, "When Anger and Death Are All the Rage," op-ed, *New Orleans Times-Picayune,* July 17, 2005.

53. "The Islamic Ruling on the Permissibility of Martyrdom Operations," undated, http://www.religioscope.com/pdf/martyrdom.pdf (accessed July 12, 2005).

54. The letter is translated with commentary in Cook, "Suicide Attacks or 'Martyrdom Operations,'" 29–35; and also in Lincoln, *Holy Terrors,* 8–18, 93–98.

55. Lincoln, *Holy Terrors,* 13.

56. Aparisim Ghosh, "Inside the Mind of an Iraqi Suicide Bomber," *Time,* July 4, 2005, 23–26, 29. Marwan cited the al-Anfal (Spoils of War) chapter of the Quran where it says, "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into the enemy of Allah and your enemy.…" (8:60).

57. Rosenfeld, "Holy Terror."

58. George W. Bush, "Address to the Nation, October 7, 2001," in Lincoln, *Holy Terrors,* 100. The entire text of Bush's address to the nation upon the invasion of Afghanistan by an American-led coalition is on pp. 99–101.

59. George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address," January 29, 2002, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html (accessed July 17, 2005).
60. In July 2005 commentator Nicholas D. Kristoff criticized President Bush for refusing to negotiate directly with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, enabling North Korea to proceed apace with its production of plutonium needed for nuclear weapons. He pointed out that if the United States carried out surgical strikes against North Korea the North Koreans would respond with all out war.
61. Hall, "Apocalypse 9/11," 279.
62. Formerly on http://www.azzam.com, a now defunct Web site.
63. Rosenfeld, "Jihadism," 9.
64. Robbins and Anthony, "Sects and Violence," 244–49; Lorne L. Dawson, "Crises of Charismatic Legitimacy and Violent Behavior in New Religious Movements," in *Cults, Religion, and Violence,* ed. Bromley and Melton, 80–101.
65. Dawson, "Crises of Charismatic Legitimacy," 81.
66. Benjamin Zablocki, "The Blacklisting of a Concept: The Strange History of the Brainwashing Conjecture in the Sociology of Religion," *Nova Religio* 1, no. 1 (October 1997): 96–121.
67. E. Burke Rochford Jr., "Child Abuse in the Hare Krishna Movement: 1971–1986," *ISKCON Communications Journal* 6, no. 1 (June 1998), http://www.iskcon.com/icj/6_1/index.html. For ongoing coverage of the Roman Catholic sex abuse scandal by the *Boston Globe,* the newspaper that first began reporting on it extensively in 2002, see "Spotlight Investigation: Abuse in the Catholic Church," http://www.boston.com/globe/spotlight/abuse/ (accessed August 19, 2005).
68. "A Twist of Faith: NBC Dateline Court TV," May 16, 2004.
69. Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven*, 169, 181.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid., 18, 24–27, 320–21, 330.
72. See Jacqueline Stone, "Japanese *Lotus* Millennialism: From Militant Nationalism to Contemporary Peace Movements," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence*, ed. Wessinger, 277–79, on "managed millennialism."
73. David G. Bromley, "Dramatic Denouements," in *Cults, Religion, and Violence,* ed. Bromley and Melton, 11–41.
74. Ibid., 11.
75. Catherine Wessinger, "New Religious Movements and Conflicts with Law Enforcement," in *New Religious Movements and Religious Liberty in America,* ed. Derek H. Davis and Barry Hankins (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2002), 115–39, refines conclusions drawn in *How the Millennium Comes Violently.*
76. Catherine Wessinger, "Religious Fervor Erupts in Violence," op-ed, *New Orleans Times-Picayune,* October 22, 2001.

Gender in New and Alternative Religions

Mary Farrell Bednarowski

In the past 40 years, gender has become more difficult to interpret. Popular and even scientific understandings of gender once rested on the assumption that "having gender" was a straightforward matter of "being" either female or male in ways that were biologically determined. We now know that this assumption is more complicated. Interpretations of gender, femininity, masculinity, sexuality, and sexual orientation are more like a continuum that posits on one end the traditional understanding of gender as a category of existence immutably grounded in biology and on the other end an understanding of gender as "performance" that is divorced from biology and totally based on socially constructed roles. Given the diversity of New Religious Movements (NRMs) in American history, their wide range of religious world views, and the diverse ways they understood and acted upon gender relationships, explorations into the meaning of gender in NRMs become even more complicated.

Attention to gender in NRMs in the United States is important for several reasons. It demonstrates the pervasiveness of gender in this particular area of the religious landscape and the extent to which new religions served as arenas of experimentation with gender roles. It points to the great variety of beliefs and practices related to gender roles and the multiple interpretations of the spiritual significance of maleness and femaleness in new religions. It illuminates how gender-role dynamics arise from specific historical and cultural contexts, theologies, and organizational structures. It offers insights into how the members of new religions understand themselves as participants in conversations and tensions around gender that are part of the broader American society. NRMs typically assent to and even reinforce some aspects of the dominant culture's values, beliefs, and practices while at the same time dissenting from others. This dual, often paradoxical, stance is particularly apparent in matters of gender.

There is no single, overarching theory that clarifies the significance of gender in NRMs. Instead, we must select a few telling examples from numerous instances of beliefs and practices. We must also ask questions about relationships between gender

and spirituality in new religions that are relevant to groups not mentioned in this essay. It is also possible to discern some basic patterns, among them that women in new religions often have more opportunities for public leadership than is the case in the established religious traditions, but these broad patterns must be carefully qualified. Given the available research, social historian Alice Felt Tyler, who paid more attention to such matters than most, could say in her 1944 study, *Freedom's Ferment,* that women in nineteenth-century utopian groups experienced almost no discrimination based on gender.[1] More recent scholarship also acknowledges greater freedom for women in these groups but at the same time suggests a more ambiguous reality because women's charismatic leadership is seldom institutionalized in ways that portend equality for all women as movements develop over time.

The examples selected for this essay fall under three themes, all of them overlapping. One is concerned with "bodies" and the significance of maleness and femaleness in a given religion. For example, does the gender of a human person have religious meaning or significance? Are maleness and femaleness categories of embodiment and experience that are meaningful in an eternal and cosmic sense? Or are they merely incidental aspects of one particular life span? Is it better to be male or female or does it not matter? Or, should it not matter, at least in theory? A second theme focuses on beliefs and practices regarding sexuality and how the community must be ordered to accommodate and foster the spiritual connections associated with masculinity and femininity. How should men and women live together? What are the appropriate spiritual and physical relationships of women and men to each other? What is at stake in these relationships for the good of the group, the wider society, and the workings of the universe? Do men and women play distinctive roles? Do women and men help or hinder each other on the path to salvation or enlightenment, or are they in a position of neutrality towards each other? The third theme deals with relationships between gender and leadership. Should men and women preach, teach, heal, and receive new revelations for a given community? Or, on the other hand, should they, by virtue of gender identity, be forbidden or considered unable to take on these roles? Because male leadership is the norm in almost every religious tradition, new or established, it is women's leadership that typically must be justified and is more likely to be controversial.

None of these questions is exclusive to NRMs. Nonetheless, they reflect issues that are often addressed by such groups in intense and experimental ways, usually in relation to a charismatic founder's new revelation, or a community's desire to restore what they see as earlier, more authentic ways of being religious, or in an effort to try radically new forms of relationship and community.

TWO EARLY PLOT LINES

Two examples from the seventeenth century of how theology, communal structure, and cultural context affect gender roles provide surprisingly relevant stories for understanding two very basic patterns in American religious history. The first, from Puritan New England, has been the dominant story. Until recently, departures

from it have been—and often still are—characterized as "counterculture." The second, part of the history of Quakerism, manifests a prominent subplot in how gender is important for NRMs.

The story of Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Crisis in Puritan New England (1636–1638) is a good starting place for a discussion of gender and NRMs because it provides an excellent example of how gender fits into the religious world view of a community, in this case the Massachusetts Bay colony, and how the order of that community is threatened by alternative notions. Antinomianism (literally "against law"), if not really a new religion in New England, emerged as an alternative and more extreme interpretation of the Puritan doctrine of grace. The fact that one of its major public spokespersons was a woman was of great significance. Hutchinson was a woman who had, in fact, been admired by the community as long as she confined her theological discussions to domestic, informal gatherings of women. As she began to attract more followers, both civil magistrates and church elders became alarmed, and she was brought before the magistrates in a civil trial in November, 1637, and before the church elders in an ecclesiastical trial in March, 1638. She was found guilty at both trials for teaching heresy and disturbing the order of the community, and she was punished by banishment from the community and excommunication from the church. During her church trial, clergyman Hugh Peters explained to Hutchinson the ways she disturbed the social order, not only with her unsound theological interpretations and accusations against other clergy, but by "stepping out of her place" and functioning as a preacher rather than a hearer, a husband rather than a wife, and a magistrate rather than a subject. At one point, clergyman John Cotton, her former spiritual advisor and advocate, speculated that, given her heretical theological beliefs, he would not be surprised to learn that she was unfaithful to her husband. This story highlights certain norms related to gender that prevailed in American religious history and culture: public religious leadership must be male; female participation in religious matters is confined to the home and to lay status; the religious authority of women should be expressed indirectly, i.e., through education of children and moral example to men; there is a proper, divinely mandated, and therefore "natural," hierarchical relationship based on male authority that prevails between the sexes in church, the public sphere, and at home; and there is a negative relationship, often articulated more implicitly than explicitly, between female heterodoxy (belief that is not orthodox) and female sexuality. NRMs throughout American religious history challenged these norms at many points, reinforced them at others, and experimented with them in an ongoing variety of combinations.

Quakerism from its beginnings provided a counterexample to the norm in many ways by fostering equality of women and men and providing more opportunities for women's public participation. Quaker women, like other women, were subject to gender restrictions in colonial America. Nonetheless certain features of Quakerism made it possible, if not always and everywhere, for Quaker women to fill public leadership roles denied to women of other religions, particularly public preaching. A key Quaker belief allowing for this situation was the Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light, which states that individuals participate in the spirit of God and therefore have access

to the divine without the need for clergy or ecclesiastical structures. The lack of clergy and liturgical rituals in Quakerism reinforced the assumption that anyone, female or male, who was called by God could participate in ministry, because ministry in Quaker theology did not require ordination. Over time some groups of Quakers became more church-like, adapting rituals similar to that of other Protestant denominations and employing ordained clergy, but over the course of their history, the general spirit of the tradition functioned to level women and men spiritually and socially. In their stance against Puritan hierarchy and ecclesiology, Quakers found ways to implement religious leadership for women.[2]

GENDER ROLE VARIATIONS IN COMMUNAL GROUPS

Gender issues and NRMs were also at play among communal groups in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American religious history. First, these groups had a variety of beliefs and practices about the privileges, powers, and responsibilities that could or should be extended to women or men based on their femaleness and maleness. In addition, members of communal religions were often explicit about how much they understood themselves as very deliberately dissenting not only against dominant religious beliefs, but also against prevailing gender norms that were upheld in the established churches and in the secular culture. These communities fostered new interpretations of "family," often simply extensions of the traditional family structure, as well as convictions about how community reflects spiritual realities. In their separate communities they enjoyed the freedom to put their beliefs into practice.

Jemima Wilkinson (1752–1819), who called herself the Publick Universal Friend, founded a small, short-lived community, the New Jerusalem, in upstate New York. Wilkinson was influenced by her mother's Quakerism as well as evangelical revivals, and probably by the teachings of Mother Ann Lee, founder of the Shakers. She began preaching publicly about universal peace and love at open-air revivals after what she described as a near-death experience in 1776 that resulted in her assurance that her body was inhabited by the spirit of God. She toned down the effects of public censure against a woman preacher by wearing men's clothing and thereby, at least symbolically, "becoming a man." Her community practiced celibacy but not asceticism. Wilkinson was criticized by outsiders for her morals, her affluent life, and her religious sincerity. Eventually members of her own community with whom there were quarrels about property rights also opposed her. The community, as is often the case, did not survive after the death of its founder.[3]

The Ephrata Cloister in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania was founded in the 1730s by German-born Johann Conrad Beissel (1690–1768), whose theological heritage was the pietism and pacifism of the Church of the Brethren. The members of Ephrata practiced both celibacy and asceticism with the Sisterhood and the Brotherhood living separately, although they dressed alike in white robes of homespun wool or linen. In addition, an "outdoor" married membership of people lived in homes surrounding the communal dwellings. The community was dominated by Beissel's

charismatic leadership. He inspired rumors of sexual irregularities typical of those surrounding many communal groups. Recent scholarship reveals the large part gender played in the Ephrata world view. In a treatise entitled *A Dissertation on Man's Fall,* Beissel gave an elaborate theory of gender that traces the fall of humankind to a division of the sexes and says that this division, including female submission to male authority, would eventually be healed into wholeness. Known for its distinctive music, Ephrata's choir sang Beissel's compositions in which women's voices dominated, and the music was a crucial means of communicating this reclaimed unity of the genders. Such wholeness was not achieved within the life-span of the community, which persisted in diminished form until the end of the nineteenth century, and there were rivalries between the male and female members whose work responsibilities were allotted in traditional gender patterns.[4]

Yet another example of communal groups with gender roles that differed from mainstream society was the celibate Shakers, founded by Mother Ann Lee (1736–1784). Lee brought her new religion, rooted in Quakerism, and a few followers to the American colonies from England in 1774 and settled in upstate New York. She taught that God was dual in nature, both female and male, and that original sin was the result of sexual intercourse. Shaker leadership, elders and eldresses, emerged from both the Shaker understanding of God and the need for female members to minister to one another. Major elaborations in Shaker theology and the spread of Shaker communities beyond New York and New England and into Kentucky and Ohio did not occur until after Lee's death. Although female leadership persisted, work assignments were distributed along traditional gender lines, as in Ephrata, with men doing the farming and other public work and women responsible for domestic chores. The Shakers also had "spiritual" divisions of labor. Most Shaker theology was written by men, and the ecstatic visions, which included "gifts" of art and song, were produced by women. More recent scholarship shows that Shaker gender relationships, although highly regulated, were intensely countercultural at some points and highly accommodating of traditional gender roles at others.[5]

An equally complicated community in terms of gender roles, but distinctive in its own way, was the Oneida Community, often referred to as the Oneida Perfectionists. It was founded by John Humphrey Noyes (1811–1886) and existed in western New York between 1848 and 1880. Noyes had his own understanding of "social communism" and the meaning of "family." He repudiated traditional marriage, but, rather than promoting celibacy, the community practiced "group marriage," in which each man was the husband of every woman in the community and vice versa. Sexual unions were highly regulated, the men practiced birth control by means of withdrawal before ejaculation during sexual intercourse, and couples who wanted a child needed permission from the leaders of the community. It was Noyes's conviction that traditional marriage led to possessiveness and a draining of energy from the good of the larger community. In terms of work, Oneida had cross-gender casting, with men often participating in domestic work and women engaged in what the broader culture categorized as men's work. Women had short hair and wore short skirts to give them more freedom of movement, and child care was a communal enterprise. The

community was not ascetic; there was a great emphasis on learning and the arts. In some respects, Oneida was a forward-thinking haven, particularly for women who were freed from unwanted pregnancies and child care, and also for men who found the structure and demands of capitalism burdensome. Recent scholarship reveals that all was not paradise at Oneida. The community experienced conflict and contradiction regarding gender roles, among them Noyes's dominance in the community, his antipathy to women's rights activists, and the sexual privileges afforded by Noyes to a select number of male members.[6]

MORMONISM: A CATEGORY OF ITS OWN

Mormonism presents a distinctive example of a new religion of the nineteenth century that has survived into the present and grown to more than ten million members worldwide at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, founded by Joseph Smith in western New York in 1828, is an excellent case study of gender in a NRM because it offers compelling illustrations of a religion that reinforces some aspects of American society's affirmation of monogamous marriage and traditional male/female gender roles and significantly departs from them as well.

Mormonism's male-dominated, hierarchical system of governance began with what historians now strongly speculate was a much less formal organization that allowed women to exercise gifts of prophecy, healing, and blessing. As Mormon theology and practice developed during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, traditional male/female gender roles with implications for both earthly and spiritual lives became more and more prescriptive. Heterosexual marriage became the norm, seen as essential to the well-being of the community. In Mormonism, gender identity is everlasting. It endures from preexistence, the time before the spirit child is born into a body for the purposes of earthly life and the development of free will and moral agency. It persists, as does marriage, into eternity. The status of women in the celestial realms is determined by the spiritual standing of the men to whom they were "sealed" for all eternity in rituals performed in Mormon temples. Only males may participate in the priesthood; to include women, according to officials, would be to go against the will of God.

However distinctive the theological underpinnings of Mormonism's support of heterosexual marriage, its practice did not conflict with American cultural values. Polygamy, or, more accurately, polygyny (multiple wives), was another matter. It was discussed and practiced only by an inner circle around Smith in the 1830s, and was only acknowledged publicly in 1852. Not surprisingly, the doctrine and practice of "plural wives" generated intense moral and political opposition to Mormonism in nineteenth-century American society and was made illegal, once and for all, by a Supreme Court decision in 1890. In 1890, as well, in the "Great Accommodation," Mormon President Wilford Woodruff received a revelation that ended official approval of polygamy, although it is practiced by separatist groups to this day.[7]

Mormon feminists, of which there are many, during the past 35 years tried to find historical reasons for a variety of developments that closed off avenues of leadership positions for women. They cited Mormonism's acquiescence to sexism in the wider society, the lack of churchwide devotion to Heavenly Mother who is the spouse of Heavenly Father and the ignoring of her place in the Mormon pantheon, and official opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) movement of the twentieth century. Mormon women reinstituted *Exponent II,* named after a women's newspaper, *Exponent,* from the late nineteenth century and advocated women's inclusion in the Mormon priesthood. Mormonism, once a new religion and now firmly and respectably established, continues to work out gender issues that are both familiar and strange to the wider culture.

SPIRITUALISM AND THEOSOPHY

While it is overgeneralizing in some ways to posit the concept of "women's religions," it can also be useful to think in terms of such phenomena when considering NRMs like Spiritualism, Christian Science, Theosophy, and New Thought. In general, women have outnumbered men in American church membership since the late seventeenth century, but these NRMs significantly exceeded even the established traditions in their appeal to women and differed drastically from mainstream religions in giving women numerous opportunities for leadership. Many social and theological factors account for their appeal.

The year 1848 marked the beginnings of what became known as modern American Spiritualism, a NRM based on the belief that the dead could return to earth to communicate with the living and to reassure them by scientific, that is, physical means—rappings, voices, ghostly ectoplasmic appearances from "spirit cabinets"—that life persisted after the death of the body. Margaret and Kate Fox, two young girls from western New York, were the first to hear spirit communications and then publicly attest to that experience. Interest in Spiritualism spread rapidly, and mediums or mediators between the living and the dead, many of them women, attracted followers, including the wealthy and well-educated who wanted communication with deceased loved ones.

Spiritualism offered many outlets for women's participation and leadership: the role of mediumship itself was available to women; Spiritualism was characterized by loose organization enabling women to become mediums if they could attract a following; numerous journals like *The Banner of Light* and the *Spiritual Telegraph* that welcomed the women's written submissions and often employed women editors; and affirmation, although qualified, of women's public speaking in their roles as mediums and lecturers. In addition, Spiritualism's theology was a hopeful one emphasizing ongoing progress on earth and in the spirit realms and that denied the existence of hell, the doctrine of original sin, and, therefore, the role of Eve in the fall of humankind. Spiritualists also supported social reforms such as women's rights and divorce reform that would make it easier for women to leave abusive husbands and to retain custody of their children.[8]

At the same time, historians note that Spiritualism reinforced gender stereotypes. Women mediums were more likely than men to give trance lectures, thereby presenting themselves as passive conduits for spirit messengers rather than as defiant resisters of social restrictions against women who ascended public podiums voluntarily. Women mediums often had male protectors who saved them from harassment and exploitation as well as negative speculations about their sexual morality. Unfortunately, the effect was often the opposite of what they intended and scandals ensued. Spiritualism also had male mediums, writers, lecturers, and reformers. Because they did not depart from the norm of male religious leadership, however, they were more likely to attract criticism for promoting a fraudulent religion than for stepping out of their socially and religiously assigned places.

The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 by Madame Helena P. Blavatsky (1831–1891), a Russian émigré, and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), an American, both former Spiritualists who later repudiated that movement. Theosophy's world view was founded on western esotericism, Hindu and Buddhist religious thought, and occult ideas and practices. From its beginnings, Theosophy said that gender was a category of human experience that merited attention, and the movement produced strong leaders who were both female and male. Further, Theosophy's understanding of the human person, and its particular interpretation of karma, deemphasized the ultimate importance of male and female embodiedness. Theosophy, at least theoretically, did not absolutize gender in any given lifetime even if it affirmed the principles of maleness and femaleness in the workings of the cosmos. The physical body housed the spiritual ego, but this "dense body" fell away at death, leaving behind its physical, gendered characteristics. The reincarnated entity could be reborn as either male or female, depending upon what lessons needed to be learned in that particular lifetime.[9]

On the other hand, generally Theosophists in the United States did not formulate notions of the radically "new woman" or "new man" then becoming more popular in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century American society. Some of the Theosophical lodges, particularly in England, were very active in working for progressive political reforms, including women's rights. While Theosophists argued for increased presence of the feminine principle in religion, world politics, and ordinary life in order to balance the dominance of the masculine principle, these concepts reinforced the dominant culture's ideas of what characterized maleness and femaleness. W. Michael Ashcraft pays close attention to matters of gender in his study of the Point Loma community near San Diego, California. He notes that Katherine Tingley (1847–1929), the charismatic and entrepreneurial leader of Point Loma, identified herself, as did her followers, "with the prevailing model of womanhood espoused by the middle classes in late nineteenth-century America."[10] Men in the community were expected to be both "manly and gentle," and, like the women, well-disciplined in response to bodily needs and desires. The story of Theosophy in the United States reveals the irony of a movement that supported numerous strong women leaders and promoted a world view that centered on the cosmic significance of gender, yet otherwise did not depart in subversive ways from prevailing notions of gender.[11]

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND NEW THOUGHT

Even more than Spiritualism and Theosophy, Christian Science and the several groups such as Divine Science, Religious Science, and the Unity School of Christianity collectively called the New Thought movement came to be known as women's religions. William James spoke of them as "healthy-minded" religions. Religious historian J. Stillson Judah characterized them, along with Spiritualism and Theosophy, as "metaphysical," and they have also been referred to as "mind-cure," "harmonial," and "positive-thinking," the latter adjective somewhat pejorative, indicating that historians and other observers thought that these NRMs' denial of the reality of matter produced world views that failed to adequately address the problem of evil. Many women were associated with these movements, most of whose lives spanned the last half of the nineteenth century and often the first half of the twentieth. The most famous is Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910), founder of Christian Science. Others include Augusta Stetson (1842–1948) and Ursula Gestefeld (1845–1921), students of Eddy who later became her rivals; Emma Curtis Hopkins (1849–1925), whom J. Gordon Melton calls "the Mother of New Thought" and whose lineage as a teacher of other New Thought leaders is notable; Myrtle Fillmore (1845–1931), cofounder of the Unity School of Christianity with her husband Charles, who took the more public role; H. Emilie Cady (1848–1941), homeopathic physician and author of *Lessons in Truth,* still a basic textbook of Unity; Elizabeth Towne (1865–1961), New Thought writer and editor of the *Nautilus,* a New Thought journal; Nona L. Brooks (1861–1945), cofounder with her sister of Divine Science; and Mary Kimball Morgan (1861–1948), founder of the Christian Science school, The Principia, still in operation in St. Louis, Missouri. All of these women had backgrounds in established, usually evangelical, Protestantism.[12]

Christian Science and New Thought, although distinctive movements, have common traits that help to explain their appeal to women and their acceptance of women leaders. As did Spiritualism, these NRMs' hopeful theologies of human nature deemphasize sinfulness based on Eve in the Garden of Eden, and therefore all of womankind are not blamed for what Christian theology calls "the Fall." They teach that only Spirit has ultimate reality and that the physical world, including the body, sickness, and sin, is an illusion. We see the physical world as real because we fail to understand the true nature of reality as God's perfect creation. These NRMs also advocate healing, relief from physical and emotional suffering through a change in consciousness. Because, then, the physical body has no ultimate reality, issues of gender are theoretically negligible. The body, whether female or male, should make no ultimate difference, a major factor in explaining why so many women found outlets for their leadership abilities in these NRMs and found the theology of these NRMs to be coherent with their experiences of life. This is my own interpretation.

In practice, the picture is more complex. Even though these movements continue to attract women members and to foster women leaders, the more the religions become institutionalized, the more prominent male leadership becomes. This was certainly true of Christian Science. Although Eddy's authority is powerfully ongoing,

historically governance at the national level was carried out by a predominantly male board of directors. On the other hand, Christian Science shows an intense concern with women's religious leadership and with Eddy not only as the particular founder of Christian Science but precisely as just such a woman leader. The Mary Baker Eddy Library for the Betterment of Humanity opened in 2002 and considers women's leadership a major focus in its programming. Growing dominance of male leadership was also evident in the Unity School of Christianity, where the anti-institutional fervor of its male cofounder, Charles Fillmore, was subverted by the male-dominated Association of Unity Churches.[13]

GENDER AND RACE IN AFRICAN AMERICAN NEW RELIGIONS

Four examples offer differing combinations of attention to both gender and race in new religions that emerged from African American culture in the United States, one founded by a woman and three by men: the African American Spiritual Churches, initiated by Mother Leafy Anderson (1887?–1927); the International Peace Mission Movement established by Father Divine (1880?–1965); Marcus Garvey's (1887–1940) Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA); and Jim Jones's Peoples Temple (Jonestown). Anderson established a black Spiritualist congregation in Chicago in 1913 and in about 1920 moved to New Orleans where she started a movement that exists to the present, and whose women leaders and members always outnumbered men. Like the white Spiritualist women of the nineteenth century, African American Spiritualist women were forced to defend their calls to ministry, and in New Orleans, which has had at least 175 Spiritualist congregations in its history, male ministers typically had the largest and most affluent congregations. Women validate their ministries through elaborate rituals of ordination, celebration, and memorializing of Anderson. In all of these ceremonies spirit presences are summoned. David Estes notes the paradoxes regarding gender in the eclectic elements that make up Spiritualist theology and governance. An elaborate hierarchy of ministry, including bishops and archbishops, and complex liturgies, all derive in part from the Catholic heritage of New Orleans. Both of these are rare phenomena in religions with women leaders. On the other hand, acceptance of women clergy emerges in part from the movement's equally strong Afro Caribbean religious roots. Among African diasporic cultures in the Caribbean, women's equal leadership is taken for granted.[14]

Father Divine's International Peace Mission Movement grew from modest beginnings in Brooklyn in 1918 into a significant, integrated religious movement that offered to its members food, shelter, and work, and became well-known for its large public feasts. By 1947 the movement was well-known in Philadelphia. Members lived communal, celibate lives, since Father Divine considered a physical relationship between a man and woman a "black sin." Father Divine himself lived in a spiritual marriage with Mother Divine (he married another "Mother Divine" after he was widowed) that symbolized God's love for humankind, and in this case God was personified as both father and mother. Father Divine insisted on the equality of all

people, and he particularly deemphasized race and gender, asking that people avoid terms related to racial identity or even maleness and femaleness, preferring instead phrases like "so-called men" and "those who call themselves women." For women, this downplaying of gender relieved them from having to automatically play the social roles of mothers and servants as was the case in larger society.[15]

By contrast, one of the major goals of Marcus Garvey's UNIA was to foster a strong and unified consciousness of race in people of African descent. He did this by supporting the formation of black businesses and shipping lines, and, best-known of Garvey's projects, he proposed a black-governed nation in Africa. This nation would serve as a haven and a source of pride for black people all over the world. Women in the UNIA did not enter public and economic life. Instead, they took refuge in the home, where they acted out traditional roles of supporting their families.[16]

Only recently have scholars noted the interrelated dynamics between race and gender in the Peoples Temple movement, perhaps because for two decades the focus was on the tragic ending of the community in mass suicides in Jonestown, Guyana, in November 1978 and on its white male founder, Disciples of Christ minister, Jim Jones (1931–1978). Scholars now acknowledge that 80–90 percent of the members were African American. To take this demographic fact seriously requires asking where the Peoples Temple fits into the history of black religion in the United States. Nor was the Peoples Temple totally male-dominated, in spite of Jones's dominance. The majority of members were women, and a key group in the running of the Peoples Temple was an inner circle of white women around Jones, whose history has been "triply erased," due to the focus on the suicides and to both popular and scholarly assumptions that both female and male members were brainwashed and sexually exploited victims of a deranged cult leader.[17] Future research on gender and race in the Peoples Temple will reveal more about not only sexuality, but also the dynamics between black and white women and the roles nonprominent males of either race played in the community's history and ending.

GENDER AND EASTERN RELIGIONS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Although eastern or Asian religions have affected American life most dramatically since the 1960s, Americans encountered eastern religions long before that. The nineteenth-century New England Transcendentalists knew about Buddhism and Hinduism. Theosophy, as already noted, also brought eastern thought to at least a small part of the population. Swami Vivekananda's appearances at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1893 popularized aspects of Hinduism far more widely than had been the case before 1893. Buddhism arrived with Asian immigrants who came to the United States in great numbers at the turn of the twentieth century and again in the 1960s, when immigration quotas related to Asia countries were relaxed. In the American context, these ancient religions of Asia became "new."

Not all new religions from the East are, in fact, derived from variations of Hinduism and Buddhism. The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World

Christianity, now known as the Unification Movement and, popularly, as the "Moonies," sent its first missionary to the United States in 1959. She was a woman theologian named Young Oon Kim (1915–1989). The movement was founded in Korea in 1954 by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon (b. 1920) who converted to Presbyterianism as a young man. Unification theology, considered heterodox by established Christianity, describes a brokenhearted God who desires to reunite various dualisms separated at the fall of humankind, among them, maleness and femaleness. In the Unification interpretation of Christianity, an illicit sexual relationship initiated by Adam and Eve (who was, as in the traditional Christian story, tempted by the serpent) caused the fall, before they were spiritually mature enough to have sex. Unificationism's intense emphasis on the redemptive nature of "family" and on right-ordered, heterosexual, married sexuality means that maleness and femaleness are essential characteristics of the human person. Moon and his wife are the prototype of the Blessed and Perfect Family. The Unification interpretations of marriage and sexuality and its conservative politics might at first glance appear to coincide with the values of conservative American Christianity. But Unification practices, particularly arranged marriages, often across cultural and racial lines to further the unification of humankind, and mass wedding ceremonies, bring it into conflict with mainstream culture. Other practices, such as long waiting periods before marriages are consummated and temporary separation of parents from their children so the parents can work full time for the church, reflect Unification assumptions about the broader meanings of family. Today the movement has grown a third generation of members, and apparently some of the earlier practices are being modified, such as the inclusion of non-Unification members in mass wedding ceremonies.[18]

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), popularly known as Hare Krishna, is a particularly interesting example of how a Hindu sectarian movement, part of the Vaisnava tradition, lived out its history with gender issues in the years since its founding in New York in 1966 by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada (1896–1977). In keeping with the pattern of normative male leadership, gender-related problems were called "the women issue" rather than "the gender issue." In ISKCON, masculinity and femininity are eternal values. Members, or devotees, of the movement testify that in the early years Prabhupada, in spite of recorded sexist comments and the assignment of more "feminine" tasks to women, was committed to women's equal opportunities for spiritual advancement. Before and after his death, the status of women deteriorated, due most likely to the increasing dominance of young celibate male renunciates (a position in the movement denied to women until very recently). As time passed, ISKCON witnessed an increase in emphasis on female embodiment as an obstacle to spiritual development and the female body itself as a temptation, particularly to male devotees. Among other outward signs of this change, women were expected to stay at the back of the temple during worship. Female devotees described their experiences in ways that Judah in 1974 said "may not appeal to Americans interested in women's liberation."[19] Susan Jean Palmer detailed the frustrations of ISKCON women, particularly

at the Montreal temple during the late 1980s, although by then a women's rights movement was emerging among more vocal female devotees, and some ISKCON women criticized Palmer for generalizing too broadly based on her findings at one temple.[20] Advocates for women's equality persisted to the present, and ISKCON has grappled publicly with the role of women. In 2005, the Governing Board Commission made possible the selection of women gurus.[21]

A history of conflicting theological and social dynamics characterized discussions of gender in ISKCON and helps to explain why the roles of women were controversial. ISKCON teaches the sexless and eternal nature of the soul or spirit, and women and men engage in the same devotional practices. Thus, theoretically, as Kim Knott explains, no scriptural or theological reason exists to keep women from attaining any position of authority in the movement, including that of guru. Further, says Knott, no one in the movement dissents from this view, even if they may not agree on the role of women. In addition, both women and men are expected to live lives of service and submission to others and to Krishna. At the same time, the realities of the body cannot be ignored, and Knott found that devotees generally think that the female body presents greater problems to the soul that is trying to liberate itself from entrapment in matter than the male body. This assumption comes up in debates over the role of women. The issue of women's participation in ISKCON is a controversial subject among both insiders and outsiders. As the movement matured, the insider conversation became more public, as has ISKCON's acknowledgement of the realities of a sexual abuse scandal several years ago and concerns about devotees' relationships with male gurus.[22]

Other Hindu sects in the United States also offer significant insights into the dynamics of gender. One is Siddha Yoga, whose primary ashram is in South Fallsburg, New York. It comes from a tradition of Hinduism characterized by intense devotion to the guru, in this rare case, a woman, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda (b. 1955), who along with her brother received the power and authority of the Siddha Yoga lineage in 1982 from Swami Muktananda (1908–1982). They were co-gurus until 1985 when Gurumayi's brother resigned after breaking his vow of celibacy. Siddha Yoga has drawn many women to its practice, including a number of professionals. Again, a combination of factors accounts for the attraction of women in spite of the fact that most of the images for God in Siddha Yoga is masculine. The charismatic power of the guru herself and the authority she holds within a tradition that rarely grants such power to women exercises appeal for many women. Also, given the Western expectation of equality for women, the egalitarian relationship between the masculine and the feminine in the Siddha Yoga world view is appealing.[23] Another movement, although short-lived in the United States, was Osho, or Rajneeshism, founded in India by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (1931–1990). In the early 1980s the movement had a communal settlement near Antelope, Oregon, that disintegrated in 1985 after Rajneesh was deported. Among Osho's beliefs was a negative attitude toward traditional marriage and an emphasis on the celebration of sexual expression as a way to liberate women and men. Women,

particularly, were urged to express their sexuality freely, and the role of "lover" was emphasized over that of "mother." The movement, not surprisingly, was highly controversial.[24]

American Buddhism in its many varieties was never perceived as a "cult" except, perhaps, by a few anticult groups alarmed by the growing presence of non-Christian religions in the United States. This is in contrast with movements like Unificationism and ISKCON, which attracted considerable hostile attention from such groups. Yet Buddhism is a new religion to American culture. In the past 40 years it worked out a number of issues in order to develop an authentic American Buddhism, particularly in regard to matters of gender. American converts to Buddhism, rather than immigrants, worked to create an American Buddhism, and both men and women were involved. In fact, the full inclusion of women in Buddhist study and practices, and in the offices of teacher, may well be American Buddhism's major contribution to worldwide Buddhism.

Buddhism as historically practiced in Asia was always male-dominated. In efforts to ensure women's full participation in American Buddhism, questions resulting from Asian Buddhism arose about whether women are more to blame for the human condition than men, whether human persons embodied as women can achieve enlightenment as quickly or in the same ways as men, and whether women can receive Dharma (Buddhist teachings) transmission and become teachers. As Rita Gross notes, the coincidence of increasing numbers of American converts to Buddhism in the 1960s and 1970s, and the emergence of the feminist movement during that same period, helps to account for the fact that Buddhist women practice side by side with men. "The women most likely to be attracted to Buddhism," says Gross, "were not about to play a secondary, supportive role to enable men to study and practice while they provided domestic service." Gross also elaborates on the dual "problem of the male teacher": one of them a series of sexual scandals related to particular male teachers that was "limited to a specific time and set of circumstances," and the more fundamental problem of the lack of women teachers.[25]

By the early years of the twenty-first century, American Buddhism produced numerous well-known feminist scholars like Gross and Anne Klein; head teachers and directors of meditation centers, among them Charlotte Joko Beck of the Zen Center of San Diego, Karen Sunno, of the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center, and Wendy Nakao, Abbot of the Zen Center of Los Angeles; and writers such as Gretel Ehrlich and Natalie Goldberg. Women are innovators in the teaching of Buddhism, emphasizing themes in the world view and practice of Buddhism not seen before in historic Buddhism. Among these themes is the idea of a more earth-centered rather than an other-worldly practice, that is, Buddhist practice for the sake of an "ordinary," awakened life on earth. Another theme is the paradoxical acknowledgement of the Buddhist belief that our bodies are impermanent and often the cause of suffering but that at the same time, "We Spend our lives in bodies, and if we realize anything we care to call 'enlightenment,' it's in our bodies."[26] This is a reality, American Buddhists say, that is as true for men as it is for women.

GENDER AND THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

The New Age movement is a cultural phenomenon that began in the 1960s and has obvious connections to the metaphysical religions, particularly Theosophy. It is composed of countless organizations and movements within movements, all loosely characterized by commitment to broad convictions about human nature and the workings of the universe. Among the most basic are an emphasis on the pervasiveness of the sacred within the universe, particularly the sacredness of each inner self; the interconnectedness of all things, sometimes referred to as the "cosmic web"; and the necessity of overcoming a variety of historic dualisms characteristic of Western society: spirit and matter, male and female, emotion and reason, science and religion. Both popular culture and scholars assume that the New Age movement embraces several levels of depth ranging from the shallow, commercial, and crass to a genuine search for cultural transformation and reenchantment of the universe.[27]

To what extent is the New Age movement "gendered"? No sophisticated demographic studies can prove this, but there is the widespread perception that the New Age movement has attracted more women than men and that the loose organization and entrepreneurial ethos of the movement encourage women leaders. In addition, one of the New Age's most prominent themes, that of the "divine within," or the divine self, appealed to women historically, because it promises immediate access to the sacred without the need for approval of religious organizations. The indwelling of the divine confers spiritual authority and sanctifies bodies, nature, and daily life. The New Age gave rise to both women's and men's spirituality movements, usually connected with neopaganism, and in these movements gender differentiation is evident. For women the focus is on liberation and healing from patriarchal oppression and veneration of women's bodily and psychic experiences and of the goddess (or goddesses). Men's spirituality movements typically work to overcome the emotion-deadening effects of living in a scientific, hyperrational, work-glorifying culture that male members have experienced as spirit-deadening.

"Bodies" figure prominently in the New Age movement, but no consensus exists about their ultimate spiritual significance. Are our bodies, and thus our genders, "our selves"? Or, are we ultimately spirit or mind or "idea"? Because its manifestations are so various, affirmative answers to both of these questions are in the New Age movement, an indication that conflicting views about male and female bodies are part of ongoing dialogue about gender roles and sexuality.

Some aspects of the New Age movement hold that our thought patterns, not our biology, determine our destiny. Other contemporary spiritualities, such as feminist Wicca and neopaganism particularly, hold that human bodies are sacred, just as nature is sacred, and that our bodies and therefore our genders are, indeed, our selves. But reverence for the body has not abolished within these movements issues of exploitation and abuse, and conflicting issues abound over what could be called neopagan sexual ethics.[28]

CONCLUSION

Issues of gender in new religions reveal the complexities of a human reality that has often been ignored in the study of both established and new religions. They reinforce the growing appreciation in both popular culture and the scholarly world for the significance of gender not only in NRMs but in religions in general. Gender is a highly significant part of religious world views, whether or not it is experienced or acknowledged as such, personally or communally. At the very least, scholars and students of new religions need to ask several basic questions about any movement they encounter. What is it like to be a woman in this movement? What is it like to be a man? And how do the answers to these questions help us to understand essential characteristics of the movement's beliefs and practices?

NOTES

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2. Susan Hill Lindley, *You Have Stept Out of Your Place: A History of Women and Religion in America* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), chap. 2, 8–15. See also Margaret Hope Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America* (Philadelphia: Quaker Press of FGC, 1995).

3. Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

4. Jeff Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves: The Sacred World of Ephrata, The Pennsylvania German History and Culture Series* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

5. See Jean M. Humez, ed., *Mother's First-Born Daughters: Early Shaker Writings on Women and Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993); Linda A. Mercadante, *Gender, Doctrine and God: The Shakers and Contemporary Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990); Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

6. See Robert S. Fogarty, *Special Love/Special Sex: An Oneida Community Diary* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994); Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991); Louis J. Kern, *An Ordered Love: Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias: The Shakers, the Mormons and the Oneida Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

7. For further information about contemporary Mormon polygamy, see Martha Bradley, "Cultural Configurations of Mormon Fundamentalist Polygamous Communities," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 8, no. 1 (July, 2004): 5–19.

8. Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

9. Margaret Cousins, "Without Distinction of Sex," *The Theosophist* 40 (1918): 213–23.

10. W. Michael Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle: Point Loma Theosophists and American Culture* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2002).

11. Ibid.

12. Gail Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins: Forgotten Founder of New Thought* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002); J. Stillson Judah, *The History and Philosophy of the*

Metaphysical Religions in America (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967); Beryl Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom: American Women, Sexual Purity, and the New Thought Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

13. Dell deChant, "Myrtle Fillmore and Her Daughters: An Observation and Analysis of the Role of Women in Unity," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream,* ed. Catherine Wessinger (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 102–24. On the Mary Baker Eddy Library see www.marybakereddylibrary.org.

14. David C. Estes, "Ritual Validations of Clergywomen's Authority in the African American Spiritual Churches of New Orleans," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Leadership Outside the Mainstream,* ed. Catherine Wessinger (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

15. See Robert Weisbrot, *Father Divine and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

16. Beryl Satter, "Marcus Garvey, Father Divine and the Gender Politics of Race Difference and Race Neutrality," *American Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (March, 1996): 43–76. See also E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974).

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24. Elizabeth Puttick, Foreword by Ursula King, *Women in New Religions: In Search of Community, Sexuality and Spiritual Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997). Puttick was once a member of Osho.

25. Rita M. Gross, "How American Women are Changing Buddhism," *Shambhala Sun* (July, 2005): 91, 93. This issue contains a number of articles on American Buddhist women.

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Children in New Religious Movements: The Mormon Experience

Michael Homer

Since the late 1960s the critics of New Religious Movements (NRMs) have focused their attention on the impact such movements have on children. They have argued that children are particularly susceptible to mind control, brainwashing, or coercive persuasion, and they have even justified kidnapping to remove them from controlled environments. But when these theories were rejected by academics and by the courts in the 1990s, the opponents of NRMs shifted their focus to allegations of child abuse and other illegal activities, which they claimed are rampant in such organizations.[1] This theory is premised on the notion that a cult organization "with its stereotyped totalitarian cult leader's control over members, was conducive to child abuse and neglect, with little to restrain the cult leader from any whimsical ideas about child-rearing that might occur to him or her … From this view 'cult children' are raised in organizations predisposed toward abusive practices."[2]

Based, in part, on such allegations, some new religious groups were subjected to raids of their homes that were justified as attempts to protect children from harmful conduct.[3] These same movements were attacked in child custody cases in an effort to deny custody to church members.[4] This essay demonstrates that such tactics are not new. In fact, just as Mormon polygamy was the subject of the first United State Supreme Court case that interpreted the free exercise clause of the U.S. Constitution, the same practice provided the initial justification for assuming that NRMs are particularly prone to committing child abuse, and that one can assume such abuse takes place within the group without any specific evidence to prove it.[5] I suggest that a better standard for evaluating the treatment of children in religious movements should not be based on such suppositions, which really amounts to cult bashing, stereotypes, or appeals to "public morality," but instead must be considered on facts proven on a case by case basis.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ("Mormon Church") was organized by Joseph Smith Jr. (1805–1844) in 1830. Smith claimed that he was chosen by God, through revelation and ordination, to restore the fullness of the gospel to the earth after a long apostasy. Shortly after organizing the Church, Smith reportedly

took additional wives, the first as early as 1833.[6] By the time the Mormon Church settled in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1839, he instructed some of his closest confidants concerning this doctrine of "plural marriage." Nevertheless, the practice was not officially announced until after Smith's death and his successors transferred church headquarters to the Salt Lake Valley in the Intermountain West.

Before the battles over polygamy began, Smith and other high-placed Mormons were accused of subjecting their followers to a form of mind control. This explained why people (and particularly young women) were attracted to what the critics believed was a palpable fraud and how these converts were eventually persuaded to become plural wives. Maria Ward, a pseudonym for an ex-Mormon who published an exposé in 1855, claimed that "Mormon leaders possessed a singular and fascinating power, which they practiced on all that came within their influence." That "power," according to Ward, "is now popularly known by the name of Mesmerism." Through this power Mormon Elders controlled the minds of potential converts and forced them to join their Church: "At this time I was wholly unacquainted with the doctrine of magnetic influence; but I soon became aware of some unaccountable power exercised over me by my fellow traveler. His presence seemed an irresistible fascination. His glittering eyes were fixed on mine; his breath fanned my cheek; I felt bewildered and intoxicated, and, partially at least, lost the sense of consciousness, and the power of motion … I became immediately sensible of some unaccountable influence drawing my sympathies towards him. In vain I struggled to break the spell. I was like a fluttering bird before the gaze of the serpent-charmer."[7] Teryl Givens also demonstrates that this theme was picked up and advanced by other writers wishing to explain both the attraction of Mormonism and its inherent dangers.[8]

Of course, the most obvious danger was considered polygamy, which imperiled hearth and home. In 1852 Apostle Orson Pratt (1811–1881) revealed what was by then an open secret and announced that the church encouraged its male members to take multiple wives. Thereafter, the Church began its 40 year struggle with the United States Government, as well as with social commentators, who challenged the legality, as well as the morality, of this practice. Following Pratt's announcement, the Mormon Church published, for the first time, the revelation that Smith received on this subject in July 1843. This revelation provided Smith and his successors with a religious validation for the practice. Smith asked the Lord for information concerning how Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon were justified concerning the practice "of their having many wives and concubines." The Lord responded by telling Smith that this "new and everlasting Covenant … was instituted for the fullness of my glory" and that if he followed the patriarchal principle he would be blessed with extraordinary wives and exceptional children. In this revelation, which is now published as Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord told Smith that through him he would restore all things and that he would "bless him and multiply him and give unto him an hundredfold in this world, of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, wives and children, and crowns of eternal lives in the eternal worlds."[9] In part, the doctrine of plural marriage had some precedent

in the Old Testament wherein "Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, because they were given unto him, and he abode in my law." In other words, Smith, like Old Testament patriarchs, was to be given "extraordinary wives" and "exceptional children" in accordance with his righteousness.

Not surprisingly Smith, and his successors, believed that their righteous offspring were superior to the offspring of monogamists and were not subject to the same frailties as those who practiced monogamy. Brigham Young's (1801–1877) First Counselor in the First Presidency, Heber C. Kimball (1801–1868), stated that "I have had altogether about 50 children; and 100 years won't pass away before my posterity will out-number the present inhabitants of the State of New York, because I do not destroy my offspring. I am doing the works of Abraham."[10] Other apostles were in agreement. According to Charles W. Penrose, "Children now growing up to receive the cares and responsibilities of life, are generally speaking puny, spindly, and easily prostrated, their constitutions being so feeble that they become an easy prey to the many new diseases which are evolved in a gradual process of the general, physical decay … What nation, community, or society are taking this important subject into consideration, and giving it that attention which it deserves? We answer, the people who are called 'Mormons' are the only people on the earth who are truly alive to the tremendous consequences involved in this question. While all the world is going down gradually to decay and death, this despised people, ridiculed and slandered, and considered to be outside the pale of civilization, are engaged in their lofty-mountain retreat in commencing the great work of physical generation."[11] Another apostle, George Q. Cannon (1827–1901), stated that "The children of our system are brighter, stronger, healthier every way than those of the monogamic system."[12] Similarly, Mary Jane Mount Tanner (1837–1890) informed Hubert Howe Bancroft (1832–1818) that "there are no healthier, or better developed children than those born in polygamy."[13] Eliza R. Snow (1804–1887) also testified that polygamy was instrumental in "restoring human life to his former longevity."[14] And the *Deseret News* stated that polygamist marriages produce children "weighing over 200 pounds and their parents perhaps not over 150," to support its contention that first generation polygamous children were healthier than their parents.[15]

European travelers were well acquainted with the Mormon belief that their wives, children, and families were superior. Those who traveled to Utah during the nineteenth century were prepared to ask questions and make observations about the impact this NRM had on the traditional family.[16] Italian diplomat Leonetto Cipriani (1812–1888) visited Utah in 1853 and had an extremely interesting conversation with Apostle John Taylor (1808–1887) concerning the advantages and duration of plural marriage. Cipriani notes that his

> "questions on such a subject had to be discreet, I did ask him if the Mormons, generally speaking, were satisfied with polygamy."
>
> "For the time being, yes," he answered. "But with families so rapidly increasing, we don't think polygamy can last for long."
>
> "And what is the reason for that?" I asked.

"Because as long as religious authorities can watch over the development of families and direct them morally, the plurality of wives is possible. But when families are left to themselves, without control, arising discord will make it necessary that we ourselves demand the abolition of polygamy. This is the opinion of the Prophet and of the apostles."

"May I ask you a question?"

"Certainly."

"Do children born of different wives live in harmony with one another? And do the wives?"

"Presently, yes," he said, "But the secret of harmony among them is wholly artificial. It is based on continual work."…

"But human passions, jealousy—have they no hold on your wives?"

"They have, but these passions are suppressed by constant work, by their husbands' conduct, and by the religious influence of the Prophet and bishops."

"Have you had cases of wives rebelling against the household? How do you punish or correct them?"

"We've had very few such cases, and rarely at that. We correct them, by admonition and with gentleness, and when that does not suffice, we impose silence, a punishment which we have found to be the most effective with a woman."

"What do you mean by 'imposing' silence?"

"I mean never speaking to her, either at home or outside, and never answering her questions. Few women can withstand such treatment. Some have been driven mad by this, others have committed suicide, but with the majority of them, their morale breaks down and they become like lambs. I repeat, however, these cases of rebellion are rare, and in most families an exemplary harmony reigns."

"Are you satisfied with public morality? Do you have frequent cases of adultery?"

"Only one case in twenty years, and that occurred six years ago."

"How did you punish it?"

"They punished themselves by running off to Mexico."

Subsequent travelers also focused on the Mormon marriage system and its impact on family life. Jules Remy (1826–1893), a French traveler who visited Utah in 1855, noted: "Let us cast a glance upon the prospect of Mormonism, considered in connection with the present condition of the children born and bred under the influence [of] polygamy." He then judged that: "Like delicate flowers, which the tender pedals are soiled and discolored by the least breath of impurity, so are children easily corrupted by the pernicious contagion of evil examples … It is necessary to acknowledge the fact; depravity, impiety, obscenity of language, and acts against nature, may be made the just reproach of the young saints at the Salt Lake. It would be necessary to go among the savages, degraded and brutalized by intercourse with the dredges of our society to find whores comparable to those offered us by the heirs of the saints … These considerations upon the wickedness of the children of the saints, permit us to foresee that if Mormonism shall disappear like an astonishing anomalous meteor, the principal causes for annihilation will be found in polygamy, the very expedient to which the Mormons had recourse to build up and perpetuate their sex."[17] Joseph Benjamin (1818–1864), a Jewish traveler who visited Utah in 1861, observed that "I felt I had been taken back to the Asian continent, for I got to see as little of the

ladies of the house in Utah as I had in the Orient. The women also very rarely go out. Mr. Young has a total of fifty-two children and thirteen wives. The ten of his children whom I saw ranged from eight to twelve years in age. Absolutely none of them had handsome features, nor were any of them appropriately dressed." Joseph Alexander, Baron von Hübner (1811–1892), who some sources claim was the illegitimate son of Hapsburg Chancellor, Prince Klemens von Metternich, visited Salt Lake City in 1872. He noted that "Children swarm in Salt-Lake City. You tumble over them in every direction. It is, in fact, one of the characteristic traits of this town and all the Mormon settlements. They are well fed, decently dressed, and are all sent to school. But the greater portion of those I saw are delicate and even miserable-looking. Domestic authority, like all others, is merged in that of the prophet. The parents hardly know the number and names of their children. The President has forty-eight, without counting those that have died." Finally, German traveler, Max Joseph Buchner (1846–1921), who interviewed Brigham Young in 1877, recognized that "[t]he perpetual refrain was that the Mormons were supposed to be better than all other people. 'Where does the Kingdom of God begin? With fathers and mothers. Let the fathers be pure of heart and let the mothers be pure of heart. And then the children and the entire family will also be pure of heart. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were also pure of heart. Because they were the founders of the Kingdom of God and we are the Latter-day Saints; and because we are the latter-day saints, we are pure of heart." But he also admitted that: "I saw not a single resolute or focused face of the kind displayed by a typical American, and most of those present held their mouth open. The women were ugly and the modest, orthodox bonnets which many wore did not do anything to improve their looks. Crying children and the noise of constant coming and going drove me to the front so that I could hear some of the message."[18]

While these travelers were at least making judgments based on their observations of Mormon family life in Utah, there were also many comments in print that portrayed the evils of Mormonism, the adverse impact that polygamy had on family life, and the extreme danger that young women could be easily seduced to join a Mormon harem. Paul Duplessis (1815–1865), a French author, wrote a novel entitled *Les Mormons* in 1859 in which the President of the Mormon Church seduces two Parisian sisters to travel to Salt Lake City. A non-Mormon adventurer, Joaquin Dick, agrees to help the sister's brother, Georges D'Hedouville, and follows their wagon train to Utah to rescue them. A German author, Balduin Möllhausen (1825–1905), wrote several novels, the first entitled *Das Mormonenmaden,* in 1864, which begins with the failed escape of a polygamist wife and her one-year-old child from "Mormon City." The story also includes a character named Herta Jansen, a Swedish convert who, while immigrating to Utah where she will become the second wife of a Mormon leader, was eventually rescued by non-Mormons. Möllhausen also wrote a second story with a Mormon subplot entitled "Der Fanatiker," which revolves around "a naive Scandinavian beauty who has been tricked or forced into joining the Mormons and who is to be married into polygamy by an unscrupulous guardian."[19] The famous German novelist, Karl May (1842–1912), also wrote several

stories involving Mormon polygamy, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) wrote the most famous anti-Mormon/antipolygamy novel of all time, *A Study in Scarlet,* which revolves around a young girl named Lucy who is forced to marry one of the sons of an apostle. Each of these authors focused not only on polygamy but on the efforts of Mormons to seduce young women (who were children) to become converts and eventually plural wives. Another good example of the fascination that many Americans had with Mormonism's most provocative doctrine is a letter published in *L'Eco d'Italia,* an Italian-language newspaper published in New York. "What would your readers say if I were to boast an offspring of 62 children?" the letter's author, calling himself Gian Domenico Pelligrini, claimed. "And remember that I am only 50 years old so that I can expect a still greater number of children from my 22 wives, all of them healthy and able to procreate."[20] Had the readers known that there was no one named Gian Domenico Pelligrini living in Utah Territory, it would not have dampened their interest in the subject matter of the letter.

The Mormons were not generally pleased with representations made about plural marriage in general and about their children in particular. Nevertheless, the Civil War Congress passed, and President Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Anti Bigamy Law in 1862, which outlawed bigamy in all United States Territories. Thereafter the Mormon hierarchy was increasingly on the defensive on this issue. Apostle Cannon gave a discourse in the Salt Lake Tabernacle in 1869 in which he lamented of "having read accounts which have led them [travelers] to expect that most of the children born here are deficient." But he countered this perception by noting that "there are no brighter children to be found in the world than those born in this Territory. Under the system of Patriarchal Marriage, the offspring, besides being equally as bright or brighter intellectually, are much more healthy and strong."[21] While most European travelers disagreed with this Mormon claim that their families were superior to those raised under a monogamous system, a few people were at least partially convinced. French feminist Olympe Audouard (1830–1890) wrote, after visiting Utah in 1868, that "the Mormons of Salt Lake must also be credited with the following: They have not invented a children's home to send their children to; they have not ever written into their code this immoral, inhuman sentence: 'The search for paternity is prohibited.' The sad result of this sentence is that, out of three children born, in Sweden and Norway, one is a bastard; in Austria the average is one-in-five; in France the average is roughly the same. All these children are doomed by their fathers to misery and shame. Misery and shame lead some to penal colonies, and others to the hideous wretchedness of prostitution … Brigham Young has 36 daughters, all of them tall, strong and robust, and in addition, 17 sons … In short, my opinion is that polygamy well and truly is a hangable offense, a horrible thing that assimilates man to beast, destroying the pure, strong, devine love that is the inspirer of all great and beautiful things. However, to choose between one kind of polygamy and another, I prefer the legal polygamy of the Mormons to the illegal, tolerated and protected polygamy of the Mormons of Paris for, I repeat, the latter still has more disastrous consequences."[22] Another French traveler, Count Haussonville (1843–1924), reported in 1883 that a Mormon told him that: "But how many husbands

are there amongst you who take mistresses, and how many women are there who have lovers? In our midst, as far as our people are concerned, adultery is unknown; and an adulterous woman is as great an offender in our eyes as in the eyes of the ancient Israelites whose laws condemned an adulteress to be stoned to death. Tomorrow, when you take a walk through the streets of Salt Lake City, you will not see a single Mormon child abandoned or begging. How many children are there on the pavements of your great cities who do not know their father? In our midst illegitimate births are unknown. We take care of our children, and we have them taught … Hence we are convinced that some day or other the world will do us justice, and that the world will be regenerated by and through us."

Shortly after Audouard visited Utah Territory, Young and his followers celebrated the opening of the transcontinental railroad—7000 Mormons assembled in the Tabernacle the day after the Golden Spike was driven—but they also worried about the influence of "Gentiles" (non-Mormons) who settled in the previously isolated Utah territory, particularly the impact that non-Mormons might have on the practice of plural marriage. The Mormons took precautionary measures, including the establishment of a protectionist economy that required faithful Latter-day Saints to shun non-Mormon merchants. At the same time a new band of Mormon dissenters known as the Godbeites flexed their muscles, and the *Salt Lake Tribune* became an important independent voice in the territory. Ex-Mormons such as T. B. H. Stenhouse, Fanny Stenhouse, Ann Eliza Webb Young, Bill Hickman, and John D. Lee all left the church and published books explaining their reasons for doing so. Politicians and preachers, meanwhile, continued to rail against the illegal practice of polygamy. Gentiles and dissenting Mormons "thought that Young's attempts to maintain Deseret as a distinct and semi-isolated entity were unwisely placing the Saints in the path of an irrepressibly expanding American nation." They believed that such attempts were futile because God had "doomed the isolation of Utah to pass away."[23] They were also hopeful that a flood of visitors and settlers would undermine the power of Brigham Young's theocracy and contribute to the end of polygamy.[24]

With the arrival of the railroad, the federal government's assault on polygamy became much more aggressive. Young was arrested for cohabitation in 1871. Shortly thereafter, William Casey, the United States Attorney in Utah Territory, indicted George Reynolds, Young's personal secretary, for violating the antibigamy law. The Mormon Church and the United States government apparently agreed that Reynolds—not Young—would be the test case to determine whether the antibigamy statute passed by Congress was constitutional, or whether it constituted an abridgment of the Mormons' free exercise of religion under the First Amendment. The genesis of judicial stereotyping of NRMs' abuse of children can be traced to this lawsuit.[25]

In the spring of 1875 a jury found Reynolds guilty of violating the Morrill antibigamy law. The conviction was based on the testimony of Amelia Jane Schofield, his second wife, who was subpoenaed to appear and testify at the trial. Reynolds's conviction was reversed by the Territorial Supreme Court because the Grand Jury that indicted Reynolds was illegally constituted. Reynolds was indicted again on October

30, 1875, and a second trial commenced on December 9. During the second trial the government was unable to serve the second Mrs. Reynolds with a subpoena, and it was therefore constrained to introduce the transcript of her testimony from the first trial over defense objections. Even though there was no evidence that Reynolds mistreated either his wives or his children (in fact, the testimony of his second wife during the first trial was just the opposite), the trial court gave an instruction that the jury "should consider what are to be the consequences to the innocent victims of this delusion. As this contest goes on, they multiply, and there are pure minded women and there are innocent children,—innocent in a sense even beyond the degree of the innocence of childhood itself."[26] Based on the testimony and the court's instructions concerning the law, Reynolds was again convicted and sentenced to two years of hard labor. The Territorial Supreme Court affirmed the second conviction without even addressing the issue of whether the antibigamy law, under which Reynolds was convicted, was constitutional under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Reynolds appealed his conviction to the United States Supreme Court. On January 6, 1879, the court affirmed the jury verdict by a 9-0 majority [with Justice Stephen J. Field (1816–1897) concurring in the result but disagreeing with the trial court's admission of Amelia Jan Schofield's testimony from the first trial]. Although six issues were raised on appeal in *Reynolds v. United States* the most enduring part of the decision was the court's holding, written by Chief Justice Morrison Remick Waite (1816–1888), that the antibigamy statue was constitutional under the First Amendment's free exercise clause because although "Congress was deprived of all legislative power over mere opinion" it was nevertheless "left free to reach actions which were in violation of social duties or subversive of good order." Ironically, the court relied almost exclusively on British law and noted that in "common law, the second marriage was always void … and from the earliest history of England polygamy has been treated as an offense against society." But the court in Reynolds's case was as much interested in "cult bashing" as it was in determining if Reynolds was practicing bigamy. In *Reynolds,* the court appealed to racism by concluding: "Polygamy has always been odious among the northern and western nations of Europe, and, until the establishment of the Mormon Church, was almost exclusively a feature of the life of Asiatic and of African people." It also cited one expert, a Professor Lieber, for the proposition that "polygamy leads to the patriarchal principle, and which, when applied to large communities, fetters the people in stationary despotism, while that principle cannot long exist in connection with monogamy."[27]

Significantly, the court in *Reynolds* also determined that it was not error for the district court judge to instruct the jury concerning the consequences of plural marriages. Even though no evidence of child abuse was provided, it upheld the trial court's instruction that the jury "should consider what are to be the consequences to the innocent victims of this delusion. As this contest goes on, they multiply, and there are pure minded women and there are innocent children,—innocent in a sense even beyond the degree of the innocence of childhood itself."[28] The United States Supreme Court found nothing wrong with this instruction and allowed the jury to

consider "public morality." One recent legal observer concluded that: "The Court thus supported its contempt for the practice of polygamy by appealing to religious views, biases, and opinions on morality commonly held at the time. This section of the opinion lacked substantive legal reasoning and references to viable public policy justifications. Instead it cast polygamy in such a prejudicial light as to imbue subsequent, suspect opinions with the appearance of reasoned support."[29]

Historians have concluded that the perceived evil consequences of plural marriage were based to some extent on "anti-polygamy fiction and the sentimental campaign against moral diversity in anti-bellum America" rather than on legal evidence.[30] Lawyers have argued that the court's identification of social harms was based on stereotypes circulated in "penny dreadfuls" rather than legal evidence.[31] In addition, the published accounts of European travelers demonstrate that the issue of how wives and children were treated was at the forefront of their thoughts concerning the practice of plural marriage, since the Mormons had advanced a thesis that their wives and children were superior to those produced in monogamy. In any event, the Supreme Court decided that Congress could, in fact, constitutionally prohibit religiously sanctioned practice as long as it had a rational basis for doing so, and the rationality could be extended to notions of "public morality." One of those rational bases advanced by the court was that women and children under patriarchal polygamy were abused. This was upheld as a moral paradigm despite the lack of any evidence to support it.

Following the *Reynolds* decision, the U.S. Congress passed the Edmonds Act in 1882, which strengthened the ability of Federal officials to prosecute polygamists, and prevented them, or those who believed in polygamy, from voting, serving on juries, and holding public office. In 1887, Congress passed the Edmonds Tucker Act, which disenfranchised female voters, abolished spousal immunity, eliminated the Perpetual Immigrating Fund, disincorporated the LDS Church, and authorized the escheatment of most Church property. Eventually, social, economic, and political pressures caused the pragmatic Mormon leadership to capitulate and abandon the practice of polygamy. This change in policy opened the way for Utah to be admitted as a State in 1896 after a nearly 50-year wait.[32]

Even after the Mormon hierarchy abandoned plural marriage in the first manifesto in 1890, and the second in 1904, polygamy remained an ingredient in many tales about the Mormons. Zane Grey published *The Heritage of the Desert* in 1910 and *Riders of the Purple Sage* in 1912; Charles Pidgin wrote *House of Shame* in 1912. The movie industry began to take advantage of Utah and Mormon beginnings with the absolutely horrible movie *Trapped by the Mormons* in 1922, which is still in circulation in the twenty-first century. Early in the twentieth century, when Church leaders recognized that polygamy tainted Mormonism's image throughout the world, they embarked on a new course to change that image. Plural marriage was vigorously uprooted from the Church, and those who resisted and insisted on its continued vitality were excommunicated. Thereafter the Church encouraged broader participation in national politics and eventually achieved greater political influence. A major watershed occurred in 1907 when the United States Senate voted to retain Apostle Reed Smoot (1862–1941), who was elected to that body in 1903 by the Utah State

Legislature. "The Senate vote to retain Smoot marked the beginning of the nation's acceptance of the Latter-Day Saints on the same denominational terms as other American religions," argues Kathleen Flake.[33]

Nevertheless, in the wake of this rejection of polygamy by the Mormon Church, a group of dissenters within the LDS tradition, including John Y. Barlow (1874–1949) and Joseph W. Musser (1872–1954), taught that when Church authorities ceased to support polygamy, they violated God's law and forfeited their right to lead the Church. Those Church members who continued to practice polygamy established their own communities and eventually led schismatic groups. These "fundamentalist Mormons" considered themselves to be faithful to the original Church organized by Joseph Smith. Thus, the debate concerning the legality and beneficial nature of polygamy, within the context of these schismatic groups, continued. As in *Reynolds,* this debate included unsubstantiated allegations concerning the consequences of plural marriages based on stereotypes rather than focusing on facts.

Thus, it is not surprising that the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Reynolds,* with its lack of policy reasons for upholding antibigamy laws, had a reverberating impact on polygamists in these small fundamentalist Mormon communities. For example, in 1946, the Supreme Court reviewed the convictions under the Mann Act of six Fundamentalist Mormon men, who had transported their wives across state lines.[34] The Mann Act prohibited the transport of "any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose."[35] Although the Mann Act was normally not utilized in the context of bigamy, the court determined that plural marriages fit within the definition of "immoral act." In fact, Justice William O. Douglas, writing for the court, quoted an 1890 Supreme Court decision, which described plural marriage as "a return to barbarism. It is contrary to the spirit of Christianity, and of the civilization which Christianity has produced in the Western world." Douglas also wrote that a polygamous union was also "a notorious example of promiscuity."[36]

Because of such reasoning public officials continued to use "public morality" in their attacks on Fundamentalist Mormons, and they also began stereotyping polygamists in accordance with their preconceptions concerning their practices. The "modern era" of the fundamentalist Mormons began in 1953 with a standoff between fundamentalists and Arizona law enforcement officials.[37] The preceding year, Arizona Governor J. Howard Pyle concluded that the Mormon fundamentalists were a cult, that the parents were guilty of "profligacy," and that their children were suffering from child abuse.[38] He was therefore determined to charge fundamentalists with "rape, statutory rape, carnal knowledge, polygamist living, cohabitation, bigamy, adultery, and misappropriation of school funds," and certain members of the group were also charged with having "encouraged, advised, counseled, and induced their minor, female children under 18 years of age to actively participate in some unlawful conduct." Based on these charges Governor Pyle sanctioned a raid on the fundamentalist community of Short Creek, formed in 1935 and located on the border between Arizona and Utah.[39]

On Sunday, July 26, 1953, 120 Arizona peace officers, accompanied by 100 news reporters, drove across unpaved roads to the fundamentalist community of Short Creek to arrest 36 men and 86 women and to take into custody 263 children. Although this was planned as a surprise raid, the families sang patriotic hymns around the flag pole when the officials arrived at 4:00 AM. Governor Pyle subsequently announced on the radio that the purpose of the raid was "to protect the lives and futures of 263 children" and that the religious community was the "foulest conspiracy you could imagine … dedicated to the production of white slaves." Mormon officials (whose Church had abandoned polygamy some 50 years earlier) approved of the raid and were even accused of providing relevant information to the police and other civil authorities. This fueled suspicion among many of the fundamentalists that the Mormon Church not only participated in but may have also helped instigate the raid. Mothers and children were transported by bus to Phoenix, Arizona, where they were kept in separate locations, including a crowded rest home and the YMCA, and were told that their children would eventually be placed in permanent foster homes. Juvenile hearings were held in Arizona State Courts, resulting in the placement of most of the children in foster homes around Arizona, often accompanied by their mothers. Then, an Arizona Superior Court Judge ordered in March 1955 that all of the children be restored to their families, bringing an end to Arizona's efforts to segregate children from fundamentalist parents.[40] Such episodes have also been experienced by other new religious movements. Charlotte Hardman notes similar experiences in the Community in Island Pond, Vermont, and The Family. With respect to The Family she notes that: "The same pattern can be seen in the raids worldwide on The Family: front page news as the allegedly abused children were dragged from their parents in nighttime raids, with scarcely a mention of their return after no abuse could be found in any of the children, in any of the six countries."[41]

Similar efforts to separate children from polygamist parents were made in Utah, especially in communities in the southern part of the State that bordered Arizona and were also part of the "raid." The most prominent case involved the seven children of Vera Black, who were removed from their home, accompanied by their mother, and were ordered to be placed in nonpolygamist homes. When the Blacks challenged the state's authority to take these actions, the Utah Supreme Court held that parents who enter into polygamist marriages may be deprived of their right to the custody of their children.[42] When the Blacks saw that they would lose custody of their children, they agreed to sign pledges to "obey the law of the land," including the law of monogamous marriage, and by virtue of this pledge, the children were returned to the custody of their parents. However, subsequent to the family's return to this polygamist settlement in southern Utah, the Blacks continued to practice plural marriage. But no further action was taken against the Blacks because there was no evidence that they were mistreating or abusing their children or violating any law other than the antibigamy laws.[43]

After *Black* there were no further attempts to remove children from polygamist homes or to prosecute polygamists, solely for the practice, for more than 50 years. And it was not because the polygamists went away. For most of the latter half of

the twentieth century an estimated 30,000 polygamists lived in the Western United States. After *Black,* the public began to adopt the notion that justice must be fair and that facts, not stereotypes, must be taken into account in the prosecution of members of NRMs. In fact, in 1991, the Utah Supreme Court ruled that a polygamist could adopt children.[44] In order for the public to support the separation of children from their parents, legal protections for NRMs, parents, and children must exist. Furthermore, legal mechanisms must exist for persons to give evidence, at least as a preliminary step. This is preferable to impulsive undercover raids based on hearsay or misinformation, which in the past led to bloodshed. Improved communications in monitoring impossible cases of child abuse would help to avoid confrontations like those in Waco, where it is still unclear whether rumors of child abuse had any basis in fact.

Regardless of the constitutionality of antibigamy laws, the legal experiences in Utah demonstrate that the prosecution of polygamists must be prioritized between those who simply violate antibigamy laws because they are married to more than one wife and those who are suspected of child abuse and welfare fraud. In 1991 the Utah Attorney General Paul Van Dam was quoted as saying, "Unless it is associated with child abuse, welfare fraud, or any other illegal act, polygamy for its own sake has not been a crime susceptible of successful prosecution and uses up an awful lot of resources."[45] He further observed that although the Utah Constitution forbids polygamy, the State's laws do not specifically bar the practice. More recently when Governor Michael Leavitt initially acknowledged that many states "have chosen not to aggressively prosecute" polygamy and that the practice may be protected under the First Amendment, his office recast his statement within a week to emphasize that he did not condone polygamy. "I am not sympathetic to its practice."[46] Most significantly, after this gaffe, Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff echoed the statement made by his predecessor that "the claim of religious freedom is no defense to the crimes of statutory rape, incest, unlawful sexual conduct with a minor, child abuse, or cohabitant abuse."[47]

The most recent prosecution for violation of Utah's antibigamy laws highlights Attorney General Shurtleff's distinction between the debate over polygamy generally (with arguments often hinging on testimony by ex-members and stereotypes and debates over "public morality,") and specific violations of the law, which must be proven by facts. In April 2000 a rural County Attorney charged Utah polygamist Tom Green with four counts of bigamy (third degree felonies), one count of criminal nonsupport (a third degree felony), and one count of rape of a child (a first-degree felony). Green was married to at least three teenage girls and bragged about his chosen lifestyle on trash television. Even though Green was an excommunicated Mormon, some news accounts refer to him as a "Mormon polygamist." In May the trial judge granted a motion filed by Green's lawyers and severed the child rape charge from the charges of bigamy and criminal nonsupport. The court also found that Green maintained a common law marriage to Linda Kunz as a plural wife even though he had married and then divorced her.[48] As in *Reynolds* the prosecutor gave notice that he would subpoena Green's plural wives.[49]

Green's first trial for bigamy and failure to pay child support took place in May 2001 and attracted worldwide media attention. The court allowed expert witnesses to testify concerning the social impact of polygamy, including exploitation, abuse, incest, sexual assault, statutory rape, and the failure to pay child support. Green did not contest that he had conjugal relationships with his wives, but he insisted that Utah's antibigamy statute was unconstitutional. The jury found Green guilty on all counts, and in August 2001 he was sentenced to five years in prison and ordered to pay over $78,000 in restitution to the state. Green appealed his bigamy convictions, and in September 2004 the Utah Supreme Court affirmed, noting that the United States Supreme Court "has never explicitly overruled" *Reynolds v. The United States,* and that it provided precedent in upholding the legality of the Utah Anti-Bigamy Statute.[50]

The court also wrote that its antibigamy statute passed constitutional muster even under recent less stringent standards enunciated by the United States Supreme Court in *Employment Division v. Smith.*[51] The Court wrote that it passed the lower "rational basis" test and a concurring justice opined that it also passed the higher "strict scrutiny" test. The court explained that: "Utah's bigamy statute serves the State's interest in protecting vulnerable individuals from exploitation and abuse. The practice of polygamy, in particular, often coincides with crimes targeting women and children. Crimes not unusually attendant to the practice of polygamy include incest, sexual assault, statutory rape, and failure to pay child support."[52] Of course, it is doubtful that this sweeping generalization is true. It seems to be particularly at odds with the practice of polygamy in Utah during the nineteenth century. And if it is true, the citizens of the state are justified in asking why the Green case was the first prosecution of a polygamist in 50 years, when many others live the same lifestyle in the state of Utah. It is particularly difficult to square this rationale with a prior decision of the Utah Supreme Court when it ruled that polygamists have the right to adopt children: "The fact that our [state] Constitution requires the state to prohibit polygamy does not necessarily mean that the state must deny any or all civil rights and privileges to polygamists."[53]

Green's second trial, for child rape, a year later demonstrates the type of approach long advocated by legal experts in the state. The trial was not dependent on stereotypes concerning "fundamentalist Mormons" or the practice of polygamy but upon clear statutory language that made it illegal for an adult male to have sex with a 13-year-old child.[54] During this second trial it was easily proven that Green took Linda Kunz as a wife when he was 37 and she was just 13. Kuntz, who was the daughter of one of Green's wives, testified that she willingly entered into a marriage covenant with Green and that she bore his child within the next year. Outside the courtroom the prosecutor argued that it was irrelevant that Kunz believed she "willingly entered into the marriage since she was a minor and lacked capacity to make that judgment." He also asserted that she was "a victim of what psychologists call the Stockholm syndrome, in which hostages sympathize with, and later defend, their captors."[55] When the jury considered the evidence against Green (including the uncontroverted evidence that he had sex with a 13 year old), it had little difficulty finding him guilty

of child rape, a first degree felony. Nevertheless, the trial judge gave him only the minimum sentence of five years to life, and he was allowed to serve this sentence concurrently with the prior sentence for bigamy and legal nonsupport. Although many were disappointed in the relatively light sentence, this was the most important conviction. Green was guilty of a serious violation of law, which applied to both monogamists and polygamists, and had nothing whatever to do with religion.[56]

Green demonstrates the importance of separating religious issues from legal issues in the court room. The trial judge was correct in separating the child rape allegation from issues that would center on whether Utah's antibigamy laws were constitutional. Arguably the court should have removed the allegations of nonsupport from the first trial as well. The jury in the second trial could not rely on testimony concerning "crimes not unusually attendant to the practice of polygamy" in determining whether Green actually violated a statute that prohibits an adult from marrying and having sexual relations with a girl under the age of 14. Furthermore, by focusing on the facts and law, the case was not caught up in the types of stereotypes and/or generalizations that were allowed in cases since *Reynolds.* Just as it was alleged that the Mormon leadership subjected their followers to a form of mind control in order to explain why people (and in particular young women) were attracted to the church and why they eventually became plural wives, such allegations are still common concerning polygamy, and for that matter are still used to explain the attraction young people have for a wide variety of new religious movements.

Richard Vazquez argued that one of the greatest flaws of *Reynolds* was: "By electing not to justify the opinion's hostility toward polygamy with plausible policy justifications (such as heightened potential for sexual abuse of children), the *Reynolds* opinion rings hollow—an unsubstantiated attack on a religious practice."[57] While these policy justifications were enunciated by the Utah Supreme Court in *Green* they should still not be allowed to taint a jury concerning whether any particular polygamist is guilty of child abuse unless there is evidence that he actually is. *Reynolds* established an unfortunate precedent—which has been utilized in other cases involving the religious liberties of minority churches. It is far too common for courts to allow nontraditional church practices to be attacked as long as they are repugnant to "public morality" regardless of whether there is any evidence of specific wrongdoing. Charlotte Hardman has noted this same approach: "There is little need to explore in depth any particular NRM to see whether child abuse is occurring. Information from ex-members about the totalitarian nature and lifestyle of the organization is sufficient. If a group can be defined as a 'destructive cult' or an 'extreme cult' detailed evaluations of the religious group are not needed to make allegations of child abuse."[58] While some believe that children raised in polygamy are more susceptible to abuse, it would be interesting to see the basis for these conclusions considering the many organizations and circumstances through which polygamy survives today.

Litigation involving Mormon polygamy demonstrates that facts, not stereotypes, need to be considered when judging the activities of NRMs, particularly when it involves children. This is not to suggest that polygamy should be legalized. Vazquez and others argued that the inherent nature of polygamy heightens the potential for

sexual abuse and that this could be used to demonstrate the constitutionality of state laws prohibiting its practice. The Utah Supreme Court adopted this justification and argued that antibigamy laws pass constitutional muster, because of the essential nature of polygamy, under either a "strict scrutiny" standard previously utilized by the United States Court or a rational basis test that was also articulated by the Supreme Court. But it is clear that, just as most of the information to support the *Reynolds* court's notion of "public morality" came from ex-members who published exposés following the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, generalizations (and perhaps stereotypes) concerning polygamy also come from ex-members in the twenty-first century. While Taylor admitted to Cipriani in 1853 that "when families are left to themselves, without control, arising discord will make it necessary that we ourselves demand the abolition of polygamy" he certainly did not believe that there were "crimes not unusually attendant to the practice of polygamy." And no observer in Utah would claim that every polygamous group in Utah condones child abuse or the types of crimes committed by Tom Green.[59]

But courts continue to rely on allegations of ex-members concerning the practices of most NRMs. Hardman notes: "Furthermore it is ex-members that the anti-cult considers the 'experts' in terms of evaluating the nature of any NRM. Some would argue that this reliance on ex-members is misguided, ignoring research on apostasy and 'deprogramming,' which has shown that ex-members may have a resentment against the religious group they have left particularly if they have to face the reconstruction of a new life, career, and family outside of the group."[60] Courts should not rely on information supplied by anticult sources or those who dislike particular churches without evaluating motive and bias.

Further, courts should not make value judgments based on religious beliefs; instead they should make such judgments only after determining from the evidence whether illegal acts were committed by persons who happen to be members of NRMs. They should not assume that new religions are particularly prone to committing child abuse, or that such abuse takes place within any group, without any specific evidence to prove it.[61] Their determination of how children are treated in religious movements should not be based solely upon accusations, suppositions, conjectures, or stereotypes, which really amount to cult bashing or appeals to "public morality," but instead on facts proven on a case by case basis.

NOTES

1. See James T. Richardson, "Social Control of New Religions: From 'Brainwashing' Claims to Child Sex Abuse Allegations," in *Children in New Religions,* ed. Susan J. Palmer and Charlotte E. Hardman (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 172–86; Charlotte E. Hardman, "Children in New Religious Movements," in *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements,* ed. James R. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 390–91.
2. Hardman, "Children in New Religious Movements," 390–91.
3. Ibid., 176–81.

4. Michael W. Homer, "The Precarious Balance between Freedom of Religion and the Best Interest of the Child," in *Children in New Religions,* ed. Palmer and Hardman, 196–203.

5. Hardman, "Children in New Religious Movements," 391–92.

6. Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness, The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 25–42.

7. Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 139–40, quoting Maria Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Experience among the Mormons* (London: Routledge, 1855), 9, 38, 230.

8. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth,* 140–43.

9. *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:55 (July 12, 1843), as quoted in B. Carmon Hardy, ed. *The Works of Abraham: A Documentary History of Mormon Polygamy* (Spokane, WA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2006). The quotations concerning the practice of polygamy are all from Hardy's forthcoming book.

10. Heber C. Kimball, *Deseret News,* August 12, 1857, 23, quoted in Hardy, *The Works of Abraham.*

11. Charles W. Penrose, "Physical Regeneration," *Millennial Star* 29, no. 32 (August 10, 1867): 497–99, quoted in Hardy, *The Works of Abraham.* This idea of "regeneration" was repeated many times by Mormons.

12. George Q. Cannon to Journalist, *Journal History,* March 20, 1882, quoted in Hardy, *The Works of Abraham.*

13. Mary Jane Mount Tanner to Hubert Howe Bancroft, October 29, 1880, 5–6, quoted in Hardy, *The Works of Abraham.*

14. Eliza R. Snow, "Sketch of My Life," 17, quoted in Hardy, *The Works of Abraham.*

15. *Deseret Evening News,* February 15, 1881, 14:71, quoted in Hardy, *The Works of Abraham.*

16. The quotations of European travelers are taken from my book, Michael W. Homer, ed. *On the Way to Somewhere Else: European Sojourners in the Mormon West, 1834–1930* (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2006).

17. Jules Remy to *California Chronicle,* February 11, 1856, quoted in Homer, *On the Way to Somewhere Else.*

18. On the various travelers' reports see Israel Joseph Benjamin, *Drei Jahre in Amerika: 1859–1862* (Hanover: Selbstverlag des verfassers, Druck von Wilh. Riemschneider, 1862), republished as Charles Reznikoff, trans., *Three Years in America, 1859–1862* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962); Max Buchner, *Reise durch Stillen Ozean* (Verslau: J. U. Kern's Verlag, 1878); Gabriel Paul Othenin de Comte d' Cleron Haussonville, *A travers les Etats-Unis: Notes et Impressions* (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1883); Count Haussonville, *One Day in Utah: A Literary French Nobleman's Views on the Mormon Question, From "a travers les Etats Unis"* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1883); Joseph Alexander Graf von Hubner, *Ein Spaziergang um die Welt* (Leipzig: n.p., 1874); Joseph Alexander Graf von Hubner, *Promenade autor de mond,* 2 vols. (Paris: Librarie Hachette et Cie, 1873); Joseph Alexander Graf von Hubner, *A Ramble Round the World, 1871,* trans. Lady Herbert, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874).

19. D.L. Ashliman, "The Image of Utah and the Mormons in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35 (1967): 220.

20. Correspondence, *L'Eco d'Italia,* June 10, 1874, 2, cited in Giovanni Ermenegildo Schiavo, *Four Centuries of Italian American History,* 5th ed. (Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 1992), 171.
21. George Q. Cannon, "Discourse," *Journal of Discourses* 13 (October 9, 1869): 207.
22. Olympe de Joaral Audouard, *A travers l'Amerique: Le Far West* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1869).
23. Ronald W. Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 177.
24. See Homer, *On the Way to Somewhere Else.*
25. For a good description of the Reynolds case, see Orma Linford, "The Mormons and the Law: The Polygamy Cases," Part I, 9 *Utah Law Review* 308 (1964); Part II, 9 *Utah Law Review* 543 (1965).
26. *Reynolds v. United States,* 98 U.S. 145 (1878), 164–167.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
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30. Sarah Barringer Gordon, "Our National Hearthstone: Anti-Polygamy Fiction and the Sentimental Campaigne against Moral Diversity in Antebellum America," *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* 8, no. 2 (1997): 298.
31. Edwin Firmage and Collin Mangrum, *Zion and the Courts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 151–59.
32. B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 126–66. After the Manifesto the courts reversed the decision preventing polygamous children from inheritance; see ibid., 152.
33. Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 157.
34. *Cleveland v. United States,* 329 U.S. 14 (1946).
35. White-Slave Traffic (Mann) Act, chap. 395, 36 Stat. 825 (1910) (see 18 U.S.C. §§ 2421-2422, as modified).
36. 329 U.S. at 19. Twenty-six years later Douglas wrote in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* that "The Court rightly rejects the notion that actions, even though religiously grounded, are always outside the protection of the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. In so ruling, the Court departs from the teaching of *Reynolds v. United States,* where … action, which the Court deemed to be antisocial, could be punished even though it was grounded on deeply held and sincere religious convictions. What we do today, at least in this respect, opens the way to give organized religion a broader base that it has ever enjoyed; and it even promises that in time Reynolds will be overruled." 406 U.S. 247.
37. The quoted material is from Martha Sonntag Bradley, *Kidnapped from that Land: The Government Raids on the Short Creek Polygamists* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 112–26, which I have also quoted in Homer, "The Precarious Balance," 196–203.
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44. *Johansen v. Fischer,* 808 P.2d 1083 (Utah 1991). See also *Sanderson v. Tyron,* 739 P.2d 623 (Utah 1987) (finding that a parent practices polygamy is alone insufficient to support custody award); and *State v. Musser,* 175 P.2d 724 (Utah 1948) (a person cannot be prosecuted for expressing opinions of belief and personal opinions).
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52. Ibid. at 830.
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Same-Sex Eroticism and Gender Fluidity in New and Alternative Religions

Melissa M. Wilcox

In a 2003 interview conducted shortly before the confirmation of Bishop Gene Robinson, Episcopal priest and activist Susan Russell commented that debates over gay and lesbian inclusion in the church have followed a path very similar to that of earlier debates over the inclusion of women.[1] While the Episcopal Church is far from being either a new religion or an alternative one, Russell's comments point to a broader pattern in both established and newly formed religions in the United States: an organization's history and current policies on women's involvement often predict its reactions to the involvement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) people—or, more broadly, its attitudes toward same-sex eroticism and gender fluidity. Because very little in-depth research has been conducted to date on the status of same-sex eroticism and gender fluidity in New Religious Movements (NRMs), either in the United States or elsewhere, this observation is helpful in determining not only what the patterns *are,* among groups in which this issue has been studied, but what they *might be,* among groups in which it has not.

This chapter begins with an overview of same-sex eroticism and gender fluidity in the United States, as well as an explanation of the use of these terms rather than "LGBT" to designate the central issue of the chapter. It then proceeds to a general discussion of the major patterns of reactions to same-sex eroticism and (occasionally) gender fluidity in new and alternative religions of the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States. The bulk of the chapter takes up specific examples of these patterns, tracing changes and continuities across more than 200 years of shifting social norms and religious structures. Ultimately, although a great deal of work remains to be done within this area of study, the emerging patterns are strong enough and the topic significant enough to indicate that this is a promising new direction for research on NRMs.

SAME-SEX EROTICISM, GENDER FLUIDITY, AND RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES

A growing body of cross-cultural and historical research indicates that erotic fantasies and activities between people of the same biological sex have been, and continue to be, widespread. Likewise, biological sex is often one basis for the elaboration of social roles and behavioral expectations ("gender roles" or "gender norms"), so, perhaps logically, deviation from gender norms has been noticed and remarked upon in a wide variety of cultures—though certainly not all. The story gets much more complicated, however, when one considers the cultural meanings assigned—or not—to same-sex eroticism and fluid gender roles in different contexts. In some cultures, same-sex eroticism is only acceptable, or is only recognized as erotic, among one sex. In some cases it is recognized but is never condoned; in others it is considered a normal part of a certain period in life but is inappropriate at other stages of the life cycle. In some cultures (such as modern Western ones), engaging in same-sex eroticism carries significant social meaning (for one's sexual orientation, for instance), whereas in others it does not. Likewise, there is wide cultural divergence, both historically and currently, in the salience of gender roles and same-sex eroticism: for some cultures such issues matter a great deal, while others consider them minor. Some cultures have rigid and dualistic gender divisions that are strictly enforced along biological lines: all women should be like this, all men like that. Some cultures allow significant leeway in gender roles, and some recognize more than two genders, combining childhood gender proclivities with anatomical traits to recognize a variety of human types (biological males who perform traditional women's tasks, people with sexually indeterminate bodies who may perform special tasks, biological males who perform traditional men's tasks, and so on).

In the mainstream culture of the United States in the early twenty-first century, most people recognize only two sexes: anatomical females and anatomical males.[2] Contemporary mainstream culture recognizes a fairly broad but still bounded set of gender roles for women and a narrower set for men. Outside of these boundaries, definitions begin to blur. Some people whose self-presentation and behavior fall outside socially assigned gender norms do not see this as a separate part of their identities; some subsume gender fluidity under a gay or lesbian identity; others connect such fluidity to a transgender or "genderqueer" identity. Some feel a distressingly severe disconnect between their bodies and their internal sense of gender; they may eventually undergo some level of sex-reassignment procedures, from hormone therapy to surgeries, and come to identify as transsexual.

Same-sex eroticism has likewise become increasingly fluid in the twenty-first century United States, with consistent, exclusive same-sex erotic attractions generally leading one to identify as gay or lesbian while erotic attraction to both men and women generally leads to bisexual identification. Some gay men become erotically involved with women, however, some lesbians with men, and some heterosexuals with people of the same sex, without changing their sense of identity.[3] Some prefer not to identify, some identify as "questioning," and a more recent arrival is the

"heteroflexible," whose primary attraction is to the opposite sex but who is not averse to same-sex erotic encounters. Out of this complexity comes the umbrella adjective "LGBT," referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered as the main identities connected with same-sex eroticism and gender fluidity in the contemporary United States. Significantly for this chapter, however, these contemporary interpretations are quite new, with even their forerunners having developed only a little over 100 years ago.

Historians of sexuality tell us that contemporary Western concepts of homosexuality and heterosexuality developed together in the late nineteenth century, coming into wider usage in the United States around the beginning of the twentieth century.[4] This certainly does not mean that same-sex eroticism did not exist prior to this point, but rather that it took on new meaning: previously, it was simply one of many sexual improprieties and did not connote an essential, fundamental identity any more than adultery might. Furthermore, the scientists—known as "sexologists"—who developed the concept of sexual orientation, tied it almost inextricably to gender. Men attracted to other men, they suggested, were improperly developed as men, and likewise for women attracted to other women. Sexologists often referred to such people as "inverts," meaning not only that they were sexually attracted to the "wrong" types of bodies, but also that what we would call today their *gender* was inverted from that of "normal" people. Thus, although there were a few exceptions, Western scientific attention to same-sex eroticism at the end of the nineteenth century conflated gender, biological sex and sexual orientation, giving us a cultural model that still exists today: the "effeminate" gay man and the "mannish" lesbian in contrast to the feminine heterosexual woman and the "manly" heterosexual man. In the wake of these developments, both cross-gendered behavior and nonsexual intimacy with others of the same sex became far less common among those who wished not to be identified as homosexual.

Prior to the invention of sexual orientation, it was not uncommon in the nineteenth century United States for adult men and women to share a bed with another of the same sex, to write of their love for the other (especially among women) in glowingly ornate language, or to cross gender in jest or for more serious purposes (such as, for women, joining the military). None of these activities was taken to indicate anything abnormal about the people involved.[5] Consequently, discussions of gender fluidity and same-sex eroticism in eighteenth and nineteenth century NRMs must be undertaken cautiously, separating flowery expressions of emotional attachment from solid evidence for erotic activity and examining the significance of instances of gender crossing. Nonetheless, a few tantalizing cases are well worth mentioning and are included in the discussion below.

Through much of the twentieth century, as the concept of homosexuality became more widely known in the United States, it retained its initial categorization as a psychological or psychiatric disorder—a medical issue, broadly speaking, more than a moral one. While some in the first part of the century considered feminism to indicate flaws in a woman's gender (just as the late twentieth century stereotyped the feminist as a lesbian), and while religions at the turn of the century certainly were

grappling with questions of women's roles, gender crossing in general remained subsumed under homosexuality, and neither was the source of significant religious commentary until well into the 1960s.[6] On the other hand, communities of self-identified homosexuals were already forming by the turn of the century, and many of these communities solidified during the 1940s.[7] As a result, although it is generally not possible to discuss religious groups' official responses to homosexuality and gender fluidity until the 1960s or 1970s, there is some evidence for the involvement of self-identified gay men and lesbians in religious organizations prior to that time. Thus, while the cases discussed later in this chapter range from the late eighteenth century to the present, the vast majority of available evidence for explicit connections between gender fluidity, same-sex eroticism, and new or alternative religions in the United States comes from the latter half of the twentieth century.

SAME-SEX EROTICISM AND GENDER CROSSING IN NEW AND ALTERNATIVE RELIGIONS: OVERALL PATTERNS

Perhaps because of the connection sexologists made between sexual orientation and gender roles (or perhaps simply because of the importance of both within mainstream American culture), even in decidedly nonmainstream American religions there is a strong connection between attitudes toward gender roles and attitudes toward sexual diversity. In fact, this holds true, broadly at least, for the NRMs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even though their patterns of "sexual diversity" did not include attention to homosexuality. Groups such as the Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Perfectionists, all of which experimented with sexual arrangements, also rethought, in at least minor ways, the roles of women (and sometimes of men). In the twentieth century, attitudes toward the social roles of men and women often coincide with attitudes toward gender fluidity in general and toward sexual orientation, especially among mainstream religious groups but also in NRMs. In fact, at the risk of being overly bold in the face of scant data, it is worth considering that even the group's more cultic or more sectarian nature affects attitudes toward both gender roles and sexual diversity, at least in the twentieth century.

Groups that might be described as either "cultic" or "sectarian" in the classical sociological sense experience high tension with society.[8] This is true of most new and alternative religions, which usually define themselves and sometimes are defined from outside as being "different" from the mainstream and perhaps opposed to some of its values. In addition, some NRMs are also exclusivistic, believing that there is only one possible route to the truth, while others are *nonexclusive:* they hold that there are many paths to the truth, even if they believe that their own is the best of those. When theological exclusivism, or its lack, includes the gendered and sexual order, one often finds religious groups proclaiming either that there is only one set of proper genders and sexual relations and that the mainstream culture fails to adhere strictly to these (exclusivist), or that there are many acceptable forms of gendered and sexual behavior and that the mainstream culture fails to allow appropriately full expression of these (nonexclusivist). Groups espousing stricter norms for gender

and sexuality than those found in the mainstream generally offer clearly divided, binary gender roles, and they usually require either strict (and usually monogamous, or in certain cases, polygynous) heterosexuality or celibacy. Those experimenting with gender norms are likely to experiment with sexual norms as well, and vice versa, although even the more radical NRMs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries maintained a binary understanding of gender. Occasionally, such experimentation can lead to its own form of exclusivism, but overall in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries it is the nonexclusivist religious groups—whether mainstream or alternative—that are most likely to embrace a wide variety of expressions of sexuality and gender.

Religious attitudes toward sexual and gender diversity are also related to attitudes toward the human body and material existence. Religions whose practices and beliefs are closely tied to the body often attend closely at least to issues of sexuality, if not also to issues of gender, because both sexual and gendered expression may impact religious behavior. On the other hand, the more distanced a religion's focus from the body and the material world, the more likely that religion is to be indifferent toward issues of gender and sexuality, considering them irrelevant or evanescent.

While these observations suggest certain general patterns, the exceptions to those patterns are just as interesting. These include cases in which the founder of a religion is not held to the same standards of sexual or gendered behavior as the religion's followers, as well as the small number of NRMs formed specifically on the basis of sexual orientation, some of which are exclusivist not in theology but in membership. With these rough guidelines in mind, then, we can turn to examining a number of cases of same-sex eroticism and/or gender diversity in the new and alternative religions of the United States in the past 200 years.

PRE-TWENTIETH CENTURY CASES

The beginning of the twentieth century marks an important turning point for the interpretation of same-sex eroticism and gender fluidity in religious organizations, because it was early in that century that the concepts of sexual orientation and inversion came to be widely known in the United States. Accordingly, any examination of same-sex love and gender fluidity in religious groups prior to the twentieth century should pay close attention to the social context in which such phenomena occur: is the gender crossing done in jest or for practical purposes, for example, or does it seem to carry a deeper meaning that would be more relevant to comparison with LGBT identities in religions of the twentieth century? Are expressions of romance between two people of the same sex simply socially acceptable statements of affection, or is there evidence for a more erotic relationship?

As far as I am aware, the earliest reference in a new or alternative religious context in the United States to serious, extended gender fluidity that seems to be more than simple practicality is the case of the Publick Universal Friend.[9] Born in 1752 as Jemima Wilkinson, this visionary-to-be quit the Society of Friends (the Quakers) some time before succumbing to a serious illness. Upon recovering, at the age of

24, the seer refused to be known as Jemima Wilkinson, taking instead the title of "Publick Universal Friend." The Friend claimed to have "died and been reborn as the second coming of Christ," embodying the very spirit of Jesus and therefore becoming male, or at least masculine.[10] Much maligned in public, the Friend eventually founded a community of celibate followers that survived for several decades in western New York.

Perhaps like the townspeople in Rhode Island and Philadelphia who reacted so strongly against the Friend, contemporary and later commentators seem puzzled by the Friend's gender, using feminine pronouns and continuing to use the name of Jemima Wilkinson but describing the Friend as quite masculine in appearance. Historian Susan Juster (also using the feminine pronoun) explains that the Friend "deliberately remade herself into a masculine figure" and "[forbade] her followers to address her in gendered pronouns," signing the Friend's one published work as "your friend and *brother* in the communion and fellowship of the gospel."[11]

Some of the Friend's closest (presumably female-born) followers also took on masculine dress. Juster argues that "Wilkinson and her female followers repudiated their gender identity in order to assume the prophetic mantle."[12] As Juster notes, however, the Friend's was no simple masculine identity—Jemima could simply have become James Wilkinson and left no record of the transformation, as has been the case with a number of women in Western history who have crossed gender for practical reasons. In fact, the Friend left a detailed description of the death of Jemima and the takeover of her body by "the Spirit of Life from God."[13] While it would be anachronistic to claim that the Friend was an eighteenth century transgendered man, it also may be too simple to claim that the Friend was simply a subterfuge to allow a woman access to prophetic authority.

Similarly tantalizing and complicated are the examples of same-sex intimacy (some erotic, some not) and gender fluidity marshaled by D. Michael Quinn in his groundbreaking study of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Mormons.[14] For all the scandal caused by its approval of polygyny, the early Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) offered women significant leadership and power by the standards of the day. In some cases, polygyny allowed women more freedom rather than less, and although women's spheres were often defined separately from men's, within those spheres women exercised considerable authority and autonomy until the mid-twentieth century. The early LDS church, like a number of other nineteenth-century NRMs in the biblical tradition, conceived of the divine as female as well as male, and some nineteenth-century Mormon women were active in the woman suffrage movement.[15] Despite this evidence of liberalism, like other religions of its time the LDS church condemned homosexuality as the concept of the homosexual came into wide usage in the early twentieth century. However, Quinn argues that the church also was not particularly inclined to harshness in its treatment of those so accused—at least, not until the early 1950s, when not only was the broader U.S. culture in the midst of a severely conservative turn, but the LDS church was also placing increasing limits on women's power and authority.[16]

In the late 1800s, on the other hand, Quinn finds no evidence that the concept of homosexuality as a separate orientation was present in LDS circles. Also missing was the attendant concept of gender fluidity as a marker of sexual abnormality. As a result, Quinn can cite numerous examples of prominent Mormon men and women who wrote openly of sharing beds and physical (apparently nonsexual) affection with others of the same sex. Likewise, some nineteenth-century Mormons (including a child of prominent leader Brigham Young) crossed gender for the sake of entertainment with no questions ever being raised about their mental health or sexual normalcy.[17] By the turn of the century, however, some Mormons were beginning to identify subtly as homosexuals.

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY CASES

In 1903, Mormon poet Kate Thomas published a love poem addressed to another woman. With the nineteenth-century approval of same-sex emotional attachment still in place culturally, there was little to remark upon in the poem's appearance in the LDS *Young Woman's Journal.* However, Thomas was living in New York's Greenwich Village at the time, where the term "gay," which appeared in the poem, was already a veiled reference to homosexuality. Furthermore, Quinn notes that some of Thomas's unpublished poetry was far more erotic than her published work, especially by the standards of the time, and Thomas never married.[18]

The late nineteenth century saw the beginnings of urban enclaves where same-sex eroticism was a well-known pastime, and the concomitant beginnings of communities of self-identified homosexuals. Thus, it is unsurprising that one might find a few members of the LDS church in such enclaves, just as one might find a few Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Reform Jews, Methodists, and members of other religions. More surprising, perhaps, than the existence of one putatively lesbian Mormon poet is the work described by Quinn as "the earliest community study of lesbians and gay men in America," which was undertaken by a college student in Salt Lake City in the early 1920s.[19] The study, conducted by Mildred J. Berryman and only finalized in 1938, included 33 homosexuals, of whom 9 were men and 24 were women. Quinn explains that indications of religious identity in the study are slim, but that passing references in a number of cases indicate that "many (possibly all) the persons in [Berryman's] study were of Mormon background"[20]—as was Berryman, who included herself as one of the cases in the study.

As the twentieth century progressed, gay and lesbian communities expanded and solidified. Historian John D'Emilio argues that World War II had a profound effect on these communities because military service placed many men in homosocial environments while increased job opportunities gave more women the economic freedom to live on their own (or with other women).[21] Out of this environment came not only a solidification of the gay and lesbian bar cultures, not only the liberal advocacy groups known collectively as the "homophile movement," but also the first new religion founded by and for homosexuals: the Eucharistic Catholic Church.[22]

The Eucharistic Catholic Church first held services in Atlanta, Georgia, on July 1, 1946, when its founding bishop, John Augustine Kazantks, ordained its founding priest, George Augustine Hyde. Hyde was previously a Roman Catholic seminarian; Kazantks lost his position as a bishop in the Greek Orthodox Church due to his homosexuality. Together, Kazantks and Hyde decided to form a church that would welcome people of all sexual orientations. By January of the following year their reach extended across Georgia, with Kazantks serving the southern half of the state from his home in Savannah and Hyde the northern half from the church's original base in Atlanta. Although Kazantks eventually returned to Greece, Hyde was consecrated as bishop and eventually became archbishop in the American Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Church. From these positions, he assisted in the founding of New York's gay- and lesbian-oriented Church of the Beloved Disciple as a parish of the Eucharistic Catholic Church; the founding priest of Beloved Disciple eventually took the ministry into Canada as well, where some effort has been underway recently to revive the Eucharistic Catholic Church.[23]

THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION AND ITS AFTERMATH: THE MID-TWENTIETH AND LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Turning Points

The mid-twentieth century was a time of conservative retrenchment in the United States, both morally and politically. Although gay and lesbian subcultures persisted throughout the 1950s, they either functioned anonymously or worked very cautiously in the open. Because medical understandings of homosexuality as an aberrant orientation had led to increasing legal sanctions and sometimes to forced psychiatric treatment, to come out or be exposed as a "homosexual" meant not only the potential loss of one's job, family, and home, but also shock treatment or other destructive attempts at "healing." Even some political radicals and socially experimental religious groups during this time kept their distance from homosexuality. In England, for example, Gerald Gardner, the founder of contemporary Wicca and hardly a mainstream religious figure, wrote in 1954 that the Knights Templar had been followers of the Goddess but had been cursed by her because of their homosexuality. His book was published in the United States in 1955.[24]

With this background, it is perhaps unsurprising that the only gay and lesbian religious movement was one that, though schismatic, was tied to a socially conservative religious movement. Indeed, the gay and lesbian rights organizations of the time worked from comparatively conservative perspectives, encouraging public dialogue on homosexuality rather than demanding rights as the subsequent generation of activists would do. But precursors of an impending change were nevertheless detectable. As the Eucharistic Catholic Church was growing in Georgia, another movement was underway several hundred miles north of there. It, too, eventually connected alternative religious movements and homosexuality, but in a radically different way from anything conceived of by Hyde and Kazantks.

Beat poets such as Allen Ginsburg wrote openly of same-sex desire and sexuality in a way that was not only unprecedented but also enormously risky in the social and political conservatism of the 1950s. They thus led the way for the gay liberation movement, whose official founding dates to the riots at Greenwich Village's Stonewall Inn in June of 1969.[25] But a number of the Beats were also attracted to Buddhism, and Jack Kerouac studied it quite intensely.[26] Beat writings introduced a generation of youth to this religion and drew them especially to those teachers who were working in the United States and developing American lineages. Because of the intertwined presence of gay sexuality and Buddhism in the Beats' writings, they pointed to new religious directions especially for LGBT youth, many of whom found in their Christian and Jewish heritages (especially in the 1960s and 1970s) communities unwelcoming of or ambivalent toward LGBT people.

A prominent example of this pattern is the man who came to be known as Issan Dorsey.[27] Born Thomas Dorsey Jr. in Santa Barbara, California, in 1933, he was raised in a large Italian Catholic family and considered the priesthood for a time. By high school, however, he was becoming sexually active with other men. Talented in the performing arts and desperate to leave Santa Barbara, he joined not the film industry but the United States Navy—which, he recalled, "was like a big coming-out party."[28] As during World War II, during the Korean War the armed forces provided men like Dorsey with a strongly homosocial space that extended their opportunities to meet other gay men. It also, however, provided opportunities for abrupt discharges—and Dorsey and his lover were discovered one night and summarily ejected from the Navy. Both were discharged in San Francisco and stayed there to become a part of that city's booming gay subculture. From the early 1950s until the late 1960s, Dorsey was a fixture in the gay and lesbian bar scene, eventually taking on the drag persona of Tommy Dee and performing around the country. Travel, the bar scene, celebrity in the 1960s, and guilt over his homosexuality and his discharge from the Navy—all drew Dorsey into increasing substance abuse. But several changes in his life led him to seek a new direction, just when the wider San Francisco counterculture was discovering Shunryu Suzuki and the San Francisco Zen Center.

Dorsey began studying with Suzuki and took lay precepts (initiation) in 1970, receiving the name of Issan. He worked at the San Francisco Zen Center's nearby Tassajara retreat center and studied with Suzuki's successor, Richard Baker. By 1975 he had been formally initiated as a monk; he spent much of the next five years at the Tassajara center before returning to San Francisco in 1980. From this point on, Dorsey became increasingly involved in bringing Zen to the LGBT communities in San Francisco. He helped to start a meditation group for gay men, which eventually grew into the Hartford Street Zen Center in San Francisco's gay Castro district. In the mid-1980s he became teacher-in-residence at the center. He also, however, tested positive for HIV. Perhaps because of this, he became concerned with the increasingly desperate need for hospice care for people with AIDS in the Castro district. Inspired by the work of other hospices and spurred by the illness of one of his own students, Dorsey began housing people with advanced AIDS in the Hartford Street Zen Center. With the help of several others this project grew into the Maitri Hospice—from

whose services Dorsey benefited when he fell ill. Issan Dorsey died of AIDS complications in 1990, but the organizations he founded continue to influence Buddhist practitioners—especially LGBT converts—in the San Francisco area and elsewhere.

The success of the Hartford Street Zen Center is indicative not only of the popularity of Zen Buddhism in the San Francisco counterculture, but also of the draw that religions outside the Jewish and Christian mainstreams have exerted on LGBT people in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century United States. While the number of Jewish and Christian denominations, congregations, and families open to LGBT people has increased steadily since the 1970s, many groups still remain either unwelcoming or ambivalent, if not openly hostile. In such an environment some LGBT people choose to avoid religion altogether or to practice it on a strictly individual basis. Others, however, find spiritual homes in the many NRMs in the United States. Some LGBT people begin their lives as members of these movements and find them to be more or less comfortable spaces in which to come out. In all likelihood, though, the majority of LGBT people in such religions—like many other members—are converts.

As attractive as alternative religions may seem to LGBT people who have grown uncomfortable or disillusioned with Judaism and/or Christianity, however, not all of these movements welcome LGBT people. As discussed above, the general pattern is that religious organizations that follow strict rules for social conduct, and especially those with a strictly binary understanding of gender, are likely to disapprove of same-sex eroticism and gender fluidity. Conversely, those that experiment with social structure and especially with gender roles are likely to welcome LGBT people, while traditions that see the material world as irrelevant will be more indifferent to LGBT people. Some religions fall along the middle of the scale, being strongly ambivalent about the status of LGBT people in their midst. And finally there is a special case: alternative religions founded by and for LGBT people.

Nonwelcoming Organizations

Religious organizations that allow or encourage sexuality but carefully restrict its practice to the proper times, places, people, and/or purposes are the most likely to prohibit or frown upon same-sex eroticism.[29] Likewise, those that understand women and men to be fundamentally different (even if equally valued) and assign to each sex strictly defined roles and responsibilities are least likely to welcome transgendered or transsexual people into their ranks. In the United States, strictly defined doctrines of sexuality and gender usually come together, at least over the long term. For instance, it is difficult to find an organization that accepts transgendered people but not lesbians or gay men, and groups accepting lesbians and gay men but not bisexuals and transgendered people often speak of their acceptance as being in process—"We're not ready to deal with transgender issues *yet*." Most, though not all, of the nonwelcoming NRMs in the United States are based in Christianity and represent socially conservative branches of that religion. The LDS church, for example, as discussed above, regards the expression of same-sex desire or cross-gender identity

as sinful and holds that the best cure for anyone with such feelings is heterosexual marriage. Interestingly, although the LDS church never accepted same-sex eroticism and always viewed women and men as having separate roles and responsibilities in the church, its increasingly strict responses to homosexuality in the 1950s and 1960s were paralleled by an increasing restriction of women's authority within official church structures. Other Christian-based groups that advocate a strict social conservatism include the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Unification Church (well-known in the United States at one time for its strong and very public emphasis on heterosexual marriage), and the Seventh-day Adventists.[30] While these groups ban LGBT people from their ranks (lesbians and gay men explicitly; bisexuals and transgender people usually by implication) and shun members who come out as LGBT, any violence they inflict is usually limited to the emotional and spiritual levels. The Christian Identity movement, on the other hand, considers white homosexuals to be among those especially cursed by God, and its more radical wings encourage (and have carried out) the murder of LGBT people in God's name.[31]

Of the nonaccepting religions that are not Christian based, two of the best known are the Nation of Islam and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).[32] Both organizations teach clearly separated gender norms, and both emphasize the importance of heterosexual marriage and childbearing (although, for male devotees in ISKCON, becoming a renunciant after marrying and fathering children is the highest goal in life). On the other hand, a nonwelcoming organization that failed to follow this pattern of gender expectations was Rajneeshpuram, known for its encouragement of sexual experimentation and for its high regard for women. Susan Jean Palmer suggests that AIDS may be the intervening factor in this case, which she, too, finds somewhat unusual.[33] Given that Rajneesh taught a fairly apocalyptic view of religious and cultural change that turned on a vision of AIDS wreaking global havoc,[34] this is a logical inference. Palmer also hints at a slight ambivalence within the group, noting that "homosexuality [was] not considered sinful or abominable…, but a cowardly cop-out"[35] and that in one publication Rajneesh "grudgingly admit[ted] … that homosexuality can also be a valid path to superconsciousness."[36]

Further complicating the issue of nonaccepting religions is the presence of satellite groups specifically for LGBT members of those faiths. Not surprisingly, such groups are generally not formally recognized by their "parent" religious organizations, but they offer an alternative for LGBT people who do not wish to give up either their sexual orientation or gender identity, or their religion.[37] Both the Seventh-day Adventist group (Kinship International) and the LDS organization (Affirmation) are among the older groups, formed in 1976 and 1977, respectively. Newer developments include anti-LGBT satellite groups such as the LDS organization Evergreen, and the pro-gay group GALVA—the Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association. The latter seems to be primarily Internet based,[38] but has expanded over the past several years to include four different e-mail groups in 2005. Although apparently founded by followers of ISKCON,[39] GALVA has extended its outreach to all LGBT (or, in its terminology, "third-sex") Hindus.

Ambivalent or Contested Organizations

As with mainstream religious organizations in the United States today, there are a number of NRMs that are ambivalent about the inclusion or the status of LGBT people. In some cases this is because groups see themselves as progressive but are simultaneously rooted in a rigidly defined understanding of adult intimacy and family; in other cases the reasons are more complex.

One of the more complex situations is that of the African diasporic religions, such as Vodou and Santería.[40] In recent years debates have raged over the status and even the presence of gender roles (the traditional African cultures had gender roles all along, but the same-sex part may, indeed, be a more recent addition to these new/old traditions) and same-sex sexuality in the traditional West African cultures from which these religions have grown.[41] Some branches, such as Palo, are quite strict in their refusal to initiate LGBT people, and both women and gay men are generally forbidden to play the sacred *batá* drums in these religions.[42] On the other hand, other branches are more accepting, and there are LGBT people—some quite open, others closeted—at all levels of these traditions. Since there is no central authority for any African diasporic tradition, individual priests and priestesses must make their own decisions about whom to accept into their "houses," or congregations. Thus, there are even houses that are known to be predominantly gay and lesbian, just as there are others known to be homophobic. Furthermore, transgender issues are particularly tricky in these religions. While there is space for significant gender diversity (especially given the gender crossing that can take place during possession by a deity) and there are transgendered and transsexual people involved in African diasporic religions, there are also some indications that involvement may be more difficult for those who physically alter their bodies to bring them more in line with their gender identities.[43] Thus, the African diasporic religions encompass homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and LGBT people, and because of the relative autonomy of priests and priestesses these different aspects map only partially onto the divisions among different traditions.

More centralized NRMs can also be ambivalent or contested on the issue of LGBT inclusion, especially if their progressive self-concept conflicts with a more traditional definition of intimacy and family. This includes such faiths as Baha'i, the Family International (also known as the Children of God), and Christian Science, among others.[44] Each of these movements is rooted in the Abrahamic "family" of religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Though Baha'i teachings attempt to distill a universal truth from a wide variety of world religions, the movement's roots are Muslim, and Muslim leaders generally are quite clear on the desirability of heterosexual couplings despite the presence of a small but growing LGBT Muslim movement globally.[45] Thus, while the principles of oneness in Baha'i—the oneness of God, humanity, and religion—encourage Baha'is to work for social justice and toward the equality of all people, an emphasis on traditional, opposite-sex marriage and procreation leave little room for tolerance of same-sex

eroticism. On the other hand, Baha'i is not given to firm statements of its disapproval, so unlike some of the "nonwelcoming organizations" it is not generally vocally anti-LGBT.

Ambivalence in the Family International is especially interesting given the organization's history of sexual innovation. Made infamous by its practice of "flirty fishing," or using sexual encounters as a tool for evangelism, the Family International is described by sociologist William Sims Bainbridge as "an amalgam of the late-sixties youth counterculture and the traditional Holiness movement."[46] Holiness churches today are quite clear in their denunciation of LGBT people; the late-sixties counterculture, on the other hand, helped to produce the gay liberation movement. The Family International is somewhere in between. Promoting a "Law of Love" (essentially a version of the Golden Rule) in sexual interactions, the Family holds extremely permissive views of sexuality. In a survey of over 1000 Family members, Bainbridge found that only 0.3 percent of respondents felt that sex between a man and a woman before marriage was "always wrong," and only 1.2 percent disapproved of adultery. Yet, 55 percent of Bainbridge's respondents felt that sex between two people of the same sex was always wrong. A survey of the general population just a few years earlier had found that 62.9 percent of respondents shared this opinion, so even on this more difficult issue Family members were more permissive than the general public.[47] Yet on the question of same-sex marriage this pattern reversed itself, with only 3.1 percent of Bainbridge's respondents (versus 11.7 percent of the general public at the time) believing that same-sex couples should have the right to marry. Bainbridge explains that these discrepancies are due, in part, to a biblical literalism in the Family that leads the organization to interpret sex between men as biblically forbidden and sex between women as simply unnatural (but not biblically forbidden).[48]

Christian roots may also be the main cause of a reticence on the part of Christian Science to discuss homosexuality at all. A search of the extensive denominational Web site for the term "homosexuality" yields only two texts: a report on workshops for teens, which notes that "homosexuality" was among the topics but does not indicate what was said about the subject, and an article written by a contributing editor of the *Christian Science Journal* that mentions homosexuality among the threats to (presumably heterosexual) marriage.[49] My own research led me to a former Christian Science practitioner who had been prominent in her congregation. Upon coming out as a lesbian, she reported, she repeatedly wrote to the organization's Mother Church in Boston to ask whether her membership was still valid, but never received a response. Her local church was also divided on the issue, open enough that some gay men applied for membership but unsure whether or not to accept them.[50] In some ways, then, Christian Science seems to be in a position very similar to that of a number of mainstream Protestant organizations in the early twenty-first century: ambivalent enough about same-sex relationships that it is rarely willing to discuss them in public at all, either to condemn or to affirm.

Indifferent Organizations

If the Christian roots of Christian Science are enough to make the religion ambivalent about the status of homosexuality, its non-Christian close relatives in the metaphysical movement are not so influenced. In fact, this is a telling distinction, because NRMs that teach that the material world is illusory or irrelevant (as opposed to being fallen, for instance, or central) often are indifferent toward issues of gender identity and sexual orientation. With its insistence on the true reality of mind and the illusion of the body, Christian Science would be a logical part of this group; although it does not, in fact, fit here, the non-Christian metaphysical groups do, along with several Asian import religions that stress detachment from the material world without simultaneously teaching strict norms for gender and family (as is the case, for instance, with ISKCON).

Many of the metaphysical movements formed by students of Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy moved away from Christianity toward a more universalist approach to spirituality, while maintaining Eddy's teachings about the fundamental unreality of the material world. Groups like Religious Science, Unity, and Divine Science usually welcome LGBT people—in some cases because they offer special services and groups for LGBT people, but often because they are simply not inclined to be preoccupied with questions of sex, gender, and sexuality. For instance, at the Agape International Spiritual Center, a Religious Science megachurch near Los Angeles, one minister told me the following:

> the theology that we practice here is based on the idea that each of us is a divine being. And that divinity, as our identity, is not gender-based … whether that comes in the form of being a lesbian or a gay man or a transgender woman or man is not the issue.[51]

She also mentioned that she knew of bisexual women who felt welcome in the church. In addition to welcoming people regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, Agape also offers several small groups for LGBT people.

Siddha Yoga holds a similar perspective, although it might be described as somewhat more ambivalent despite its generally indifferent attitude toward sexuality and gender. Centered around inner awakening and spiritual awareness, Siddha Yoga teachings focus far more on practice and individual spiritual development than on morality. Daryl Glowa, a leader and public relations representative in the Siddha Yoga Meditation Center of Los Angeles, told me proudly that no one is ever turned away from a Siddha Yoga center; she also recalled that when a transgender person came to meditate at the Los Angeles center, that person was offered a choice between the men-only, women-only, and mixed seating in the meditation hall.[52] On the other hand, during a brief telephone conversation with a representative at Siddha Yoga's New York headquarters, I was told that there had been some question at the upstate New York ashram over whether same-sex couples, being unable to marry legally, should be allowed access to couples' housing; Glowa was unaware of this and was unable to comment. In all fairness, the New York representative relayed this story as the only instance of which she was aware in which LGBT people were treated unequally in the organization. Thus, while there may be some lingering ambivalence

in Siddha Yoga, overall this is another movement whose resolute focus away from the material world aids it in being welcoming by way of indifference toward sexual and gender diversity.

Affirming Organizations

Another Asian import religion—this one from Japan rather than India—serves well as a bridge between the "indifferent" category and the "affirming" one, in which religions actively seek out and affirm lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender identities. Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is, on the one hand, a religion focused on practice rather than moral laws. As a Buddhist movement, it could easily be expected to share with Agape and Siddha Yoga a disregard of things material in favor of focusing on spiritual realities; logically, then, someone unfamiliar with the movement might expect it to be among those religions indifferent to LGBT identities. Yet the branch of Buddhism from which SGI developed, unlike most branches, is focused explicitly on the material world, and practitioners are encouraged to chant not only for the movement's goal of world peace, but also for material gain, physical comfort, and other "this-worldly" benefits.[53] In their study of SGI, Phillip Hammond and David Machacek suggest that the religion is "characterized by an almost libertarian perspective on individual behavior" but also "advances a soteriological vision of a world without nuclear weapons, war, poverty, and crime."[54] Also unusual for a Buddhist organization is Soka Gakkai's evangelism; members believe that spreading their philosophy and practice can improve both individual lives and the world in general, and as a result SGI takes evangelism quite seriously.[55]

Indeed, at a 2001 Los Angeles Gay Pride festival (held near the national headquarters of SGI-USA, which are in Santa Monica), I was approached several times by smiling, leaflet-carrying people asking me whether I was interested in chanting "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" for world peace. The presence of SGI members at a Pride festival was not simply an accident of evangelism, however. Hammond and Machacek found that among the 401 SGI members they surveyed in the United States, only 20 percent believed that homosexuality was "always" or "almost always" wrong; in a 1996 study of the general population in the United States, 65 percent of respondents held such beliefs.[56] Furthermore, while the nonwelcoming groups discussed above generally also held conservative beliefs about gender roles, SGI members are considerably more liberal than the general public on such questions.[57] Thus, there continues to be a connection between attitudes toward gender and those toward LGBT identities.

Other NRMs that actively welcome LGBT people into their ranks are generally less evangelical than Soka Gakkai, but they often share its liberal, eschatological visions for social change, especially concerning gender equality. The Raelians are perhaps the most radical of these, believing that if the human race chooses self-perfection through science and acknowledges its alien progenitors, it will advance to a "planetary consciousness" and avoid nuclear self-destruction.[58] Rael sees the existence of human sexes as the result of clever machinations on the part of the Elohim,

humanity's alien forebears. Palmer comments: "Seeing gender as an artificial construct, Rael emphasizes its fluidity, resulting from different possible combinations of X and Y chromosomes. This implies that all human beings are essentially androgynous."[59] Since the concepts of sexual orientation and transgender identity are built upon a binary understanding of sex and gender, Raelian androgyny undermines any sense of "normative" sexual orientation—or even of sexual orientation at all—as well as any sense of "normative" gender. Palmer puts it most clearly at the beginning of her chapter on the movement: "The Raelian Movement appears to be one of the rare examples of a NRM that promotes in its members a tolerance for sexual ambiguity and encourages homosexual expression."[60]

Other socially radical movements that both promote liberal understandings of gender roles and actively welcome LGBT members are the feminist spirituality movement (now better known by one of its descendants, the Goddess movement), most branches of neopaganism, and the Church of Satan. While these movements differ in some significant ways, they share a radically liberal vision of social change, and each believes that widespread change begins with individual change. Satanism's focus on individual fulfillment and power (despite the sexism sometimes evident in the writings of its founder, Anton LaVey) makes it particularly open to gender equality, gender fluidity, and sexual diversity.[61] Likewise, the presence of both male and female deities in most neopagan groups provides ample opportunity for gender equality (again, despite the occasional sexism of earlier writers, such as Wicca founder Gerald Gardner). Many neopagan groups in the early twenty-first century actively affirm lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people, and welcome at least a certain amount of gender fluidity.[62] Some groups, such as the Reclaiming tradition of Wicca, openly affirm transgendered and transsexual people as well—a far cry from Gardner's strictly gendered, sex-paired covens. The feminist spirituality movement, which influenced Reclaiming and other neopagan groups as well as being influenced by them, affirmed lesbians from its beginnings in the early 1970s, with some branches even valuing intimate relationships between women more highly than those between men and women. Bisexuality has been more controversial within feminist spirituality circles, as it has been more broadly in lesbian communities[63]—although bisexuals have been increasingly welcomed in recent years. Such has not been the case generally for transgendered people, as many social movements rooted in second-wave feminism still refuse to recognize transgendered or transsexual (male-to-female) women as "real" women.

Organizations Targeting Sexual and Gender Diversity

The clearest connections between LGBT identities and NRMs lie in those religions founded with lesbians or gay men in mind—specifically, the Radical Faeries and a separatist feminist form of Wicca known as the Dianic tradition.[64] Zsuzsanna Budapest never intended Dianic Witchcraft to be for lesbians only, but when she decided to give feminism a religious base in the early 1970s, she created a women-only space that was openly welcoming and affirming of intimacy between women.

The feminist movement as a whole still struggled at the time with the presence of lesbians in its ranks (Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique,* famously referred to lesbians once as "the lavender menace"[65]), but it also soon expanded into several movements with different approaches to feminist social change. One of these, cultural feminism, focused on "women's ways" of living; it produced the women's music festivals, much of feminist art in the 1970s and 1980s, and the feminist spirituality movement. Because it was so intensely women focused, it overlapped well with separatist feminism, many of whose members were lesbians.[66] Claiming that "Wimmin's [sic] spirituality is rooted in paganism, where wimmin's values are dominant,"[67] Budapest wrote in her 1976 book, *The Feminist Book of Lights and Shadows,* that Dianic Wicca and other new Goddess religions were "part of a changing universal consciousness that has been long feared and prophesized [sic]."[68] Like other Wiccan founders such as Gardner and Alex Sanders, Budapest claimed to be a hereditary witch; everything she relayed in her books, she said, was wisdom passed down to her by her female forebears. In fact, her teachings blend Wicca, radical feminism, and feminist spirituality. She acknowledges both female and male deities, though the male deities clearly play a secondary role in both myth and ritual, and Dianic witches follow the standard calendar of agricultural holidays as well as sharing much of Wiccan mythology—with, of course, a feminist twist.

Over time, Dianic Wicca has come to accept bisexual women as well as lesbians; according to the high priestess of the coven descended from Budapest's Susan B. Anthony Coven #1 (now known as the Circle of Aradia), the organization's demographics have changed as well to include more heterosexual women than lesbians.[69] On one question, however, Dianics stand firm: only women *born* women are allowed in their ranks. As with other second-wave feminist institutions that hold similar policies, such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, this policy led to controversy as transgendered (male-born) women applied for membership. The aforementioned high priestess told me that in the Circle of Aradia, intersexed people raised as girls have been admitted for inclusion; this is particularly interesting because it indicates a shift in the Circle of Aradia, and perhaps in Dianic Wicca as a whole, from a biologically essentialist understanding of gender differences to a socially essentialist one —men and women are still fundamentally different, still have fundamentally different "energies," but at least according to this priestess, those differences come from the experience of being raised in a gendered society rather than from physiological factors. Finally, another indication that Dianic Wicca is shifting in its attitude toward gender (though it would be unwise to expect acceptance of transgendered women any time soon) is the relatively new guardian movement. Guardians, a new ritual role in Dianic circles that may have originated in the Strega branch's role of Watchers,[70] guard the ritual circle from external disturbances. According to the high priestess at the Circle of Aradia, many guardians are "butch" lesbians—women whose gender identity is more traditionally masculine than that of most Dianic witches.[71]

As the feminist spirituality movement blossomed along with the rest of cultural feminism, as lesbians created separate spaces for themselves and spoke of spirituality alongside politics, gay men were developing similar ideas. One of them was the

founder of the first gay rights organization in the United States: Harry Hay. Although Hay lost the leadership of his organization, the Mattachine Society, just five years after its 1948 beginnings because of his ties to the Communist Party, his communism did not prevent him from thinking about religion in positive ways. Though he was not interested in mainstream, organized religions, Hay believed that both gay men and lesbians were special beings, fundamentally different from heterosexuals and destined to save the world from its self-destructive ways.[72] In 1979, Hay, Don Kilhefner, director of the Los Angeles Gay Community Services Center, and Mitch Walker circulated a flyer advertising a "spiritual conference for radical fairies"—in other words, radical gay men, though the word was also a reference to magical beings—at a retreat near Tucson, Arizona. Among those who attended, some were so inspired that they continued the meetings, and the Radical Faerie movement is now international.[73]

Faerie gatherings are notoriously unstructured, but they fall generally into the class of "neopagan," most commonly bringing aspects of Wicca together with practices and beliefs appropriated from a variety of Native American cultures. As Jay Hasbrouck describes them:

> Faeries generally agree that they are people who seek an anarchistic departure from what they see as the inevitable products of Western capitalist society: bureaucracy, competition, consumerism, alienated work, careerism, pollution, urban sprawl, oppressive hierarchies, corporate control, isolation and dissolution of a sense of community, sexual oppression and possessiveness, and heterosexism.[74]

Though Faeries are generally gay men, contemporary Faeries tend to view both sexual orientation and gender roles as oppressive social constructs; thus, unlike Dianic circles, Faerie communities are open, at least theoretically, to all sexes and genders as well as all sexual orientations. Like Dianic Wicca, and like the affirming movements discussed above, the Faeries have a radical and progressive vision of the future and a fluid understanding of gender roles.

CONCLUSIONS: GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND NRMS

Only in recent years has research on NRMs paid significant attention to questions of gender roles or sexual orientation; yet, with detractors and deprogrammers accusing alternative religions of promulgating homosexuality, homophobia, or both, examinations of these issues are important for a broader and more accurate understanding of NRMs. While relatively large numbers of LGBT people have joined LGBT-focused or LGBT-welcoming congregations within Judaism and Christianity, there are indications that many find in new and alternative religions the spiritual resources and the stance on gender and sexuality that they seek. Some are drawn to the indifferent organizations, relieved finally to join a religion where they are neither scorned nor (overly) heartily welcomed for their sexual orientation or gender identity. Others revel in the accepting religions, having rejected the accepting branches of Christianity or Judaism for reasons either related or unrelated to LGBT issues.

As with any population, unraveling the complicated reasons for religious attendance and apostasy among LGBT people is a challenging task, but understanding the stances of NRMs toward same-sex eroticism and gender fluidity is an important aspect of this endeavor.

NOTES

1. Rev. Susan Russell, interview with the author, June 19, 2003. An excellent perspective on this is provided by Mary-Jane Rubenstein, in "An Anglican Crisis of Comparison: Intersections of Race, Gender, and Religious Authority, with Particular Reference to the Church of Nigeria," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72, no. 2 (2004): 341–65.

2. Intersexed people—those whose bodies are genetically or anatomically sexually indeterminate—are working for greater recognition and may eventually constitute a third sex in U.S. culture if they are successful.

3. An especially good example here is men who have sex with men (voluntarily or by force) in prisons, where sexual activity is related to gender identity more than to sexual orientation: the "top," or penetrator, retains his identity as a heterosexual male, while the "bottom," or penetrated, may be referred to as a woman regardless of his gender or sexual orientation.

4. See especially Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* vol. 1, *An Introduction,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990); and David Halperin, "Is There a History of Homosexuality?" in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader,* ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 416–31.

5. These differences between nineteenth-century and twentieth-century expressions of friendship and love have sparked quite a few debates between historians of gender and sexuality. Useful resources include Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Morrow, 1981); and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford, 1986).

6. For some of the official religious statements on homosexuality from the 1960s through the 1980s, see J. Gordon Melton, *The Churches Speak on Homosexuality* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1991).

7. Scholarship on gay and lesbian history has progressed to the point that there is a plethora of resources on this topic. These include (among many others) Leila Rupp, *A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-Sex Love in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States 1940–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); and Toby Marotta, *The Politics of Homosexuality* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981).

8. Howard Becker was the first to add the term "cult" to the church-sect-denomination typology of religions. Contemporary sociological usage of this terminology is nicely summarized by Meredith McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context,* 5th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002).

9. See Susan Juster, "To Slay the Beast: Visionary Women in the Early Republic," in *A Mighty Baptism: Race, Gender, and the Creation of American Protestantism,* ed. Susan Juster and Lisa MacFarlane (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 19–37.

10. Juster, "Visionary Women," 27.

11. Quoted in Juster, "Visionary Women," 28; emphasis Juster's. The original source, according to Juster, is *Some Considerations Propounded to the Several Sorts and Sects of Professors of this Age … by a Universal Friend of Mankind* (Providence, RI: n.p., 1779), 94.
12. Juster, "Visionary Women," 29.
13. Quoted in Juster, "Visionary Women," 27. The original source, according to Juster, is "A Memorandum of the Introduction of the Fatal Fever," undated, Jemima Wilkinson Papers 1771–1849, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Cornell University Library.
14. D. Michael Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1996). See vol. II, chap. 2, for more information about the LDS church.
15. See Maxine Hanks, ed., *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).
16. Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics,* 375–83. Quinn also notes that homosexuality did not become official grounds for excommunication until 1968 (see Ibid., 374).
17. Ibid. See especially chaps. 3 and 5.
18. Ibid., 115–17.
19. Ibid., chap. 7.
20. Ibid., 197.
21. John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader,* ed. Abelove, Barale, and Halperin, 467–76.
22. Very few sources exist on the Eucharistic Catholic Church and its founder, George Hyde. The church is briefly mentioned in Gary David Comstock, *Unrepentant, Self-Affirming, Practicing: Lesbian/Bisexual/Gay People within Organized Religion* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 6. See also the biography of Hyde written by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Religious Archives Network, http://www.lgbtran.org/Profile.asp?A=H&ID=96 (last accessed June 24, 2005). My text is heavily indebted to the latter's summary of the organization's history.
23. See http://netministries.org/see/churches.exe/ch04614?frame=n (last accessed June 27, 2005).
24. Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1955).
25. A good source on the Beats and sexuality is the introduction to Regina Marler's edited collection of Beat writings on sex and homosexuality, *Queer Beats: How the Beats Turned America on to Sex—Selected Writings* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2004). Thanks to my students Matt Colley and Kim Hooyboer for bringing this work to my attention.
26. See John Lardas, *The Bop Apocalypse: The Religious Visions of Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).
27. See David Schneider, *Street Zen: The Life and Work of Issan Dorsey* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), to which the following brief summary is indebted.
28. Ibid., 16.
29. Religions requiring celibacy of all members, of course, frown fairly equally on all erotic activity.
30. See vol. II, chaps. 4, 6, and 3, respectively.
31. See, for instance, Howard L. Bushart, John R. Craig, and Myra Barnes, *Soldiers of God: White Supremacists and Their Holy War for America* (New York: Kensington, 1998); see also vol. II, chap. 10. White homosexuals are more of a concern to Identity Christians than homosexuals of other races or multiracial homosexuals because Identity Christians consider whites to be the true Israel, the chosen people of God. Transgressions committed by whites are thus

considered the most serious, whereas transgressions committed by people of color are seen as simply a part of their (supposedly baser) "nature."

32. On the Nation of Islam, see Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), and vol. IV, chap. 8; on ISKCON, the Unification Church, and (below) Rajneesh, see Susan Jean Palmer, *Moon Sisters, Krishna Mothers, Rajneesh Lovers: Women's Roles in New Religions* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), especially 225–26, and vol. IV, chap. 3.
33. Palmer, *Moon Sisters,* 225–26.
34. Ibid., 45.
35. Ibid., 55.
36. Ibid., 225.
37. Or, at least, their culture—some members of both Affirmation and Kinship consider themselves "ex-Mormon" or "ex-Adventist."
38. See http://www.galva108.org (last accessed June 27, 2005).
39. One of the group's stated purposes is "To spread and to share Lord Caitanya's sankirtana movement with everyone, and especially in regard to other third-gender communities, through the public chanting of "Hare Krishna," distributing literature, books, and prasadam (sanctified foodstuffs), establishing centers, temples, etc.," http://www.galva108.org/purpose.html (last accessed June 27, 2005).
40. See vol. IV, chap. 11.
41. Cf. Oyèrónké Oyêwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); and Oyeronke Olajubu, "Seeing Through a Woman's Eye: Yoruba Religious Tradition and Gender Relations," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 20, no. 1 (2004): 41–60.
42. Randy P. Conner with David Hatfield Sparks, *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Participation in African-Inspired Traditions in the Americas* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004), 122–24, 152.
43. See, for instance, Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, "Sexuality and Gender in Santería: LGBT Identities at the Crossroads of Santería Religious Practices and Beliefs," in *Gay Religion,* ed. Scott Thumma and Edward R. Gray (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005), 132. Vidal-Ortiz also notes that, as in other religions, in Santería bisexuality is sometimes elided by homosexuality (133).
44. On Baha'i see William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, *The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984); Michael McMullen, *The Baha'i: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2000); and vol. IV, chap. 10; on the Children of God, see William Sims Bainbridge, *The Endtime Family: Children of God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002); and vol. II, chap. 8; on Christian Science see Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); and vol. II, chap. 5. Another interesting case of ambivalence is the Church of Scientology (see vol. V, chap. 8). I have been able to find no mention of sexual orientation or gender identity in the very few scholarly sources on this religion, and other sources are difficult to use because they tend to be skewed heavily in favor or in condemnation of this highly public and highly controversial group. Early government suspicion of Scientology seems to have included accusations of homosexuality (cf. Ron Schaffer, "Matriarch Surrenders," *The Washington Post,* Metro Edition, August 8, 1978, C1); in the twenty-first century its detractors accuse it of homophobia (cf. George Rush and Joanna Molloy with Jo Piazza and Chris Rovzar, "Homophobia Claims Dog Scientology," *Daily News*

[New York], Sports Final Edition, "Gossip" section, 28). In response to a query from the author regarding its official position on homosexuality, the Church of Scientology responded as follows: "The Church of Scientology does not dictate sexual preferences. Scientology is a practical method of improving conditions in life and works to increase a person's abilities, give higher IQ and better reaction time, greater ability to solve his problems in life—things of this nature" ("Ron," personal communication with the author, June 29, 2005).

45. See www.al-fatiha.org (last accessed June 28, 2005).
46. Bainbridge, *Endtime Family,* 123.
47. Ibid., 125.
48. Ibid., 126, 129.
49. "Lecture on Ice," *Publicly Speaking* (January 2004), http://www.churchofchristscientist.org/gv/tmc/lectures_0104.jhtml (last accessed June 28, 2005); Nathan A. Talbot, "Chastity: A Source of Stability," *The Christian Science Journal* (September 1997), http://www.churchofchristscientist.org/GV/CSPS/CSJ/Journal9_97.jhtml (last accessed June 28, 2005).
50. Christine Logan, interview with the author, August 30, 2001.
51. Rev. Sage Bennet, interview with the author, August 8, 2001.
52. Daryl Glowa, interview with the author, June 27, 2003.
53. See Phillip E. Hammond and David W. Machacek, *Soka Gakkai in America: Accommodation and Conversion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and vol. IV, chap. 5.
54. Ibid., 122.
55. Cf. ibid., 31–33.
56. Ibid., 120.
57. Ibid., 119.
58. On the Raelians, see Palmer, *Moon Sisters,* 157–87; and vol. V, chap. 10.
59. Ibid., 165.
60. Ibid., 157.
61. In fact, as of June 2005, the Church of Satan Web site included a statement in support of same-sex marriage. See Magus Peter H. Gilmore, "Founding Family: 'Morality' versus Same-Sex Marriage" (March 9, 2004), http://www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/FoundingFamily.html (last accessed June 29, 2005). On the Church of Satan in general, see vol. V, chap. 6.
62. There are still challenges, however; see Mary Jo Neitz, "Queering the Dragonfest," in *Gay Religion,* ed. Thumma and Gray, 259–80.
63. This is true of gay male communities as well; I mention lesbian communities specifically here because the context is the women's spirituality movement.
64. There are two branches of contemporary Wicca that claim the name "Dianic." However, only the branch founded by Zsuzsanna Budapest is separatist. I know of no religions founded specifically with bisexual or transgendered people in mind—yet. The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence is a fascinating movement that, although founded by gay men, is open to people of all genders and sexual orientations. I have elected not to include it here, however, because although the group's parody of Catholic nuns is amply deserving of sociological attention and although some of its members see their work with the Sisters as an important part of their religious practice (often as Wiccans or Radical Faeries, interestingly enough), the Sisters are not and never were a religious organization.
65. Toby Marotta, *The Politics of Homosexuality* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 236n.
66. For the history of second-wave feminism, see Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

67. Zsuzsanna Budapest, *The Feminist Book of Lights and Shadows* (Venice, CA: Luna Publications, 1976), 3.

68. Ibid., 1.

69. Letecia Layson, interview with the author, July 12, 2002. On the development of the Circle of Aradia, see the oral history of Ruth Barrett at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Religious Archives Network, http://www.lgbtran.org/OralHistory.htm (last accessed June 30, 2005).

70. This is Layson's speculation, but I find it plausible.

71. See also the oral histories of Jade River and Falcon River at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Religious Archives Network, http://www.lgbtran.org/OralHistory.htm (last accessed June 29, 2005).

72. See Harry Hay, "A Separate People Whose Time Has Come," in *Gay Spirit: Myth and Meaning*, ed. Mark Thompson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 279–91.

73. On Faerie history, see Stuart Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement* (Boston: Alyson Books, 1990), 248–79.

74. Jay Hasbrouck, "Utopian Imaginaries and Faerie Practice: Mapping Routes of Relational Agency," in *Gay Religion,* ed. Thumma and Gray, 239.

Millennial Destiny: A History of Millennialism in America

Dereck Daschke

Millennialism or millenarianism, the expectation of a time in history when the world as it exists will be fundamentally transformed, is an almost universal aspect of human cultures in one form or another. It may originate in the cycles of nature: life and death, waking and sleeping, day and night, the moon phases, or the seasons. It may simply be the purest expression of hope, an idealization of the future, or a wish that makes the unknown easier to embrace. Still, few cultures have embraced millennialism as such a basic component of its national DNA, as it were, as Americans have.

The origins of American millennialism date to its own origins as a national entity, beginning before American nationhood with Christopher Columbus and "the discovery of the New World." This designation, which is a deliberate echo of the apocalyptic transformation of the world into the "New Heaven and the New Earth" of Revelation 21:1, would not be bestowed on the American continent until long after Columbus's arrival there. Still, it conveys exactly what sacred significance it held for European Christians—not the least of whom was Columbus himself. In the course of his expeditions to and explorations of the lands unknown to European Christendom, Columbus wrote in his journal that his discovery was both the apocalyptic New Heaven and Earth and the lost Garden of Eden. He wrote, too, that he was certain that he had been guided as God's messenger to these lands. Christopher ("Christ-bearer"), in fact, depicts himself as an overtly messianic figure in his books *The Prophecies* and *The Privileges,* as one who fulfilled Biblical prophecy as well as brought the Catholic faith to the unsaved heathen populations of the world. As they continued to be in the America of the Puritans and the early United States, the unconverted native peoples of the New World signified one of the last barriers to Christ's Second Coming. Columbus determined that the end of the world would occur in 1650.[1]

While Columbus's view of his own sacred purpose in history was not widely shared, that of his "New World" soon would be. With the Protestant Reformation following almost immediately on its heels, the appearance of this pristine land at

virtually the same time as the "true" Church had thrown off what it had identified as the yoke of the Papal Antichrist could hardly be a coincidence. As read through the grand apocalyptic narrative of the Biblical book of Revelation, the Reformation signified the opening of the fifth seal (Revelation 6:9–11), and thus the time subsequent to it, the time of the sixth seal. All led up to the climactic events of the last seal, the seventh.[2] Protestants thus felt themselves to be living in significant times indeed.

THE MILLENNIAL ROOTS OF PROVIDENTIAL HISTORY

The particular activity of institutional reform and resistance that the Reformation unleashed in England became infused with millennialism during the English Civil War. The perception that the Reformation had marked one of the moments in the apocalyptic drama of Revelation naturally held the same lens to the British monarchy and its ally, the Church of England. This mixture of religious and secular power cast the king of England, the figure in the seat of this "unholy" power, in the role of the Antichrist.[3] In particular, tensions came to a head under King Charles I as a group of reformers agitated to "purify" the Anglican Church of any elements not attested to in Christian Scripture. These reformers became known, at first derisively, as "Puritans."[4] One such sect, meeting resistance and fearing persecution, fled to Holland, but the permissiveness of that culture threatened their way of life as much as the English king did. In 1629, Puritans formed the Massachusetts Bay Company to create an opportunity to settle in the New World and create a society in the image of the Israel of the Old Testament, where church law would undergird society as Mosaic law once had. These settlers at first viewed themselves as exiles, like the Jews conquered by the Babylonian empire, but they were later recast as religious travelers of a different sort: Pilgrims. This designation came into vogue prior to America's First Great Awakening in the 1740s and reflected notions prominent in Puritan theology of the time—that America was now the Chosen, Elect, or Redeemer Nation that would usher in the Millennium, as Israel, Rome, and England once all were.[5] From the shores of this literal "New World" would salvation and peace come to all.

Key to Puritan thinking about history is the notion of *Providence,* which it presents as unfolding in a specific, predetermined way so as to unveil God's will on Earth. Though its more immediate roots are in the Calvinist belief in predestination, Providence almost perfectly transposes the Jewish understanding of covenantal or salvation history, in which Israel, as the original Chosen Nation, received special protections and obligations through the law that Moses delivered at Sinai following God's salvation from their Egyptian oppressors. With this legal relationship established, an earlier covenant, the promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendents, could now be completed. This ideal state of affairs was not to exist for very long, however. The unified kingdom of Israel under David and Solomon split in two, and the people fell away from the Law. After a series of bad kings in both kingdoms, the kingdoms were "given over" to other nations in conquest. The Northern kingdom, Israel, never recovered, but the Southern kingdom, finally conquered by the Babylonian empire in 587 BCE, saw its ruling and priestly classes exiled. Its

subsequent transformation of the Israelite religion produced the foundation not only for Judaism as we know it today but Christianity as well. In exile, on the one hand, the themes of salvation and return took on a more immediate poignancy, as the Judeans—now known as "Jews"—longed for a return to their land and a restoration of their relationship with God. On the other, the situation also allowed Judaic concepts of salvation, Promised Land, and exile itself to develop powerful metaphorical capacities to explain the meaning of events in history. Moreover, with the Judean monarchy destroyed by the imperial invaders, God's other important covenantal promise, an eternal kingship in Jerusalem from the line of David, took on a new urgency. The historical situation the Jews found themselves in cried out for the anointed one of God, or "Messiah," who would restore the people of Israel to their former glory in their Promised Land. For its part, the Babylonian empire would also coexist with Egypt in Jewish (and then, especially, Christian) culture as the symbol *par excellence* of a wicked and oppressive empire.

It was also in the years after the Babylonian Exile and the Jews' subsequent subjugation to the Persian, Greek, and Roman empires that followed that the genre of apocalyptic literature arose. Apocalypses were often intensely concerned with history and its mysteries. Why were God's righteous so persecuted? Why did the ungodly prosper? When would the apparent chaos of history end and God re-exert his control over it? When would the Messiah finally come to overthrow the oppressors and restore God's people to their place of prominence in the world? In other words, apocalyptic writers ached for that time of millennial transformation when all that had gone wrong in the past would be set aright. In this expectation, they borrowed from the prophetic warning of the Day of the Lord, a time of final judgment to be brought by God against the peoples of all nations—including Israel. This conceptualization of an end of time, itself, was imbedded in the view of the span of human history as a Great Week, culminating in a final cosmic Sabbath, where, as he had at the beginning of time, God and humanity would rest at the end.[6]

This end time eventually became associated with the Messianic age. The Messiah did not just restore Israel but the whole world—after the Day of the Lord had purged the unrighteous. In prophetic reckoning, however, a divine day was worth 1000 human years, and thereby a determination of the length of human history on Earth began to take shape in some circles: 6000 years, paralleling the six days of Creation, followed by the Messianic age, a cosmic Sabbath of 1000 years. In addition, another type of historical structuring, apparent in cultures from Greece to India, also influenced the prophetic reading of history among the ancient Jews. In this schema, human history and its civilizations were subject to decline over time, usually marked by four different, distinct eras in which the first is an ideal, perfect age and the last—corrupt and chaotic—is the current one. But the transformation of this final era is imminent; a new time of perfection is at hand. In the end times, however, evil runs largely unchecked, and things get worse before they get better.[7] Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue of four metals in Daniel 2, which has had such a great impact on the apocalyptic interpretation of history up to our own time, demonstrates that this concept had been incorporated into Jewish thought at least by the Hellenistic age.

The millenarian tendency to view the world in stark terms of good and evil is often called by the name of an early Christian heresy, Manichean dualism. Unlike Manichaeism but like Persian Zoroastrianism, from which apocalyptic dualism in the Bible derives, in Judaism and Christianity the tension between the two plays out in a final cosmic battle, whose outcome is predetermined in favor of good. In Jewish scripture, the imagery and expectation of divine battle at the end of time is found mainly in two places. The first is the prophecy of the battle of Israel against the armies of Gog from Magog in the Book of Ezekiel (chapters 38–39), whose location, Har Megiddo, would come to symbolize the ultimate clash between good and evil for almost the whole of Western civilization: *Armageddon.* The second is the latter half of the Book of Daniel, a series of apocalyptic prophecies written in stunning, coded imagery. These chapters (Daniel 7–12) describe the treachery and final defeat of a truly wicked king, one who defiled the Holy Temple and challenged the host of heaven. Historically, these chapters allude to the reign of the Syrian-Greek ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes in about 168 BCE, but its magic and genius lie in its symbolism. Daniel obliquely paints a picture that yet clearly seems to describe some specific ruler, his wickedness toward the righteousness of God, and his divine comeuppance. But once the historical referent is lost to successive generations, the visions could potentially apply to any oppressive ruler, anywhere, at any time. Add to this scenario a truly cryptic timeline that, nonetheless, definitively established that the restoration of God's Temple and His people would occur on a divinely ordained schedule, and an entire area of Biblical prophecy is born: millennial date setting.

The complete covenantal, prophetic, and apocalyptic system was itself reinterpreted with the rise of Christianity so as to no longer apply exclusively to Israel and the Jews but to all people. For the most part, Christian salvation was not about earthly protection but spiritual redemption, and Jesus's eschatological exhortations on the coming Kingdom of God were meant to prepare his followers spiritually for the afterlife in heaven. But the expectation of a literal overthrow of one's enemies at a predetermined time in human history proved too compelling to abandon entirely, and some time after Jesus's death led to speculation about his *parousia,* or Second Coming. All of the overt apocalyptic elements of the Christian movement came together in what has become the definitive and paradigmatic expression of end-time belief: The Revelation, or (in Greek) *Apocalypse,* of St. John. In Revelation 13–20, the entire political scenario of the end times is laid bare. Satan, always at work behind the scenes of worldly powers, makes his final, great move to ensnare and enslave humanity by sending a human leader (described as a Beast from the Sea, and later seen as the definitive type for the Antichrist) to promise peace through the unification of all governments, economies, and religion—an imperial system modeled on imperial Rome but designated in Revelation as *Babylon,* in honor of the great oppressors of God's Chosen. Of course, the righteous know this is a trap, and the religion is a false one. Scores will be murdered for their resistance, some will fall into the hands of the enemy, and others will continue to fight until Christ's triumphant return. And return he does, casting Satan and the Beast into a lake of fire and chaining Satan

under the Earth during Christ's millennial reign of peace. The end of this 1000-year period sees the final defeat of Satan and then God's judgment upon humanity.

Revelation was a controversial inclusion into the Christian canon—so much so that its this-worldly eschatology, the depiction of end-time events literally occurring in the terrestrial realm, had to be respiritualized by St. Augustine (354–430), in his treatise *City of God,* once Rome was no longer "Babylon" but the home of the Church itself. Augustine lays the foundations for *postmillennialism,* wherein history prepares humanity for a final, perfect age, by asserting that the Christian millennium began with the experience of the Holy Spirit and subsequent establishment of the Church by the apostles on Pentecost.[8] The events described in Revelation are therefore metaphors for one's own spiritual struggles and victory in Christ. Yet this scripture has always been for some group, somewhere, the key to history. With the Protestant Reformation's emphasis on personal and inspired interpretation of scripture, on the one hand, and its identification of the Pope and the Catholic Church with Antichrist and Babylon, on the other, the apocalyptic timetable evinced in the Book of Revelation was once again apparent in the events that were transpiring in European Christendom. The discovery, a literal revelation, of an unknown, pristine land nearly simultaneously with the schism with the Catholic Church could hardly be coincidence. It had to be Providence, assumed the Puritans and other Protestant Reformers, that made the New World available for the true Church at the height of its oppression. The society established there would be what Massachusetts Bay Company Governor John Winthrop (1588–1649) pronounced "a city upon a hill" during the Mayflower's voyage to America, alluding to the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, who proclaimed his followers "a light of all the world" (Matthew 5:14). Yet Jesus himself was paraphrasing the prophet Isaiah, who carried the word of God to the people of Israel: "I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations … that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6).

"GOD'S NEW ISRAEL" IN PURITAN AND REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT

While it is inaccurate to paint all the citizens of colonial New England with the millenarian brush, the idea of America as a New Israel and a harbinger for the salvation of the world was an underlying part of the region's "provincial mythology" for most of a century, up through the First Great Awakening. It would find expression in the writings and sermons of dozens of influential preachers, the greatest among them being Increase (1639–1723) and Cotton (1663–1728) Mather, Joseph Bellamy (1719–1790), and most especially Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758).[9] In 1742, Edwards wrote of the millennial mission of the American colonies,

> And if we may suppose that this glorious work of God shall begin in any part of America, I think, if we consider the circumstances of the settlement of New England, it must needs appear the most likely, of all American colonies, to be the place whence this work shall principally take its rise. And if these things be so, it gives us more abundant reason to

> hope that what is now seen in America, and especially in New England, may prove the dawn of that glorious day.[10]

This cultural context, of course, also served to incubate the themes and ideas that set the stage for the American Revolution. The Calvinist, prophetic view of history established in the New World by the Puritan settlers took on a Manichaean outlook with regard to the Catholic French (especially during the French-Indian War) and the Anglican British, painting both as manifestations of evil forces against the work of the righteous. At the same time, the religious virtues of the Protestant Reformation influenced thinking about what civil society in God's Kingdom should entail: self-sufficiency, a commitment to liberty as a means to truth and counter to tyrannical oppression, and a suspicion of institutional authority.[11] There was also a tension between recognition of inherent human depravity on the one hand and the hope for the progress and transformation of individuals within a divinely ordained community on the other. Thus, in the years leading up to the First Great Awakening and through the sermons and writings of Edwards, the Mathers, and others, the apocalyptic orientation of postmillennialism emerged in a distinctly American understanding of society having an obligation for constant improvement and a capacity for a form of this-worldly perfection. In the postmillennial perspective, the millennial age, rather than appearing with the total upheaval of all human governmental systems, has proceeded through them since the time of Christ's resurrection. With God's divine blessing on the New World colonies culminating in the mass spiritual movement and explosion of conversions known as the First Great Awakening, many among the New England clergy saw a great turning point in world history at hand, a final marker before the fulfillment of prophecy and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth.[12]

On the other hand, these rubrics for understanding opposition and conflict, implicitly or explicitly framed every threat to their identity as God's elect, the American Israel, in the imagery and rhetoric of the cosmic war between good and evil. This stance foreshadowed the more pessimistic outlook of *premillennialism,* which broke through the optimism of the American nineteenth century and persisted into the twentieth, both in times of crisis and in times of peace. What changed, however, was the identification of the enemy and the righteous cause that must be defended. This new paradigm for the interpretation of Biblical prophecy not only compelled the vicious Wars of Religion in Europe but also helped to frame nearly every conflict in America's first two centuries—and several afterwards, as well, up to our own time.[13]

Yet, all apocalyptically motivated communities face a problem when history fails to come to a close, despite their best efforts to prepare for it or even help it along. The discipline and purity of behavior required to meet the New Age can be sustained for only so long, and in time, and especially with the next generation, people begin to "backslide." The reality of human behavior ceases to match the ideal, and the gap between the two is a measure of the failure of the community as a whole. Not only are clear vices like gambling and drinking indications of its fall from grace, but so

is losing a constant focus on one's redeeming mission in favor of more worldly concerns. This state of affairs describes the view of New England preachers in the generations subsequent to the founding of the Massachusetts colony, and this sense of loss and pessimism about the world around them gave rise to the next great surge in American millennialism, the First Great Awakening, a period of religious revival in the early 1740s, voiced especially by the redoubtable Edwards.[14] But Edwards' millennialism, like that of the First Great Awakening in general, was of the progressive, postmillennial type. In his "New Light" way of thinking, the Holy Spirit was leading America—and the world, as the revival movement was also a European phenomenon—back to its spiritual destiny by the effervescent workings of "vital religion." Revivals inspired conversions to Christianity; at some point the "concert of prayer" was expected to achieve a critical mass of righteousness, and even kings and other government men participated in the work of bringing about the Kingdom of God on Earth, not as rulers or politicians, but as humble Christians like any other.[15]

By the 1750s, as the effusiveness for "vital religion" also dissipated over time—even Edwards himself was expelled by his community as the First Great Awakening resoundingly came to an end—the political concerns and national framework of the Puritans' millenarianism returned to the fore in New England once again, brought about by a series of wars with and ultimately victories over the "Antichristian" French settlements in North America by the armies of the now Protestant British.[16] However, New England ministers did not frame the goal of these victories over Antichristian rulers as their Puritan predecessors had, in terms of the defeat of those who opposed true religion. The cause now was *liberty,* both religious *and* civic—in fact, as Alexis de Tocqueville observed later, at the time of the Revolution, there was perceived no separation between the two types of freedom in the minds of Americans.[17] The French Canadian colonies were loathed precisely because of what the French Catholic mixture of oppressive religion and oppressive government threatened for the American colonies—a conspiracy of Satan to use kings and priests to enslave the colonists and snuff out religious freedom before it could flourish. In a radical reversal of the millennialism of their Puritan forefathers, an exceedingly virtuous and free civic state became the precondition for religious liberty.[18] Within this civil millennialism, if civic freedom were guaranteed, so too would true religion flourish around the world, as only in a free society could the spiritual liberation from sin be possible.[19] Such expectations culminated in the American Revolution. The country was once again at the forefront of God's redeeming work in history. America's millennial and Biblical role was never clearer. As Cyprian Strong preached in 1777, "There is no one (I trust) whose mind is not at once struck with the description of Israel, as being a most perfect resemblance of these American colonies; almost as much so, as if spoken with a primary reference to them."[20]

In this way the Puritan settlers were reinterpreted not as theocrats but as the original champions of "the Sacred Cause of Liberty," and the entire history of America as the setting for a progressively climactic cosmic battle between good and evil, which the Revolution would surely resolve for all time.[21] However, at this point in American history, evil was not primarily Satanic, but signified oppressive, tyrannical

governments. The apocalyptic battle shifted from the souls of men to the realm of nations.[22] Samuel Sherwood wrote in 1776, "Liberty has been planted here; and the more it is attacked, the more it grows and flourishes. The time is coming and hastening on, when Babylon the great shall fall to rise no more; when all tyrants and oppressors shall be destroyed forever."[23] The Revolutionary War was also interpreted as the stone that smashes the statue of four metals in Daniel 2, putting an end to all other forms of government, especially the weak mixture of church and state found in the European nations of the time, represented in Daniel by the feet of iron and clay. Moreover, Antichrist should now also be sought in the arena of world affairs.[24] To wit, with the sad dénouement of the French Revolution into the wars of the Napoleonic Empire, American ministers cast Bonaparte as Antichrist in the cosmic drama of history (with the Catholic Church now playing the Whore).

America's Providential destiny had never been so clear or assured, it seemed: the struggle between liberty and tyranny was nothing less than the struggle between heaven and hell, and thus in its role in liberty's victory, America would surely be the seat of God's millennial kingdom.[25] Ironically, this very concern with spiritual consequences of tyranny, identified in the clergy's rhetoric with the enslavement of the Jews in Egypt, planted the seed of the religious argument against the actual practice of slavery in the New World—and thus soon turned its millennial assuredness against itself.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: PROGRESS AND PREMILLENNIALISM

The success of the American Revolution sustained the new nation's self-image as a force guided by destiny and a beacon to the world. However, the remarkable unity of civic and religious views of America's mission forged by the Revolution dissolved in its wake. Yet, the postmillennial hope of a history of progress, evinced not only by Protestant ministers but also statesmen like John Adams (1735–1826) and Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), continued to shape Americans' thinking about history and themselves as a nation, but now along separate, if often parallel, tracks.

The civil view of the country's destiny that came to the fore during the Revolutionary War continued with an optimistic sense of the possibilities that lay ahead, and defeating the British on American soil again in the War of 1812 only solidified the young country's certainty of its place in the world and its history. Freed from the earthshaking events of the Revolution, the religious notion of Providence took on a more secular shape as uninterrupted *progress.* Americans hence took advantage of the blessings of liberty that it had secured to create a landscape of social amelioration and communal utopianism—often with the stated goal of creating a model society that will bring about the golden age of humankind. Religious experimentation made manifest the promise that civil liberty held for religious liberty, expanding the ranks of antiestablishmentarian, utopian, and often millennialist groups across the continent, including the Shakers and New York's Oneida community. The optimism of progress also revealed its clear connection to the American continent with

the westward expansion toward the Pacific Ocean, a movement known by midcentury as *manifest destiny.*[26]

The religious movement that perhaps most perfectly captures the moment when the United States' cultural optimism and religious progressive millennialism were both in ascendancy is the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints.[27] Also known as the LDS Church or the Mormons, it began with a 14-year-old boy named Joseph Smith (1805–1844) in upstate New York. Smith was confused by the explosion of revelations and prayed that he might know which one heralded the true church. His prayer was answered by a vision of God Himself, who told him that the true church was lifted from the Earth after the apostolic age of the first Christians, and thus all the churches in existence were apostate and false. Smith himself reinstated the apostolic church in preparation for Christ's Second Coming, through an ongoing series of revelations not only with God, but also Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, the apostles Peter, James, and John, and a previously unknown prophet from ancient Israel, Moroni. This last figure directed Smith to the location of a codex of Golden Plates that contained a New Testament of Jesus Christ: the Book of Mormon.

A 2005 *Newsweek* cover story on the Mormons noted that the era in which they emerged in American history was much like the current one, filled with

> evangelical energy, deep patriotism, economic transformation, sharp political divisions and anxiety about foreign forces' inflicting harm on the homeland. Smith's teachings place America at the center of existence at just the moment in our history—in the wake of the successful War of 1812—when nationalism was on the rise.[28]

To say that the Latter-day Saints place America at the center of existence goes beyond even the millennial visions of either the Puritans or the revolutionary republicans of the previous two centuries. According to Mormon theology, America will fulfill the eschatological purpose of gathering in and purifying the saints. Brigham Young (1801–1877), Smith's successor and the man known as "the American Moses," wrote in his *Discourses,*

> The American continent will be Zion, for it is so spoken of by the prophets.… [T]his is the continent whereon the Lord has commenced his work for the last time, and whereon Jesus will make his appearance the second time, when he comes to gather and save the house of Israel.… Zion will extend, eventually, all over the earth.[29]

Specifically, two American locations will play central roles in the new millennium: The New Zion of Salt Lake City, established by Young, and Jackson County, Missouri, which, echoing Columbus, not only will be the actual site of Christ's Second Coming but was also the location of the Garden of Eden.[30]

Thus the LDS Church establishes America as the beginning and end of sacred space, but the eschatological connection to the country and the continent does not end there. Noah's flood most likely began in the Mississippi Basin.[31] Ancient populations fleeing both the Tower of Babel and the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem made their way to this continent, creating the peoples known as the American Indians. It is, in fact, this second group of ancient immigrants, a family of Israelites led by

a man named Lehi, whose lives are recorded in the Book of Mormon and whose descendents witnessed the appearance of Jesus Christ in America after his resurrection. Christ informed them that their Messiah had come and would later establish the Messianic age in the land where they stood. Even the work of the Republic, including the Revolution and the establishment of religious and civil liberty under the Constitution, was divinely ordained and prophesied.[32] Given how closely Smith's visions tied the particularity of American history and geography to the story of the ancient Israelites, it is hardly surprising that the Mormons adopted the American millennial strategy of identifying themselves as the New Israel.

While the Mormon millennial vision shares most of the standard Christian apocalyptic scenario for the end times, including the battle at Har Megiddo (Armageddon), as with most Christians it is largely subsumed by a focus on spiritual matters in the present. When Smith received the authority in 1829 to reinstate the true Church on Earth, he understood this event to signal a new era of Gospel work unlike any that had existed in the past, for this was a "dispensation for the fulness [sic] of times."[33] In a later vision, the prophet Elijah told Smith, "Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi, testifying that [I] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come.… [T]herefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors."[34] Smith's followers were certainly inclined to believe that he would be the last prophet before the return of the Christ.[35] Even so, the Mormon approach to the End exemplifies the postmillennial world view that permeated both sacred and secular America in the nineteenth century, and even borrowed its keyword, progress. The emphases on morality, purity, family, and industry central to the Mormon religious and social ethic not only must be seen in light of their roles in preparing individuals and their world for the Second Coming, but must also be acknowledged to reflect prevailing American values in an age that seemed to offer unlimited opportunity to expand, improve, and reform. The Mormons go secular America one better, though, by offering the potential for *infinite* progress, right on into the afterlife, up through divinity itself.[36]

THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST

Perhaps inevitably, the same national optimism that buoyed the Mormons in even the most treacherous and murderous parts of their trek across the wilderness of the American West began to ring false in some ears, especially with the painful problem of slavery continually exacerbated by the westward expansion into new territories. The promise of the Age of Progress could appear to be human hubris, an absurd boast in the face of obvious, and fatal, flaws. Perhaps this positive outlook really masked a deep moral decay that could be eradicated only by divine coup. The world view of unhindered progress shared by so many Americans for so long was about to meet its first popular challenge, a premillennial, apocalyptic warning issued by another upstate New Yorker, a man named William Miller (1782–1849).

Though an inheritor of the cultural Puritanism of the eighteenth century, Miller embraced the skeptical deism of many of the Republic's statesmen. However, unlike most of his countrymen, he was disillusioned by his participation in the War of 1812.[37] In 1816 he began a two-year, line-by-line self-study of the Bible, a process intended to reconcile all the seemingly contradictory details of Scripture but which also inclined Miller, like his spiritual forerunners, to reconcile Scripture with contemporary history. Taking the periodization of events laid out in the Books of Daniel and Revelation as a prophecy for the totality of history and assuming the "abomination of desolation" of Daniel 8 to be the establishment of the Papacy in 538 CE, Miller determined that the Second Coming of Christ would occur about the year 1843. When he began to preach the impending end publicly in 1831, he was soon delivering sermons in churches all over New England. When a Boston minister named Joshua Himes (1805–1895) took up the Millerite doctrine and started publishing the periodical *Signs of the Times* to proclaim the significance of the period and the message of Christ's coming, the foundations for a mass movement were laid.[38]

As the initial period predicted for the *parousia* between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844, came and went, the Millerites numbered somewhere between 10,000 and 100,000 adherents.[39] The failure of Christ to return at the expected time, rather than undermining support for the movement, instead focused all hopes on a new date, October 22, 1844.[40] With this date set, the movement reached its peak in numbers and intensity, and spread through most of the Protestant denominations in the United States. Skepticism and outright opposition to the movement had always existed, but as the date approached, followers encountered outright hostility in many places. Critics accused them of mental unbalance and weakness, nonconformity, immorality, promiscuity, and giving money to Miller for his own personal gain (not unlike unconventional and apocalyptic religious groups before and after them).[41] Still, the conflict with the world around them only confirmed their Manichean outlook, which placed them incontrovertibly among the righteous who would witness firsthand the Coming of Christ. Businesses were closed, debts were forgiven, and fields went unplanted. Finally, October 22 arrived, and people waited to greet the returned Messiah. And wait they did, until it was clear that the time was, in fact, not at hand—an event later called "the Great Disappointment."

While the Great Disappointment did cause most of the faithful to abandon Miller's prophetic system and return to a history less fraught with immediate cosmic significance, others maintained the core event that Miller predicted had, in fact, transpired: Jesus Christ left the Holy of Holies of the heavenly Temple. However, they asserted, he tarried to prepare the Temple before his return to Earth. These believers became known as Adventists; the largest group of which, led by a prophetess named Ellen G. White (1827–1915), defined themselves in opposition to an effort by Catholics and politicians to establish an official Sunday Sabbath in the United States. This matter as read by the inheritors of Miller's prophetic mantel was a clear harbinger of the reign of Antichrist; the sacred structure of time itself, as established by God in the Fourth Commandment, was arrogantly being eradicated by an unholy alliance of a

false religion and a government all too willing to deliver it the power it demanded. To the Seventh-day Adventists (SDAs), it was a scenario straight out of the Book of Revelation.

The continued failure of Christ's bodily return forced White to examine the spiritual state of the world to look for signs that signaled his imminent arrival or explained his absence. As a result, ironically, the ideology of the group moved away from its pessimistic premillennial orientation toward more traditional American postmillennialism.[42] White's "Spirit of Prophecy" claimed that Christ's delay was due to humans' sorry moral state and more time had been granted to improve the condition of the world. This new effort had interesting but unintended effects. In 1863 White began to emphasize a ministry of vegetarianism and general bodily health.[43] In fact, the SDAs' success in establishing not only well-regarded health centers and hospitals but also colleges and seminaries brought them right into the secular governmental systems they originally resisted, as it became feasible and advantageous to become accredited and part of the country's health care and educational systems.[44] For this reason, few would regard the SDAs today as anything particularly remarkable within the spectrum of American Christian denominationalism—until their apocalyptic past came back to haunt them.

Since at least the 1930s, some Adventists felt that the group had become too mainstream, too comfortable in their new relationship with secular society, to proclaim the ideas that defined their sole reason for being, namely the imminent Second Coming of Christ. One such group was the Branch Davidians, founded by Victor Houteff (1885–1955) near Waco, Texas. Houteff applied the principle of Protestant prophetic interpretation regarding the Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation to Adventist tradition, asserting that Martin Luther (1483–1546) "opened" the First Seal and Miller, White, and he himself opened the last three. This same interpretation of history was reapplied by Vernon Howell, better known by the messianic name David Koresh (1959–1993). Koresh, like Houteff, was rejected by the established SDA church for pressing an end-times message. Koresh gained control of the Branch Davidians in the early 1980s following revelations that identified him as the seventh angel of Revelation 10:7 and Cyrus of Isaiah 45.[45] Koresh was to father the Elders of Zion, the council that would rule on Earth with Christ in the millennial age. However, he himself would not see the age he would usher in. He predicted he would be killed during the battle of Armageddon waged in 1995 in Israel between the Branch Davidians and American military. Thus, when federal agents arrived on his doorstep in 1993, the script was already written, even if the time was unexpectedly early and the location of the battle had changed.[46] As a result, four Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) agents and six Branch Davidians died in the first confrontation; at the end of the ensuing 51 day siege, when a fire broke out and consumed the Mt. Carmel religious center, 74 Davidians died, including Koresh and 21 children, all his. Interestingly, the connection between the Branch Davidians and the SDAs was never clearly made in the media's coverage of the siege—at the request of the SDA church. While the church still officially affirms the immanent Second Coming of Christ as well as the truth of White's prophecy, clearly for them, as

with most Americans, in a more hopeful time the apocalypse is best viewed at a distance.[47]

Both the Mormons' and the Adventists' schemes of history implied an unfolding of certain events in accordance with a plan for humanity. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a theology of *premillennial dispensationalism* codified a version of this understanding of time in such an influential way that its effects are felt to this day. However, as opposed to the historicism of the Adventists, which linked history with prophecy in a specific way, dispensationalism emphasized a more general periodization of history, linked to changing covenantal relationships between God and humanity. Most broadly speaking, dispensationalists recognize at least three major dispensations: the covenant with the Jews (reflected in the Old Testament), the New Covenant that followed Christ's crucifixion (the "Church Age"), and the Millennium that represents Christ's reign on Earth after the Second Advent.[48] Different interpreters recognized other dispensations as well, but the thrust of the system underscores its *futurism,* or the notion that Christ could return at any time, "like a thief in the night." Dispensationalism hence emphasizes the imminence of the millennium and the correspondence of current (and near-future) events with end-time prophecy without falling into the trap of date setting.

As a movement, dispensationalism was catalyzed by John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) and his group, the Plymouth Brethren, in England and Ireland. Darby started preaching his system in 1837; in 1859 he toured the United States where his message found the same fertile ground for premillennialism as Miller had but which did not rest the entire belief structure on specific dates and events beyond human control.[49] While Darby avoided applying Scripture literally to the past, he asserted that the future, specifically the time just prior to the millennium, would play out exactly according to the scenarios set forth in the Bible. In addition to the Books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation, Darby fleshed out the picture of the end times with the interpretation of specific other passages from the Bible, or "proof texts." From one, the "Little Apocalypse" of Mark 13, Darby contributed the notion of the *Tribulation,* a period of horrific strife to be suffered by those under the reign of Antichrist in the Last Days; from another, 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, he provided premillennialist thought with the expectation of a *Rapture,* an event that translates the faithful to heaven prior to the tribulation. In addition, whereas Great Britain or the United States previously played the role of "New Israel" in millenarian scenarios, in Darby's system God's covenant to the Jews would finally be fulfilled, as the people of Israel gathered again in the promised land prior to the *parousia.*[50] As it took root in the United States after the Civil War, Darby's premillennial dispensationalism brought together a number of disparate elements in American Protestant theology around a Biblical literalism that gave authority to an antiestablishmentarian and anti-intellectual stance against secular government, modern academic scholarship (including Darwinism and academic Biblical scholarship), and the decidedly postmillennial optimism of liberal Christianity. The publication of the highly popular *Scofield Reference Bible* by Darbyite Cyrus Scofield (1843–1921) in 1909 solidified the pervasive influence of premillennial dispensationalism on fundamentalism and

evangelicalism, forms of Protestantism that shaped millennial thought throughout much of the twentieth century.[51]

Another millenarian group that emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century was clearly influenced by both Adventist and dispensationalist eschatology. Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916) was raised Presbyterian but became increasingly disillusioned with what human institutions, from government to the various church organizations, offered in the face of the unremitting problems of worldly life, and also with how far both had deviated from their original purposes as expressed in the Bible. He attended an SDA meeting in 1870, but, like Miller, eventually charted his own path of understanding through the landscape of Scripture and prophecy, assessing history by way of prophetic calculations. Like the dispensationalists, his focus was on the premillennial gathering of the true church out of the global wasteland of false religions and human political systems. To this end, his wealth of publications, from the multivolume *Studies in the Scriptures* to widely distributed magazines and evangelical tracts, encouraged those concerned with the state of the world and the souls residing in it (his "Bible Students"; later, Jehovah's Witnesses) to separate themselves from all secular and other religious endeavors because these institutions were the Satanic "Babylon" of Revelation. Christ would return invisibly in 1874 to gather his "little flock" or "Bride"—the 144,000 of Revelation 7 and 14 who would rule with God in heaven. In 1914, he would reveal himself and his kingdom on Earth.[52]

The international tumult of World War I initially seemed to confirm Russell's predictions, but in time he set a second date, 1918, for the resolution of the war by divine means. Russell died before this hope was dashed. Russell's successor, Joseph Franklin Rutherford (1869–1942), reinterpreted 1914 as the time of Christ's invisible advent and fixed 1925 for the unveiling of the Kingdom. The failure of Christ to begin his visible rule at this time engendered a reevaluation of Witness theology and practice, but unlike their eschatological cousins, the Adventists, they responded by increasing their distinctiveness and separateness from the rest of society. These efforts took a variety of forms for which they are known today—the refusal to vote or serve on juries or in the American military, the rejection of un-Biblical celebrations from birthdays to Christmas, and the prohibition against blood transfusions. Yet none is more important than the shift in energies to door-to-door outreach missions. This evangelical work means to inform all those caught up in Babylon's vast web that it is not too late to stand on the correct side of the apocalyptic divide, if not as one of the 144,000, then as part of the Great Multitude identified in Revelation 7:9.[53] After this message of salvation is offered to the entire world, the millennial preparations will have been made and the groundwork for the *parousia* completed. This shift is not quite as radical as the one from pre- to postmillennialism as manifested among the SDAs, but still a far cry from the specificity of the prophetic stance under Russell. The last date for the appearance of the kingdom of God on Earth, 1975, came and went without much fanfare, as the mission to those in Babylon's clutches had long been refashioned as long-term and ongoing. Like the dispensationalists and the Adventists now, the Witnesses expect that Jesus could return at any time to

transform the Earth and all its human institutions into the ideal that they are meant to be.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: APOCALYPSE NOW

While the premillennialism of the Millerites and the Darbyites contrasts with the general optimism of the first half of the nineteenth century, they both tapped into an undercurrent of anxiety about the state of the American union, which exploded full blown between 1860 and 1864 as the American Civil War. This, as with the previous conflicts with other nations, encouraged in the American civil-religious mind-set an identification of the conflict at hand with the ultimate one; this interpretation was in no way undermined by the claim to it by both the North and South.[54] The sentiment on the Union's side that envisioned the war as a divine conflagration that would purge the nation of its original sin was captured indelibly by Julia Ward Howe (1819–1910) in "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." To say the least, the Revolutionary era's lofty rhetoric that conflated oppressive governments—then, monarchal and Catholic rule—with slavery was about to be put to the ultimate test. But the sheer horrors of the cataclysm, including the first assassination of an American president, not only allayed to a significant degree the faith in infinite American progress, but also shattered the bond forged in civil millennialism: that the role of the United States, especially in its battles, was weighted with eschatological import for the salvation of the world. In the twentieth century, the secular belief in obligation to use American power for good in the world continued in its crusade in World War I by making the world "safe for democracy," as President Woodrow Wilson, who believed this to be no less than the country's destiny, articulated the cause. Yet strictly religious millennialism by and large stayed out of the center of American consciousness until the last few decades of the century, first as a series of millennialist tragedies, then as the emergence of a powerful political force rooted in fundamentalist and evangelical Christianity, and then finally coinciding with the year 2000.[55]

If any wars earned the designation "Armageddon" on the basis of their sheer scope and horror, the two World Wars surely did. (World War I was, in fact, openly referred to in this manner.) Both stoked prophetic speculation among American evangelicals in the same way that wars had throughout the country's history. World War II seemed especially pregnant with signs regarding the identification of the Antichrist. Given Adolph Hitler's (1889–1945) aggression and anti-Semitism, and Benito Mussolini's (1883–1945) fascism and rule from Rome, both Axis leaders emerged as prime candidates, and certainly as the second "war to end all wars" spawned unprecedented devastation and hardship across the world. As the Axis powers threatened the sovereignty of many nations, an end-time scenario certainly appeared to be playing out on the global stage. Yet it was in the aftermath of World War II, following the deployment of two atomic bombs against Japan, the emergence of the Soviet Union as a military and ideological superpower to rival the United States, and the establishment of the modern nation of Israel subsequent to the discovery of the Holocaust, that the floodgates of millenarian interpretation of the times opened.[56]

What was unique about these events, however, was the way in which each brought strands of apocalyptic thought, long reserved for an evangelical minority, immediately and unshakably into the consciousness of the entire world. As it was at the beginning of the nation, so too in the Cold War era the unfolding of history perfectly meshed with a picture of scriptural destiny. Yet, in contrast to the millennial hopes for the city on the hill, at this time the expectation was not the progressive salvation of the world but its rapid destruction through nuclear strikes, for which the cause was generally assumed to be some entrenched conflict between the Soviet Union, the modern state of Israel, and the United States.[57] The establishment of Israel in 1948, in particular, was regarded with near euphoria among the millennial-minded since it signaled the close of Darby's "Great Parenthesis" of the Christian dispensation and thus the beginning of the millennial age. The capture of Jerusalem in the Six-Day War in 1967 produced the same effect.[58] The anxiety provoked among nonevangelicals by the instability of international relations, the Middle East, and the arms race became to a large degree symbolized by the "Doomsday Clock" set by the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* at seven minutes to midnight, or doomsday—nuclear annihilation—in 1947.[59] This fear was effectively and repeatedly stoked by a number of prophecy interpreters who masterfully translated Biblical scenarios and apocalyptic warnings into commentaries on current events.

In their minds the awesome devastation of the atom bomb became inextricably linked with the Biblical epistle 2 Peter 3:10: "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." For these Christians, then, nuclear war was something that neither could nor should be avoided; it was part of God's plan, revealed to the Biblical authors and translated into the images of their times.[60] With the Cold War the Soviet Union emerged at the forefront of apocalyptic fantasies, largely by way of the long-standing identification in prophetic circles of Russia with Gog, the enemy to the north of the holy people in Ezekiel 38–39. This interpretation had been made since the nineteenth century, but it took on a new life with both the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the creation of the state of Israel.[61] Evangelists such as Billy Graham (b. 1918), Jerry Falwell (b. 1933), and Pat Robertson (b. 1930) advanced versions of this end-time scenario for decades, while writers and broadcasters, especially Hal Lindsey (b. 1929) and Jack Van Impe (b. 1931), made the case in enormously popular books and television programs.[62] Lindsey's *The Late, Great Planet Earth,* in fact, became the number one "nonfiction" bestseller of the 1970s, and despite the rapidly and radically changing international landscape, he has continued to write with certainty about the culmination of prophecy through *Planet Earth—2000 a.d.* (1997), into the twenty-first century. Their success also granted them access to political power with the election of Ronald Reagan (1911–2004), who brought other millennial-minded individuals into his administration. Reagan, a literal believer in Biblical end-times prophecy, was the driving force behind a massive nuclear buildup against the "evil empire" of Soviet Russia, and suddenly evangelical millenarians had a reason to take an interest in the forces of international politics, an ironic stance for many who felt that only God would make peace on the Earth or

destroy it, according to His plan and His will.[63] At the end of Reagan's first term, before fundamental changes in leadership in the Soviet Union made disarmament a political reality, the Doomsday Clock was set at three minutes to midnight.

Reagan notwithstanding, one curious feature of Biblical prophecy in the atomic age saw the end of American millennial exceptionalism. The United States had no role as the redeemer nation or the meliorating force of moral suasion to bring about the time of peace. In fact, those who sought such goals were seen as arrogantly trusting in the human potential to save the world at best, or at worse as unwitting dupes of the Antichrist, who sought disarmament prior to global enslavement. Moreover, far from God's New Israel, the United States, or its most prominent cities—New York, New York; Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles, California—became identified as Revelation's Babylon itself.[64] So, too, did the establishment of the United Nations, with its headquarters in New York City, correspond to the world government established by the Antichrist. Reviving a literary genre from early in the century,[65] apocalyptic thrillers found a ready audience, combining political conspiracy theories and the plot line from the Book of Revelation in novels from Pat Robertson's *The End of the Age* (1996) to the book and film *The Omega Code* of 1999 to Tim LaHaye's and Jerry Jenkins's *Left Behind* series, which became nothing short of a cultural phenomenon in the late 1990s through the 2000s.

AMERICAN BABYLON

This turn in prophecy against American society in some ways parallels millennialist developments in other areas of the religious and political scenes, which see the United States as an evil or oppressive force in the world and thus ought to be fought, resisted, or rejected. Such a stance could be found as far back as the Ghost Dance revitalization movements among the Native Americans of the West and Northern plains between 1870 and 1890. A modern counterculture emerged most clearly in the 1960s and 1970s, reacting to those disorienting and disillusioning forces that the Cold War imposed on Americans generally, and specifically to the crises of the Bay of Pigs standoff, the civil rights movement, the wave of political assassinations from John F. Kennedy (1917–1963) and his brother Robert (1920–1968) to black activists Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968) and Malcolm X (1925–1965), and, above all, the Vietnam War.[66] Alternatives to the current social order and its legacy of violence were sought desperately, giving rise to postmillennial religious and utopian experimentation not seen on such a grand scale since before the Civil War. "Hippies" eschewed just about every traditional form of American life for a time, adopting new forms of family, morality, economy, and spirituality in loose collectives. Young people either actively or implicitly protested the conformity of American culture that masked deep betrayals of American ideals, which they sought to restore. Even popular music became an agent of change, as musicians such as the Beatles (1967's "All You Need is Love"; 1968's "Revolution") and Bob Dylan (b. 1941) (1967's "The Times They are A-Changin'") transformed both art and political consciousness on a massive scale, imparting the sense that, to quote Dylan,

"the order is rapidly fadin'." The millennial expectations for the countercultural revolution were identified as the "dawning of the Age of Aquarius," thought to be a time of peace and harmony, a radical but peaceful transformation of the world as it existed at the time. The hippie ethos also pursued esoteric religions from the West (Spiritualism) and East (Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Chinese *I Ching*). This "New Age religion" emphasized interconnectedness, a concern for all living things (which also initiated the environmental movement), the expansion of consciousness, and the innate divinity of all people.[67]

These mostly benign forms of alternative spiritual experimentation appeared as direct threats to traditional Christian organization and values, leading to the rise of secular anticult and Christian countercult movements, which sought to end the danger to human potential (anticult) or of false religions (countercults). These movements themselves embodied post- and premillennial assumptions, respectively, about the significance of these "threats."[68] But in 1979, Peoples Temple, led by the Pentecostal preacher Jim Jones, shocked the world with actual violence. Jones, whose ministry was dedicated to rectifying the economic and racial injustices existing in the United States through the "apostolic socialism" found in the Book of Acts, became convinced that his efforts to transform American culture would meet with harsher resistance from "Babylon" in the form of an increasingly more fascist and militant federal government. He took Peoples Temple to Guyana, South America, where it formed a utopian "New Jerusalem" called Jonestown. (Guyana was also supposed to best survive a nuclear war, which Jones was convinced was inevitable.) When a California congressman, Leo Ryan, on a fact-finding mission at the behest of some of the members' families, was murdered at Jonestown, Jones believed there would be no escape from the forces of Babylon, and he and 912 of his followers committed "revolutionary suicide," believing they were not dying but escaping a painful and corrupt world that was not ready for their work on its behalf.[69]

This virulent stance against the federal government and its depiction as Babylon reemerged in the confrontation with the Branch Davidians and also in various conspiracy-minded militia groups in the 1990s. Like Jonestown and the Branch Davidians, the militia underground indelibly impressed their view of the world on American consciousness through a terrible act of violence. Timothy McVeigh (1968–2001), not a member of a specific militia but influenced and radicalized by them, blew up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, on April 19, 1995, the second anniversary of the end of the fatal siege in Waco. One hundred sixty-eight people died in the blast. Militia movements in the 1980s and 1990s frequently combined fierce nativism and antagonism toward the American government with white power racialism and anti-Semitism, blending to a degree with apocalyptic race-preservation religious groups such as Christian Identity and Aryan Nation. The idea that the federal government is an enemy that must be destroyed to preserve the white race has served as a common touchstone among these reactionary conspiracy-minded groups, both secular and religious. They shared the common vision of an end of the "Z.O.G." ("Zionist Occupied Government") and its nefarious push for an "N.W.O" ("New World Order") through the white race's declaration of a

"RaHoWa" ("Racial Holy War") against the government and its Satanic allies in other races and religions.[70] A variation of this scenario plays out in the underground racialist novel *The Turner Diaries,* which apparently helped to shape McVeigh's ideology prior to his attack in Oklahoma City.[71]

The 1990s fantasy of domestic terrorism that fueled both *The Turner Diaries* and McVeigh, it could be argued, would most likely emerge in an America no longer in constant contention with an external enemy. For in no small part due to the relationship developed between Reagan and Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev (b. 1931) over the arms reduction treaty in Reagan's second term (representing a radical change in both political course and millennial point of view from the American president), Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) brought about the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, an event that effectively marked the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union. No proclaimer of Biblical prophecy foresaw the democratic revolutions that swept Eastern Europe and the Soviet satellite republics. It was a unilateral victory for the United States, now the only remaining superpower, won without launching a single nuclear warhead. And without a clear enemy on the national stage, it would need to adjust its sense of where to seek its military, moral, and ideological battles of ultimate importance.

THE NEW MILLENNIUM

As the 1990s drew to a close, the calendrical changeover to the year 2000 once again brought millennialism, even if a superficial kind, to the forefront of American consciousness.[72] Where there was actual "premillennial tension" to be found, it had mostly to do with the concern about the effect of the changeover on computers, which typically were designed only to store the last two digits of a year date, and so at that time faced the illogical prospect of "moving backward in time" when the date changed from "99" to "00." Not only did ordinary bankers, air traffic controllers, military personnel, doctors, and anyone else who relied on a computer chip become increasingly apprehensive about the potential for a massive technological meltdown on January 1, 2000, this vision of disaster for a time also became a unifying apocalyptic narrative among many of the same evangelists who capitalized on the prophetic significance of the nuclear age.[73] This potential glitch, called by the shorthand "Y2K" ("year two thousand"), prompted a massive computer programming effort in the final years of the decade—which was either highly effective or highly unnecessary, as the transition was made from 1999 to 2000 with nary a malfunction.

In addition to the looming technological collapse, the sense of dislocation from a familiar universe was reinforced by unnerving, violent religious events that came with seemingly ever greater frequency. Just a month prior to McVeigh's attack in Oklahoma came news of a deadly sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway system by the Japanese apocalyptic group, Aum Shinrikyo. Two years later, 39 members of a San Diego group, Heaven's Gate, committed ritual suicide in order to board a spacecraft following the Hale-Bopp comet. Both groups, if not premillennial in the

traditional sense of expecting Christ's return, did share the sentiment that the human world was doomed to horrible decay and evil, though Aum confronted the situation with "fight" and Heaven's Gate with "flight."[74]

Fears of violence from unexpected places ran rampant in the 1990s. The fall of the Soviet Union had destabilized a number of long-simmering ethnic conflicts in the European Baltic states. Genocide went unchecked in African countries. Nuclear stockpiles became available on the black market. The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin in 1995 destroyed the momentum of the Mideast peace process and provoked a violent *intifada* (uprising) among the Palestinians, casting the Holy Land under a dark shadow of violence once again. And yet, as upsetting as these conditions in the world were, for all intents and purposes, the 1990s were a time of peace and prosperity in the United States. Even the specter of a terrorist strike during the millennial celebrations remained just that—a specter. The decade ended with the disputed presidential election of George W. Bush, son of a president and a born-again Christian with a strong evangelical base. If Bush's millenarian world view (seemingly inherited from Reagan, not his own father) was not evident during his campaign for the presidency, world events would soon enough bring Americans starkly face-to-face with it.

September 11, 2001, transformed the United States instantaneously in a number of ways, especially in that it demanded that the country again define its role in the world by confronting an enemy. Yet the threat presented by the 19 hijackers of the planes on that day, apparently operatives of an extremist Islamic terrorist organization known as al-Qaida ("the base") and directed by exiled Saudi cleric Osama bin Laden (b. 1957), was formidable not because of its military or ideological power, but because the threat itself was elusive, unconventional, and driven by religious motivations, rather than clearly nationalist or expansionist goals. In foreign policy expert Samuel P. Huntington's (b. 1927) phrase, it was a "clash of civilizations," a final challenge to the democratic legacy of the West that it could neither ignore nor afford to lose.[75] Moreover, to President Bush and his conservative religious base, the attacks reawakened not only the sense that the United States needed to secure individual freedom from tyrants, at home and abroad, but also that this was a religious mission, a calling by God, and those who opposed it served the side of evil. In this environment, Bush's religious outlook framed the response to al-Qaida once again in Manichean terms.[76] The enemy was not a small network of terrorists, but "terror" itself; the perpetrators were not criminals who should be captured and tried, but fanatical evildoers, driven to murder by the hatred of American freedoms.[77] Bush's global War on Terror was more than a military response to the worst attacks on American soil in history. It was also a way to define and confront the symbolism those attacks represented. But as the War on Terror operated in more and more symbolic realms, it needed an appropriately symbolic enemy.

Modern prophetic interpreters had long been interested in the antagonistic potential of Iraq under the dictatorial rule of Saddam Hussein (b. 1937). Iraq corresponded geographically to ancient Babylonia, and the appearance of a ruthless tyrant there who contended with Israel (or God's other Chosen Nation, the United States)

fit the ancient mold of Antichrist or the First Beast of Revelation perfectly. Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and his subsequent defeat by an American-led worldwide coalition seemed poised to bring about end-times events in a quite literal fashion.[78] But President George H.W. Bush (b. 1924) declined to remove Hussein from power, effectively leaving the apocalyptic drama on hold until his son's administration. Carry-overs from the first Bush administration, especially Vice President Dick Cheney (b. 1941), the Defense Secretary during the Gulf War, strongly advocated the overthrow of Hussein from the earliest days of George W. Bush's presidency. For them, this act catalyzed democratic reform and the spread of freedom in the Mideast and speeded the final defeat of an enemy of the United States and Israel.[79] Bush and his administration garnered support for Hussein's overthrow by conjuring images of atomic destruction at the hands of an unchecked enemy in rhetoric largely unseen since Reagan's first term, despite the failure of UN weapons inspectors to find any evidence of weapons of mass destruction or programs for their development. Recalling the antipathy of prophecy interpreters toward both the UN and international cooperation since the Reagan era, Bush not only disregarded these findings but essentially sidestepped the UN and other countries (with the major exception of Great Britain) to invade unilaterally. Even before the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, "Operation Iraqi Freedom," failed to uncover any weapons of mass destruction on its own, the war's focus shifted dramatically from protecting the United States to building a democratic Iraq.[80]

Thus, with President Bush and his centerpiece war in the Mideast, American millennialism's two strands, the premillennial (or cataclysmic) and the postmillennial (or progressive), find themselves once again joined together to define America for itself and the world: The redeemer nation that is so blessed by liberty that it stands ready to fight the embodiment of evil itself, in order to allow peoples everywhere to form a democratic government and thereby experience God's gift of freedom themselves. Bush proclaimed in his Second Inaugural Address: "Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world; it is God's gift to humanity."[81] Yet he also framed the War on Terror as "a conflict between good and evil. And America will call evil by its name"[82]—and in which nations are "either with us or against us in the fight against terror."[83] As always, only the unfolding of history will reveal whether the new Iraq can provide its neighbors—and the United States and Israel—with a model of hope and the possibility of transformation for peoples living in tyranny, or if the ongoing conflict between good and evil will bring far more of the latter and precious little of the former. Either way, America, ever the New World born out of unrestrained depths of pessimism and optimism, the unbridled desires to reject the rest of the world and to save it, will find itself where it always does: on the verge of the New Millennium.

NOTES

1. *Encyclopedia of Millennialism and Millennial Movements,* s.v. "Columbus/Colon."

2. Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1968), 45. The Anglican scholar Joseph Mede essentially established the mode of interpretation that saw Biblical prophecy as referring to the formation of the church and other contemporary historical events. Ibid., 29.

3. Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes In American Thought 1756–1800* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 12, 58.

4. Scott Atkins, "The American Sense of Puritan," American Studies at the University of Virginia, http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/puritan/purhist.html (accessed January 12, 2006).

5. Hence, like the morning light, election follows a westward path around the globe. Bloch, *Visionary Republic,* 11; Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation,* 95–96.

6. Some put the messianic age at 5,000 years after creation. In any case, this schema is meshed perfectly with the millennium of Revelation in the early Christian work, the Epistle of Barnabas, solidifying the conceptual unity of the two apocalyptic schemas. Damian Thompson, *The End of Time: Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millennium* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1996), 7, 29.

7. Thompson, *The End of Time,* 7–10.

8. Ted Daniels, *A Doomsday Reader: Prophets, Predictors, and Hucksters of Salvation* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 39–50.

9. Bloch, *Visionary Republic,* 11; Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation,* 53–62.

10. Jonathan Edwards, "The Latter-day Glory is Probably to Begin in America," in *God's New Israel,* ed. Conrad Cherry (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 58.

11. Bloch, *Visionary Republic,* 15.

12. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 24–28.

13. Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation,* 17–18.

14. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty,* 1.

15. Ibid., 24–25.

16. A number of earthquakes in the region at this same time added to the millennial fervor. Bloch, *Visionary Republic,* 33–36.

17. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty,* 53–54.

18. Ibid., 23–24.

19. Ibid., 62.

20. Ibid., 60.

21. Ibid., 44–46.

22. Ibid., 17.

23. Samuel Sherwood, *The Church's Flight into the Wilderness: An Address on the Times,* in Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty,* 151.

24. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty,* 153.

25. Ibid., 23, 54, 141.

26. See especially Tuveson's chapter, "When did Destiny Become Manifest?" *Redeemer Nation,* 91–136.

27. On the debate over whether the Latter-day Saints should be categorized as pre- or postmillennialist, see Massimo Introvigne, "Latter Day Revisited: Contemporary Mormon Millenarianism," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements,* ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 230_232. Like many groups, the LDS Church apparently was more premillennial at its inception, then became more postmillennial as it became more established.

28. Elise Soukup, "The Mormon Odyssey," *Newsweek,* October 17, 2005, 55.
29. Brigham Young, "Discourses," in *God's New Israel,* ed., Conrad Cherry (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 131.
30. Coke Newell, *Latter Days: A Guided Tour Through Six Billion Years of Mormonism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 164.
31. Ibid., 26.
32. *Doctrine and Covenants* 101:77–80. The need to imprint American Republican history with the divine stamp comes into stark relief in the vision by Wilford Woodruff, who later served as LDS church president and prophet, in 1877. In this vision, the signers of the Declaration of Independence came to Woodruff to chastise him for not baptizing them by proxy (a baptism for the spirits of the dead) into the LDS Church, now that that sacrament had been restored with the true Church. Woodruff and his brother straightaway baptized all of the signers, all of the deceased presidents of the United States, and others figures significant to the founding of the country, including Columbus. Newell, *Latter Days,* 220.
33. *Doctrine and Covenants* 128:18; quoted in Newell, *Latter Days,* 72.
34. *History of the Church,* vol. 2:434–35; quoted in Newell, *Latter Days,* 78.
35. Newell, *Latter Days,* 77.
36. Ibid., 242.
37. Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 17, 80–81.
38. Ibid., 19–20.
39. The University of Virginia, "The End of the World," *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and American Culture, http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/christn/chmillhp.html (January 13, 2006). On the difficulties of ascertaining who counted as a "Millerite" and how many there were at the movement's peak, see Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture,* 4–5.
40. Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture,* 50–51. The reinterpretation of failed prophecy to reaffirm a movement is well-noted amongst scholars and yet remains endlessly fascinating. Leon Festinger's famous case study, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964; 1956), employs the concept of cognitive dissonance to describe the ways in which individuals adjust to realities that do not conform to expectations—mainly either by denying the facts are what they are or by asserting that their predictions came true, but in the *spiritual* realm. These strategies of alleviating cognitive dissonance will come into play as some Millerites reestablish themselves and their millennial ideology as the Seventh-day Adventists. Other studies of this phenomenon are found in *Expecting Armageddon: Essential Readings in Failed Prophecy,* ed. Jon Stone (New York: Routledge, 2000).
41. Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture,* 144–51.
42. Dereck Daschke and W. Michael Ashcraft, "The Adventist Tradition," *New Religious Movements: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 259–60.
43. Some 30 years later, W.K. Kellogg was developing vegetarian foods for a SDA health institute, the Battle Creek Sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan, when he created a dry cereal: corn flakes.
44. *Encyclopedia of Millennialism and Millennial Movements*, s.v. "Seventh-Day Adventists."
45. James Tabor and Eugene Gallagher, *Why Waco?: Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 59–62.
46. Ibid., 10, 76–77. James Tabor describes the way in which both Koresh and the BATF/FBI responded to one another as the playing out of "maps" or "scripts" that had already been

written—the apocalyptic one for Koresh versus the megalomaniacal hostage-taking "cult leader" on the part of the government. Tragically, these scripts, brought together in the way that they were, turned out to be mutually reinforcing. Ibid., 8–12.

47. *Encyclopedia of Millennialism and Millennial Movements*, s.v. "Seventh-Day Adventists."

48. Ibid., s.v. "Dispensationalism."

49. Paul S. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief In Modern American Culture* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 88.

50. Ibid., 89.

51. Ibid., 89–100.

52. Daschke and Ashcraft, "Jehovah's Witnesses," in *New Religious Movements: A Documentary Reader,* 279–80.

53. Ibid., 282.

54. Charles Strozier, "God, Lincoln, and the Civil War," in *The Year 2000: Essays on the End*, ed. Charles Strozier and Michael Flynn (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 61–65; James Moorhead, *American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War 1860–1869* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

55. Wilson, the son of a Presbyterian minister, not only believed he had been ordained by God to be president but that America itself had been divinely established "to show the way to the nations of the world how they shall walk in the paths of liberty." His entries into WWI as well as his work to create the League of Nations, both of which flew in the face of a national tendency toward isolationism, reflect his deep conviction in the United States' role as a "redeemer nation."

56. Boyer's *When Time Shall Be No More* remains the scholarly benchmark for understanding the strains of millennialism in the United States in the twentieth century. See the comprehensive treatment on these three aspects of post-WWII prophetic belief in chapters 4–6. On the categorization of millennialist groups in terms of the existence or lack of a violent component, see Catherine Wessinger, "Introduction: The Interacting Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution, and Violence," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence,* ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

57. Especially as imagined in Hal Lindsey's prophetic pronouncements *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1970) and *The 1980's, Countdown to Armageddon* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981).

58. Dwight Wilson, *Armageddon Now! The Premillenarian Response to Russia and Israel since 1917* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 123–43, 188–214.

59. See the history of the clock's settings at "Doomsday Clock," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, http://www.thebulletin.org/doomsday_clock/timeline.htm (accessed January 13, 2006). As of this writing, the clock is at seven minutes to midnight, its original time setting.

60. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More,* 118–136.

61. Ibid., 154–167.

62. Ibid., 127–140.

63. Ibid., 140–145.

64. Ibid., 119, 135.

65. Ibid., 106.

66. Not incidentally, the victims of these assassinations were themselves skilled in the use of millennial rhetoric, inspiring young people and idealists with the promise held by the post–World War II generation to change the world.

67. Robert Ellwood, "How New is the New Age?" in *Perspectives on the New Age,* ed. James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 59–67.

68. Douglas Cowan, "Constructing the New Religious Threat," in *New Religious Movements: A Documentary Reader,* ed. Dereck Daschke and W. Michael Ashcraft (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 325–26.

69. Dereck Daschke and W. Michael Ashcraft, "People's Temple," *New Religious Movements: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

70. Michael Barkun, "Millenarians and Violence: The Case of the Christian Identity Movement," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem,* ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 247–49. President George H.W. Bush gained unwanted attention from militias and other right-wing antigovernment conspiracy groups when he started using the phrase "New World Order" to describe the way the Gulf War coalition and its victory over Saddam Hussein's Iraq would transform global politics. Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 40. Of course, the reverse side of the U.S. dollar bill contains the Great Seal with the Latin phrases "Annuit Coeptis" and "Novus Ordo Seclorum," which translate roughly as "Providence has favored our undertakings" and "New order of the ages," respectively. Both reflect the civil millennialism of the early Republic; however, the latter has easily been misread as "New World Order"—providing conspiracy theorists evidence for the nefarious plans of the federal government to control the world. "Annuit Coeptis," Great Seal Mottoes, http://www.greatseal.com/mottoes/coeptis.html; "Novus Ordo Seclorum," Great Seal Mottoes, http://www.greatseal.com/mottoes/seclorum.html (accessed January 14, 2006).

71. Barkun, *Culture of Conspiracy,* 79.

72. This despite the fact that nothing religiously significant was ever really assigned to the end of the second millennium of Christendom—or that, for a variety of reasons, it was not even the end of the millennium, or of the twentieth century, which lasted until December 31, 2001.

73. Brenda Brasher, *Give Me that Online Religion* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 56–61.

74. When Chen Tao, a Taiwanese millenarian group that expected a nuclear war between China and Taiwan, came to the United States due to the belief that God would come in flying saucers to rescue the population of North America before the tribulation of this war, they were met at every turn by reporters pressing them for their plans for mass suicide when God did not show up as expected. See, for instance, the otherwise evenhanded reporting by Sam Howe Verhovek, "Taiwanese Group Prepares to Meet God—in Texas," *New York Times,* March 4, 1998, sec. A10—which contained the eye-catching pull quote, "Talk of divinity, and rumors of suicide."

75. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22(28), from the Academic Index, http://www.alamut.com/subj/economics/misc/clash.html (accessed January 14, 2006).

76. John B. Judis, "The Chosen Nation: The Influence of Religion on U.S. Foreign Policy," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/PB37.judis.FINAL.pdf (accessed January 14, 2006).

77. "On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country.… [F]reedom itself is under attack.… Our nation—this generation—will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage." George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American

People," The White House, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html (accessed January 14, 2006).

78. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More,* 327–31.

79. Many of the civil millenarian aims of these Bush administration officials were public record prior to their ascendancy to high-level government positions due to their establishment of the Project for the New American Century think tank. See especially the letter sent to President Clinton in 1998, signed by several future Bush administration appointees, urging Clinton to invade Iraq and overthrow Hussein. "Letter to President Clinton," Project for the New American Century, http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm (accessed January 14, 2006).

80. Judis, "The Chosen Nation."

81. George W. Bush, "President Sworn-In to Second Term," The White House, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050120-1.html (accessed January 14, 2006). Interestingly enough, the president specifically discounted America's role as a "Chosen Nation" as a reason for taking up the fight to liberate Iraq from Saddam Hussein in his 2003 State of the Union Address, where he made his primary case to the American people for his invasion of Iraq. George W. Bush, "President Delivers 'State of the Union,'" The White House, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html (14 January, 2006).

82. Tom Carver, "Bush puts God on his side," *BBC News,* April 6, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2921345.stm (accessed January 14, 2006).

83. "Bush says it is time for action," CNN.com/U.S., November 6, 2001, http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/ret.bush.coalition/index.html (accessed January 14, 2006).

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Introduction

Although new or alternative religious movements, or New Religious Movements (NRMs), have always been part of the American religious landscape, they have not always received broad public attention. Most often, their formation, attraction of members, and growth or decline have occurred beyond the harsh glare of prolonged public scrutiny. In some striking cases, however, a new or alternative religious movement has dominated the news for a period of time, usually because the movement itself, or some of its members, became involved in something that was widely perceived to be illegal, immoral, or simply destructive. For example, in the wake of the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Minister Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam became notorious for his comment that Kennedy's murder meant "the chickens had come home to roost." In the 1970s saffron-robed members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, also known as Hare Krishna, became so well known for seeking donations and engaging strangers in conversations in public that they were easily lampooned in the comic film "Airplane." In the 1980s, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, leader of the Unification Church (or Moonies), was found guilty of tax evasion by diverting church funds for his personal use. More recently, in 1993, the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms staged a raid on the home and church of a small group of Bible students outside of Waco, Texas. In addition to the ten lives lost in the botched raid, the 51 day standoff between the students of David Koresh, a group widely known as the Branch Davidians, and agents of the federal government, particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation, culminated in the loss of 78 lives in a fire that consumed the Mount Carmel Center where the Branch Davidians lived. In 1997 followers of Marshall Applewhite, forming a group called Heaven's Gate, joined him in committing suicide so that they could all progress to what they viewed as "the evolutionary level above human." The list of such incidents could easily be multiplied.

In the late twentieth century as new and alternative religious movements continued to receive public attention for elements of their practice or belief that were highly controversial, a dominant image of such groups began to solidify. That image was

fostered by the activism of groups of former members, their families, some professionals in social work and psychology, and various other volunteers. When the opposition to new or alternative religious groups originated with more or less secular individuals, those opponents were generally called anticultists. When opposition originated with Evangelical Protestant Christians, those opponents were usually called countercultists. The tireless work of such activists, anticultist or countercultist, quickly produced a standard understanding of new and alternative religions that united a wide variety of groups under the umbrella category of "cults." In the perceptions of their anticult opponents, cults posed serious threats to vulnerable individuals and, ultimately, to the stability of American society itself. Anticultists and countercultists believed that cults had three prominent characteristics. First, they were led by unscrupulous, manipulative, and insincere individuals who sought only to increase their own power, wealth, and/or sexual enjoyment. Second, cults preyed upon unsuspecting, confused, and vulnerable individuals, often using sophisticated and virtually irresistible tactics of influence. Third, participation in a cult would surely bring harm to individual participants and might also lead them to commit any number of antisocial actions that threatened the public good. The stereotype of the "destructive cult" was aggressively marketed by the loose coalition of anticultists, particularly when disturbing news about any new or alternative religious movement became public. Thus, on the one hand, while a variety of events created a broad interest in learning about individual religious groups, their practices and beliefs, organizational structure, leadership, and many other topics, on the other hand, the predominance of the cult stereotype inevitably skewed the information available, attributed the perceived faults of any one group to all of them, and created expectations that any group labeled a cult must necessarily be worthy of suspicion, scorn, and vigorous opposition. Despite their prodigious efforts at educating the general public, the various anticult and countercult activists have, in fact, promoted much more misunderstanding than accurate understanding of the religious lives of some of their fellow citizens. Consequently, they have helped to create a very hostile environment for anyone whose religious practices do not fit within a so-called "mainstream." The personal and social costs of such religious bigotry may actually be higher than what the activists fear from cults themselves.

This set of volumes on "New and Alternative Religions in America" intends to rectify that situation for the general reader. It aims to present accurate, comprehensive, authoritative, and accessible accounts of various new and alternative religious movements that have been and are active in American society, as well as a set of essays that orient the reader to significant contexts for understanding new and alternative religions and important issues involved in studying them. The presentations are predicated on a simple but fundamental assumption. It is that accurate description and understanding must precede any judgment about the truth, validity, morality, or trustworthiness of any religious group or person. Accurate description demands that the group be presented in terms that it could itself recognize and acknowledge as being at least close to the way it understands itself. Providing an accurate description of the history, organization, practices, and beliefs of a particular group does not, in

any way, constitute an endorsement of that group, but it does provide an indispensable baseline for any further discussion. Such a baseline has often been lost in the public discussions of new and alternative religious movements, because their most bizarre, threatening, or even humorous aspects have been exaggerated. What is missing from such caricatured presentations is a sense of how any person could find such apparently ludicrous, lethal, or laughable groups worth joining. Simple dismissal of new or alternative religions as absurd, erroneous, or pernicious misses the social influence that they can have and demonstrably have had. Whatever an outsider's perception of new and alternative religions might be, many clear-thinking and well-intentioned individuals, throughout American history, have associated themselves with such groups. This set is founded on the idea that members' or participants' reasons for their decisions and their accounts of their experiences form the primary data for understanding new and alternative religions. Both hostile and approving accounts of new or alternative religions from outsiders provide a different sort of data, which reveals the social location and often-controversial careers of new and alternative religions. But neither approval nor criticism by external observers should take precedence over the self-understanding of each group as articulated by its members in establishing a baseline of descriptive accuracy.

Readers of this set of volumes will thus encounter both information and analytical frameworks that will help them arrive at an informed and appropriately complicated understanding of new and alternative religious movements in American history and society. Volume 1 provides a set of analytical perspectives on new and alternative religions, including the history of such movements in the United States, the controversies in which they have often become embroiled, the roles of leaders within the groups and the processes by which individuals become members and also leave their groups, the legal and global contexts in which new and alternative religions function, and a variety of prominent themes in the study of new religions, including roles of gender, children, and violence.

The four volumes that follow generally present accounts of individual groups, many of them well known but some much less so. Each chapter presents information about the origin and subsequent development of the group in question, its internal organization including the predominant type of leadership, its most important practices and beliefs, and controversies that have put the group in the limelight. Volume 2 focuses on groups that have developed out of the broad biblical tradition—Judaism and Christianity—and have achieved such a distinctive status as to be considered, at least by some observers, as independent religious groups rather than simple sectarian variations of more mainstream Jewish or Christian traditions. Volume 2 accordingly raises most acutely the problems of definition that are involved in using the admittedly malleable categories of "new" and "alternative" religions.

The description of a religious movement as *new* or *alternative* only begs further questions. Novelty can be in the eye of the beholder, or in the mind of someone claiming to be innovative. That is, religious movements are judged to be new, alternative, or anything else only in particular contexts and by certain audiences. They may claim, for example, to retrieve and correctly interpret or represent past beliefs

and practices, which have been neglected or forgotten. But their opponents might view the same claims as dangerous and deviant inventions. New religions themselves often manifest a pronounced ambivalence about their own novelty. A fundamental dynamic in new and alternative religions is that they strive to present themselves as both new and old, as unprecedented and familiar. The novelty of new religions cuts both ways; it can just as easily excite the interest of potential adherents as it can strain their credulity. As they spread their messages to those whose interest, approval, and even acceptance they hope to secure, NRMs proclaim both their challenging novelty and their comforting familiarity.

In their sectarian forms, these movements attempt to recapture the lost purity of an idealized past. Sects typically have prior ties to larger religious organizations from which they have intentionally broken off. They aim to return to the pristine origins of the tradition and reestablish its foundations. Sectarian forms of Christianity frequently exhort their partisans to get "back to the Bible"; contemporary Islamic sects similarly yearn for the purity of the times of the prophet Muhammad. Even the Church of Satan, founded by Anton Szandor LaVey in 1966, has spawned sectarian groups that accuse the original Church of Satan of having abandoned its initial commitments and emphases. Sects thus define themselves both in relation to the broader world and in relation to their specific tradition, both of which are perceived to threaten their purity of belief and practice.

In their typology of responses to secularization, Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge contrast cults to sects. Rejecting the polemical definition of cults spawned by their cultural opponents, they define cults as independent religious traditions. Cults may be imports from another culture or independent products of the society in which they develop. Like sects, cults often find themselves in tension or conflict with broader society, simply by virtue of being new and different. Because they, too, want to locate themselves in relation to an authoritative past, cults also lay some claim to previous tradition. What separates cults from sects in their relation to previous traditions is that cults typically do not have a history of institutional conflict and eventual separation. Cults are marked from their beginnings as new entities. Both sects and cults, then, simultaneously declare their novelty and sink their roots in the past. In order to avoid confusion about the term "cult," which has such negative connotations in contemporary American society, this set will keep to the designations of new and alternative religions, which are widely employed by many scholars even though they are somewhat imprecise. The choice of which groups to include in Volume 2, as with the other volumes, is a judgment call. The guiding principle was not only to provide a representative sample of new and alternative religious groups throughout American history, but also to present the groups in sufficient detail to enable the reader to form a complex understanding of them.

Volume 3 investigates groups in the occult or metaphysical tradition, including nineteenth century Spiritualism, the Theosophical Society begun by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in the late nineteenth century, and the contemporary New Age movement. Like the groups discussed in the second volume, those in Volume 3 are part of a broad tradition that has deep roots in

antiquity. For example, in *The Secret Doctrine* Madame Blavatsky included the ancient Vedic sages of India, the Buddha, and a collection of ancient Greek philosophers among the ancient teachers whose wisdom about the nature of human beings and the nature of god was being given its fullest expression in Blavatsky's modern Theosophical system.

The religious movements discussed in Volume 3 typically present a different organizational profile from those in Volume 2. The groups in Volume 2 have made substantial efforts to maintain boundaries between themselves and their surrounding social environment, demanding exclusive allegiance of their members; vesting authority over practice, doctrine, and group life in charismatic leaders; and offering new and improved interpretations of familiar texts already acknowledged to have broad cultural legitimacy. In contrast, the movements in Volume 3 center on individual teachers who attract shifting groups of students with varying degrees of commitment for varying lengths of time, leave the ability to determine the authority or validity of any pronouncements in the hands of individual seekers, and claim to bring to light extraordinary wisdom from previously unknown or underappreciated sources.

Many of the religions that have appeared to be innovative developments in American religious life have actually been transplanted from other cultures where they have often enjoyed long histories. The openness of the United States to immigrants has always been an important factor in promoting American religious diversity. The 1965 repeal of the 1924 *Asian Exclusion Act,* for example, permitted a variety of Eastern religious teachers to extend their religious activities to the United States. Late in his life, for example, Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, made the United States the focus of his efforts to awaken love for Krishna in as many people as possible. Military personnel returning from service abroad, often with spouses from countries where they had been stationed, also helped to introduce new religious practices and movements to the United States. This was the case, for example, with the form of Japanese Nichiren Buddhism known as Soka Gakkai. Even where it is difficult to provide independent corroboration of claimed international ties, they can nonetheless be claimed. A dramatic example here was the assertion that the elusive figure at the origins of the Nation of Islam, W.D. Fard, arrived in Detroit, Michigan, in 1930 from Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The movements in Volume 4 show clearly that religious innovation in the United States always needs to be considered in a broader, global context. That is no less true of the groups discussed in other volumes as well. For example, Ann Lee's small band of Shakers began in Manchester, England; David Koresh gathered Bible students from Australia, England, and other foreign countries as well as the United States. Theosophy's Madame Blavatsky was a Russian émigré. Finally, the Church of Scientology, like many other new religions that have begun in the United States, conducts a vigorous international missionary program.

The frequent movement of individuals, practices, and ideas across national borders could make a focus on new and alternative religions solely in the United States vulnerable to a myopia that could distort the nature and significance of those movements. That caution holds equally for homegrown and imported religions. Few

religions in the contemporary world, no matter what their age or relation to a mainstream, are confined within a single set of national boundaries. Nonetheless, the focus of this set remains on a selection of religions that have had, for one reason or another, a significant impact on religious and social life in the United States. Prominent in that selection is a group of religions that have been independently founded in the United States. For example, although the contemporary revival of Paganism can be traced to the career of Gerald Gardner in England beginning in the 1930s, many influential Pagan thinkers and teachers, such as Z Budapest, Starhawk, and Isaac Bonewits have flourished in the United States. Similarly, the Church of Satan and its subsequent offshoots owe their inspiration to Anton Szandor LaVey, who produced *The Satanic Bible* and other fundamental texts in San Francisco, California, in the 1960s. Also, beginning in the 1950s the prodigious literary output of L. Ron Hubbard gave rise first to the therapeutic system known as Dianetics and then, as his purview broadened, to the Church of Scientology. Other founders of NRMs in the United States, like Marshall Applewhite of the Heaven's Gate group, attracted far fewer adherents than the Church of Scientology but nonetheless carved out a place for themselves in American religious history through their dramatic, and sometimes tragic, actions. Volume 5 thus focuses on both new developments in international movements within the United States, such as the rise of Neo-Paganism, and the conscious construction of new religions, such as the Church of Scientology, by American teachers and organizations.

As this overview suggests, the definition of what counts as a new or alternative religion is frequently open to argument. Many groups that appear dramatically novel to external observers would claim that they are simply being faithful to ancient traditions. Joseph Smith, for example, claimed that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, was a restoration of primitive Christianity. Groups that claim to be innovative often express their messages in the form of fresh interpretations of ancient texts, as with Swami Prabhupada's effort to present the ancient Indian classic, the Bhagavad-Gita, "as it is"; or Rael's contention that the mentions of "Elohim" in the biblical book of Genesis actually refer to extraterrestrial beings who came to earth in space ships. Because of the subjective nature of the categories —new to whom? alternative to what?—it will always be difficult to delimit precisely which groups definitely do, and do not, "count" as new or alternative. Moreover, in popular discourse, where the category cult is frequently used but appears devoid of anything other than emotional content, and in interreligious arguments, where cult easily expands to include "virtually anyone who is not us," attempts at substantive definitions give way entirely to polemics. Discussion of new and alternative religions in the United States thus always refers to a shifting and vigorously contested terrain where categories like "alternative religion" or "cult" and implicit comparisons like those implied by "new religious movement" are used to establish, reinforce, and defend certain kinds of individual and group identities, even as they threaten, compromise, or erode other kinds of individual or group identities.

No mapping of such terrain can hope to be definitive. Too much is in flux. Those who enter the terrain need trustworthy and experienced guides. The essays in these

five volumes provide just such guidance. Experienced, authoritative, and plainspoken, the authors of these essays provide both perspectives on some of the most prominent general features of the landscape and full descriptions of many, but by no means all, of the specific areas within it. Those who want to explore the terrain of new and alternative religions in the United States will find in this set multiple points of entry. They may want to focus on a specific local part of the larger area, such as the Theosophical tradition, the Branch Davidians, or Heaven's Gate. On the other hand, they may want to investigate the characteristic dynamics of the broader field, such as the processes of conversion into and defection from groups or the interactions between new and alternative religions and their cultural opponents. There is much to explore—much more than can even be covered in these five volumes. But this set aims to equip the would-be explorer with enough tools and knowledge to make the exploration rewarding and worthwhile.

The Shakers

Suzanne Thurman

In 1774 Ann Lee, an illiterate factory worker from Manchester, England, set sail for the American colonies. She was part of a group known as the Shaking Quakers, so called because of their ecstatic worship. In a revelation that she claimed was from God, Lee learned that sex, or more accurately lust, was the original sin in the Garden of Eden. Thus, celibacy became, for Lee, a necessary condition of salvation. Another revelation ordered her to take a small group of followers to British North America and spread her message there.[1] Lee obeyed, and thus began the long history of the Shakers, arguably the most successful communal society in American history. Remembered today primarily for their furniture, the Shakers themselves were more interested in their salvation than in manufacturing chairs. This essay highlights the history, beliefs, and practices of the Shakers, providing a much needed context for understanding the furniture, buildings, and other artifacts that they left behind.[2]

HISTORY

When Ann Lee and her followers landed in British North America, they settled in New York City. By 1779 they had earned enough money to purchase property outside of Albany in the town of Niskeyuna (also known as Watervliet). In 1781 Lee, her brother William and James Whittaker, one of her English converts, took a missionary journey through New England. For two years they traveled in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Maine, spreading the "gospel" as understood by Lee. Put simply, Lee taught that Believers, as they called themselves, must live celibate lives free of worldly distractions. She espoused pacifism and encouraged her followers to live together and share all things in common. She emphasized frugality, simplicity, and meekness. She also believed that an individual could communicate directly with God, and worship services provided an arena for ecstatic behavior such as whirling, dancing, and speaking in tongues.

Lee possessed a charismatic personality and attracted many followers wherever she preached. Because she was illiterate, however, she could not record her teachings, and

an oral tradition of her teachings developed during the years of her ministry. After her death, the Shaker leadership recorded for future generations the foundational teachings of the movement. Rufus Bishop and Seth Y. Wells interviewed the Believers who knew Lee and put together a collection of testimonies published in 1816.[3]

Lee's teachings were considered radical at the time, causing conflict with the Shakers' neighbors. Many people saw the emotional worship of the Believers as bizarre and offensive. One frequently repeated story reported that the Shakers danced in the nude. Other people believed that the doctrine of celibacy undermined traditional notions of marriage and family. Still others distrusted the Shakers because their British leaders taught pacifism even as the American colonies fought their revolution against England. Feelings ran high, and on numerous occasions mobs chased the Shakers out of town, beating and whipping them, sometimes scarring them for life. Despite such violence, most Shakers remained faithful to Lee's teachings and gathered into loosely organized clusters for protection and economic support.

Exhausted by their travels and the persecution they suffered, Ann Lee, William Lee, and James Whittaker returned to Niskeyuna in September 1783. William died in July 1784, and Ann Lee followed him in September. Leadership of the group then fell to Whittaker.

He encouraged and strengthened the scattered groups of Believers now that their founder was gone. He believed in strict separation from the world and traveled throughout New England urging the Believers to sell their property and consolidate their resources. He also worked diligently to provide a focus for the Shakers' religious beliefs and practices. Under his leadership the Believers built their first meetinghouse in 1785 at New Lebanon, New York.

Whittaker died in 1787, and Joseph Meacham assumed leadership of the growing movement. Meacham's succession was significant for several reasons. First, he was the first American leader. Second, he moved his base of operations from Niskeyuna to New Lebanon, which became the central headquarters of the Believers. Third, he devised the "blueprint" for gathering Shakers into the highly organized villages that we know today.

Meacham built up the existing Shaker communities instead of seeking new converts from the outside world. The official gathering began in 1787 at New Lebanon under the direction of Meacham and his coleader, Lucy Wright. Meacham envisioned villages composed of several families or orders, each family corresponding to a certain level of commitment to Shakerism. All families lived communally, but not everyone was expected to turn their property over to the community. Only the most committed adherents, who lived in the Church family, signed a covenant agreeing to give all their property, real and personal, to the society.

Because celibacy was a central tenet of Shakerism, men and women lived separately, a practice that detractors claimed broke up families. In a sense, they were correct. The Shakers replaced the biological family, which rested on reproduction, with a spiritual family. Thus, men and women addressed each other as "brother" and "sister," titles they used throughout the history of the movement. Moreover, Believers

referred to early Shaker leaders as "mothers" and "fathers." After the formative years, however, the incoming leadership no longer used these titles.

The gathering of New Lebanon provided a model for other Shakers to follow. By 1794, eleven Shaker communities dotted the countryside: two in eastern New York, four in Massachusetts, one in Connecticut, two in New Hampshire, and two in Maine. Shaker leadership regulated every aspect of life in these villages and enforced strict separation from the world.

Meacham died in August 1796. Upon his death, Wright became the head of the movement. It was Shaker practice to appoint a male and female for every leadership position, and Wright had been Meacham's counterpart. Meacham, however, was such a forceful personality that he eclipsed Wright's authority. When she came to power in her own right, however, she proved to be a competent and effective leader throughout her 25-year tenure.

One of her most important contributions to the development of Shakerism was her decision to begin active proselytizing in the world. Wright knew that because of their belief in celibacy, the Shakers' survival hinged on their ability not only to bring new people into the fold but also to keep them there. To that end she established a separate "gathering order" for those who were interested in Shakerism but who might need extra attention and nurturing to convince them to stay. Even more important, however, was her decision to send out missionaries to spread the Shaker gospel. Wright saw the perfect opportunity when she heard about a great revival taking place in Cane Ridge, Kentucky. Hoping to capitalize on the enthusiasm generated by this outbreak of religious fervor, Wright sent three men—John Meacham, Issachar Bates, and Benjamin Seth Youngs—to take the Shaker message westward into the Ohio Valley. On January 1, 1805, they started and, in the course of their work, established five villages in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana between 1806 and 1811. Two other villages in Ohio organized in the 1820s.[4]

At the end of her life, Wright agreed to the codification of the rules and regulations that structured Shaker life. Known as the Millennial Laws of 1821, this document provided in great detail the protocol for everything from worship to conducting business to interaction of the sexes. After Wright's death, the new leadership sent copies of the laws to every Shaker village. These laws reinforced the key Shaker concepts of union, conformity, and obedience to the leaders. They also strengthened the boundaries separating the Shakers from the outside world.

Wright died in February 1821. Her death marked the end of what Stephen J. Stein called the Formative Period in Shaker history. During this time, Shakers moved from loosely scattered clusters to highly organized communities. They developed a theology to support their beliefs and codified their practices to ensure uniformity among their members. Wright played a central role in this formalization of Shaker life. Although Meacham was the one who organized the first villages, Stein argues that "Lucy Wright clearly played a far more instrumental role in the evolution of Shakerism. She was perhaps the most influential figure in all of Shaker history."[5]

After Wright's death, a single leader did not emerge to replace her. Instead, the Believers followed the system of coleadership that was already established. Two men and two women made up the central ministry located at New Lebanon, and together they oversaw the spiritual and temporal welfare of all Shaker villages.

With the formal structures of Shakerism in place, the Believers focused their energy on maintaining their communities, and a sense of growth and prosperity marked the middle portion of the nineteenth century. It was during this period that the population peaked among various Shaker villages. Exact population statistics are difficult to find. Frequently cited are those compiled by Shaker theologians Calvin Green and Seth Y. Wells in their *Summary View of the Millennial Church,* published in 1823. These men estimated a total Shaker population of 4000 to 4300. Using United States census records for 1820, Priscilla Brewer calculated statistics that, overall, are similar to the estimates of Green and Wells.[6]

William Sims Bainbridge, continuing the use of census schedules, determined the population of the Shakers in 1840 and 1860 to be 3608 and 3489, respectively.[7] Although Bainbridge's figures suggest a decrease in population by midcentury, the Believers perceived themselves as growing. Their population was diverse; men and women of all ages and children, too, filled the dormitories. The villages were bustling hives of activity, and the Shakers were confident that their way of life would continue to appeal to the larger world.

Despite this optimistic view of their future, changes in their communities disturbed the Shaker leadership, especially the deaths of the first generation of Believers who had known Lee. Leaders sensed an increase in the number of people leaving the communities and feared that Shaker society, overall, was too worldly. These changes challenged the Believers' earlier perception of growth and vitality. Taken together, these issues led to the outbreak of a period of revivalism known as the Era of Manifestations, or "Mother Ann's Work," which lasted from the late 1830s through the 1850s. The leadership hoped that this outpouring of spiritual gifts would revitalize the Believers, strengthen their identity as Shakers, and lead to numerical and spiritual growth in the villages.[8]

Although isolated experiences of spirit activity occurred prior to the Era of Manifestations, the revival began in August 1837 when a group of girls from the gathering order at Niskeyuna whirled, sang, entered into a trance-like state, and described visions of angels. With the central ministry's blessing such activity soon spread to other Shaker villages, and the Shakers focused all their time and energy on the revival. Men, women, and children danced ecstatically and reported in great detail the visions they received from the spirit world. Known as "instruments," those who "talked" to the spirits not only delivered messages of encouragement to the Believers but also pointed out improper behavior and called the Shakers to repentance. The spirits also gave gifts to the Shakers such as trumpets, pearls, birds, or wine. These gifts were invisible to the eye and required the receiver to act out in pantomime the item received.

In 1841 Holy Mother Wisdom, the female incarnation of the godhead, visited the villages to bless and comfort Believers, chastise those who needed it, and hand out a

plethora of spiritual gifts. Her visits were solemn occasions for which the Shakers prepared with much ritual cleansing and fasting. Eternal Father, the male half of the godhead, also visited the villages to bless the Shakers and point out irregularities where he found them.

The following year the Believers inaugurated a spiritual Passover that took place on special ground set aside for that purpose. Elaborate rituals surrounded this feast. Preparing the ground for the ceremony took hours of intensive labor. On the day of the feast, the Shakers donned special garments. They cleansed the villages with spirit brooms and marched to the grounds where their ceremony culminated in a Passover feast in which the Shakers "drank" spiritual wine and "dined" on spiritual food.

Over time, the level of spirit activity decreased as the revival lost its momentum. In some villages, skepticism about the authenticity of the revival appeared as early as 1845. In other villages, sustained activity lasted into the 1850s. Gradually, however, the Believers turned their attention to other issues and the revival ended.

Aside from the time of revival, the years between 1827 and 1875 witnessed growing interaction between Believers and the outside world. The Shakers established extensive trade networks with outsiders and entered numerous business dealings with worldly firms. They also became interested in a variety of social issues that occupied the reform-minded segment of American society. Believers experimented with temperance and vegetarianism, assuming that a diet free from alcohol and meat would help them curb their sexual desire. They also followed the outbreak of Spiritualism which started in 1848 when the Fox sisters of Rochester, New York, heard "rappings" from the spirit world. Their supposed contact with the dead intrigued many Americans, including the Believers. Shaker brothers sometimes attended séances when they were in cities on business and then reported their experiences to their Shaker villages. Some Shakers thought that the world's interest in Spiritualism indicated that outsiders were opening up to the teachings of Ann Lee, and they prepared for the anticipated influx of Believers.

The outbreak of the Civil War further pulled the Shakers into a closer relationship with the world. Although they were not active abolitionists, the Shakers condemned the institution of slavery as evil. The Believers of Harvard, Massachusetts, for example, read aloud Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* They also helped supply the occasional fugitive slave with money and clothes. When the war began, the Shakers sided with the Union cause, even though their pacifist principles prohibited them from taking up arms. Two Shaker leaders, Benjamin Gates and Frederick Evans, visited President Lincoln in Washington, D.C., and successfully pled their case for an exemption of all Shaker men from the draft. Given the opportunity, however, the eastern Shakers did whatever they could to support Union troops. The Harvard Believers provided apples and beverages to the soldiers stationed at nearby Camp Stephens, and they welcomed the soldiers when the latter visited Shaker worship services.[9]

Western Shakers, particularly those in Kentucky, were less fortunate than their eastern counterparts in choosing how to respond to the war. Although high taxes plagued the eastern Shakers and war disrupted some of their trade routes, geography

insulated Believers in New England and New York from the brunt of the war. The Kentucky Shakers, however, suffered many hardships. Both Union and Confederate troops repeatedly demanded food and lodging from them, and military officers commandeered Shaker wagons and horses for their own use. Such depredations pushed the western Believers to the brink of poverty.[10]

Historians generally use the Civil War as a dividing line in American history, but Stein argues that this timeline does not apply to the Shakers. He notes that the Era of Manifestations was the critical event in Shaker history during the middle years, and he dates the end of this period at 1875, when the Believers closed their community at Tyringham, Massachusetts, the first village in the east to disband.[11]

The closing of Tyringham marks the beginning of the final period of Shaker history, characterized by a persistent decline in membership. People quit joining the Shakers in large numbers. Most of the children raised in Shaker villages left when they reached adulthood, attracted by the growing economic opportunities in the outside world. Those who remained in the society were growing old, unable to maintain their properties or conduct business. Thus, the story of Shakerism in the years after 1875 is a litany of village closings until only seven villages remained open by 1922.

Yet the picture of life in Shaker society in the twentieth century is not all doom and gloom. Believers adapted to the changing world and eagerly embraced many modern innovations. They installed telephones, electricity, and indoor plumbing. They bought automobiles and radios and modernized their kitchens. They also exercised their individuality in ways unfamiliar to earlier Believers. Clothing for both men and women reflected worldly fashions. The sisters decorated their dresses with fringe or lace, wore jewelry, and bought their clothes instead of making them. The brothers chose how they wore their hair and whether or not they grew beards.

Worship, too, became a matter of individual choice. Instead of adherence to a set of orthodox beliefs manifested in a ritualized worship service, Believers in the twentieth century occupied many points on the spectrum of religious experience. Many Shakers continued to pursue Spiritualism. These Believers, argues Stein, tended to be "progressive" and supported causes like women's rights, the separation of church and state, land reform, and the peace movement. They saw their commitment to these causes "as highly compatible and mutually reinforcing" their spiritual beliefs. Other Shakers were evangelical in their outlook, cooperating with Protestant ministers, attending camp meetings, and opening Sunday Schools in their villages. Yet other Shakers espoused a restorationist view of their faith, arguing that Shakerism had strayed too far from its roots. They reemphasized traditional Shaker theology and separation from the world.[12]

Despite the seeming vitality of life in twentieth century Shaker communities, declining membership took its toll, forcing the closure of one village after another. In 1947 the leadership closed New Lebanon (now called Mount Lebanon), home of the central ministry. By 1960 only two villages remained open, Canterbury, New Hampshire, and Sabbathday Lake, Maine. In 1992, Sister Ethel Hudson, the last remaining Canterbury Shaker, died, leaving Sabbathday Lake as the only active Shaker community.

Today a handful of Believers continue to live at Sabbathday Lake much as their predecessors did. They worship in the meetinghouse, no longer dancing but just using hand motions; they live communally; and they are celibate. They also remain a largely agricultural society. They own a tree farm and an apple orchard. They raise sheep and livestock. They grow vegetables for themselves and herbs for the commercial market. They also produce handiwork, such as baskets, textiles, and woodenware, which they sell in their village store. The society is open to admitting new members, and there are frequently seekers or enquirers living among the covenanted Shakers. The village is also open for tours, and scholars can find valuable resources in the library.

Restored Shaker sites, such as Canterbury, New Hampshire; Pleasant Hill, Kentucky; and Hancock, Massachusetts, function as living history museums. Currently, the Shaker Museum and Library, located in New Lebanon, New York, is in the process of restoring the buildings of Mount Lebanon's North Family as the new home for the museum. But not all Shaker sites became historical repositories. Individuals in Harvard, Massachusetts, created the Shaker Village Historic District, turning Shaker buildings into private homes. Harvard's companion village in Shirley houses the Massachusetts Correctional Institute.

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Theology

The cornerstone of Shaker theology is celibacy. For Lee, lust caused Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. To achieve salvation and return to the pre-Edenic state, a person must cast off the desires of the flesh or deny lustful seductions. Because of its centrality to Shaker thought, celibacy was strictly enforced in Shaker communities. Men and women, including married couples, lived separately. Buildings had two staircases and two doors to minimize contact between the sexes —men used one staircase, women another; men used one door, women another. Outsiders found the doctrine of celibacy curious, if not illogical, and argued that if everyone became a Shaker then the human race would soon die out. The Believers argued, however, that universal conversion to Shakerism would usher in a new and sinless world where procreation was unnecessary.

Another important idea in Shaker theology is the belief that Lee was the second appearance of Christ. Whether she believed this about herself is unclear, but after her death Shaker theologians codified their beliefs about her role in salvation history and constructed a clearly defined position. Their efforts culminated in the 1808 publication of *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing,* the Shakers' first major theological treatise.[13] The concept of Lee as the second appearance of Christ is grounded in the Shaker view of the godhead as dual, possessing both a male/father and a female/mother nature. All of creation reflects this duality. Theologically, this duality affected how the Shakers viewed Jesus and Lee. The Shakers rejected the idea that Jesus was divine. He was only a human upon whom the Christ spirit descended

during his lifetime, a view known as adoptionism. At his death, the Christ spirit left Jesus' body. To complete the work of redemption, a female counterpart to Jesus was needed. The Shakers believed that this person was Lee, who was also anointed with the Christ spirit during her time on earth. Thus, the second coming of Christ, which for orthodox Christians remains a future event, occurred for the Shakers in the eighteenth century, hence the official name of the sect—The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing.

Shaker views on the nature of Jesus and Lee influenced the development of other theological points, including the afterlife. Because the Shakers did not believe in the divinity of Jesus, they rejected the biblical story of his bodily resurrection. They did, however, believe in life after death. They said that an active spirit world existed, where those souls who never heard Lee's gospel could still be saved before their final descent into hell. Lee often talked about communicating with these spirits, and during the Era of Manifestations many Shakers offered her plan of salvation to the spirits whom they encountered.

As the Believers' interest in Spiritualism attests, the Shakers did not believe that divine revelation stopped with the Bible. From the beginning, Lee taught that God communicated directly with each believer. In fact, she based her entire ministry on that premise, coming to British North America to "open the gospel" of celibacy after she received a revelation that she believed came from God. As Shakerism progressed, this strain of thought remained strong. It took a different shape in the late nineteenth century when progressive Shakers, believing that God would not limit divine revelation to Christians, assumed that non-Christian religious traditions also contained spiritual truths.

Worship

Worship, as a communal expression of common beliefs, played a central role in Shaker life. Unlike mainstream Christians, the Shakers did not ordain ministers. They believed that God communicated directly with individuals, eliminating the need for a human intermediary. Thus, at sabbath meetings designated individuals might preach on some aspect of Shaker theology, but more important for worship than the spoken word was dance.

The Shakers were known for their dancing. In the early years their spirited whirling and twirling caught outsiders' attention and often led to ridicule and persecution. Under Joseph Meacham, however, the Shakers developed the organized dancing for which they became famous. Meacham saw the individualized dancing and singing of the early days as detrimental to union and order, two concepts central to Shaker thought and manifested by the Believers' emphasis on conformity of action and belief. He introduced songs that everybody sang at certain points in the service. He also replaced the random movement of individuals with intricately choreographed dances that involved each Believer.[14]

Over time the Shakers developed a large repertoire of songs and dances. They sang a cappella and in unison. Many Shaker songs emphasized key doctrines of the

Believers; one of the most common themes was overcoming one's carnal nature or, as Daniel Patterson put it, "taking up a full cross against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil."[15] Dancing, especially, was viewed as an effective way to subjugate one's body. During Lee's missionary tour, Believers described the spirited dancing they witnessed as literally burning away lust. After the Shakers adopted a more ritualized style, dancing was seen as an outward sign of internal subjugation. Shaker theologians Calvin Green and Seth Wells explained the Believers' use of dance in their major theological treatise, *A Summary View of the Millennial Church,* published in 1823. Written specifically to present Shaker beliefs to the outside world, *A Summary View* laid out succinctly the Shaker justification for dancing as a way to praise God. After all, Shakers reasoned, even the Bible told how David and Miriam danced before the Lord. Ritualized dancing also signified the unifying spirit of Christ. Everyone working together, dancing as one body, represented the spiritual union of the Shakers.[16]

Education

The earliest Believers rejected formal education as irrelevant. When they organized communally, however, leaders saw the usefulness of some type of formal training for children. Meacham advocated the teaching of moral values as well as useful skills so that boys and girls would grow up into productive members of society. Increased interaction with the world convinced leaders that children needed to learn, at minimum, reading, writing, and arithmetic to keep them competitive with their worldly counterparts.

Attempts to provide education were sporadic and varied from village to village. Wells's appointment to the position of superintendent of Shaker schools in 1823 gave direction to the Shakers' efforts. The leadership chose Wells because he was one of the few Believers who received a formal education before joining the society. He followed a classical course of study in high school and also studied bookkeeping. Moreover, before his conversion he taught and served as a principal in the Albany, New York, public schools as well as at the Hudson Academy.

Wells introduced several innovations into the Shaker system of education. Over time he expanded the basic curriculum of reading, writing, grammar, spelling, arithmetic, and geography to include algebra, astronomy, agricultural chemistry, and music. He also introduced the Lancastrian method of education, a system popular in the outside world at the time. This method of instruction utilized advanced students, known as monitors, to oversee small groups of students, thus reducing the demands on the teacher. He also called for the Believers to build separate schoolhouses and asked local officials to inspect the schools and their teachers. This worked to the Believers' advantage. Shaker schools consistently received high ratings that, in turn, convinced non-Shaker parents to send their children to Shaker schools. Extended formal education, however, never concerned the Believers. They emphasized manual training and socialization of children. Boys and girls learned tasks appropriate to their gender. They were also expected to learn the basic precepts of Shakerism so that they could take their place in Shaker society when the time came.[17]

Organization

Shaker villages were highly organized, and the leadership structure was multitiered. Several families composed each village, and each family was a fully functioning unit, responsible for its own economic viability. The leadership of a family included the ministry, or elders and eldresses who watched over spiritual and temporal concerns; deacons and deaconesses responsible for internal economic decisions of the family; and trustees and office sisters who mediated between the Shakers and the outside world in business affairs. In conformity with their view that all of creation reflected a dual godhead, each group of leaders included both men and women. The Shakers, however, were not democratic. Those in charge chose the next set of leaders.

Several villages located close together formed a bishopric, and over each bishopric presided a ministry, separate from the ministry of each family. The bishopric ministry was ultimately responsible for the spiritual and economic well-being of the villages they oversaw, and they moved from village to village, staying as long as it took at each place to address any problems that arose.

The central ministry, located at New Lebanon, New York (later called Mount Lebanon), oversaw the bishoprics. The central ministry was the highest authority within Shakerism. Its elders and eldresses concerned themselves with every aspect of Shaker life. They spent much of their time traveling, encouraging the Believers, and dealing with problems that were too big for an individual bishopric to handle.

Living arrangements within Shakerism were also highly organized and centered on the family or order. A gathering order, one or two intermediate orders, a separate children's order if the numbers warranted it, and the Church family composed a typical village. All families lived communally. Everyone able to work did so, but no one received wages. In return the Society provided for all its members' needs, including housing, clothing, meals, medical care, recreation, and spiritual direction. The elderly held a special place in Shaker society, and they were well cared for as they entered their declining years.

The Economy

The economic structure of Shakerism was closely linked to village organization. Each family's ultimate goal was self-sufficiency. Thus, farming was central to the Shaker economy. The Shakers grew what they ate. Men worked the fields, raising various kinds of grains. They also tended orchards and raised livestock. The sisters grew vegetables in their gardens and kept milk cows. The Believers also tried to provide for themselves all the goods and services a community needed, such as blacksmithing and shoemaking. The Shakers built sawmills, gristmills, and, in some places, textile mills. Community members produced items needed for daily life such as baskets, tubs, brooms, hats, socks, and all varieties of furniture.

Despite these efforts, the Believers quickly discovered that they could not cut themselves off from the larger economy. They could, however, use to their advantage

the system of farming and manufacturing that they already had in place. Once they met their own needs, the Shakers sold to outsiders excess foodstuffs and products, or they manufactured items, such as brooms and chairs, specifically for the outside market. They also charged their non-Shaker neighbors for the use of Shaker mills. In short, the Believers entered the world of market capitalism.

The best example of the Shakers' aptitude for producing and selling what the world's people wanted to buy is their highly successful seed and herb industry. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Believers achieved a reputation for the high quality of their seeds and herbs. The Shakers marketed these products over long distances, and the brothers who went on sales trips were gone for months at a time. The economic impact of the seed and herb industry on Shaker communities was significant. During the peak season that industry generated a major percentage of a family's income.

Several factors contributed to the success of Shaker industries. First, the Believers maintained a strict work ethic. All Shakers worked for the community, as much as their health and skills allowed. From a practical point of view, group labor made Shaker communities viable, but the Believers also viewed work as a form of worship. Thus, they approached their daily jobs not as dreary tasks to be performed but as gifts to offer God. Second, the Shakers embraced modern technology. Even though they believed in the value of labor as a spiritual and economic necessity, the Shakers had no qualms about lightening the work load if they could. Thus, the Believers earned a reputation for inventiveness. They are credited with inventing the flat broom and the circular saw. They built labor-saving devices, including a revolving oven and a washing machine. They also willingly adopted improvements that originated in the world such as cast iron stoves, electricity, and indoor plumbing. But perhaps the technological development that most affected the Shaker economy was the railroad. As soon as rail lines were within easy reach of their villages, the Believers used trains to ship their products faster and farther than they could on foot or by wagon, greatly expanding the market for their products.[18]

Clearly, by the middle of the nineteenth century the Shakers abandoned the idea of strict self-sufficiency. Their entrepreneurial skills and their reputation as honest businessmen enabled the Believers to participate in the world of market capitalism. Ultimately, however, their entry into this larger economic realm proved disastrous. As the century progressed, Shaker trustees and deacons displayed economic behavior that undermined Shaker principles. They borrowed heavily from the world, bought stocks and bonds, and engaged in speculation. Almost always these attempts brought economic disaster to the villages.

Declining membership also affected the Shaker economy. By the late nineteenth century, few people were joining the Believers, and those who remained in Shaker villages were elderly and unable to perform the strenuous work necessary to run the families. Communities sometimes hired outside help, but even this was not enough to keep the villages viable. Gradually, villages closed and consolidated. When the situation became desperate, the Shakers resorted to selling their furniture and other items to outsiders. Finally, in 1959 Eldress Emma B. King of the central ministry

created the Shaker Central Trust Fund. The start-up money for this fund came from the sale of villages that were already closed; the purpose of the fund was, and continues to be, to care for the remaining Shakers as well as to preserve Shaker sites and promote an understanding of Shakerism.[19]

Role of Women

One important aspect of Shaker life was the Believers' goal of equality, including gender equality, within their communities.[20] Gender equality was a radical notion in the nineteenth century when women in the outside world had few legal rights and often lived isolated and difficult lives. In fact, Shakerism as a movement with a female founder, always encouraged a positive view of women, and the sisters generally found life in the community satisfying and rewarding.[21]

In the nineteenth century, housework and child care dominated women's lives. Shaker sisters, however, had much greater flexibility than non-Shaker women in the types and amount of work they performed. It is true that the Believers, just as their worldly counterparts, divided work along gender lines—men worked in the fields, and women shouldered domestic duties. The implications of this division of labor, however, differed for Shaker and non-Shaker women. Women in the outside world maintained a continuous round of cooking, cleaning, and laundering, usually without any help. Shaker sisters, however, benefited from the practice of work rotation. The leadership typically assigned jobs to both men and women, taking into account an individual's aptitudes, but rotated labor-intensive work among the brothers and sisters, exempting only those who were too old or too sick to work. Shaker women, thus shared tasks such as laundering and cooking, limiting the time they spent in the least desirable occupations.

Childbirth and child care also placed heavy demands on women. Non-Shaker women had little choice about their future. Society expected them to marry and have children, and those who did not found that life could be difficult both socially and economically. Shakerism, however, offered women an alternative to marriage in which their decision not to marry was honored and in which their economic needs were met, even in old age. Celibacy freed Shaker sisters from the rigors of numerous pregnancies and from potential death in childbirth. Moreover, those women who joined the Shakers with children found respite from child care duties since appointed caretakers raised children separately from their parents.

Freed from child care and with participation in the backbreaking work of the community limited by job rotation, Shaker women enjoyed more time for other aspects of their lives. This was especially true in the area of skilled work. Women worked in groups and formed close bonds with each other as they passed on their skills in making items such as palm-leaf hats, sieves, and leather gloves. The sisters also made "fancy goods" such as poplar sewing cases, pincushions, and pen wipes that they sold in the Shaker stores located in their villages. This arrangement was mutually beneficial. Shaker leadership valued the economic contributions of the products made by

the sisters. The sisters valued the creative outlet inherent in craft production as well as the mental stimulation and companionship that working in groups provided them.[22]

Controversies and Issues

By the first third of the nineteenth century, the Shakers were an accepted part of the American landscape. Most people still found their practices and beliefs strange, but physical violence against the Shakers generally disappeared. But the Shakers still experienced problems with the outside world.

Lawsuits were brought against them by disgruntled apostates, people who left the Shakers on less than happy terms. One of the main reasons for these lawsuits was the apostates' desire to recover back wages or property they gave to the society upon joining. They typically argued that they should be paid for the work they did for the community, just as they would be in the outside world. As troublesome as these lawsuits were, however, the Shakers almost always won them. The courts consistently ruled that people who left the Shakers were not entitled to back wages because their willingness to live in the community indicated an acceptance of the communal regulations that governed a Shaker village. As for the recovery of property by former Church family members, time after time, the court recognized the Church family covenant as a legal and binding document and refused to return property legally transferred to the community.

Lawsuits against the Shakers also occurred when parents tried to recover their children from the Believers. It was not uncommon for parents who were unable to care for their children to turn them over to the Shakers. To do so they signed an indenture that, like the covenant, was a legally binding document. This virtually guaranteed that parents who took the Shakers to court in an effort to retrieve their children lost their case. A murkier issue involved children who entered the community with one or both parents. Normally this was not a problem, but when one of the parents left and the other one stayed, or when one parent refused to join the Shakers, custody of the children could become an issue.

The stories of two such parents—Eunice Chapman and Mary Dyer—became nationally known when both women published accounts of their efforts. In 1811 Chapman's husband became a Shaker, moving to the Niskeyuna, New York, community in 1813. According to Chapman's account, in 1814 she visited this community, leaving her children with her sister, only to find on her return that the Shakers had taken her children to live with them at her husband's request. To be near her children, Chapman lived with the Niskeyuna Shakers for two weeks but refused to join, so they sent her to Albany. In 1817 she published *An Account of the Conduct of the People Called Shakers,* exposing the pain she suffered at the Believers' practice of breaking up families.[23] The following year the New York State legislature, influenced by her publication, granted Chapman a divorce and passed a law that allowed non-Shaker parents to seek custody of children living with the Believers. Over several years, Chapman used this law to regain custody of her three children.[24]

Dyer's struggle to recover her children was even more protracted, although her troubles began much like Chapman's. In 1811 Dyer's husband, Joseph, became interested in the Shakers, and at his insistence he and Mary visited the Believers at Enfield, New Hampshire. Joseph wanted to join; Mary did not. To convince her, Joseph promised that she could control the lives of their five children and offered the compromise that if either one of them left the Shakers, he would get three of the children and she would get two. Mary was not happy with Joseph's offer, but she agreed to move herself and her children to Enfield in 1813.[25]

Mary stayed with the Believers for two years but never felt at home. In 1815 she left, claiming emotional abuse (the Shakers had cut off all contact between her and her children) and physical abuse. Three years later she published *A Brief Statement of the Sufferings of Mary Dyer, Occasioned by the Society Called Shakers,* an account of her time with the Believers in which she exposed the sordid (though not necessarily true) details of life in a Shaker community.[26] She followed this publication with *A Portraiture of Shakerism* in 1822, and for a time during the 1820s, her plight generated much public interest.[27] Eventually, the New Hampshire state legislature granted Mary a divorce. She was never successful, however, in recovering her children from the Believers, and spent the final years of her life living in a small house near the Enfield Shaker community, the closest she could get to her children.

Conflicts with the world were not the only problems the Shakers faced. Despite their stated goal of unity, the Believers, being human, experienced their share of internal conflict. One of the earliest tensions, was between eastern and western Shakers. Because of the geographic distance between the western and eastern villages, western Shakers developed a sense of autonomy that irritated eastern leaders, who viewed the western Shakers as newcomers to the movement. One of the first manifestations of this tension was the central ministry's displeasure with the publication of Benjamin Seth Youngs's theological treatise, *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing* in 1808. Youngs, who lived at South Union, Kentucky, had help from several other western Shakers in writing the book, and when they finished they sent a copy to the central ministry. Wright wrote to the western leaders, acknowledging their efforts but admonishing them for some of the views expressed in the volume. Two years later, in order to regain control of their theological turf, the eastern Shakers reissued the *Testimony,* edited by Wells and Green, two of the foremost eastern theologians.

Another source of tension within Shakerism centered on the Era of Manifestations. On the one hand, the revival brought new life to Shaker communities. The many visions and messages that poured forth during this period helped the Believers articulate some of their theological beliefs, especially the dual nature of the godhead. Many songs from the revival became standards in Shaker worship. On the other hand, the Era of Manifestations led to much confusion among the Believers. Perhaps the most obvious tension was between those who supported the work of the spirit and those who supported an ordered life based on obedience to the rules of Shaker society. Instruments and visionists revealed spirit messages that undermined the

teachings of the leadership, and they supported their messages by citing divine revelation, a claim the ministry could not dismiss easily. To maintain control, the central ministry required instruments to "open" their visions to their elders before revealing them in a service. Older visionists assumed positions of leadership in their villages, enabling them to check the extreme enthusiasm of some of the younger instruments. Eventually, the village ministries hand picked new visionists, whom they could trust to tow the ministries' line.[28]

Yet another source of conflict within Shaker villages occurred when trustees and deacons ignored the rules about financial interactions with the world and pursued business deals that devastated the economic stability of their villages. Both the Shirley, Massachusetts, and the New Gloucester, Maine, villages experienced severe financial setbacks when they plunged into the world of finance capitalism. In 1849 the Shirley Shakers built the Phoenix textile mill solely for the purpose of leasing it to outsiders. They quickly found that they spent more money to maintain the property than they earned in rent. Moreover, Jonas Nutting, the Shaker who oversaw the project, borrowed $30,000 to finance the factory; this, in turn, meant interest payments that had to be met. In 1861 the Shirley Believers' total debt for the factory was $50,000, a sum that threatened their economic viability. They sold the factory in 1866, declaring it a complete failure.[29]

The New Gloucester Shakers faced a similar problem. They too invested money in a large mill and found that they could not pay to maintain it. Ransom Gilman, the trustee responsible for the factory, engaged in speculation, a practice forbidden by the Shakers. He borrowed money to buy wheat in Chicago that was then shipped to the Believers. They ground it into flour and hoped to sell it for a profit. The plan failed, yet Gilman continued to buy grain, anticipating a change in fortunes. By 1861 the New Gloucester Shakers were $14,000 in debt. The central ministry asked the other villages to contribute a specified amount of money to New Gloucester so that the Believers there could pay their debt without borrowing even more money. Such a gesture of support epitomized the communal nature of Shaker life.[30]

CONCLUSION

Many scholars consider the Shakers to be the most successful of American attempts at communal life because the group, though very small, still exists today. The Society survived the death of its charismatic leader and has continued to find a niche in American society. Americans, moreover, discovered the Shakers. Restored Shaker villages, as well as the Sabbathday Lake community, are popular attractions. Shaker furniture, both antique and reproduction, is popular among collectors. Books on many different aspects of Shakerism, from history to architecture to cookbooks, continue to be published. The Shaker legacy is well preserved; even when the last Shaker dies, the world of Shakerism will live on.

NOTES

1. On the earliest years of the movement, see Clarke Garrett, *Spirit Possession and Popular Religion: From the Camisards to the Shakers* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

2. The classic history of the Shakers is Edward Deming Andrews, *The People Called Shakers: A Search for the Perfect Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), and was reissued by Dover in 1963 as an enlarged edition. This book sparked the current interest in Shaker studies. The definitive history of the Shakers, however, is Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1992).

3. Rufus Bishop and Seth Y. Wells, *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Our Ever Blessed Mother Ann Lee, and the Elders with Her; Through Whom the Word of Eternal Life was Opened in this Day of Christ's Second Appearing: Collected from Living Witnesses* (Hancock, MA: J. Tallcott and J. Deming, 1816).

4. On the expansion of Shakerism in the west, see F. Gerald Ham, "Shakerism in the Old West" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1962); and Julia Neal, *By Their Fruits: The Story of Shakerism in South Union, Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947).

5. Stein, *The Shaker Experience,* 106–18, quote on 117.

6. Calvin Green and Seth Y. Wells, *A Summary View of the Millennial Church, or United Society of Believers, (Commonly Called Shakers,) Comparing the Rise, Progress, and Practical Order of the Society; Together with the General Principles of Their Faith and Testimony* (Albany, NY: Packard and Van Benthuysen, 1823), 76; Priscilla Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (Hanover, NH: University of New England Press, 1986), 74–79, 147–50, 224.

7. William Sims Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics 1840–1900: An Example of the Use of U.S. Census Enumeration Schedules," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 21 (1982): 353–55.

8. Andrews, *People Called Shakers*, 155; Brewer, *Shaker Communities*, 115; Lawrence Foster, "Shaker Spiritualism and Salem Witchcraft: Social Perspectives on Trance and Possession Phenomena," *Communal Societies* 5 (Fall 1985): 179; Sally M. Promey, *Spiritual Spectacles: Vision and Image in Mid-Nineteenth Century Shakerism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 1–13; Suzanne R. Thurman, *"O Sisters Ain't You Happy?": Gender, Family, and Community Among the Harvard and Shirley Shakers, 1781–1918* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 97.

9. Thurman, *"O Sisters Ain't You Happy?"* 148.

10. Neal, *By Their Fruits,* 177–97; Thomas D. Clark and F. Gerald Ham, *Pleasant Hill and Its Shakers* (Pleasant Hill, KY: Shakertown Press, 1968), 63–70.

11. Stein, *The Shaker Experience,* 122, 235.

12. Ibid., 320–37, quote on 323.

13. Benjamin S. Youngs, *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing Containing a General Statement of All Things Pertaining to the Faith and Practice of the Church of God in this Latter-day* (Lebanon, OH: Press of John M'Clean, 1808).

14. Edward Deming Andrews, *The Gift to be Simple: Songs, Dances and Rituals of the American Shakers* (New York: Dover, 1962), 143–57.

15. The definitive work on Shaker songs is Daniel W. Patterson, *The Shaker Spiritual,* 2nd ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2000), quote on 39.

16. Green and Wells, *A Summary View of the Millennial Church,* 82–83, 85–87; Suzanne Thurman, "The Seat of Sin, the Site of Salvation: The Shaker Body and the Nineteenth-Century American Imagination," *Nineteenth Century Studies* 15 (2001): 5–6.
17. On Shaker education, see Stein, *The Shaker Experience,* 100–101; Andrews, *People Called Shakers*, 186–94; Marguerite Fellows Melcher, *The Shaker Adventure* (Old Chatham, NY: The Shaker Museum, 1975), 158–61.
18. See Edward Deming Andrews and Faith Andrews, *Work and Worship: The Economic Order of the Shakers* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1974).
19. Stein, *The Shaker Experience,* 364, 366.
20. Not all scholars take this position. See Priscilla Brewer, "'Tho' of the Weaker Sex': A Reassessment of Gender Equality among the Shakers," in *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States,* ed. Wendy E. Chmielewski, Louis J. Kern, and Marlyn Klee-Hartzell (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993): 133–49.
21. See Thurman, *"O Sisters Ain't You Happy?"* passim.
22. See Beverly Gordon, "Shaker Fancy Goods: Women's Work and Presentation of Self in the Community Context in the Victorian Era," in *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies,* ed. Chmielewski, Kern, and Klee-Hartzell, 89–103.
23. Eunice Chapman, *An Account of the Conduct of the People Called Shakers: In the Case of Eunice Chapman and Her Children, since Her Husband Became Acquainted with That People and Joined Their Society* (Albany, NY: 1817).
24. Thurman, "The Seat of Sin," 8.
25. A comprehensive account of the Mary Dyer case is Elizabeth A. DeWolfe, *Shaking the Faith: Women, Family, and Mary Marshall Dyer's Anti-Shaker Campaign, 1815–1867* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
26. Mary M. Dyer, *A Brief Statement of the Sufferings of Mary Dyer, Occasioned by the Society Called Shakers, Written by Herself, to Which is Added Affidavits and Certificates: Also a Declaration from Their Own Publication* (Concord, NH: 1818).
27. Mary M. Dyer, *A Portraiture of Shakerism, Exhibiting a General View of Their Character and Conduct, from the First Appearance of Ann Lee in New-England, Down to the Present Time, and Certified by Many Respectable Authorities* (n.p.: 1822).
28. See Diane Sasson, "Individual Experience, Community Control, and Gender: The Harvard Community During the Era of Manifestations," *Communal Societies* 13 (1993): 45–70.
29. Thurman, *"O Sisters Ain't You Happy?"* 143–46.
30. Stein, *The Shaker Experience,* 145–46.

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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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INTRODUCTION

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also known as the Mormon or LDS church, constitute an organization that transcends simple denominational status. Though the Mormons were originally one of a multitude of restorationist churches emerging out of the ferment known as the Second Great Awakening in the early nineteenth century, a number of factors conspired to forge an entity variously considered a religion, a people, a global tribe, and a New Religious Movement (NRM), the only "indigenously derived ethnic group" in the United States and an emerging world religion. Mormonism's distinctive doctrines challenge the boundaries of Christian orthodoxy, while a history of persecution and exile fostered a close-knit Mormon community with fierce intragroup loyalties. In addition, authoritarian leadership and superefficient worldwide correlation of all church programs and instructional materials establish an uncommon degree of uniformity and conformity, while unusually intense requirements of sacrifice, commitment, lifestyle practices, and service far surpass the norms of a nominal, Sunday-only Christian observance. One of the fastest growing churches in the world, Mormonism has enjoyed a colorful history characterized by charismatic beginnings, new scripture, and violent confrontation with its host society that gradually was transformed into its current position of utmost respectability in mainstream American society. Once condemned by non-Mormon preachers and politicians, Mormons are now lauded by observers as "the American religion"[1] and praised by presidents and public figures for their family values, clean living, healthy lifestyle, and humanitarian outreach to members and nonmembers alike.

HISTORY

The founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith (1805–1844), dated the commencement of his life's labor—the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—to 1827. That was the year an angelic messenger who identified himself as Moroni directed Smith

to retrieve from an upstate New York hillside a set of gold plates. This was not Smith's first encounter with heavenly visitors. As a youth of 14, he experienced a vision of God and Jesus Christ, who appeared in answer to his personal quest for the true religion. This experience, which he apparently regarded as a personal one only, gave him no authority to inaugurate a religious movement. But three years later in the fall of 1823, Moroni appeared for the first time, told Smith "that God had a work for [him] to do," and unfolded to him a remarkable story. Moroni described an ancient record that detailed the history of some early inhabitants of the North American continent, contained "the fulness of the everlasting gospel," and recorded a visit of Christ to that same people. Moroni returned to Smith yearly four more times, before indicating the burial spot of the plates and allowing Smith to remove them. Smith was also given a device with which to translate them. At some point in the translation process, Smith realized that his work extended beyond the translation and publication of the plates as the Book of Mormon, which was published in March 1830, to include the restoration of priesthood authority and (re)establishment of the true church of Jesus Christ. Formal organization of this entity, initially called the Church of Christ, occurred on April 6, 1830.

Reports that Smith had a "gold bible" attracted considerable intrusion and harassment, leading him to relocate in Harmony, Pennsylvania, and later Fayette, New York, before work on the Book of Mormon was complete. But opposition to the new church might have eventually died down if not for a fateful decision Smith made late in 1830. In response to another revelation from God, he announced that converts to the new faith were to be "gathered in unto one place." The initial location for this gathering was Kirtland, Ohio, but shortly thereafter Jackson County, Missouri, was named the site of a New Jerusalem, and most converts headed there even as Smith continued to direct construction of a temple and supervise the church from Ohio. In 1835, he organized the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the first two Quorums of Seventy. Today, those bodies, together with the First Presidency (the prophet and two counselors), constitute the leadership of the church. The Kirtland temple was dedicated in 1836, though it served more as a meetinghouse than the locale where special rituals and ordinances are performed, as is the case today.

A series of conflicts both internal and external (see below) led to successive displacements of Mormons through several Missouri counties, leading to a period of relatively calm exile in Nauvoo, Illinois (1838–1846). There, the Mormons lived in a virtual city-state of their own construction, while converts poured in from the east and from Great Britain, and doctrine poured forth from Smith. The first wave of converts were mostly Campbellites, followers of Alexander Campbell's (1788–1866) reformed Baptist movement who joined when Campbellite preacher Sidney Rigdon (1793–1876) did in the Kirtland, Ohio, area. Many other converts were "seekers," unaffiliated Christians looking for a form of Christianity that more nearly approximated the New Testament church than contemporary institutions. Smith's insistence that his authority was not just assumed, but actually conferred upon him by heavenly messengers, was a powerful claim, and in nearly all instances, converts

were convinced, after reading it, that the Book of Mormon was the word of God and therefore sure evidence of Smith's authority and legitimacy.

Conflicts in Illinois emerged as they had elsewhere, but compounded in this instance by rumors of Smith's introduction of plural marriage (technically polygyny —a man taking more than one wife—but commonly called polygamy in historical discussions of Mormonism) and his espoused political aspirations (he initiated a campaign for president of the United States in 1844). A vitriolic attack from a dissident newspaper led Smith as Nauvoo's mayor, with the city council's assent, to issue an ill-conceived order declaring the paper a public nuisance. The city marshal accordingly destroyed the offending press, and shortly thereafter Smith was arrested and acquitted (in a Nauvoo court) of inciting a riot. In the ensuing turmoil, and in spite of clear premonitions of his own death, Smith subjected himself to double jeopardy by giving himself up to Carthage, Illinois, authorities. He was murdered the following day (June 27, 1844) by a mob of Carthage militia while under the governor's protection.

Upon Smith's martyrdom, several claimants to be his successor emerged. Most Mormons agreed to the leadership of Brigham Young (1801–1877), president of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, and followed him west. The largest other group would organize under Joseph's son Joseph Smith III (1832–1914) in 1860 as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (renamed the Community of Christ in 2000). The main body of Mormons settled in the desolate Salt Lake Valley, which was part of Mexico when they embarked on their westward exodus but became part of the United States as a consequence of the treaty of 1848 following the Mexican War. They organized a provisional government of the State of Deseret in 1849; the Territory of Deseret followed in 1851. With the public avowal of the practice of polygamy in 1852, Mormon Utah entered a protracted struggle with the federal government.

A number of factors conspired to crush Mormon hopes for religious autonomy in the West. First was the federal government's unwillingness to countenance plural marriage, even in a geographically remote setting. The gold rush of 1849 spurred western settlement, and the coming of the railroad effectively sealed the end of Utah's isolation. Conformity with more mainstream values became an imperative if the Mormon Church was going to survive, the territory achieve statehood, and the Mormon people win greater acceptance and respectability in wider American society. The end of polygamy was initiated in 1890, and shortly thereafter Mormons embraced participation in the national political parties, disbanding their own People's Party. Mormon participation in the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893 resulted in honors for their Tabernacle Choir, a massed-voice chorus, furthering their quest for participation in the mainstream. Another significant development in this era was the church's cessation of the practice of the gathering (or settling in Mormon communities in Utah); converts were encouraged to build up their churches locally, and in 1895 the first stake (a diocese-like unit) was organized outside the United States (in Canada). Henceforward, the church steered toward an international rather than a primarily Utahan—or even American—composition.

Mormons manned the famous Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War (1846–1848), but mostly out of economic self-interest at a time of impoverished exile. They remained mostly aloof in the Civil War (1861–1865), understandably unenthusiastic about supporting either side. But World War I (1914–1918) provided the American Mormons with an opportunity to prove their unqualified patriotism. Utah's volunteer enlistments were far above quotas, and Red Cross contributions and Liberty Bond purchases similarly exceeded federal requests. Theologically, doctrines were not changing but emphases were. Tithing was rigorously encouraged in 1899, helping the church solve a long-standing crisis precipitated by federal financial oppression. The Word of Wisdom, a rigorous health code, was received in 1833, but was seldom rigorously enforced or observed. That changed as well, with adherence becoming a requirement for temple admission in the 1920s. Another hallmark of modern Mormonism, the church's welfare program, was initiated in the years of the Great Depression (1929–early 1940s). Today, both Mormon values of economic self-reliance and a formidable system of welfare farms, production facilities, distribution centers, and bishop's storehouses are legendary.

Missionary work was always integral to Mormonism. As World War II (1939–1945) approached, successful proselytizing and a high birth rate combined to produce nearly a million members. One of Mormonism's most beloved prophets, David O. McKay (1873–1970), assumed the presidency in 1951. His slogan, "every member a missionary," typified a renewed emphasis on missionary work. His two decades in office saw church membership triple from approximately one to three million members. The following decade was equally dramatic, with a continuing growth rate of 40 percent per decade. Increasingly, the church was becoming a church of the southern hemisphere, with Latin American growth strongest. Spencer W. Kimball's (1895–1985) 1978 revelation extending the priesthood to blacks alleviated tensions with African Americans, and opened Africa and northern Brazil to missionary work with dramatic results. Growth among the American black community, however, remained modest.

Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), former Secretary of Agriculture under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, became church president in 1985. His lasting legacy was an emphasis on the Book of Mormon that effectively elevated that scripture to a central place in Mormon doctrine and devotional life. By the early years of the new millennium, more than 120 million copies of the Book were in print, making it the most widely published and distributed book ever produced by an American.

After a brief presidency by Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995), Gordon B. Hinckley (b. 1910) assumed the position of "prophet, seer, and revelator" in the Mormon Church. The most media-savvy leader the church has known, Hinckley improved relations with the press, put an articulate and good-humored face on modern Mormonism, and inaugurated a program of prolific temple building that dwarfed all previous efforts.

By the year 2000, Mormon membership passed 11 million, and it is now one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States. Much debated claims that Mormonism is the next world religion, and the first to emerge since Islam, are

probably premature. But phenomenal growth continues in Latin America, and relatively small but growing populations exist scattered throughout Asia and Africa. The nineteenth century church depended largely on Great Britain and northern Europe for its convert base; those areas appear now to be stagnant in terms of LDS growth. What appears certain is that Mormonism is no longer an American religion. Since 2000, more members speak Spanish than English, a trend sure to continue in the new millennium.

PEOPLE, FOUNDERS, AND LEADERS

Joseph Smith

Joseph's position in the LDS church is more than first in a line of prophets that continues to this day. Of the three books of scripture Mormons use in addition to the Bible (The Book of Mormon, the *Pearl of Great Price,* and the *Doctrine and Covenants*), Smith produced two in their entirety and virtually all of the third. As a revealer of new doctrines, Smith was in his most prolific phase when his life was cut short. Temple ordinances, radical teachings on the nature and origin of God, and a doctrine of human theosis, or humanity's literal potential to become like God, all emerged out of the Nauvoo years. In fact, no significant addition to LDS theology or practice occurred after his death, making him effectively a Mormon prophet without parallel. Like Muslims, Mormons use the term "the prophet" as a synonym for their religion's founder (although it can also refer in contemporary contexts to whomever occupies that position currently).

The sources of Smith's ideas, organizational genius, and influence over his followers are widely disputed. Followers believe he enjoyed communion with God after the pattern of Moses—face to face encounters involving dialogic revelation, with Smith asking questions and receiving specific, articulate responses. These encounters were supplemented by angelic assistance from a host of resurrected beings. His gift of seership, initially the ability to translate gold plates with the aid of a seerstone and a device called the Urim and Thummim, eventually developed into the ability to recover a number of ancient texts independently of any manuscript, produced by biblical figures such as Adam, Abraham, Enoch, Moses, and John. Nonmembers ascribe his production of these writings to sheer inventiveness, familiarity with hermetic and esoteric sources, or simply a "genius" for "uncanny recovery of elements in ancient Jewish theurgy."[2] His powerful charismatic appeal was attributed to mesmerism by legions of early writers, but his devotion to his people was noted by all, and his willingness to suffer on their behalf elicited a reciprocal loyalty and a reverence that continues today.

Brigham Young

Brigham Young occupies a close second as the prophet who was most influential in shaping the nature and direction of Mormonism. He lacked Smith's gift—or felt the need had largely been fulfilled—for "thus saith the Lord" pronouncements and

doctrinal revelations. As a leader and colonizer, he is without parallel in American history. He masterminded the largest migration of American citizens in history, supervised the founding of hundreds of communities in the intermountain West, fostered a prosperous and thriving Mormon subculture that numbered over 100,000 at his death, and made his imprint felt on every aspect of Mormon life and society for more than three decades. Until the United States government intervened, he successfully organized and managed a virtual theocracy.

Relentlessly pragmatic, plainspoken, and often confrontational, Young was (justly) suspicious of federal authorities and intentions, resisted incursions of "gentile" (non-Mormon) influence, and disliked "philosophy." At the same time, he was progressive and liberal enough to found the Salt Lake Theatre, continue Smith's support for education in the new territory, and encourage the professional training and rights of women.

Eliza R. Snow

Eliza Roxey Snow (1804–1887) had the unique distinction of being wed to two prophets (Smith and Young) and being sister to a third, the fifth prophet Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901). But independent of those connections, Snow was one of early Mormonism's finest poets, intellectuals, and role models for women. She played a key role in founding the Relief Society (one of the largest and oldest women's organizations in the world), sending LDS women to eastern medical schools, encouraging their engagement in politics, and founding a women's journal, *The Woman's Exponent.* She also was influential in establishing a popular but never developed and seldom-discussed doctrine of Mormonism, a Mother in Heaven, through one of the most beloved hymns in Mormonism, "Oh My Father." The words also give expression to the LDS doctrine of premortal existence, invoking a time when "in some first primeval childhood [I was] nurtured near thy side."

Parley P. Pratt

If Smith was the revealer of most Mormon doctrines, Parley Pratt (1807–1857) was one of the first to organize them and present them in a suitable form for mass public consumption. His *Voice of Warning* (1837), the first sustained exposition of Mormon doctrine, remained a staple in the missionary repertoire well into the twentieth century. Pratt was himself an indefatigable missionary, serving on over 20 mission tours, as well as being a self-taught man of letters. He produced the most literary Mormon autobiography of his generation, as well as numerous hymns still used and the church's first works of fiction, such as the 1844 "Dialogue of Joseph Smith and the Devil."

James E. Talmage

James Talmage (1862–1933) was a brilliant educator, scholar, and internationally recognized scientist who brought erudition and academic training to the task of a

Mormon theology. His two landmark works had the distinction of being commissioned by the Church, and retain a quasi-canonical status. *The Articles of Faith: Being a Consideration of the Principal Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1899) is a systematic exposition of the 13 tenets listed by Smith as a summary of LDS teachings. He followed this in 1915 with *Jesus the Christ: A Study of the Messiah and his Mission,* still the definitive LDS work on christology. His work on *The Great Apostasy* (1909), though now somewhat dated, also established LDS views on the historical reality of the corruption of Christianity and a need for full restoration rather than reformation. Talmage was one of a generation of church intellectuals who demonstrated a successful synthesis of secular and spiritual approaches to the gospel. His calling as an apostle (a level of church leadership) and role as expounder of church doctrine affirmed the early Mormon Church's emphasis on intelligence as "the glory of God."

Hugh W. Nibley

Hugh Nibley (1910–2005) was the dominant Mormon intellectual of postwar Mormonism. His influence was primarily felt among Latter-day Saints hungry for intellectual foundations to the Book of Mormon, the ancient writings gathered in the Pearl of Great Price, and temple theology. His work on the Book of Mormon, in particular, creates a compelling case for Near Eastern elements bespeaking a genuinely ancient provenance to the text. Competent in several ancient and modern languages, Nibley was the first Mormon apologist to earn the praise of prominent non-LDS scholars of biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies and even the grudging respect of Protestant evangelicals.

Within the LDS community, Nibley also exerted unparalleled influence as a critic of Mormon culture, relentlessly attacking what he saw as departures from early Mormonism's teachings on the environment, materialism, and intellectual engagement. His rhetorical flamboyance and personal idiosyncrasies won him a devoted following, even as the former alienated some colleagues and critics of the church. His legacy is fairly assured through approximately 20 volumes of collected works.

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

When it comes to distinctive LDS teachings and doctrines, the Book of Mormon occupies a special place. Published and advertised for sale even before the Church came into being, the new book of scripture was perhaps more important for what it embodied than for what it promulgated. As a new revelation from heaven, the book represented a reopening of communication between humanity and God, a renewed covenant, and new dispensation. And it set Smith apart among myriad nineteenth century claimants to prophetic authority as one who produced tangible, verifiable evidence of his divine calling. The Book of Mormon was therefore a dramatic sign that distinguished Mormonism as a religion of new prophets and new revelation. Smith inaugurated Mormonism with this emphasis on the form and

accessibility, rather than the content, of divine knowledge, with his first words upon returning from the Sacred Grove, the forested spot near his Palmyra, New York, home where he had his first vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ: "I have learned for myself,…" Likewise, the Book of Mormon enjoins readers to "ask of God" if the record is true, and promises that "by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5). This emphasis on what Latter-day Saints call "personal revelation" is both a core principle of Mormonism and the bedrock for all other principles.

After the church was organized, Smith experienced repeated visions and revelations, and elaborated a fairly comprehensive theology that departed from other Christian creeds in fundamental ways, even as he claimed to restore the authority and organization that characterized the church that Christ established. The entire program of gospel restoration was predicated on the belief, affirmed to Smith in his "First Vision," that all Christian groups had departed from the true gospel order, in a universal or "Great" apostasy. Unlike other restorationists that likewise believed the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century had not gone far enough in recuperating original Christianity, Smith taught that even Adam was taught the gospel, baptized, and given the gift of the Holy Ghost. Christ himself, in other words, was restoring, rather than inaugurating, gospel teachings and ordinances.

Smith also differed from most other religious innovators of his day in affirming the need for manifest evidence of divine authority to act in God's name. In his case, he insisted that he received such "priesthood" authority to perform rituals called ordinances in God's name, by the personal appearing of a resurrected John the Baptist in May 1829, who ordained Smith to the Aaronic Priesthood. Subsequently, he claimed receipt of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, by the resurrected apostles of Christ, Peter, James, and John. Thus, he asserted the same kind of continuity that is the basis for Roman Catholicism's claim to authority: literal apostolic succession.

First and notably different among the beliefs Smith restored was the conception of the godhead. Joseph echoed historical Christianity in considering God the Father to be the supreme being and object of worship, and in holding Jesus Christ to be God's divinely begotten son, the Savior who atoned for the sins of the human race, and the Savior who was literally resurrected from death. Salvation, for Latter-day Saints, is impossible independent of Jesus Christ's freely given sacrifice of himself on mankind's behalf in the crucifixion. In this cardinal sense, Latter-day Saints are clearly and undeniably Christian. But flying in the face of Trinitarian formulations, Smith declared that "the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also" [D&C 130:22]. The Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost, as the third member of the godhead, is not corporeal but exists as a "personage of spirit." Not canonized or fully incorporated into church teaching, but taught by Smith as well, was the further claim that "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens."

Smith's conception of humankind was as radical as his views on deity. Humanity, he declared, was eternally existent, inherently innocent, boundlessly free, and infinitely perfectible. "Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light

of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be," he wrote (D&C 93:29). Latter-day Saints accordingly believe that human existence recedes infinitely into the past, incorporating a premortal state in which we lived in God's presence as his literal spirit offspring. Mortality is a probationary period in which humans both demonstrate and improve upon moral qualities, under conditions of trial, opposition, and temptation.

Existing before the fall of Adam, humanity cannot therefore be seen as emerging out of a context of corruption or originating from fallen parentage. Therefore, "Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God (D&C 93:38). Though we are born into a world of sin and obtain human bodies subject to weakness and sinful appetite, Mormons believe we inherit neither sin nor guilt. Infant baptism is thus redundant at best and sacrilege at worst, since it denies both the inherent innocence of God's divine progeny and the efficacy of Christ's atonement, which does away with the effect of Adam's sin.

Every human being has agency, or moral freedom, which is, in fact, an inalienable characteristic of the human spirit as constituted by God. "All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence" (D&C 93:30). Or as Smith wrote more simply, God affirmed such freedom in our mortal context when, "in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency" (Moses 7:32, Pearl of Great Price). Freedom of choice was, in fact, the subject of the war in heaven between the great archangel Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels, alluded to in Revelation 12, according to writings produced by Smith. The privileged position that accountability and freedom of choice occupy informs the Mormon political, cultural, and theological sensibility.

Finally, Smith taught that humanity can become even as God is. "You have got to learn how to make yourselves Gods," he said, "by going from a small capacity to a great capacity, from a small degree to another, from grace to grace, until the resurrection of the dead, from exaltation to exaltation—till you are able to sit in everlasting burnings and everlasting power and glory." Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), sixth president of the church, confirmed that "as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God."[3]

In this perspective, part of the eternal destiny that awaits the righteous is the opportunity to continue in family relationships beyond mortal life. Through special ordinances, men and women may be sealed to each other for time and eternity, and children to their parents, in a chain of associations that can extend infinitely in both directions. Interpreting the promises made to the biblical partriarch Abraham literally, Latter-day Saints believe that those who receive exaltation in the Celestial kingdom of God (the highest of three levels of heaven in Mormon thought) may also sire an endless posterity of spirit offspring, in the same way that the human family are spirit offspring of a Heavenly Father. The essence of exaltation or eternal life, for

Latter-day Saints, is this capacity and privilege to enjoy and perpetuate eternal family relationships.

Mormons are quasi-universalists. They believe that virtually all people will be saved in one of three kingdoms of glory—which are demarcated the Celestial, the Terrestrial, and the Telestial—although exaltation pertains to the highest order within the Celestial kingdom alone, and an unfortunate few who willfully persist in rebellion against God and his Christ will be consigned, through their own determined choices, to an uncertain fate as "sons of perdition." The God of Mormonism is hence a God who is above all else a generous and merciful God who must nonetheless honor the agency that he gave to the human race, whose members will receive the greatest rewards and blessings "which they are willing to receive."

To create a holy place where eternal marriages and other sacred ordinances can be performed, Latter-day Saints erect temples. Unlike meetinghouses, buildings for normal Sunday worship open to Mormon and visitor alike, temples are entered only by those who aspire to live by the strictest requirements of faithfulness, as manifested by a "temple recommend" bestowed after interviews with ecclesiastical leaders. Mormons believe that deceased individuals are subject to the same requirements imposed on the living if they hope for salvation. They must accept Christ and the ordinances, beginning with baptism, that he stipulated. But Mormons also believe that God is just, and therefore he made provisions that those who die in ignorance can be taught the gospel and have sacred ordinances performed on their behalf by the living. Such "work for the dead" is also conducted in the temples. As evidence that ancient Christians performed such rituals, including the baptizing of living proxies on behalf of deceased ancestors and others, Latter-day Saints refer to Paul's rhetorical question to the Corinthians, "If the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for the dead?" (I Corinthians 15:29).

The "strict requirements" that manifest the life of a devout Mormon include adherence to a health code, known as the Word of Wisdom, which mandates moderation in diet and abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee. The code also enjoins sparing consumption of meat, use of grains, and enjoyment of fruits and herbs "in their season." Mormons must also comply with the Old Testament law of tithing, paying ten percent of their income to the church. LDS financial offerings thus tend to be much higher than in other Christian denominations. Part of the reason is that temple goers must be full tithe payers, and part of the reason is undoubtedly the culture of sacrifice intrinsic to Mormonism. Faithful members are also expected to conform to the law of chastity, which means no premarital or extramarital sexual relations. The importance of this principle, like the Word of Wisdom, is doubtless related to the biblical concept of the human body as a temple of God. But it receives additional significance from the unique belief that procreation is no mere biological convention for the peopling of the earth, but a sacred power that in the eternities pertains to godhood itself. The emphasis bears tangible results. Studies consistently show that LDS youth and adults alike practice sexual chastity at significantly higher levels than members of other groups.

Adherence to the Mormon faith also requires a commitment to Christian service. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has no professional clergy. Except for the General Authorities, who constitute the central leadership based in Salt Lake, virtually all positions in the Church are filled by lay workers. Even bishops, who preside over local congregations called wards, and stake presidents, who preside over groupings of wards called stakes, perform their demanding service voluntarily, in addition to their professional and family commitments. Typical wards require volunteer service in 100 or more other positions called "callings." At the age of 19, young men are expected to serve for two full years, at their own expense, as proselytizing missionaries. Retired couples are also encouraged to serve, often doing so in the areas of education or humanitarian services. Young women are not expected to serve, but many thousands do so every year. Missionary work is considered primarily a responsibility pertaining to the priesthood, and Mormons follow the primitive church in restricting the priesthood to worthy males only.

Modeled in part on the New Testament church, the LDS church has a prophet as its head, assisted by two counselors, with the Quorum of Twelve Apostles ranking next in the hierarchy. The apostolic succession restored by Smith continues to the present, with Latter-day Saints sustaining the present leader as "prophet, seer, and revelator" of the church. "Modern revelation" or "continuing revelation" thus remains the distinguishing feature of LDS church leadership. Though the manifestations of this model are not as dramatic as in the days of Smith and Young, Mormons continue nonetheless to accept the prophet as the literal spokesman for God. In a practice that avoids any semblance of politicking or lobbying, the senior apostle is routinely ordained the new prophet upon the death of his predecessor.

Under the direction of the Twelve Apostles are several Quorums of Seventy, and then Area Authorities responsible for vast geographical units. Within those units, the next descending level of organization is the stake, presided over by a president and two counselors, and comprising five to a dozen wards and branches (a branch is a unit with generally fewer members and leadership resources than a ward).

Two areas of Mormon culture with roots in revealed theology are welfare and education. Historians have commented on the peculiar tendency, in Mormonism, to "exalt … economics and economic welfare into an important, if not indispensable, element of religious salvation."[4] Smith experimented with communalism to obviate poverty, and Young famously ordered relief expeditions to save starving handcart pioneers (Mormon settlers traveling westward to Utah) with the words, "that is my religion,… to save the people." In the 1930s, leaders centralized a churchwide welfare program, intended to replace "the curse of idleness" and the indignity of the dole with principles of self-reliance and industry. Accordingly, the church began acquiring farms and processing facilities and building "bishop's storehouses" to serve as storage and distribution centers for the needy. Centered on a ten-acre complex in Salt Lake City known as Welfare Square, the church's massive operations today include 172,000 acres of farmland, 199 agricultural production projects, 51 canneries, and 63 grain storage facilities feeding into 113 central, regional, and branch storehouses.[5]

In recent years, those relief efforts extended far beyond the church's own membership. Over 2,400 humanitarian missionaries serve in Welfare Services worldwide, and efforts reach 150 countries, including disaster assistance efforts in North Korea, Africa, Europe, South America, and Afghanistan.

Aiming to solve poverty at the source, the church launched the Perpetual Education Fund (PEF) in 2001, modeled on the Perpetual Education Fund that financed the immigration and resettlement of nineteenth century converts. Over 30,000 immigrants used needed monies, and then paid back into the fund to finance fellow recipients. The new PEF targets returned Mormon missionaries in underdeveloped nations, providing low-cost educational loans. Over 6,000 men and women benefited from the 100 million dollars raised for the effort in the first two years alone.

Education always had a prominent place in Mormon faith and culture, since Smith founded an evening school for adults, "the School of the Prophets," in Kirtland in 1833, where they studied the gospel but also Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. In Nauvoo, Illinois, though economically crippled and scattered by the Missouri persecutions, Mormons organized a university shortly after draining the swampland and erecting the first buildings. They repeated the effort three years after entering the Salt Lake Valley, founding the University of Deseret in 1850. "The glory of God is intelligence" (D&C 93:36), Smith wrote in 1833, and later recorded the inspiring claim that "whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come" (DC 130:18–19). Mormon emphasis on the life of the mind is evident today in their operation of the largest private, church-sponsored universities in the United States. Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, has 35,000 students and the number one ranked "great college library" according to one prestigious review.[6] A culture of learning is also evident in the fact that, as one study remarks, American Latter-day Saints maintain "a standard of educational attainment that is significantly higher than the national average." Interestingly, the effect of this educational engagement produces in the case of Mormons a somewhat anomalous result. In contrast to the tendency for educational attainment to dampen religious ardor, researchers find in the case of Mormon men that "the higher the level of education, the higher one's religious observance.… The same findings hold generally true for Mormon women."[7]

SCRIPTURES

Latter-day Saints follow other Christians in affirming the Bible as the word of God, "as far as it is translated correctly" according to one of their articles of faith. They are devout students of the scriptures and generally read the Bible as a historical, inspired record, tending toward literalism in their interpretation with some exceptions. They do not, for instance, read the creation story of Adam and Eve literally, neither do they regard the days of creation literally or, as a rule, the universal flood.

The Bible is for Mormons a principal source of church sermons, gospel study, and proselytizing efforts.

The Book of Mormon is perhaps the scripture that people most associate with the church and is the source of their unofficial name, though it was at first intended as a term of derision—"Mormonites," which soon became shortened to "Mormons." In its essentials, the Book of Mormon is theologically congruent with the Bible. It affirms that Jesus is the Christ and espouses a gospel of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. In addition to both embodying and representing a version of divine revelation that is as literal as Old Testament instances, though more egalitarian in its manifestations, the Book of Mormon presents few novel doctrines. It does pronounce the fall of Adam and Eve fortunate, part of a divinely instigated plan, and also expounds a doctrine of Christ's atonement, or vicarious sacrifice on behalf of humankind, with more doctrinal detail than the New Testament. The most remarkable aspect of the record is probably its account of a visit of the resurrected Christ to the ancient inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere and the subsequent establishment of a Christian church with twelve "disciples." Even earlier, according to the record, a church was established that looked forward to the coming of a Christ while keeping the Mosaic Law. The LDS faith's emphasis on the Book of Mormon historically derives from the fact that Smith's claim to prophetic authority rose or fell on the validity of the record he claimed to translate by the gift and power of God. The Book of Mormon is, in that respect, the "keystone of Mormonism."

Smith received dozens of revelations supposedly from God during his lifetime. Many of these were selected for publication as the *Book of Commandments* in 1833, subsequently reissued as the *Doctrine and Covenants.* A few additions were made in the years since, most recently in 1981. The *Doctrine and Covenants* contains more of those teachings that are distinctively LDS, such as the law of tithing, the health code known as "the Word of Wisdom," the concept of a godhead consisting of three separate and distinct entities, the offices and duties pertaining to the priesthood, three distinct kingdoms of glory, and more.

The fourth and final book of scripture rounding out the LDS "Standard Works" is the *Pearl of Great Price.* It consists of ancient writings attributed to Abraham, a selection of the writings of Moses absent from or corrupted in the Old Testament version, an account of Smith's personal history, a revision of Matthew chapter 24, and the church's Articles of Faith. Especially notable, parts of the *Pearl of Great Price* include a report of a pre-Mortal Council in Heaven, and the record of the ancient biblical prophet Enoch.

Besides producing three books of scripture in addition to the Bible, Smith also spent a few years working on what he called a new "translation of the Bible," although it was actually a recension, since he did not work with original manuscripts, but proceeded to make changes and additions under what he felt was divine inspiration. Although the LDS church never adopted his edited work as its official version, many (though far from all) of the changes he introduced were incorporated as footnotes in the current (1979) King James Version of the Bible used by the LDS church.

CONTROVERSIES AND ISSUES

Mormonism has been steeped in controversy since its boy prophet first claimed that God and Christ had personally visited him.. Publishing a record that supposedly recounted ancient American history inscribed on gold plates, recorded by descendents of Israelites, delivered up by an angel, and translated by "the gift and power of God," elicited both mockery and suspicion. Hostility was also aroused, then as now, by those who believed the Bible was the complete and sufficient word of God and saw the new scripture as a blasphemous affront to a settled canon.

An infelicitous combination of other factors conspired to turn hostility into violent confrontation and persecution. Had they simply lived among other American citizens, Mormons might have aroused no more notice than the scores of other idiosyncratic movements spawned by the religious ferment of the Second Great Awakening. But mere months after their 1830 organization, Smith revealed to his followers that the Old Testament prophecies of an Israel gathered in from her long dispersion were to be literally fulfilled. Accordingly, Mormons gathered in Kirtland, Ohio, and shortly thereafter in Independence, Missouri. Financial catastrophe and internal dissension destroyed the Ohio base, while on the western frontier, frictions with other settlers quickly escalated. Mormon claims to new scripture, heavenly manifestations, and spiritual gifts, combined with their practice of labeling outsiders "gentiles" and their rhetoric of Missouri being the land of their inheritance quickly alienated neighbors. Preaching to the Native Americans, whom they labeled "Lamanites" and considered chosen descendents of Israelites, angered Missourians, and charges that these Northern immigrants were abolitionists was an especially volatile allegation in proslavery Missouri. Finally, the sheer number of converts gathering in sparsely populated areas quickly made Mormons the dominant political power and led to violence. Successive confrontations forced the saints to leave Jackson County, Missouri, then Caldwell County, and then, following a massacre of Mormons at Haun's Mill, they were forced to leave the state altogether.

Welcomed across the Mississippi into Illinois, the saints established a prosperous city called Nauvoo, with a majestic temple, a fledgling university, and a thousands-strong Nauvoo Legion, or militia. But old tensions reemerged; additionally, reports circulated that Smith and others were practicing plural marriage, concerns grew that the Mormon courts gave church members unprecedented exemption from legal accountability, and genuine alarm set in when Smith announced his candidacy for the presidency of the United States in early 1844. Months later, he was murdered with his brother Hyrum in a Carthage, Illinois, jail, and Mormons were once again forced to flee en masse. Most chose to remove westward under Young.

They settled in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, and five years later publicly announced their practice of plural marriage. At that point another wave of confrontation began, leading to invasion by federal forces in 1857 and a barrage of laws and court rulings that by 1890 stripped the church of its assets and its members of the right to vote, and resulted in the imprisonment or flight of Mormon leaders and

the virtual destruction of the church itself. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, popular fiction included sensationalist accounts of Mormons that appealed to anti-Mormont sentiment, fear of the foreign, and all things lurid—further compounding Mormonism's alienation from the mainstream. By 1890, President Wilford Woodruff (1807–1898) announced that God had relieved the Mormon people of the responsibility to practice plural marriage, and the Americanization of Mormonism began in earnest. Statehood came at last, after repeated rebuffs, in 1893, though as late as 1904 the United States Senate held hearings on whether to seat the newly elected Reed Smoot (1862–1941), Mormon apostle from Utah.

With occasional setbacks, Mormons were increasingly perceived by the American public as hardworking, family-oriented, and patriotic, and the church was recognized for its moral teachings, efficient organization, and success in caring for its own. No serious conflicts with larger society erupted until the 1960s, when attention on civil rights focused the spotlight on the LDS practice of barring persons of African ancestry from the priesthood. The church weathered that storm, enduring bouts of negative publicity, only to change their policy when much of the storm had abated. In 1978, President Kimball announced that the Lord directed him to make the priesthood available to all worthy males regardless of race or ancestry.

In the years since the priesthood announcement, Mormonism is often invoked as an institution that typifies the best of Christian values, rather than as an instance of unacceptable heterodoxy, as it was in the nineteenth century. Except for occasional protests from Christian fundamentalists, who protest the appellation of Christian to a religion that embraces unorthodox notions of the Trinity and other anomalous doctrines, most people in the United States and throughout the world view Latter-day Saints with respect and acceptance.

At present, few controversies persist. Like Catholicism, Mormonism still does not bestow the priesthood upon women. Most Mormons are comfortable with this doctrine, and no significant agitation for change is on the horizon. The history of Mormon women has, in fact, been one of paradox and surprise. Portrayed by politicians, novelists, and moral crusaders as victims of an oppressive system, plural wives were adamant in defending their own right to engage in the practice and publicly demonstrated by the thousands against federal interference. Social historians noted that the system actually allowed LDS women an uncommon degree of social and economic power. Utah women were the first in the United States to exercise the right to vote (in 1870) and were accorded educational opportunities and encouragement in many cases comparable to their male peers. Mormon theology, while patriarchal in priesthood rights, is in other ways profoundly feminist. Mormons espouse, for example, belief in a "mother in Heaven" (sung about in a popular hymn, though seldom discussed), and believe, as Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) put it succinctly, that "a man cannot be exalted [saved] singly and alone."[8]

Occasional criticisms have emerged in foreign quarters that Mormon inroads in their culture is a form of American imperialism, but Mormon insistence on entering

countries through the front door or not at all has earned it a trusting relationship with most of the hundred plus countries where some 60,000 Mormon missionaries now operate. Since 2000, Mormonism has more members outside the United States than within, but because the top leaders serve for life, change in the national and ethnic constitution of that leadership lags far behind changing demographics churchwide. The first non-North American was called to the Quorum of the Twelve in 2004 (from Germany), and as yet no Latin American member, where most members reside and where growth is strongest, serves in that quorum.

One area of internal friction emerged in the 1960s with the professionalization of Mormon studies. Long divided between vehement critics and faithful apologists, the study of Mormonism is now of vital interest to American historians, sociologists of religion, and cultural scholars. In addition, the development of archaeology, anthropology, and other disciplines made it possible to subject the Book of Mormon to scholarly scrutiny with a new intellectual professionalism. Some Mormons pleaded for a more naturalistic approach to Mormon history, and a less literal acceptance of the historical claims of and about the Book of Mormon.

At the same time, a powerful Church Correlation program, which aims to unify and centralize all church programs and instruction, and is especially attentive to the millions of newer members from less developed nations, tends toward less, not more, intellectual engagement with Mormon history and doctrine. In addition, the Church, through its own historians and scholars working out of both Brigham Young University and its own historical department, continues to produce high-quality scholarship predicated upon and reaffirming the traditional rendering of Mormon history and the legitimacy of the Book of Mormon as ancient history. One observer writes that all these competing tensions amount to "a crisis comparable to but more profound than that which Roman Catholicism recognized around the time of the Second Vatican Council."[9] That is an overstatement, since the crisis in the LDS case is not felt beyond the more intellectual strata of the church. But frictions have led to occasional excommunications of dissident scholars and also feminists, who are perceived to be engaging in the work of publicly undermining the teachings and mission of the church.

The church has also attracted occasional criticism for its involvement in political issues in the United States. The church's opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment is largely viewed as being the deciding factor in its 1982 defeat. More recently, the church supported state initiatives aimed at defending traditional definitions of marriage, as opposed to gay and lesbian marriage, and issued a "statement of principle" in support of "a constitutional amendment preserving marriage as the lawful union of a man and a woman."[10] The church also has a long-standing and publicly expressed opposition to abortion. On at least one occasion, the church demonstrated that its positions can cut across both major political parties when President Kimball issued a public statement opposing the MX missile plan in 1981. In all these cases the church is unapologetic, insisting on its right to express public positions on issues of national moral significance.

THE FUTURE

In 1984, sociologist Rodney Stark predicted that some people then alive could live to see the LDS church grow from its six or seven million to 267 million by the year 2080.[11] Though criticized as extravagant by fellow scholars, an unapologetic Stark returned to the subject in 1999, insisting that "membership is substantially higher than my most optimistic projection."[12] Stark's numbers do not factor in the number of LDS defections or lapses into inactivity—which can be considerable, especially in high-growth areas. Even so, the LDS church clearly continues to grow at a prodigious rate, and it remains a highly cohesive international community, with little internal dissension, history of or prospect for significant schism, or impediments to continued success. President Hinckley was apparently in earnest when he claimed in 1999 that the two greatest challenges facing the church were providing sufficient local leadership and houses of worship to keep pace with member growth. (New meetinghouse construction at that time was proceeding at a 400-buildings-per-year rate.[13] Other challenges will undoubtedly involve the growing internationalization of a church long identified as an American institution with a historic connection to its Utah base.

Until now, Mormon culture has largely been defined by the history of persecution and alienation, geographical isolation, and beliefs and practices sharply at odds with prevailing norms. In the era of the international church, the special role the United States served in Mormon history and theology will necessarily receive less emphasis. In addition, with an increasing proportion of members being recent converts, the role of collective memory in giving shape to a shared identity will diminish. Since the administration of President Benson (1985–1994), the vastly heightened role of the Book of Mormon in Mormon devotional life may emerge as a more conspicuous nexus of Mormon faith and cultural grammar. In addition, commensurate with Mormonism's rise as a religion of millions has been the elaboration of distinctively Mormon modes of cultural expression. Though its architecture is mostly eclectic, and its art and music have yet to carve out distinguished niches, Mormon literature and, more recently, Mormon filmmaking include superior works that articulate distinctive Mormon themes in an artistic language while still resonating across the wider culture. Such developments suggest that Mormonism stands poised to find continued success in combining successful integration into larger society with a powerful sense of group identity and cultural distinctness.

CONCLUSION

A major achievement of Mormonism is its global spread while forging a coherent and recognizable Mormon culture that transcends geographical and ethnic boundaries. Mormonism has proven itself more resistant than mainline Protestant churches to the influences of secularism and modernity. Though its leadership is increasingly aged and unfailingly conservative on moral and social issues, the rank and file still accord the church president the same status enjoyed by Smith as the literal prophet,

seer, and revelator of the Lord. And recent church presidents have tended to downplay those doctrines that served to distinguish Mormonism from mainline churches, while increasing church participation in international humanitarian efforts. The overall effect has been a twenty-first century church that, even as it embraces a pioneer past, modern prophets, and distinctive doctrines of deity, enjoys amicable relations with other faiths and assumes a comfortable place at the interdenominational table of those churches whose priority is alleviating suffering, doing good, and leading lives of service and integrity.

NOTES

1. The Russian writer Leo Tolstoi remarked to Andrew D. White, then president of Cornell University, that "the Mormon people teach the American religion." *Improvement Era* 32.2 (February 1939); Harold Bloom remarks on "how American both [Joseph Smith] and his religion have proved to be." Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 127.
2. Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 101.
3. The First Presidency of the Church, "The Origin of Man," *Improvement Era* 13, no. 1 (November 1909): 81.
4. Leonard J. Arrington, "Religion and Economics in Mormon History," *BYU Studies* 3.3/4 (Spring 1960–Summer 1961): 15.
5. Garth L. Mangum, "Welfare Projects," in *Historical Atlas of Mormonism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 140.
6. Princeton Review, cited in "Study Gives Y High Marks," *Deseret Morning News,* August 17, 2004.
7. Stan L. Albrecht and Tim B. Heaton, "Secularization, Higher Education, and Religiosity," in *Latter-day Saint Social Life: Social Research on the LDS Church and its Members,* ed. James T. Duke (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1998), 302, 310–11.
8. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation,* 3 vols., ed. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 2:65.
9. Martin E. Marty, "Two Integrities: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography," *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 3.
10. "First Presidency Issues Statement on Marriage," July 7, 2004, newsroom.lds.org.
11. "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research* 26, no. 1 (September 1984): 19, 22–23.
12. "Extracting Social Scientific Models from Mormon History," *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 176.
13. Address of President Gordon B. Hinckley to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, May 13, 1999.

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The Adventist Tradition

Douglas Morgan

The Adventist movement emerged amidst the religious ferment of the antebellum United States, stirred by the preaching of William Miller (1782–1849), a Baptist farmer from upstate New York in the late 1830s and 1840s. Miller's Adventist awakening melded Protestant revivalism with a bracing apocalyptic message: biblical prophecy revealed that the second coming of Christ was about to occur; in fact, it would take place "about 1843."[1] Despite the mistake in specifying the time, the Adventist movement started by Miller's preaching led to a vital and enduring alternative religious tradition, or New Religious Movement (NRM). By 2005 membership in the largest of the Adventist denominations, the Seventh-day Adventists, surpassed one million in the United States and Canada, and 14 million worldwide.[2]

Closer to evangelical Protestantism than to Mormonism, yet more sharply distinct from it than the Disciples of Christ and other churches that developed from the restorationist preaching of Barton Stone (1772–1844) and Alexander Campbell (1788–1866), Adventism occupied ambivalent territory in the American religious landscape. While establishing a stable niche in society, Adventism sustained a dissenting identity—a sense of distinctive vocation in the culmination of history that creates tension with the larger culture. While carrying out that mission by proclaiming the second advent of Christ and a new world to come, Adventists had a significant impact on the present world through an array of institutions and endeavors for health care, education, religious liberty, and international development and humanitarian aid. The Adventist tradition helped generate cultural phenomena in American history that range from breakfast cereal to the Branch Davidians, whose variation on Adventist belief lay behind the tragic confrontation with federal authorities near Waco, Texas, in 1993.[3] Though Ellen Gould Harmon White (1827–1915), a cofounder of Seventh-day Adventism, is less well-known than fellow nineteenth century prophets Mary Baker Eddy and Joseph Smith, the charismatic leadership of this minimally educated woman from Maine inspired much of the Adventist achievement.

ORIGINS, 1840–1863

Miller was far from alone in preaching that the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 concerning a "cleansing of the sanctuary" would somehow be fulfilled in the 1840s.[4] That belief was widespread among Protestant writers on prophecy in Miller's day. His innovation came in interpreting the "cleansing of the sanctuary" to be a cataclysmic act of divine intervention—a cleansing by fire of the present evil order, followed by re-creation—"the new earth"—when Christ returned. The Millerite movement gave expression to the "come-outer" rejection of dominant societal institutions as irredeemably corrupt adopted by some radical reformers in the late 1830s and 1840s. Adventists repudiated the American institutions of church and state as instruments of redemption, placing their hopes in the total and immediate renovation of society soon to be accomplished by Christ's eternal reign on earth. They thus rejected the postmillennial outlook, then dominant among Protestants, that revival and reform would transform the United States, leading to a millennium in which righteousness would hold sway. In some ways, the Millerite Adventists were more like abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879),[5] who repudiated the United States Constitution and called upon Christ's true followers to come out of the slaveholding Union and the established churches that blessed it. In a more literalistic fashion than the Garrisonians, however, Adventists preached the total destruction of civilization and its remaking through divine agency, unaided by human artifice.

The "Great Disappointment" of Jesus not appearing in power and glory on October 22, 1844, the date upon which expectations finally settled, fragmented the Adventist movement. Several of the movement's leaders regrouped at a conference in Albany, New York, in 1845, where they acknowledged their mistaken interpretation of prophecy but reaffirmed both their belief that Christ was soon to return and their commitment to preaching it.[6] The Advent Christian Association, which eventually emerged from this segment of the Millerite movement, was the largest of the Adventist denominations for most of the remainder of the nineteenth century.

The Albany Conference distanced itself from several much smaller groups of Advent believers who remained convinced that the prophecy concerning the "cleansing of the sanctuary" was, indeed, fulfilled in October 1844 in a transcendent event —variously explained—but necessary in the very final sequence of divine actions for the judgment and redemption of the world. Prophecy, ecstatic worship, and even more extreme behavior thought to mark the heavenly age could be found among these groups.

Within this latter segment, a group gradually coalesced around the leadership of James White (1821–1881), Ellen G. White, and Joseph Bates (1792–1872), a veteran social reformer and Millerite organizer.[7] James, a young schoolteacher with a background in the restorationist movement known as the Christian Connection began itinerant preaching of the Millerite message on his own initiative. Ellen, daughter of Portland, Maine, hat maker Robert Harmon, was, along with several other family members, expelled from their Methodist church in 1843 for their persistence in testifying to their second advent beliefs. In December 1844, Ellen received

visions, experienced in a trance-like state.[8] These visions conveyed encouragement that God was leading the tiny, disoriented group, in spite of their great October disappointment, along with giving guidance on how to move forward.

James and Ellen married in Orrington, Maine, in August 1846, and, along with Bates, organized a series of conferences in New England and New York during the late 1840s, which hammered out the core beliefs of the movement that would organize as the Seventh-day Adventist church in the early 1860s.[9] Renewing their study of apocalyptic prophecy, this group found its mission and identity in the "three angels' messages" of Revelation 14:6–12. The prophecy concerning the first and second messages, they concluded, already was fulfilled sequentially by the Advent awakening leading up to 1844. But now, they believed, the third message, the last in the sequence before the return of Christ, must be preached after 1844. Here was their purpose: to proclaim this third and final message before Christ's return, which pointed to a people who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). The "commandments of God" meant in particular the ten commandments, including the sabbath commandment that, they insisted, mandates observance of the sabbath on the seventh day of the week—Saturday, not Sunday.[10]

By the early 1850s these sabbatarian Adventists saw it as their mission to gather a "remnant" in the last days, marked by fidelity to the law of God and sabbath observance, and the "spirit of prophecy"—manifested in the ministry of Ellen White. Another distinctive belief, "annihilationism," depicted God's final judgment on the unrepentant as irreversible death rather than perpetual torment in hell, as conventionally taught. Despite its forbidding sound, annihilationism seemed to them to be more consistent with the biblical picture of a loving God. They held to the closely related doctrine of conditional immortality, denying the existence of an immortal soul detachable from the body. The dead "sleep" in the grave until the final resurrection, when immortality is conferred to the saved by God.[11]

Miller's interpretation of biblical prophecies pointing to 1844, the sabbatarians contended, correctly identified the *time* of their fulfillment, but was mistaken as to the *event*—that is, in identifying the "cleansing of the sanctuary" with the second coming of Christ and the eradication of evil on earth. Rather, the cleansing of the sanctuary referred to a cosmic "Day of Atonement" marked by Christ's final work of mediation and judgment in the "heavenly" sanctuary referred to in the New Testament epistle to the Hebrews. The time span of this eschatological Day of Atonement, while expected to be quite brief, was indeterminable. Rather than recalculating dates, the sabbatarian Adventists now set about the formidable mission of being a prophetic remnant, proclaiming the "third angel's message"—God's final message of warning and reform—to a world facing judgment.[12]

This mission set them starkly over against the ruling powers in American society. As the national crisis over slavery intensified in the 1850s, the sabbatarian Adventists used the Book of Revelation to express a Garrisonian critique of the American republic for its hypocritical "union of *democratic* professions with *slaveocratic* practices."[13] And, as did Garrison, they denounced the widespread clerical support for Sunday laws as an expression of Protestant cultural dominance. That use of state coercion

to enforce a religious practice, said the Adventists, as well as the intolerance shown in suppressing the Millerites from giving free expression to their conscientious interpretation of the Bible in the 1840s, revealed the Protestant empire's vaunted religious liberty to be a sham. In terms of Revelation 12–14, the sabbatarian Adventists saw their movement as the "remnant" (12:17) whose final persecutor (the United States) is depicted as a beast that has a benign, lamb-like aspect but "speaks like a dragon" (13:11–18) and compels worship of an "image to the beast" (a fearsome monster depicted in 13:1–10 that, since the Reformation era of the sixteenth century, many leading Protestant writers had regarded as a symbol of the papacy).[14]

Through a rapidly expanding output of periodicals, pamphlets, and books, as well as "tent meetings" conducted by itinerant evangelists, the sabbatarian Adventists in the 1850s proclaimed their "come-outer" message from Maine to Iowa. Preparation for the impending establishment of Christ's reign, they said, required coming out of the "Babylon" of churches who, in imposing observance of Sunday—the "false sabbath"—manifested pervasive defiance of the law of God's government. Despite the ever-more shocking outrages of the Fugitive Slave Law (1850), the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), and the Dred Scott decision (1857), the "remnant" thus called out would not take up arms or campaign politically on behalf of Christ's kingdom. But joining the remnant meant ordering life in accordance with a higher loyalty that would soon bring about a final crackdown by the "slaveocracy," after which, in the words of a leading Adventist writer, "the coming of the Just One" would check the American republic's "astonishing career."

As their mission unfolded and their numbers grew, the sabbatarian Adventists by the 1860s were convinced of the need for organization and institutions to embody the principles of their radical apocalyptic dissent in American society.[15] James and Ellen White led the drive for organization, battling a strong predisposition in their community against any retrogression into the structures that characterized the corrupted churches of "Babylon." Now numbering over 3,000, believers scattered throughout the northern states had by 1860 formed congregations known by a confusing variety of names. After agreement that year on "Seventh-day Adventist" as best encapsulating the movement's most central, distinctive convictions, the publishing office that had been in Battle Creek, Michigan, since 1855 was incorporated as the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association. The Michigan Conference, formed in 1861, united believers in that state, not by a formal creed beyond the Bible, but covenanting together "to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ." Six more conferences then quickly organized along similar lines, and in 1863 joined with the Michigan Conference to form the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, headquartered in Battle Creek.

These crucial developments set the Seventh-day Adventists decisively on the path of a representative type of church governance along Methodist lines, with decisions on general policy, pastoral personnel, and funding made through the conferences, rather than local congregations. Centralization and cohesion, with strong collective authority vested in the clergy, became hallmarks of the denomination. However, a clash over authority came as early as 1866, with Iowa opponents of the aggressive

leadership of James and Ellen White forming the Church of God (Seventh Day). This break launched the development, over the subsequent century and a half, of numerous, relatively small, seventh-day observing Church of God denominations. The most prominent movement in this sector of the Adventist tradition was the Worldwide Church of God, led by Herbert W. Armstrong (1892–1986).[16]

Organized during the Civil War, the new denomination quickly faced a major crisis over the draft and the question of participation in combat.[17] Their radically biblicist and come-outer outlook disposed Adventists toward pacifism, and since the late 1840s nonresistance views occasionally appeared in their publications, though it was not a prominent theme. As an obscure, dissenting religious movement with its organizational structure barely formed, they were reluctant to draw suspicions of disloyalty to the Union by publicly declaring their refusal to engage in military combat. For the most part, they took the option of paying the $300 fee for an exemption when necessary. In the summer of 1864, however, revisions to the draft law eliminated that alternative, except for members of recognized pacifist faiths such as the Quakers. Now the Adventists were forced to petition the federal War Department and several state governors for recognition as "noncombatants" based on their religious convictions. Uriah Smith (1832–1903), editor of the *Review and Herald,* stated that in declaring "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ" to be their "articles of faith and practice," Seventh-day Adventists understood "the commandments of God to mean the ten commandments of the moral law, and the faith of Jesus Christ to be the teachings of Christ in the New Testament." It would, they believed, be impossible to keep not only the sixth commandment ("thou shalt not kill") but also the fourth ("the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God") while engaging in warfare.[18]

During the Civil War Adventists increasingly thought that their work would effect positive change, at least for a time, within the societal institutions of the present world.[19] Until 1862 their preaching and writing envisioned the Jubilee that would soon free the slaves as none other than the general, final Jubilee for the whole world. The slaves would be freed by Christ at his second coming, not by the American government. After the war ended in 1865, however, James White pointed out that, in addition to the war resulting in freedom for the slaves after all, governmental authorities showed fairness and consideration towards Adventist dissent over the draft. Despite the world's downward spiral, he concluded, the Christian's role is to stay in this "old world" and "act his part until the Prince of Peace shall come and reign."[20]

DISSENTERS IN THE PROTESTANT EMPIRE, 1863–1915

In the decades following the Civil War, the distance between Adventism and the cultural mainstream lessened in some important ways as the church worked to establish an alternative but enduring institutional presence in American society. The "gift of prophecy," exercised by Ellen White independently from the church's organizational governance, became increasingly decisive in inspiring and shaping endeavors toward that end. In response to her exhortations based on visions she experienced

in 1863 and 1865, the church rapidly turned its attention to health reform.[21] Adventists incorporated the principles of healthful living and "natural" remedies set forth by Sylvester Graham (1795–1851) and other reformers into the core of their spirituality, theology, and mission. They viewed physical health as intrinsic to Christian sanctification and preparation for Christ's return. Health reform was essential to a holistic restoration of the image of God in human beings and making them "fit for eternity." Provision of alternative health care, meeting the needs of "suffering humanity," and public advocacy for health and temperance causes became essential components of the Adventist project. Health reform attracted positive attention, became a way of life for believers preparing themselves for life in the world to come, and provided a wide range of possibilities for those inspired by Adventism to take an active part in its mission.

In 1866 the church launched a monthly periodical, the *Health Reformer,* and established its first institution for health care, the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek.[22] Ellen White described the new venture as "designed of God to be one of the greatest aids in preparing a people to be perfect before God."[23] The health institute went through ups and downs during its first decade before its leadership was given to a brilliant protégé nurtured by the Whites, John Harvey Kellogg (1852–1943). The young physician studied medicine at the University of Michigan and at Bellevue Hospital Medical School in New York, one of the nation's leading centers for medical training. At Battle Creek Sanitarium, as he renamed it, Kellogg synthesized the principles of health reform with what he regarded as the most advanced insights of mainstream medical science. The purpose of the sanitarium went beyond recovery from illness to training people to adopt healthful practices; it was to be, said Kellogg, "a place where people learn to stay well." Passionately dedicated to vegetarianism and dietary reform, Kellogg's experiments in developing health foods led to the invention of granola and cornflakes, which his more commercially minded brother, Will, used in pioneering the American breakfast cereal industry. The doctor also invented exercise machines and devices for delivering hydrotherapy.

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church, as John Harvey Kellogg envisioned it, was to be "the Good Samaritan to all the world," offering benevolent service on a "undenominational, unsectarian" basis.[24] To train talented and idealistic young Adventists for such service, he founded the American Medical Missionary College in 1895. In 1893, Kellogg also became head of the Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association, formed to oversee the church's health and humanitarian projects in the United States and abroad. One of the most ambitious of these brought free medical clinics, health classes, child care, housing for the unemployed, and an array of other social services to the burgeoning industrial city of Chicago, Illinois, beginning in 1893.

Prohibition, one of the most prominent issues of social reform, drew Adventists into the political arena, working cooperatively with other progressive agencies.[25] During the 1870s, Ellen White formed ties with the Woman's Christian Temperance

Union and gave public lectures on temperance and prohibition to audiences occasionally estimated to number in the thousands. The liquor traffic, she wrote in 1881, brought the nation into a "moral paralysis" that every temperance advocate was under obligation to counteract "by precept and example—by voice and pen and vote."[26] Again during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the church devoted the full energy of its organizational machinery to the cause of getting out the vote for prohibition.

While the health reform and prohibition causes brought Adventists into a working relationship with associations closer to the cultural mainstream, the preeminent motivation behind these efforts remained a mission of dissent and reform from the margins. The "third angel's message" must be proclaimed throughout the world to prepare a people for the return of Christ and the new world to come.

In the two decades following the Civil War, the Adventist mission expanded further into the American Midwest and in California, and made smaller beginnings in the South.[27] A world perspective on mission began to take hold, and the first official overseas emissary of Seventh-day Adventism, John N. Andrews (1829–1883), went to central Europe in 1874. At the same time, more and more of the world was coming to North America, so the church adapted its outreach to various language groups among American immigrants, such as Germans, Norwegians, Swedish, and French.

With their understanding that preparation for eternity involved the whole person, not just "the soul," the Adventist pattern of mission went beyond religious indoctrination, placing high priority on institutions for education and health care replicating those in Battle Creek.[28] In California, for example, with their adherents there still numbering only in the hundreds, the church opened the Rural Health Retreat in the Napa Valley in 1877 and Healdsburg College in 1882—the counterpart to Battle Creek College, which started in 1874. A publishing house, the Pacific Press Publishing Association, was established in Oakland in 1874, paralleling the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Battle Creek. The Pacific Press launched its missionary journal, the *Signs of the Times,* in 1875, while the *Review and Herald* continued publication from Battle Creek.

Adventist evangelism centered on calling truehearted believers out of the "Babylon" of the established churches and into the commandment-keeping "remnant." Until the 1890s, they directed this call mainly to people of Protestant background, rather than Roman Catholic or non-Christian. Placing the Sabbath issue at the forefront, the Adventist polemic challenged American Protestants to uphold the standard of what they regarded as true Protestantism.[29] They insisted that making the Bible the final authority required observance of the Sabbath on the seventh day, and that laws giving state support to Sunday observance violated the principle of individual freedom from coercion in religion.

Following the Civil War, a new campaign emerged among Protestants for strengthening and extending Sunday laws. The measure was part of a broader agenda: ensuring that the United States remain a "Christian nation" in the face of the new level of pluralism brought by the growing masses of non-Protestant immigrants.

A coalition of clergy from several Protestant denominations formed the National Reform Association that in 1879 launched a campaign for a national Sunday law that would indicate "national recognition of divine sovereignty."[30]

Apocalyptic prophecy indicated to Adventists that the Sunday crusade would succeed in the end, leading to the final persecution of the faithful minority by the two-horned beast of Revelation 13:11–18, which symbolized the United States. Paradoxically, that apocalyptic expectation energized them to intense activity in the governmental arena against Sunday laws and on behalf of religious liberty in general.[31] As the Adventist cause progressed in the South, where states enforced Sunday laws more strictly than any other region, imprisonment of believers became somewhat commonplace. More than 100 served time, some on chain gangs, between 1878 and 1896. Meanwhile, the church stepped up its activism, contending, among other reasons, that laws against work or business on Sunday placed an unfair economic burden on Saturday observers, who, in order to worship in accordance with their conscience, would be forced into two days of inactivity, while the Sunday-observing majority would need to take only one. Adventists began publishing the *American Sentinel* in 1886 (changed to the current title, *Liberty,* in 1906) and formed the National Religious Liberty Association in 1889 to advocate religious freedom and separation of church and state and "to aid persecuted people of any race, color or creed."[32]

In 1888 and 1889, issues of religious liberty moved to the national stage with reform legislation proposed by Senator Henry Blair (1834–1920) of New Hampshire. In 1888, Blair introduced the first national Sunday legislation to be proposed in Congress in 60 years. The following year he proposed a constitutional amendment requiring public schools to provide instruction in "virtue, morality, and the principles of the Christian religion." In both instances, Adventists mounted mass petition campaigns and sent spokespersons to testify before congressional committees in helping to defeat Blair's bills.

The church's ambitious mission continued pushing toward new frontiers during the final decade of the nineteenth century.[33] The work overseas moved beyond its initial phase in Europe and Anglo-Protestant dominated enclaves in Australia and South Africa, and made a start in Catholic-dominated Latin America and "heathen" lands in Africa and Asia. As the United States rapidly urbanized, the church also made a concerted effort to establish missions in the large cities that teemed with millions totally untouched by their message. These efforts were at times frail and abortive, and rarely resulted in large numbers of converts. However, in addition to Chicago, a lasting and dynamic Adventist presence took hold in New York City, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, California, and other cities.

Prompted by repeated, urgent pleas from Ellen White, Adventists in the 1890s also ventured into another mission field they had largely neglected—the African-American population of the South.[34] In sermons, articles, and letters, the prophet called for a comprehensive mission bringing educational and economic opportunity, along with gospel truth, as a work of "restitution" to an oppressed and impoverished people "who have been robbed of their time and deprived of their education."[35] She

stressed the equal dignity of all people in Christ; no "walls of prejudice" should be built up within the church. The most dramatic response to her admonitions came from her oldest son. Edson White (1849–1928) and a friend acquired and outfitted a steamboat, christened the *Morning Star,* which they sailed down the Mississippi River and used as a base for work in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and nearby regions. The ramifications for racial equality and black economic advance in the Adventist work prompted a violent reaction from white supremacists. Despite the obstacles posed by the backlash, along with the reluctance of some church leaders to provide needed funds, and Edson's own somewhat unstable personality, the Southern Missionary Society founded under his leadership established by 1909 fifty-five primary schools with 1800 pupils in ten Southern states, medical facilities in Atlanta, Georgia, and Nashville, Tennessee, and Oakwood Industrial School (later Oakwood College) near Huntsville, Alabama. Black membership in the Adventist church, which numbered less than 50 in 1894, reached 900 by 1909.

As the story of the Southern mission illustrates, the prophetic ministry of Ellen White intertwined deeply with virtually every aspect of the church's development. Historian Jonathan Butler profiled the division of labor between the husband-wife team, James and Ellen, as cofounders of the Seventh-day Adventist movement.[36] James was "the organizer, the publisher, the businessman." Ellen was "the visionary, the counselor and exhorter." Her visions were not a source for Adventist doctrines nor did her writings add to the canon of Scripture. While the male leadership of the movement hammered out doctrines in the late 1840s and 1850s, the charismatic experience of the "spirit of prophecy" served to hold the consensus together, to bring to bear the particular scriptural message needed to "correct, revive and heal the erring" in the nascent community.

By the time of her husband's death in 1881, Ellen White's prophetic gift produced a voluminous body of publications. The centerpiece of her literary work was the multivolume *Spirit of Prophecy* series, renamed the *Conflict of the Ages* in its final editions.[37] In these volumes she set forth the full sweep of Adventism's theology of history as the "great controversy between Christ and Satan." That controversy originated with the rebellion of Lucifer in heaven prior to creation of the earth and would culminate in the future eradication of sin, suffering, and death in a new earth restored to the benevolent Creator's original intent. The "great controversy" was a contest over the loyalty of human beings, who possess the freedom to choose between Christ and Satan. Because God's kingdom cannot be imposed by force, those faithful to God must endure suffering at the hands of evil powers, which God allows Satan the freedom to instigate. But the faithful live in hope that God, after allowing enough scope to evil to make clear to the universe the issues in the controversy and the freely chosen loyalties of all involved, will establish an eternal kingdom of righteousness, justice, and peace. This is the world view, or controlling narrative, through which Adventists made sense of their lives, and consequently became an indispensable reference point for understanding the movement's history.

The influence of another series of volumes by Ellen White, the *Testimonies for the Church,* stood second only to the *Conflict of the Ages* series. Eventually totaling nine

volumes, this series compiled letters and articles of spiritual counsel and admonition that Ellen White directed to particular individuals and situations, along with some autobiographical narrative.[38]

In her mid-50s when her husband died, the prophet by then no longer experienced the dramatic visionary trances in public settings that marked her earlier years. Revelations now came to her in dreams during "the night season" and in deep, vivid impressions. The locus of her prophetic authority gravitated more toward her writings. Her sermons, articles, and travel narratives now appeared with much greater frequency in church periodicals—in virtually every issue of the *Review and Herald* and the *Signs of the Times.* A team of literary assistants assembled and edited her pieces for publication in a continuing stream of books.[39]

An intriguing interplay developed after James's death between Ellen White's authority and that of the church's male leadership.[40] On the one hand, it became increasingly necessary to marshal support from "the testimonies" (shorthand for Ellen White's writings as a whole) in making the case for a biblical interpretation or a policy decision. While careful to avoid claims of infallibility, and insisting that her writings were a "lesser light" pointing to the "greater light" (the Bible), the church ascribed to them an authoritative status. The "lesser light" seemed to make answers to the specific issues faced by modern believers much more direct and clearer than would consulting the "greater light" alone.[41]

On the other hand, Ellen White never held formal office, nor was she able to exert dictatorial control over church affairs. A "balance of power" developed in which the "spirit of prophecy" maintained independence from the authority of church leaders yet pursued a cooperative relationship with them. Not always able to impose her will, Ellen White resisted the control and manipulation of male leaders.

In the late 1880s, one of the most epochal struggles in Adventist history took place over the meaning of salvation through faith in Christ.[42] Alonzo T. Jones (1850–1923) and Ellet J. Waggoner (1855–1916), coeditors of the *Signs of the Times* based in California, advocated the new understanding of "righteousness by faith." The historic Adventist emphasis on the importance of commandment keeping, they argued, did not mean that human works had even a partial role in earning salvation. Both forgiveness of sin and the transforming power that enabled progress in the way of commandment keeping, said Jones and Waggoner, is grounded in Christ alone.

General Conference president George I. Butler (1834–1918) and *Review and Herald* editor Smith warned that the new views put forward by their younger colleagues undermined the Adventist purpose of proclaiming the perpetuity of God's law in the latter days. They thought a passage Ellen White had written 30 years previously proved their interpretation of a key matter in the dispute—the meaning of "law" in Paul's epistle to the Galatians. And, they badly wanted her to issue another "testimony" to erase all doubt and correct the errors of Jones and Waggoner. However, at a General Conference session held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1888, Ellen White sided with the "righteousness by faith" advocates, even while admitting that their interpretation of some of the disputed scriptural passages differed from her previously held views.

With Ellen White's support, the new view of righteousness by faith took on legitimacy in the church, and a revival ensued over the next half-decade, during which most of the old guard publicly repented of their bitter opposition. It was a decisive moment in Adventism's complex relationship to evangelical Protestantism. Adventists, though not unambiguously or without subsequent controversy, would thereafter claim adherence to the Protestant principles of justification by faith and the final authority of Scripture. It was a "victory" for Ellen White, but paradoxically one that subordinated the authority of her writings to ongoing study of the Bible.[43]

Moreover, it did not bring to an end her disputes with the church leadership at the Battle Creek headquarters, particularly over the operation of the Review and Herald Publishing Association.[44] In 1891 she embarked on a mission to nourish the emerging Adventist work in Australia. While the move was a form of protest against those attempting to wield "kingly power" in Battle Creek, it did not amount to a banishment or a surrender, as the prophet's voluminous correspondence to her brethren in the United States continued to hold the status of "testimony" from the Lord's messenger.

After nine productive years of publication and institution building in Australia, Ellen White returned to the United States in 1900 to face even more traumatic upheavals than had occurred in 1888.[45] Her straightforward calls for reform led to major changes in the denomination's organizational structure at the General Conference session of 1901. The reforms sought to break up the power centralized in Battle Creek by dispersing much of the administrative oversight to newly created "union" conferences. Each of the unions brought together several conferences in a region of the United States or world into an administrative unit that would be better attuned to regional conditions and needs than faraway Battle Creek, Michigan. The title of "president" of the General Conference was scrapped; the head administrator would carry the humbler title of chairman of the executive committee. In another sense, though, the reorganization sought to increase centralized coordination and efficiency by making the various agencies of the church (such as the International Religious Liberty Association, the Sabbath School Association, and the Tract and Missionary Society), which had previously operated as independent entities, into departments administered through the conference structure.

The reorganization was agreed upon in a spirit of unity in 1901, but new controversies soon erupted. Arthur G. Daniells (1858–1935), the vigorous young leader who was installed as chairman of the General Conference executive committee, soon clashed with some of the most influential figures in the church, who viewed his aggressive leadership as a reprise of "kingly power." Jones, coeditor of *Signs of the Times* and one of the church's most influential thinkers, protested when Daniells used the title of "president," despite the action taken by the 1901 conference. Jones advocated an increasingly radical doctrine of individual liberty in the church and thought the 1901 reorganization moved the church away from hierarchical authority. He denounced Daniells for taking matters in the opposite direction.

Meanwhile, long-festering antagonisms between John Harvey Kellogg and the church's ministerial leaders broke out into open conflict.[46] Kellogg regarded the

Adventist clergy as a generally backward lot, poorly educated, and resistant to health reforms. The ministers in turn were suspicious of his nonsectarian approach, his growing national celebrity, the laxity in Sabbath observance at the Sanitarium, and the growing power wielded in the church by the medical missionary enterprises that Kellogg tightly controlled. Open conflict with Daniells resulted when Kellogg refused to allow the Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association to come under the administration of the General Conference, as stipulated by the 1901 reorganization.

Charges that pantheistic heresy infected Kellogg's book manuscript for *The Living Temple,* slated for publication and mass marketing in 1903 as a churchwide evangelistic project for that year, made the atmosphere still more volatile. Ellen White made repeated efforts to reconcile the disputants, but in the end, she sided with Daniells and the General Conference. Kellogg was removed from church membership in 1907, and the church lost control of the Battle Creek Sanitarium and the program of humanitarian activism in Chicago. The church continued to emphasize health and medicine, a legacy of Kellogg more than anyone other than Ellen White. However, the outcome of the controversy set Adventism decisively on a course pursued to the present: health reform and humanitarian activity are subordinate to the church's central mission of winning adherents to its doctrinal beliefs and church membership.

In the midst of the controversy, a fire destroyed the Review and Herald Publishing Association plant in December 1902.[47] With the encouragement of Ellen White, the General Conference leadership interpreted this as a sign that it was time to move away from the malign atmosphere that had been building in Battle Creek. In the summer of 1903 the General Conference and Review and Herald offices moved to the Washington, D.C., area, where they remained for most of the twentieth century. There the reorganization plans of 1901 took lasting form as the basic framework for the church's organization to the present.

While Ellen White more than held her own against the most powerful men in the church, she did not press the matter of ordination of women to the ministry.[48] A resolution to do so, presented at the General Conference session of 1881, was tabled and never resurfaced. Ellen White did, however, strongly encourage women to carry out the various works of ministry, guided by their own distinct gifts, not as mere subordinates. In 1886, for example, she wrote that, "It was Mary who first preached a risen Jesus; and the refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth now."[49]

AFTER THE PROPHET: SHAPING THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHURCH, 1915–1945

When Daniells stepped down from the General Conference presidency in 1922, his successor, William A. Spicer, was familiar to him. Throughout the entire two decades of Daniells's tenure at the helm, Spicer served in the second most responsible position in the church's administration, that of secretary of the General Conference. Daniells in turn served as secretary throughout Spicer's years as president (1922–

1930). The Daniells and Spicer administrations oversaw transitions that formed the twentieth century church as it faced the world without a living prophet in its midst.

Authority in the Church

Though she reduced the scope of her direct involvement in church affairs during the final decade of her life, Ellen White continued to function as a living source of prophetic guidance until at least 1913.[50] After her death in 1915, Adventists struggled over how and to what extent her prophetic authority could be vested in her writings, and how that authority would relate to other sources of authority: the Bible, the living church, and the evidence of research, reason, and experience.

As stipulated by her will, the White Estate had custodianship of Ellen White's writings. This estate was governed by a board of church leaders though structurally independent of the General Conference. Management of the work of the Estate in handling the ongoing publication of Ellen White's books, the compilation of new ones, and the release of previously unpublished material fell to her son, Willie C. White (1854-1937), and then grandson, Arthur L. White (1907–1991).

Even before her death, during the controversies unfolding just after the turn of the century, the authority of Ellen White's writings became a fiercely contested issue.[51] Though White explicitly repudiated any claim of "infallibility," a significant segment of the church held that her writings were basically infallible—certainly an unerring commentary on Scripture. Both Willie White and Daniells held a more moderate position and made some efforts to educate believers on the necessity of taking historical context and human fallibility into account in drawing guidance from the "spirit of prophecy" writings. On the whole though, much was done that encouraged, and little done to discourage, the conception of Ellen White as recipient of direct communication from God, which she wrote down, in a process untainted by human limitations, circumstances, or cultural influences. To do otherwise was politically dangerous within the church. Daniells's ouster from the General Conference presidency in 1922 came in part because of his "soft" view of Ellen White's authority. That event signaled the victory of the near inerrantist view, which remained dominant until a new round of controversies in the 1970s.

A fundamentalist-leaning outlook prevailed in general among Adventists during these decades.[52] Adventists in the 1920s identified themselves with fundamentalism and made an impact on the fundamentalist movement. Historian Ronald Numbers notes that Adventist scholar George McCready Price (1870–1963) was a major influence behind the eventual widespread acceptance in Protestant fundamentalist circles of "flood geology"—a cornerstone of "scientific creationism." Price's views on the biblical creation and flood in turn were shaped by Ellen White's writings.[53]

Education

On the other hand, an Adventist commitment to education—and more specifically to accredited higher education—that solidified during the Daniells-Spicer era

set a counterforce in motion.[54] The Adventist church by 1921 operated 59 secondary and postsecondary schools in North America, including six colleges offering four-year degrees, and every local congregation was strongly encouraged to sponsor or cosponsor an elementary school.

After the rupture with John Harvey Kellogg, the denomination in 1910 established a new medical school, the College of Medical Evangelists, in Loma Linda, California. Propelled by Ellen White's declaration that God's plan required a medical school of the "highest order," church leaders and school officials took on the daunting challenge of earning an "A" rating from the American Medical Association, and achieved the goal in 1922. That process entailed establishment of the Ellen G. White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles as a facility for clinical training. Around North America in the 1920s, the church was operating 20 sanitariums, five with a 100-bed or greater capacity.[55]

The commitment to a fully accredited medical school proved critical in deciding a hard-fought struggle in the 1920s and 1930s over the character of the church's institutions. Would they be dedicated to the alternative models of education and health care based on the ideals of nineteenth century reform advocated by Ellen White? Or would they meet the norms of secular professional and accrediting agencies? The conflict centered on the issue of accreditation for the denomination's colleges. Opponents of accreditation said that accountability to outside regulations might contradict or undermine church standards. Faculty would need graduate degrees from non-Adventist universities, and they would be molded by secular ways of thinking and in turn inculcate them in their Adventist students.

Advocates of accreditation emphasized the mandate for institutions of the "highest order." The quality and credibility of the Adventist mission demanded recognized excellence in the professions. In particular, maintaining an "A" rating for the College of Medical Evangelists, said the school's president, Percy T. Magan, required that students accepted into the medical school possess bachelor's degrees from accredited college. This pragmatic consideration apparently tipped the balance in a back-and-forth struggle that, by 1942, resulted in accreditation for all of the Adventist-operated colleges in the United States.

Professionalizing the Ministry

Important developments in the professionalization of the Seventh-day Adventist ministry also began during the Daniells-Spicer era.[56] During the nineteenth century, Adventist ministers functioned as itinerant evangelists, rarely staying in one location more than a year or two, at most, before reassignment as determined by the conference administration. No standard for educational qualifications existed, and complaints about the poor quality of the preaching force came from laity and General Conference leaders alike. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the concept of a settled pastorate as a routine expectation only gradually developed, and, while the typical length of a pastoral tenure lengthened, a stay of more than ten years at one assignment was still unusual at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Daniells had a particular interest in the professional and spiritual development of pastors. During his years as secretary of the General Conference, he headed the newly formed Ministerial Association and lobbied persistently for publication of a monthly journal for preachers, which began in January 1928, entitled *The Ministry.* I.H. Evans, a close colleague of Daniells's for decades and his successor as secretary of the Ministerial Association, encouraged development of an "advanced school of theology," which started with a summer session on the campus of Pacific Union College in California in 1934. Momentum from that start led to the opening of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in 1937 next to General Conference headquarters in Takoma Park, Maryland, which developed recognized graduate degree programs.[57]

Race Relations

Issues of organization and authority intertwined in dramatic ways with race as Adventists grappled with what W.E.B. Du Bois identified in 1903 as "the problem of the twentieth century." At the same time that Adventism was beginning to gain momentum among African Americans around the turn of the century, race relations were degenerating to their lowest point in the nation's history. After the Adventist mission to the South stirred a violent reaction, with accusations of disturbing the racial order, Ellen White advised that Adventists temporarily have segregated worship services where necessary and refrain from public agitation for "social equality."[58]

Meanwhile Lewis Sheafe, an eloquent preacher who left the Baptist ministry to take up the Adventist cause, enjoyed notable success during the first decade of the twentieth century in building a following for Adventism among Washington, D.C.'s African American population, then the largest and most influential in any American city. Sheafe was attracted by the promise of Adventism for education and health, but frustrated in his efforts to make these opportunities real for his people. Daniells and his General Conference colleagues were adamant in viewing Washington as a Southern city in which the church could succeed only by strict adherence to the "color line" in its institutions. With church leaders demanding that he submit to Ellen White's counsel of expediency on racial matters to the neglect of her repeated assertions about the gospel breaking down racial barriers and bringing liberation to the oppressed, Sheafe finally left the denomination in 1916. In New York City, another former Baptist, James K. Humphrey, beginning virtually from scratch in 1906, raised up a thriving congregation in Harlem that numbered over 600 in the 1920s.[59] But by the end of that decade, Humphrey, too, could see no way toward his dreams for black social and economic development other than working independently of the white conference leadership. This led to his expulsion from the Adventist ministry and the division of his church as hundreds joined him in forming an independent congregation.[60]

As traumatic as these ruptures were, the Adventist message attracted a loyalty among African Americans that transcended the alienation of its two most charismatic pioneers. Despite segregation—explicit and otherwise—in the church's institutions,

African Americans composed one of the most vibrant sectors of Adventism during the twentieth century. Gradual but deeply rooted development of Oakwood College made it the enduring center of black Adventist education. During the World War II era, pressures for a structural resolution to racial inequities led to the formation of black or "regional" conferences alongside the geographically defined (usually by state) ones. While viewed as ideal by almost no one, these conferences put black ministers in a better position to lead the Adventist work in the black community and administer the funds donated by the predominantly black churches. When organization of the regional conferences began in 1944, the African American Adventist membership numbered about 17,000—8 percent of the total membership. During the next half-century, the black membership grew at three times the rate of the overall membership, reaching 193,000 (25 percent). Adventism deviated grievously from its ideals on racial equality, but it somehow, and with very little margin, navigated the worst decades intact as one church.[61]

International Mission

Adventism did make significant advances toward being a truly international community, as the priority of world missions also became firmly embedded in the denominational character during these decades.[62] The monumental project of reaching the entire world enlivened the imagination of a new generation of Adventists who, adapting the slogan of the Student Volunteer Movement, dedicated themselves to taking "the Advent message to all the world in this generation." When Daniells came to General Conference leadership in 1901, world church membership stood at close to 80,000, about 13,000 (16 percent) of which lived outside of North America. By 1930, the membership count in North America had grown to more than 120,000, but was far surpassed by the total outside North America, nearing 200,000 (62 percent of the world total). A strong majority holding membership in an American-born church were not Americans, a trend that would only grow.

GLOBALIZATION AND CONFLICT, 1945–2005

While the growth in worldwide membership, accompanied by shrinkage in the American percentage continued apace in the two decades after World War II, considerable homogeneity continued to characterize Adventism. The administrative offices throughout the world remained largely the domain of Americans and Europeans. While a degree of cultural adaptation occurred, the American church remained the norm for worship practices, evangelistic methods, and behavioral mores, in addition to doctrine.

Since the 1960s, however, a central challenge for the world movement was how to be one church amidst the rapid acceleration of centrifugal forces of ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, and doctrinal interpretation. Those forces, in turn, were in large measure generated by the outworking of a related challenge in the American church. Adventism in the United States, still the foremost source of wealth and

influence despite its ever-dwindling percentage of world church membership, faced new forms of the tension that every NRM must grapple with: sustaining a distinct identity—true to the movement's purpose and sharply demarcated from the surrounding society, over against adaptation to the wider culture in the interests of growth, quality of life, and having an alternative to offer that remains meaningful as society changes.

Adventism's response to a particularly blunt form of this challenge—the demands of military service and loyalty—serves as a starting point for looking at trends in the church's relationship to American culture as a whole. In the years leading up to World War II, church spokesmen adopted the term "conscientious cooperators" to describe the Adventists' departure from the norm regarding military service. For members who were drafted, the church upheld as the ideal a combination of "noncombatancy," in accordance with the original stance taken during Civil War, with acceptance of duty in the military that did not require bearing arms, most frequently as a medic. Through this approach, Adventists sought to fulfill the demands of conscience by refusing to bear arms while at the same time cooperating with the national mission in some useful capacity. During the late 1930s, the church formed a Medical Cadet Corps (MCC) to provide preinduction training that enabled a young Adventist "to fit into a place where he could serve God and his country conscientiously." Noncombatant military service, rendered more useful by the MCC, became a way to prove their love of country during the war, "so that none might have just cause for doubting our patriotism."[63]

Military chaplaincy created a further bond between church and nation.[64] After the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the General Conference committee voted a new policy for providing the ecclesiastical certification required for Adventist ministers to enter military service as chaplains and be commissioned as officers. In 1974, seventeen Adventist ministers were rendering service as military chaplains, and the number increased substantially in the era of the all-volunteer forces. Chaplain Barry C. Black, an Adventist minister widely respected in the church, was appointed Chief of Navy Chaplains in 2000. Three years later the United States Senate elected Black as its chaplain.[65]

The denomination, through officially recognized channels, reaffirmed in 2003 its historic stand for noncombatancy.[66] At the same time, the National Service Organization, the agency at denominational headquarters that coordinates ministry to Adventists serving in the military, informed church members that their decision about enlisting in the military and bearing a weapon is "a matter of conscience between you and God" and that a number of "good Seventh-day Adventist Christians have successfully made the military a career."[67]

The number and prestige of Adventist institutions generally expanded through the second half of the twentieth century. In 2004, the church in the United States and Canada operated 14 colleges and universities, 126 secondary schools, 62 hospitals, and 45 centers for retirement living and care of the elderly.[68] Adventism created a comprehensive, alternative way of life in the United States, and the institutional successes mark, in a general way, a continued vitality. It was possible for a resident of

Takoma Park, Maryland, in the 1990s, for example, to be born, educated from kindergarten through college, work, worship, receive medical care, and shop for food, books, and entertainment at Adventist institutions throughout life, without ever traveling more than a mile or two in any direction.

At the same time, these institutions functioned as bridges to the wider world—means to prosperity and professional success, sometimes within but frequently beyond the Adventist institutional network.[69] They also become the primary means through which the world came in contact with Adventism—precisely the point of their existence from the standpoint of church mission. That contact, however, has brought with it the influence of cultural values and norms, thereby reducing the contrast between the dominant national culture and the Adventist alternative. In addition to accreditation or certification from secular agencies, government financial aid has drawn Adventist institutions toward the mainstream. After World War II, American Adventist leaders gradually, and not without struggle, overcame the aversion to such aid that the church long held on the principle of separation of church and state.[70] Hospitals and colleges accepted funding through various government programs, justifying this acceptance by stating that the designated monies went for those aspects of the institution's work that served the general public rather than advancing sectarian beliefs. Allocations from the United States Agency for International Development provided a substantial majority of the funding for dramatic expansion of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in the 1980s. ADRA achieved recognition in the international development field for its long-term public health, agricultural, and educational projects, as well as delivering immediate relief for victims of disaster.[71]

The extent to which accreditation and government funding has influenced the policies and ethos of these institutions to the detriment of their Adventist distinctiveness has been a major issue of concern and debate in the church since the 1960s. Leaders of the church's work for religious liberty, probably the most significant additional way it is active in the public arena, took the lead in resisting the trend toward acceptance of government aid. Though they gave up much ground in these matters, they continued to succeed in mobilizing Adventists for advocacy on behalf of religious freedom.[72] Along with wide circulation of *Liberty* magazine, they had a leading role in legislative lobbying and legal action for religious rights of employees and against school prayer amendments. Here the church's teachings on apocalyptic prophecy, which envision politically dominant religious forces as the ultimate threat to liberty and human rights in the United States, appear significant in differentiating the character of Adventist public involvement from that of the religious right.

On matters of racial and gender equality, the progressive elements that could be found in Adventism's nineteenth century heritage were not sufficient to bring about a course correction in the second half of the twentieth century.[73] It took pressure from wider society caused by the civil rights movement to do that. Only after the landmark Civil Rights bill of 1964, was forthright action taken to implement nondiscrimination policies at all Adventist institutions. Belated but substantive progress came in the proportion of African Americans holding general leadership positions in

the denomination. Charles E. Bradford, for example, was elected president of the North American Division in 1979. Along with the growth among African Americans, immigration multiplied the diversity of the American church in recent decades. In a survey conducted in 2000, 56 percent of the members identified themselves as Caucasian, 30 percent of African descent, 10 percent as Hispanic, and 3 percent of Asian descent.[74] More than ever, achieving racial justice and harmony is a challenge, as well as an opportunity, for the Adventist church.

Recognition of long-standing injustices against women gradually grew, as did greater openness to women in ministry and church offices.[75] But only the protracted pressure of legal action, brought in conjunction with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, against the Pacific Press Publishing Association during the 1970s led to equality in employment practices. A conference of church scholars and administrators that met at Camp Mohaven in Ohio in 1973 concluded that no biblical or theological reasons prevented fully equal ordination of women to the ministry. Strong opposition arose against moves to ordain women, however, and it remained a much-contested issue, one that highlights the current challenge of moving forward as a united movement amidst ever more complex diversity of ethnic identity, cultural attitudes, and theological orientations.[76]

The struggles over the issue that surrounded the General Conference sessions of 1985, 1990, and 1995 suggest that a majority, though not an overwhelming one, of the church in North America and western Europe, favored removing any barrier to ordination of women, or at least allowance for the various divisions of the world church to set their own policy on the matter. However, opposition from the increasingly influential Latin American and African sectors of the church, along with a strongly committed minority in the United States, prevented such action. The presence of women in the church's salaried pastoral ranks, virtually nonexistent from the 1920s to the 1970s, has nonetheless greatly increased during the past quarter century. Recent conflicts clarified that women may serve as pastors, carrying the same credentials as male pastors during their initial years (typically three to five) in ministry prior to ordination. That authorizes female pastors to perform most of the functions of ministry, such as preaching, baptizing, and marriage ceremonies. Without ordination, though, they may not participate in the ordination of other ministers or preside over the organization of a new congregation. Proceedings at the General Conference session of 2005 in St. Louis, Missouri, vividly illustrated the countervailing patterns. For the first time, a woman was elected as a vice president of the General Conference. Soon after this unprecedented and dramatic development, however, delegates voted a new policy that the General Conference president must be an ordained minister, thus barring the new female vice president and all women from consideration for the presidency in future elections.[77]

Theological divisions further complicated the Adventist quest for unity and its positioning in relation to broader cultural influences. During the first half of the twentieth century, relations between Adventists and other denominations remained generally frosty. The Adventists claimed to have "the truth" for the last days, which requires the believer to come out of any current denominational allegiance in

"apostate Christianity," while Protestant apologetics in turn sometimes labeled Adventism a "cult" or "sect." Dialog conducted with influential evangelicals during the 1950s led to a thaw. *Questions on Doctrine* (1957), the book produced by Adventist leaders in response to the investigating evangelicals, placed an evangelical hue on Adventist beliefs and repudiated some concepts sometimes taught or implied by various Adventists but not held as standard doctrine.[78] That convinced evangelicals that Adventists did not belong in the "cultist" category with Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. However, it also helped stimulate long-running debates within Adventism that contributed to the present theological diversity.

In the decades following the publication of *Questions on Doctrine,* an "evangelical" movement gradually took shape within Adventism. The evangelical wing stressed justification by faith alone, the authority of Scripture over that of Ellen White's writings, and rejected a view deeply cherished in some Adventist circles that the church's mission is to develop a "final generation" of perfectly sanctified believers, which would lead to the Second Coming. Controversy became crisis in 1979 when the foremost advocate of the evangelical emphasis, Australian Desmond Ford, publicly challenged traditional teachings concerning 1844, the "investigative judgment," and prophecy interpretation. Ford was a beloved preacher, articulate debater, and a formidable scholar. When he was expelled from his teaching position and shorn of his ministerial credentials, scores of those sharing his views also left the church's pastoral and teaching ranks. A much larger number, however, favorable to the "evangelical" position on the gospel but not wishing to confront established doctrines connected with 1844, remained active in the church.[79]

The so-called traditionalist or historic Adventists, on the other hand, viewed the entire package of Ford's "new theology" as dangerous and contradictory to the teachings of the church's pioneers.[80] Particularly in the early 1990s, some "independent ministries" taking this view believed that church leadership was too tolerant of threatening views and became antagonistic to the denomination's official work. Here, too, though, a larger portion remained active in the denomination, working energetically to promote evangelism and revival along traditional lines.

A liberal stream of Adventism also emerged, emphasizing progressive development in doctrine, openness to change in church practices and policies, and involvement in social issues, such as civil rights and economic justice.[81] The Association of Adventist Forums and its publication, *Spectrum,* established in the late 1960s, gave voice to liberal Adventism, which is often associated with the church's educational and medical institutions. Scholarly study of Ellen White has probably been the most controversial legacy of the liberal sector. *Prophetess of Health* (1976) by Ronald Numbers challenged the widespread view of the prophet's writings as virtually infallible by showing her usage of the works of other health reformers and that she changed her views on some topics over time. The work of Numbers and others eventually prompted even denominational leadership to acknowledge that Ellen White's writings were far more dependent on literary sources than previously recognized.[82]

Identification with the statement of 27 Fundamental Beliefs voted at the General Conference session of 1980 became a benchmark for theological unity. However,

evangelicals, traditionalists, and liberals contested the interpretation and application of the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. Two theological societies—the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, relatively open to critical scholarship, and the more traditionalist Adventist Theological Society—each sustained enthusiastic participation. Understanding of Creation and the age of the Earth in connection with scientific knowledge became a particularly divisive preoccupation.

Adventism in the United States enters the twenty-first century incorporating increasing ethnic and cultural diversity and experiencing considerable tension over how to interpret and apply its beliefs in a rapidly changing society. Will it focus on prophecy belief, and emphasize the claim on singular importance as the agency for God's truth in the last days, as the traditionalists favor? Or will it, under evangelical and liberal influences pursue a benevolent, respectable, and less exclusivist identity? Or will more creative ways of being a dissenting yet winsome alternative religious tradition emerge?

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Jehovah's Witnesses

David L. Weddle

Jehovah's Witnesses have taught and practiced an alternative version of Protestant Christianity for 125 years. Originating in the United States in the late nineteenth century as a small group of Bible students, the movement spread across the globe, and in 2004 the Watch Tower Society reported over six million active members in 235 countries.[1] Jehovah's Witnesses belong to the Protestant tradition by virtue of their insistence on the Bible as their primary authority, yet they developed beliefs, practices, institutional forms, and a relation to culture based on their apocalyptic hope that distinguishes them from other Protestants.[2]

OVERVIEW

As Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses hold that the Bible is the ultimate religious authority rather than Church tradition or personal spiritual experience; thus, they reject any belief or practice that is not supported by their reading of the Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses teach that the Bible is "a book from God," given through inspired writers who faithfully recorded God's message as a secretary transcribes a dictated letter. They assert that the Bible is scientifically and historically accurate and that its prophecies about future events are entirely reliable.[3] In a consistent application of the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura,* Jehovah's Witnesses reject many doctrines in the ecumenical creeds, such as the nature of God as Trinity, the divine nature of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the immortality of the soul, and the eternal punishment of unbelievers. Jehovah's Witnesses teach that these so-called "orthodox" beliefs are the result of adapting Christian theology to Greek philosophical ideas at the time Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century.[4]

Since that time, Jehovah's Witnesses insist, all churches have departed from the true Christian faith by seeking power and wealth in the world, supporting earthly governments in waging wars, uniting in ecumenical organizations, and adopting pagan practices such as the celebration of Christmas and Easter. In these ways,

Christian churches, along with the adherents of all other world religions, entered unwittingly into alliance with Satan, the fallen angel who opposes God's purpose to establish his kingdom on earth. Jehovah's Witnesses are convinced that they are the only true believers in a time of general apostasy. In these last days, Jehovah's Witnesses demonstrate their loyalty to God's kingdom by giving public testimony to their faith. In doing so, they prove their worthiness to enjoy the coming paradise on earth. Ever alert to Satan's temptations and aware of the possibility that yielding to the allure of the world would betray their allegiance to Jehovah, Witnesses often quote Jesus's warning that in the last days only "he who endures to the end will be saved" (Mark 13:13b). For that reason, they persistently canvass their neighborhoods and towns, explaining their beliefs and distributing vast amounts of literature. Most people first encounter Jehovah's Witnesses at their front doors and must decide whether to invite the pleasant strangers in or send them on their way. In either case, the Witnesses have answered their calling to proclaim God's kingdom and to warn of the judgment that is coming. Whether they are welcomed or rejected, they interpret their experience as confirmation of their role in the final drama of history: Jehovah's Witnesses initiate conversations that are daily fulfillments of biblical prophecy. It is hard to imagine a more compelling religious identity in the Protestant Christian tradition.

HISTORY

Religion in the nineteenth century United States was marked by widespread enthusiasm, taking visionary and energetic forms in revival campaigns, utopian communities, and Adventist hopes of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God to earth. Heightened expectations of a glorious future, however, inevitably bred impatience. Even Jesus's own disciples asked him: "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:4). Apocalyptic believers throughout history believed that the very date of the end of the world lies encoded in the prophecies of the Bible. One of the most persuasive decoders of millennial promises was William Miller (1782–1849), a lay Baptist minister whose followers expected the end of the world on October 22, 1844. For many, the failure of Miller's prophecy was dramatic refutation of claims to calculate the exact date of the return of Christ.

For others, including those who sold their property and dressed in white robes for their ascension into heaven, the "Great Disappointment" became the opportunity for more ingenious interpretations. Hiram Edson reported a vision of Christ entering the "second apartment" or inner sanctuary of the heavenly archetype of Solomon's temple where Israelite priests offered sacrifices. There Christ began conducting what later Adventists would call an "investigative judgment" of all people, based on their obedience to biblical laws, including Sabbath observance and strict attention to health and diet. Just as ancient Israelite priests entered the Most Holy Place in the temple once a year to cleanse the people of sin, so Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary in 1844 in precise fulfillment of prophecy in the biblical book of Daniel, "to

determine who through repentance and faith in Christ is entitled to enter His eternal kingdom."[5] When Christ completes the examination, he will return, suddenly and visibly, to initiate the apocalyptic events foretold in the Bible. The "sanctuary doctrine" was later confirmed by visions of Ellen Gould White (1827–1915), prophet of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and served as an influential explanation of how Christ could be in the heavens in fulfillment of prophecy, but remain invisible on earth where powers of evil increase their control of religious and political systems. In the title of her best-known work, White called the struggle between Christ and Satan *The Great Controversy,* and predicted that it would soon end in the victory of the Messiah at the battle of Armageddon and the eternal destruction of the wicked.[6]

Interpretations of biblical eschatology, especially in the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation, were always popular among American Christians. The detailed chronologies inspired by the dispensationalism of John Nelson Darby (1800–1882), British founder of the Plymouth Brethren, provided the primary source for C.I. Scofield (1843–1921), who later incorporated the scheme of seven dispensations into his famous reference Bible. Each dispensation (from the Greek term for "economy") is a different form of divine administration of the world during a particular period of history.[7] Each dispensation has its own principles that regulate the relationship between God and the world, including the means of human salvation. The key to understanding any passage in the Bible is to identify the dispensation in which it was written and the historical period in which its teaching was binding. For example, most laws given to ancient Israel do not apply in the dispensation of the Church that began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). For dispensationalists the distinction between Israel and the Church is critical because they believe that prophetic texts in the Old Testament promising the messianic age will be literally fulfilled in the future of the Jewish people.

Before that dispensation of the kingdom begins, however, Christians in the present dispensation of grace will be taken directly into heaven in the "rapture" and those "left behind" will go through seven years of great tribulation. After "those days" Christ will return to earth to establish his millennial kingdom, a reign of peace and justice that will end with another test of human loyalties to be followed by the "Great White Throne" judgment and the final consignment of the wicked to the "second death." The elaborate calculations of Adventists near the end of the nineteenth century aroused expectations that a comprehensive interpretation of human history, from its beginning in the Garden of Eden to its culmination in the "new heavens and earth" was possible by means of an authoritative correlation of the course of human history and the code of divine revelation. Among the many who were excited by that prospect was Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916).

Russell was born in 1852 into a middle-class family in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. Although he attended Presbyterian churches, he found Calvinist teachings of original sin and predestination inconsistent with his own sense of youthful initiative and self-determination and the preaching of eternal torment of unbelievers wholly contradictory to divine love. While still a teenager, Russell became convinced that "though each of the creeds contained some elements of truth, they were, on the whole,

misleading and contradictory of God's Word."[8] Russell began to earnestly study the Bible, assisted by several Adventist associates. George Storrs (1796–1879), editor of *Bible Examiner,* convinced Russell that the soul dies with the body and that unbelievers would not endure eternal punishment, but simply cease to exist. Storrs also taught "a second chance of salvation for all resurrected people during the millennium," a view that became "a key doctrine of Russell's."[9] Russell learned from Nelson H. Barbour (1824–1908), editor of *Herald of the Morning,* that the invisible "presence" of Christ occurred in 1874, from which date Russell calculated that 40 years of "harvest" would elapse before the kingdom arrived. Despite these influences, however, Russell did not adopt Adventist observance of Saturday Sabbath nor the standards of dietary health taught by White.

Russell modestly acknowledged that the views he promoted were not original with him, but were "scattered fragments of truth" preserved piecemeal by different Protestant groups over the centuries. Russell described his teaching as "less work of origination than of reconstruction, adjustment, harmonization."[10] That acknowledgement was crucial for discouraging any tendency to regard Russell as a prophet who received revelation by direct inspiration apart from the Bible. The biblical model for Russell's role is closer to that of apostle, and the event in the history of Jehovah's Witnesses that corresponds to Pentecost in the story of the early Christian church was the publication of the first issue of the monthly journal, *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* in 1879. By that action Russell and his supporters accepted the commission to proclaim the coming kingdom in the power of "Jehovah's holy spirit." The difference from the original apostolic message is that Russell taught that Christ assumed the place of rulership in heaven in 1874. Russell made that conviction even clearer in 1909 when he changed the name of the magazine to *The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence.*

By 1880 Russell drew together the small congregations that had formed around his published views. He charged them with the role of the "faithful and discreet slave" who supplies spiritual food to the rest of the household in Jesus's parable in Matthew 24:45–47. Already Russell was formulating the key distinction between the "little flock" of 144,000 who would assist Christ in ruling the kingdom from heaven (Revelation 14) and the "great crowd" of believers from all nations who would inherit the earthly paradise (Revelation 7). In 1881 he published the conviction that the "faithful and discreet slave" represented the collective ministry of those anointed by God's "holy spirit" to share in messianic authority, and in 1884 he formed Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society as their unifying organization.

Russell promoted his teaching tirelessly, through dramatic public lectures and prolific writing. He was a tall man, with a flowing beard, and made a striking stage presence. Never pretentious, Russell impressed others by his sincerity, modesty, and moderation, setting an example by spending time in missionary work abroad. For these qualities, his students fondly referred to him as "Pastor." Russell's central passion was "publishing" in every possible form, including contributions to newspapers and magazines. In 1913 Russell's sermons reached 15 million readers through what

he called "newspaper gospelling." He encouraged his students to go door-to-door with literature, accompanied by phonographs or dioramas.[11]

In 1886 Russell began an ambitious series of books titled *Millennial Dawn,* with the first volume called *The Divine Plan of the Ages.* He was convinced that he had discovered the key to the coherent interpretation of all prophetic passages in the Bible, thus deciphering the divine intention in history, including the knowledge of its end. This method of biblical interpretation was pioneered by Jewish sectarians at Qumran and has animated popular religion in the United States for three centuries.[12] So Russell's approach was not original, nor was his judgment that Christendom had fallen away from the moral discipline and spiritual fidelity that is required to survive divine judgment. That theme had resounded through American preaching from the time of the Puritans. What distinguished Russell's apocalyptic rhetoric was his utter rejection of the hope of reforming apostate Christendom and his insistence that strict conformity to the model of first century Christianity required consistent separation from religious, as well as political, institutions. The only divine assistance Russell claimed in this discovery was the same guidance of God's "holy spirit" that is available to any earnest seeker after truth. The key to Russell's interpretation was a complex calculation, published in 1876, leading to the conclusion that the "seven times" of Daniel 4:16 referred to the "times of the gentiles" in domination over Israel (Luke 21:24), begun in 607 BCE and destined to end in 1914.[13] When World War I broke out, some of Russell's followers (like those of William Miller) were certain that they would be taken immediately into heaven. By the end of 1915, however, Russell explained that the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, or Turkey, signaled only the beginning of the end.

In the second installment of his series (retitled *Studies in the Scriptures*) Russell explained that the return of Christ involves a process of gradual recognition, "as a period of presence, as was the first advent." But for how long? Russell eventually tied the length of delay to the generation alive in 1914 as the cohort to whom Jesus's words were addressed: "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (Matthew 16:28). Russell translated the term *parousia* as "presence," rather than "coming," and emphasized the arrival of the kingdom of God as a slow "dawning" of the truth. In the meantime Christ called those chosen to reign with him as spirit beings in the heavens. Beginning with the apostles, God selected the 144,000 members of "spiritual Israel," also called the "bride of Christ" and the "little flock," whose last members were from the generation of 1914. Only they would be taken to heaven at the time of the kingdom.

In 1909 Russell moved the center of his publishing operations to Brooklyn, New York, and named the complex "Bethel," house of God. Not long after, Maria Ackley Russell, from whom he separated in 1897, served him with divorce papers, ending a long period of contention over her role in the organization. One official publication notes that she was motivated by "her own desire for personal prominence," but critics charge that she was asserting her right to independent judgment. As an editor of the

Watch Tower, she objected to the requirement that Russell approve the contents of every issue. Clearly she was not following the biblical injunction for a wife to submit to the authority of her husband. Barbara Harrison believes that Russell was referring to Maria in the sixth volume of his *Studies in the Scriptures,* published in 1911, in a passage of decidedly misogynistic tone: "Depraved and selfish" women attempt "directly or indirectly, to usurp the authority of the head of the home, to take and to hold the control of the purse and of the family."[14] In any case, Maria served as a sign that women should be excluded from leadership, based on the biblical prohibition against women speaking in church (1 Corinthians 14:34–35) and denial of permission for a woman "to teach or to have authority over a man" (1 Timothy 2:11–12). While women are active "publishers," going door-to-door with the message of the coming kingdom at least once a week, and some are "pioneers," who devote 840 hours a year to preaching and teaching, no woman is allowed to hold a governing position in the Watch Tower Society or serve as an elder in a local congregation.

Charles Russell died in 1916, on a train returning from a speaking tour. He insisted that his writings on the Millennial Dawn be regarded as "the key to the scriptures." Yet today the Watchtower Society does not even reprint his works.[15] Russell insisted that the Bible was the sole basis of authority and Jehovah's Witnesses have honored that principle, even to the point of discounting Russell's personal authority. The latest history produced by the Governing Body candidly portrays Russell as a fallible human being and acknowledges practices and teachings from the early days that were later abandoned. Nevertheless, the original convictions of a founder of a religious movement continue to inform its beliefs and practice. Russell's conviction that biblical prophecy refers to future historical events inspired his successors to offer daring predictions and supply creative explanations for their failures.

Russell's successor as president of the Watch Tower Society was Joseph Franklin Rutherford (1869–1942). Also an imposing figure, he served occasionally on the circuit court and was thus known as "Judge." Rutherford provided legal counsel to Russell in the purchase of land for Bethel and was a member of the board of directors of the Watch Tower Society. His disposition, however, was far less peaceful than Russell's and his style of management more centralized. Shortly after his election, Rutherford replaced four directors opposed to his administration with his own supporters. Because of the fiery rhetoric of writings against American involvement in World War I, Rutherford and seven other directors of the Watch Tower Society were imprisoned under the *Sedition Act of 1918.* They advocated a neutralist (not pacifist) stance and encouraged young male Witnesses to refuse military service. All were released after nine months during which they organized Bible studies in jail. In the aftermath of this persecution Rutherford tightened control over the Brooklyn headquarters by challenging the election of several directors and putting his backers in their place (a move he interpreted as fulfillment of prophecy). Rutherford also required door-to-door callers to account for their quota of hours by filling out a monthly "service sheet," increased the construction of Kingdom Halls, began publishing a new monthly magazine called *The Golden Age* (later, *Awake!*), and introduced the motto, "Millions Now Living Will Never Die!"

Rutherford wrote extensively, beginning with *Harp of God* in 1921. He predicted that the biblical patriarchs would return in 1925 to assist in rebuilding Jerusalem, and he built a mansion for them in San Diego, California. In their absence Rutherford occupied the residence from 1923 until his death. Faced with the task of reading prophecy in the aftermath of war and persecution, Rutherford identified "Babylon the Great" of Revelation with the League of Nations abetted by the Vatican, established clergy, and the barons of market capitalism.[16] At the annual convention of 1931 Rutherford declared that henceforth "we desire to be known as and called by the name, to wit, *Jehovah's witnesses.*"[17] Since then, the use of "Jehovah" as the personal name of God has become a major point of doctrine and religious identity. The new name was a dramatic change from the generic designation of "Bible Students" and carried an implicit challenge to Protestants from whose English translations of the Bible the proper name of God was largely eliminated.[18] In 1939, the Watch Tower Society sought to broaden the readership of its chief publication from the original group of "Russellites" to the larger company of Jehovah's Witnesses. The present title, *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom,* gives prominence "to Jehovah as the Universal Sovereign, the one who gave ruling authority to his Son."[19] The name of the magazine is itself a coded reference to the Jehovah's Witnesses' alternative reading of Bible prophecy.

During World War II Rutherford led the Witnesses through a series of court battles, winning civil rights to distribute literature, refuse to salute the flag, and claim exemption from military service. Rutherford used the judicial system in a comprehensive and systematic way, a strategy Pauline Côté and James Richardson call "disciplined litigation." In the process of pursuing legal protection for distinctive Witness practices, Rutherford also moved "from anti-religious propaganda to demands that the Witnesses be accorded a socially established religion's privileges."[20] Rutherford struggled, however, with personal problems, including "a separation from his wife tied to an almost pathological animus toward any leadership role by women."[21] Rutherford's unhappy marriage, like that of Russell, confirmed his reading of biblical passages warning against women who challenge the authority of male leadership and reinforced traditional gender roles for women that remain in place today. Rutherford's death marked a major transition in the history of Jehovah's Witnesses from charismatic to institutional authority.

Nathan Homer Knorr (1905–1977) became the third president of the Watch Tower Society in 1942, after working his way through the ranks at Bethel to a place on the board of directors. Knorr's long presidency was marked by increased growth, more sophisticated promotional and evangelistic methods, and greater uniformity in the programs of local congregations, including training in public speaking through Theocratic Ministry Schools. Unlike his predecessors, Knorr had modest writing skills and no ambition to produce his own series of interpretations of biblical prophecy. Instead, he inaugurated the practice of anonymous doctrinal publications, beginning in 1943 with *The Truth Shall Make You Free.* In 1960 the Watchtower Society published the complete *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures,* in which references to God and Lord in the King James Version are uniformly rendered

"Jehovah." The names of the translators do not appear, although Frederick W. Franz (1893–1992) was probably responsible for this version. The stated reason for anonymity is that it discourages pride and the attendant lust for power, both associated with charismatic authority. On the other hand, no individual can be held responsible for the content of any publication. Further, most books from the Watchtower Society lack a distinctive style or fresh rhetoric. The effects of Knorr's well-meaning policy resulted in the production of works of simple declarative sentences, composed in a stilted vocabulary and arranged in brief chapters. Each page is lined at the bottom with elementary questions calling for answers that consist of repetitions of sections of the text above. No questions call for criticisms of the text or explore assumptions behind the text. The strategy of anonymous authorship for official writings succeeds in achieving a uniformity of belief and expression, but also results in works that require no imagination from writers and no independent response from readers.

In the years following World War II Knorr traveled extensively, rebuilding branch organizations in Europe and establishing others in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific islands. During the countercultural revolution in the United States of the 1960s, the Watch Tower Society reacted by tightening discipline and expelling many young people from their congregations, usually for sexual misconduct. The process is called "disfellowshipping," and under its terms no Jehovah's Witness, apart from family members living in the same house, may have contact with the expelled person until he or she repents of sin and returns to the way of life prescribed in the Bible.

In 1971 the board of directors of the Watch Tower Society reorganized into a new Governing Body on the model of the original apostles, composed of 11 men, plus the president, all of whom belonged to the "anointed class," the 144,000 believers Russell taught were anointed as kings to rule with Christ over the coming paradise on earth. He also referred to them as "the faithful and discreet slave" of Jehovah charged with providing "spiritual food" to the entire congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. In practice, however, the teaching authority of the anointed class is exercised by its "governing body." The Governing Body held legal authority over the vast holdings of the Watch Tower Society, approved all publications, and was the final arbiter of doctrinal and behavioral questions. Knorr extended the apostolic model in 1972 by restoring to local congregations the authority to elect their own body of elders to replace the single overseer.

Only near the end of his tenure did Knorr, like his predecessors, become involved in controversy over failed prophecy. In 1966 the Governing Body issued a major publication that traced the creation of Adam to 4026 BCE. "According to this trustworthy Bible chronology, six thousand years of man's creation will end in 1975 … How appropriate it would be for Jehovah God to make of this coming seventh period of a thousand years … a great Jubilee Sabbath for the proclaiming of liberty throughout the earth to all its inhabitants!"[22] Despite the tentative phrasing of "how appropriate it would be" for the kingdom to come in 1975, many Jehovah's Witnesses took the prediction seriously and defected when the year 1975 came and went without the coming of the kingdom. While vigorous evangelism worldwide

restored the loss in total membership, the rate of enlistment in the United States has not regained its former level.[23]

Frederick W. Franz was elected fourth president of the Watch Tower Society at age 83. Under his leadership the Watch Tower Society responded to the decline in active members after 1975 with several publications calling for greater dedication and providing new resources for Bible study, including a reference edition of the *New World Translation* (1984), a commentary on the Book of Revelation (1988), and a two-volume Bible encyclopedia (1991). Franz bolstered educational programs and developed the Ministerial Training School to train single male missionaries. As a result of his efforts, the number of pioneers nearly tripled and the number of congregations grew to 70,000, many in Kingdom Halls that were constructed in a few days by special teams of builders. But his tenure also was not without controversy. The emphasis on greater dedication imposed stricter discipline and more rigorous application of standards for disfellowshipping. The most notorious of these cases involved Franz's own nephew, Raymond V. Franz, who resigned from the Governing Body in 1981 because of doubts about the Society's changing interpretations of prophecy and its authoritarian control over members.[24] He was finally disfellowshipped in 1982 on the charge of eating with someone who was "disassociated" from the organization. The account of the proceedings echoes stories of the expulsion of heretics in the early church, by authority also wielded by an oligarchy of elders.[25] The case of Raymond Franz illustrates the determination of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses to conform to the biblical model of apostolic authority, even at the expense of familial loyalty. Frederick W. Franz, who claimed the "mantle" of Rutherford, died at the age of 99.

Milton G. Henschel (1920–2003), fifth president of the Society, completed the transition from individual authority to corporate bureaucracy. The Watch Tower Society continued to refer to itself as a "theocratic organization" governed by members of the "anointed class" identified by Russell as members of the generation alive in 1914. In 1995, however, the Governing Body revised its interpretation of Jesus's promise that "this generation would not pass away" to mean that there will always be those who oppose the truth until the kingdom arrives. It is a term that will never lack a referent; there will always be "this generation," provoking the faithful to energetic witness, causing the tragedy of martyrdom, and offering temptation to compromise with the world. By applying the principle of progressive understanding of the Bible, the Watch Tower Society insisted that Jehovah's Witnesses no longer regard the generation of 1914 as "a rule for measuring time."[26] The new reading of Jesus's words removed the last vestige of charisma from the Governing Body as men anointed for a destiny of heavenly rule and, therefore, invested with earthly authority.

The institutional effects of this change in interpretation were far-reaching. In October 2000 The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania distributed its operations among three new corporations: Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses (to supervise educational activities), Religious Order of Jehovah's Witnesses (to manage staff in full-time service), and Kingdom Support Services (to administer building construction and maintenance).[27] These corporations, with

their own boards, are independent legal entities responsible for the global operations of Jehovah's Witnesses without direct administrative direction from the Governing Body. This was a critical stage in the process of redefining authority within the organization. It is typical for a New Religious Movement (NRM), following the death of its founder, to devise an institutional process for transferring authority. But in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses the crisis was postponed as the energetic and appealing "Pastor" Russell was followed by the equally dynamic, if not equally charming, "Judge" Rutherford. Through the tenures of subsequent presidents, however, the personal charisma of the founding figures gradually faded. As the members of the Governing Body of the Watch Tower Society became less visible and its publications anonymous, the president no longer provided a center of personal authority who inspired confidence in the official line of biblical interpretation.

The final step in transferring authority from individual leaders to the institution was to separate the legal powers of the Watch Tower Society, now wielded by younger men of the "great crowd" not elected to rule in heaven, from the spiritual guidance of the Governing Body and to establish a rotating chairmanship of the Governing Body, reducing the post to one of first among equals. At the time of reorganization, all members of the Governing Body resigned from the board of the Watch Tower Society and Don A. Adams (b. 1925) replaced Henschel as president. But this change did not solve the problem posed by the advancing age of the members of the Governing Body itself. David A. Reed notes that "long-standing doctrine precludes appointment of younger men to the Governing Body" because they do not belong to the "faithful and discreet slave class," whose membership Rutherford declared sealed in 1935.[28] A recent Watchtower publication, designed for congregational study, affirms that position: "In our day the Governing Body of Jehovah's visible organization is made up of spirit-anointed brothers from various lands and is located at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. Under the headship of Jesus Christ, the Governing Body furthers pure worship in every land.…"[29]

Nevertheless, on August 25, 2005 new members born after 1935 were appointed to the Governing Body.[30] These men claim to have received the conviction of anointing to the heavenly calling to replace original members of the 144,000 who fell into apostasy.[31] While in principle this replacement process could go on indefinitely, as some of the newly anointed may also prove unfaithful and require substitutes, the explanation cannot prove satisfactory in the long run because it implies that Jehovah regularly calls unworthy people to provide spiritual guidance to his faithful witnesses.

Eventually, if there are no available "spirit-anointed brothers" to constitute the Governing Body, the source of biblical interpretation for Jehovah's Witnesses would no longer be those called to reign with Christ in heaven. Under such conditions of attenuated authority, the question is whether the Governing Body, which has functioned from the beginning of the movement as the recipient of progressive enlightenment, could inspire submission by Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide to demands for apocalyptic fervor, rigorous conformity to doctrine, strict separation from dominant cultural patterns, and abstention from patriotic activities and civic government. Will the loss of theocratic authority, completed by this reorganization, weaken adherence

to Watchtower ideology and hasten a process of assimilation to conventional forms of Protestant bureaucracy?[32] Much depends upon the power of the alternative system of beliefs and practices that Jehovah's Witnesses offer.

BELIEFS

For Jehovah's Witnesses there is only one supreme "God of gods" (Psalm 136:2). His sacred name YHWH occurs thousands of times in the Hebrew Bible and, although its exact pronunciation is now lost, Jehovah's Witnesses prefer the familiar translation *Jehovah* because it preserves "the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, YHWH or JHVH."[33] Jehovah created the entire world in six days as recorded in Genesis 1–2, making each species separately ("after its kind"). While Jehovah's Witnesses recognize that many adaptive variations may occur within a species, they deny that all animals have a common ancestor. Further, they find it incredible that living beings spontaneously emerged, as a random event, from inanimate forces. "The Bible's explanation that 'life came from life' in that life was created by God, is convincingly in harmony with the facts."[34] Similarly, God arranged the heavenly bodies "according to laws that keep them in perfect relation to one another … Surely it would be foolish to think that the billions of stars just made themselves, and, without any direction, formed the great star systems that move with such marvelous order." As in all arguments for the existence of God from the perception of design in the universe, the conclusion follows: "This highly organized universe could not have just come about by itself. An intelligent Creator with great power was needed."[35] While Jehovah's Witnesses "give no date for the original creation of the heavens and the earth," they maintain that the seven days of creation recounted in Genesis extended over a period of 42,000 years, with the creation of Eve about 6,000 years ago.[36]

Jehovah's Witnesses also believe that Jehovah is an "invisible spirit" with classic attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and eternality, but at the same time he is a person of love, mercy, patience, and compassion. As Creator, Jehovah is the rightful king of the universe, even though rebellious angels and humans refuse to acknowledge his rule. Jehovah's Witnesses, by contrast, insist that their very name is a testimony to their loyalty to God. The phrase "Jehovah's Witnesses" comes from a passage in Isaiah: "You are my witnesses … I am Jehovah, and besides me there is no savior" (43:10, 12, KJV). Jehovah's Witnesses believe that calling upon the personal name of God follows the example of Jesus, establishes an intimate relation with God, and identifies the true religion.[37] To honor God's name is to acknowledge his sovereignty over the universe and to submit to his righteous rule, thus preparing the way for the coming of Jehovah's kingdom to earth. "All of God's purposes," according to one Watchtower publication, "are linked to his name. Mankind's problems began when Satan first profaned Jehovah's name by calling Him, in effect, a liar and unfit to rule the human race. (Genesis 3:1–6; John 8:44) Only when God's name is properly vindicated will mankind enjoy complete relief from the disastrous effects of Satan's lie."[38] Jehovah's Witnesses view history as constituting a sustained test to determine whether humans will choose to obey God's law rather than live under

Satan's dominion. They believe that sanctifying the proper name of God is essential to restoring Christian worship as practiced by Jesus and his apostles and recorded unerringly in the Bible.

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that all things were created through the agency of the Word of God, called *Logos* in John 1 and *Wisdom* in Proverbs 8. This "master workman" is chief among the "sons of God" (Job 1:6) in the heavenly court. The heavenly being who is described in John 1:1 as "with" God in the beginning and is himself "a god" became incarnate in Jesus (John 1:18). Thus, he is called the "firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15). Jehovah's Witnesses pray to God in the name of Jesus, but insist that the Bible never identifies Christ as an eternal "person" within the Godhead as in Trinitarian theology. After all, "how can an individual be *with* someone and at the same time *be* that person?" By reading John 1:1 in light of John 17:3, where Jesus addresses "the only true God," Jehovah's Witnesses argue it is only reasonable to conclude that "Jesus, the Word, is 'a god' in the sense that he has a high position but is not the same as Almighty God."[39]

Jehovah's Witnesses interpret the incarnation of the Word in literal terms: "…Jehovah God caused an ovum, or egg cell, in Mary's womb to become fertile, accomplishing this by the transferal of the life of his firstborn Son from the spirit realm to earth … it would appear that the perfect male life-force (causing the conception) canceled out any imperfection existent in Mary's ovum…."[40] Jesus developed in a normal way, but upon reaching maturity "he was granted full remembrance of his previous association with God in heaven."[41] At his baptism by John the Baptist Jesus was anointed by God's holy spirit into his calling as Messiah and adopted as Jehovah's "spiritual son."[42] He lived a life of total imitation of his Father's moral character, revealing God's sacred name, and offering his perfect human life as a "ransom" for sinful humanity.[43]

Following an ancient model of thinking of Jesus Christ as an angel, both in the sense of a messenger of divine revelation and a champion of God's people, Jehovah's Witnesses teach that in his heavenly form Christ is the archangel named Michael in Hebrew Scriptures. The argument for this identity rests on parallel descriptions of the two in the Bible. Both Michael and Christ are seen as leading an army of angels. "Since God's Word nowhere indicates that there are two armies of faithful angels in heaven … it is logical to conclude that Michael is none other than Jesus Christ in his heavenly role."[44] The identification of Christ with the archangel is a way of accounting for what in more traditional Christology would be called the divine and human "natures" of Christ. Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, is humble, compassionate, and forgiving: the perfect human being who reveals the love of Jehovah. Michael, the archangel, is formidable, destructive, and vengeful: the perfect warrior who reveals the justice of Jehovah. Apocalyptic vision always discerns two faces of God, one turned with tender care to the faithful remnant, the other dark with wrath facing the rebellious. In the Christology of Jehovah's Witnesses both are present in Jesus Christ in his earthly and heavenly forms.

The angry face of God is set most unrelentingly against one of the other angels who once also served Jehovah in the heavenly court, the one called Lucifer. Jehovah's

Witnesses teach that he rebelled against God and became the opponent of Jehovah's rule. As Satan, the "adversary" of divine government, the Devil deceived Eve and Adam into also defying God's sovereignty. Jehovah created the first human couple perfect, but through their free act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden they and all their progeny became subject to sin, sickness, and death. While Jehovah's Witnesses do not teach that humans are born with a sinful nature that binds their will to sin, as in classic doctrines of original sin, they do believe that humans are born under the curse of death and the disposition to sin. A recent publication describes the human condition by a metaphor drawn from baking. If a pan used for baking bread has a dent in it, then each "loaf has a dent, or an imperfection, in it. Similarly, each human has inherited a 'dent' of imperfection from Adam. That is why all humans grow old and die."[45]

By joining Lucifer in rebellion against God, Adam and Eve lost the right to live in paradise on earth. Instead, they returned to the dust from which they were formed and ceased to exist in both body and soul. Jehovah's Witnesses deny the immortality of the soul in another radical departure from a conventional reading of the Bible. Genesis 2:7 in the *New World Translation* reads, "And Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul." Jehovah's Witnesses note that "man *was* a soul, he did not *have* a soul as something immaterial, invisible, and intangible residing inside him."[46] The latter view is derived from Greek philosophical dualism and contradicts the biblical teaching that a human being is composed of earth and divine breath. Jehovah's Witnesses conclude that when God's breath, or spirit, is withdrawn a person becomes nothing but dust. Consequently, "the dead enter a state of complete unconsciousness."[47]

To rescue humans from the oblivion of death Jehovah sent Christ to earth as the "second Adam." By remaining sinless throughout his life Jesus qualified as the perfect sacrifice required to ransom humanity from the power of death and of Satan, thus vindicating the authority of Jehovah's rule over the earth. The sacrifice of Christ was an economic one, an exchange of his sinless life to "buy back what Adam lost," namely, forgiveness of sin and eternal life for those who believe. When Christ returned to heaven, 40 days after his resurrection, "as a spirit person once more, he appeared 'before the person of God for us,' carrying the value of his ransom sacrifice. (Hebrews 9:12, 24) At that time the ransom was paid to God in heaven. Deliverance was now available for humankind."[48]

In classic ransom theories of atonement Christ's life is "paid" to Satan to deliver humanity from the demonic power of death. The comic reversal is that Satan cannot hold Christ in the realm of death, and the resurrection frees both Christ and those he rescues. But Jehovah's Witnesses interpret the exchange in more governmental terms: Christ sacrificed his life in a demonstration of entire loyalty to God's rule, a living reversal of Adam's rebellion. Not even the fear of death, Satan's most effective bondage (Hebrews 2:14–15), can tempt Christ to stray from the path of obedience. By fulfilling his divinely appointed and prophesied destiny, Christ repays to Jehovah the honor that Adam offended. The "ransom" in this view is paid to God, the one

whose right to unconditional obedience from all his creatures was violated in Eden and vindicated on Calvary.

According to Watchtower teaching, Jesus was executed on a single piece of timber, a "torture stake," rather than a cross. This alternative interpretation is drawn from Galatians 3:3, "Accursed is every man hanged upon a stake." Watchtower exegetes argue that the Greek term *stauros* here refers to a beam sunk in the ground. Whatever value that etymological claim has, the Jehovah's Witnesses are on solid ground by noting that the cross was not a prominent symbol in early Christianity. (The sign of the fish appears most often.) For Jehovah's Witnesses the significant change came in the fourth century when "pagan Emperor Constantine converted to apostate Christianity and promoted the cross as its symbol … The cross is, in fact, pagan in origin."[49] In a dramatic declaration of alternative Christian identity, Jehovah's Witnesses denounce the central symbol of dominant Protestant and Catholic churches as a pagan icon, the veneration of which constitutes idolatry.

The resurrection of Jesus is the completion of the ransom exchange in perfect justice. Christ voluntarily sacrificed his sinless life, but righteousness required that he not be condemned to annihilation.[50] Jesus's body became lifeless on the torture stake, but God raised him from the dead in a "spiritual body" and made him a "life-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:44–45) with authority to rule over all other creatures as head of the messianic kingdom (Philippians 2:9–11). Since what Christ achieved was the possibility for anyone to freely seek forgiveness from God on the basis of the ransom, all who exercise faith in Christ Jesus will experience resurrection from "memorial tombs" to new life. Since the dead cease to exist, however, their restoration to embodied life depends entirely upon the preservation of their individual being in the memory of God. Citing a recurrent biblical metaphor, one Watchtower publication states, "God's Word refers to the dead as being asleep." They neither receive nor initiate contact with the living; their existence is remembered, in every detail, by Jehovah. Just as modern recording equipment can preserve images of those who have died, so "our almighty Creator can record the details of any individual and resurrect the same person, giving him or her a newly formed body."[51]

Jehovah's Witnesses thus solve the problem of personal identity in a condition of disembodiment, entailed in conventional views of immortality, by arguing that such views are not found in the Bible itself. Further, by accepting the fact that the soul dies with the body, Jehovah's Witnesses avoid the problem of explaining the "intermediate state" of the dead prior to the general resurrection; they do not find evidence in the Bible for either the Protestant belief that souls are with Jesus in heaven or the Catholic belief that the dead suffer purgative punishment on their way to heaven. On the contrary, they trace belief in an immortal soul back to ancient Babylon, the source of opposition to Jehovah, whose name reappears in the book of Revelation as the global center of evil in the last days.[52] Once again, the Jehovah's Witnesses' alternative reading of the Bible returns to an apocalyptic theme.

A distinctive feature of the eschatology of Jehovah's Witnesses is the belief that Christ will be assisted in his rule by an anointed class of 144,000 believers, chosen mainly from among the early Bible Students. These believers will not be resurrected,

but will dwell in heaven with Christ as "spirit beings" and assist him in ruling over those who enjoy the paradise on earth. They are the subjects of the "new covenant" who Jesus instructed to remember his death in the meal on Passover eve. In 1935 Rutherford declared that most of the growing body of Jehovah's Witnesses belonged to that "great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples …" (Revelation 7:9), standing around the throne of the Messiah. The role of these "sheeplike people" is to assist the "anointed remnant" in bearing witness to Jehovah's authority. (The increasing presence of "brethren with an earthly hope" in the higher echelons of the Watch Tower Society is sanctioned by this doctrine.)

Jehovah's Witnesses eventually developed a schema of four possible destinies at death: to be raised immediately to heaven in a spirit body to rule eternally with Christ (the anointed class); to be annihilated immediately upon death (the reprobate whose rebellion is incorrigible); to be resurrected, to pass millennial tests of faith and be rewarded by everlasting life on new earth (great crowd); to be resurrected, but fail the millennial tests and so be judged with annihilation. This elaboration of the apocalyptic dualism of heaven and hell is a strategy of accommodation to the delay of the kingdom. There must be the possibility of salvation for other than the small anointed class, or no one would have a motive for witnessing after they (except for a few replacements for those who fall into apostasy) were all "sealed" in 1935. Further, this scheme provides a second chance for people who "died without showing whether they would comply with God's righteous standards."[53] It was that gracious possibility that originally attracted Russell to the Adventist teaching of Storrs and inspires the Watchtower interpretation of the biblical symbol of "Judgment Day" as extending over the entire 1000 years of Christ's millennial reign over the earth. Thus, "when a person is resurrected he will be judged on the basis of what he does during Judgment Day, not on what he did before he died."[54]

The righteous have considerable motivation, nevertheless, for living so now, since Christ's government will be established on earth only after a catastrophic battle with cosmic forces of evil at the battle of Armageddon in the near future. Then Jesus will separate all people on earth into loyal "sheep" and rebellious "goats" (Matthew 25:31–34). The former will enter the millennial paradise, 1000 years of peace and harmony in a restored earth. The latter, along with all the unrighteous through the ages, will be annihilated in what the Bible describes as "the second death" (Revelation 20:14–15). Jehovah's Witnesses believe that only those who persevere in faithfully proclaiming the coming kingdom will be saved in the end. Thus, they do not teach that one is "eternally secure" after an initial confession of faith, as do most evangelical Christians, but that one must continue to "exercise faith" through works of service to the kingdom.

PRACTICES

Study

Jehovah's Witnesses meet three times a week in simple buildings with spare furnishings called "Kingdom Halls." The two Sunday services consist mainly of

studying materials produced by the Watchtower Society in settings that seem highly cognitive with little affective content; but as R. Laurence Moore notes, "What observers often miss is that witnesses regard what they do in meetings as serious intellectual exercise … Witnesses take enormous pleasure in their achievements. They master texts; they learn to be leaders; and they show infinite patience in teaching what they know to others."[55] These didactic meetings are part of the attempt to bring the faithful mind into harmony with biblical revelation, as interpreted in *The Watchtower* regarded as "the principal instrument of 'the faithful and discreet slave' and its Governing Body for announcing Jehovah's established Kingdom and dispensing spiritual food 'at the proper time.'"[56] Witnesses also sing hymns, written in distinctive doctrinal vocabulary, and lately accompanied by recorded music provided by the Watchtower Society.[57] The midweek meeting is for practical instruction in bearing witness or publishing.

Publishing

The formal course of training to become a persuasive publisher is Theocratic Ministry School. This education is conducted in local Kingdom Halls and includes main points of doctrine, techniques of public speaking, and practice in presenting the message of the kingdom before the congregation. The curriculum is produced by the Watchtower Society, and students are instructed that any application of the Bible they make in their evangelistic efforts should be "in harmony with what has been published by 'the faithful and discreet slave,'" that is, the Governing Body.[58] Active members, known as "publishers," are expected to devote eight to ten hours a week in door-to-door witnessing.

In support of publishers who reported spending a total of 1.3 billion hours in the field in 2004, the Watchtower Society invests great energy and vast amounts of money in publication, employing the most advanced communications technology available, from offset presses to phototypesetting computer software. All printing operations moved in 2004 from the historic Brooklyn printery and are now consolidated in new facilities in Wallkill, New York. At the dawn of the twenty-first century Jehovah's Witnesses report distributing "hundreds of millions" of copies of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!,* translated into 260 languages.[59] With the installation of more sophisticated presses in developed countries, including Japan, the output of material increases annually. In 2005 Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide reported conducting over six million Bible studies. Through the sacrificial efforts of voluntary workers at Bethel centers around the world, where full-time ministers labor in exchange for room, board, and a small personal allowance, the teachings of the Watch Tower Society are effectively broadcast to the world.[60] Jehovah's Witnesses have been quick to adopt the latest means of mass communication—with the exception of television—including most recently a well-designed site on the World Wide Web (www.watchtower.org) with an accompanying site of news releases (www.jw-media.org).

Rituals

Jehovah's Witnesses observe the two sacraments recognized by other Protestants: water baptism and the Lord's Supper. They baptize by immersion only those candidates who complete lengthy preparatory study. Candidates usually receive baptism at large conventions as a public sign of dedication to the work of proclaiming the kingdom. In 2005 Jehovah's Witnesses reported holding 227 conventions in 69 cities in the United States and baptizing 28,384 new members.[61] Baptism "marks the beginning of lifelong service to God as an ordained minister and one of Jehovah's Witnesses." While baptism does not by itself confer salvation, it is the occasion for recognizing that "Jehovah's holy spirit, or active force" is "empowering His servants to do His righteous will in association with His spirit-directed organization."[62] Thus, baptism fulfills an important role in confirming institutional cohesion by initiating one into the service of the theocratic organization whose Governing Body derives authority from its collective identity as "the faithful and discreet slave" charged with teaching the "great crowd." This distinction between those with a heavenly hope and those who anticipate living in paradise on earth is also crucial for Jehovah's Witnesses' alternative understanding of the ritual of communion.

Jehovah's Witnesses observe the "Lord's Evening Meal" once a year, on Passover eve (Nisan 14 on the Jewish calendar), in which only members of the anointed class partake of the "emblems" of bread and wine. Jehovah's Witnesses take the radical Protestant view that the bread and wine are only symbols of Christ's perfect body offered as ransom for all and his blood shed to seal a covenant with those 144,000 called to reign with him in heaven. In 2004 only 8,570 of this aging cohort survived to partake in the "Memorial," while nearly 17 million observed.[63] When the Governing Body abandoned the claim that the generation of 1914 was a "living calendar" marking time until the coming of the kingdom, they adopted the more conventional Protestant position that the exact date of the return of Christ cannot be known. The change of interpretation also changed the primary function of the Memorial to a confirmation of the identity of those who attend as members of the "great crowd" called to serve the visible organization of Jehovah directed by the authority of the "little flock." For observers the purpose of their presence is to "reflect upon the superlative love of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ."[64]

Ethics

Jehovah's Witnesses share with Christian fundamentalists a restrictive sexual morality, condemning as "fornication" any instance of premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, and abortion. They abstain from tobacco and drugs, but follow the Bible in allowing limited use of alcohol. Gambling is deplored as an expression of greed. Jehovah's Witnesses also renounce magic and divination. The discipline of abstaining from contact with the world, except as required to publish the message of the kingdom is in literal obedience to the biblical command: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers … 'Therefore get out from among them, and separate

yourselves, says Jehovah, and quit touching the unclean thing'" (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17). It is significant that the quotation is from Isaiah 52:11 and is taken from a context in which the prophet urged Israelites to resist assimilation to Babylonian culture, just as their ancestors had "come out" of Egypt.[65] Paul uses the text to add prophetic authority to his own admonition of non-Jewish converts in Corinth, urging them to separate from the worship of Hellenistic deities.

The Watchtower Society appropriates this text within a text for the broadest possible application by insisting that Jehovah's Witnesses insulate themselves from dominant cultural, religious, and political influences wherever they find themselves in the world. By so doing they follow the saying of Jesus at his trial before Pilate: "My kingdom is no part of this world" (John 18:36).[66] Because of their apocalyptic views Jehovah's Witnesses do not have a developed social ethic, other than to counsel their members to obey established governmental authority except when its demands contradict the Bible. While Watchtower publications consistently condemn injustice and exploitation of the poor, Jehovah's Witnesses deny that human efforts can bring about significant or lasting improvement in the world.[67]

LEGAL CONTROVERSIES

Jehovah's Witnesses are well known for their refusal to pledge allegiance to national governments. This practice has led to their imprisonment in many nations, including the United States during both World Wars. In Nazi Germany Jehovah's Witnesses were among the non-Jewish groups consigned to concentration camps. Jehovah's Witnesses do not teach pacifism, since they would be willing to join the forces of Christ at the battle of Armageddon, but they maintain a neutral stance toward the state. Since all worldly governments are under the power of Satan, they refuse to participate in any. In 1943 the Supreme Court, in the case of *Barnette v. West Virginia,* upheld the civil right of Jehovah's Witness children not to salute the American flag in schoolroom exercises.[68] That legal victory is only one of hundreds in which Jehovah's Witnesses won civil rights that benefited other religious groups,[69] including refusal of military service[70] and freedom from regulation of door-to-door preaching.[71]

Perhaps the most controversial of Watchtower Society policies is the prohibition of intravenous blood transfusion, first promulgated in 1945. Since then, Jehovah's Witnesses interpret the apostolic command to "abstain … from blood" (Acts 15:20) as unconditional. Any means of taking blood into the body violates the principle that the "life (soul) is in the blood" (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11). In 1961 *The Watchtower* announced that any member who accepted a blood transfusion would face disfellowshipping. Not even transfusions of one's own blood are allowed since storage would violate the biblical requirement that shed blood be poured out on the ground (Deuteronomy 12:16). Kidney dialysis is permitted as long as the blood constantly circulates through the filtering apparatus and returns to the patient's body. Since 1978 hemophiliacs have been allowed treatment with blood fractions. Many hospitals acknowledge the right of competent Jehovah's Witnesses to refuse transfusions,

and the American Medical Association recently suggested that surgeons consider such operations as technical challenges. In response one surgical team developed a process of liver transplantation without infusion of blood products, a process they hope will benefit other patients as well.[72] Some health care professionals object, however, to parents who refuse permission to transfuse their own children in life-threatening situations, and some courts appointed guardians *ad litem* (for the particular lawsuit) to approve transfusions for children. Perhaps the most complicated cases are those in which a pregnant Jehovah's Witness refuses transfusion for a fairly routine problem and thus places the life of her fetus in peril as well as her own. Some hospitals found it necessary to develop procedural policies that are medically responsible while respecting the woman's religious liberty.[73]

In any case, the Watch Tower Society continues to urge Jehovah's Witnesses to risk death rather than break the commandment of God. "Would a Christian break God's law just to stay alive a little longer in this system of things? … if we tried to save our present life by breaking God's law, we would be in danger of losing everlasting life."[74] Richard Singelenberg argues that the blood taboo is connected to the command to remain separate from the world: both "rules of pollution and purity are instrumental in creating structural boundaries around group members."[75] For Jehovah's Witnesses the prohibition of blood transfusions is another means of distinguishing themselves from the world of Satanic impurity.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The question facing Jehovah's Witnesses in the twenty-first century is which will prove stronger, the pressure to accommodate to the "contaminated" world as it moves into an ever-extending future or the passion to remain "without spot from the world" (James 1:27)? The Governing Body, speaking through the pages of *The Watchtower,* demands absolute conformity to its system of biblical interpretation, which enforces its "rules of pollution and purity" as conditions for entering the coming kingdom. Will those demands become less convincing as the next generation of Jehovah's Witnesses finds it more difficult to maintain the dedication inspired by imminent apocalypse? The challenge facing contemporary Jehovah's Witnesses is how to retain evangelistic fervor, moral discipline, and exclusionary group identity without the visible sign of the imminence of the end provided by the generation of 1914 and under the pressures on younger families to accommodate to prevailing cultural practices.

The key to continuing success of any NRM or alternative religion is striking a balance between fidelity to the original insights of the founder and responsiveness to changing historical conditions. For Jehovah's Witnesses the balance depends upon maintaining Russell's insistence that the Bible is the ultimate authority in Christian doctrine and practice with the ongoing task of correlating biblical prophecy with contemporary events. As events of history change, so must the interpretation of their prediction. As cultural practices change, so must the application of biblical principles. But at any given time, what authority establishes the correct interpretation

and application of the Bible? For Jehovah's Witnesses that authority resides in the Governing Body and is exercised through the teaching in official Watchtower publications. As we have seen, however, that interpretation has hardly been unchanging or even consistent.

Critics delight in chronicling the history of changing interpretation, especially of failed prophecies. But such criticism fails to appreciate the fundamental problem facing all interpreters of the Bible: the authoritative text remains the same, but the circumstances in which it is read are always in flux. Thus, the relevant meaning of the Bible must necessarily undergo ceaseless reformulation. This problem is faced by every preacher who searches the scriptural text for a weekly sermon. Jehovah's Witnesses do not claim to receive new revelation to fit new conditions, rather they claim that progressive illumination allows their interpretations to change with clearer understanding. That method is not so different from most Protestants who adjust their reading of the Bible to historical circumstances. Jehovah's Witnesses, of course, defend their view on scriptural ground: "But the path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established" (Proverbs 4:18).

For Jehovah's Witnesses the problem of interpretation is compounded because their key texts are among the least straightforward in the Bible. Apocalyptic scripture is highly symbolic and its language densely coded: interpretation is unavoidable in the process of correlating the text with current and future events. Nevertheless, Jehovah's Witnesses cannot relinquish the responsibility to demonstrate the ongoing relevance of prophetic scripture as the lens through which Christians may discern God's plan for human history. One of the strongest correlations Jehovah's Witnesses made over the years between prophetic scripture and contemporary events was the identification of the "beast" in Revelation with an institution of global power that serves Satan's purpose to establish evil government and false religion over the entire world. Since 1914 the prime candidate in the field of politics was the League of Nations and its successor organization, the United Nations. While the rhetoric in official publications softened somewhat in recent years, the chief suspect in the field of religion for most of the past century was the Roman Catholic Church.

In recent years, however, respect for the political authority of the United Nations and the Roman Catholic Church eroded. No longer does either seem well-situated to serve as the home base for a global system of evil. When evangelical Christians were forced by the collapse of the Soviet Union to find another "evil empire" to serve as the domain of anti-Christ, many chose Islam, reviving an old interpretive tradition in Christianity that identifies Muhammad as an apostate inspired by Satan to deceive the world. Jehovah's Witnesses chose instead to move to a more general identification of Babylon the Great: "she is Satan's entire world empire of false religion,"[76] and "this globe-encircling harlot" includes all other religions and the national governments with which they enter into unholy alliances.

As always, interpretive imagination is required to keep the correlation of prophecy and history current. The advantage of broadening the identity of Babylon to include all religious and political organizations is that the Watchtower Society is not

obligated to demonstrate that any given institution bears all the predicted "marks of the beast." Further, no matter what happens to the United Nations and the Roman Catholic Church, even if they should fade from international significance, the general condemnation of religious and political institutions will always be relevant. The interpretive move is parallel to the strategy followed when the reference to "generation" in Matthew 24:34 was changed from those alive in 1914 to the wicked opponents of God's kingdom who are present in every generation. By turning what was an identification of a specific subject of prophecy into a general correlation with conditions that are always present, the Watch Tower Society declined to pursue the courageous, but risky, enterprise of investing the interpretation of prophecy with actual predictive power.

While that strategy protects the Watchtower Society from institutional liability for failed prophecies, it also turns into sermonic platitudes what were once dramatic announcements of future events on which believers staked their lives and fortunes. Will the increasingly bland readings of apocalyptic scriptures sustain the sense of urgency required to impel another generation of Jehovah's Witnesses to follow their parents' footsteps, carrying the message of an impending kingdom door to door? The question is particularly urgent as Jehovah's Witnesses increase their numbers outside North America, among the world's dispossessed.

In one of the first sociological studies of Jehovah's Witnesses Herbert Hewitt Stroup concluded that Jehovah's Witnesses are not only sectarian in their separation from established Christian denominations, but also in their opposition to national loyalty, cultural trends, and the power of unregulated capitalism. Stroup noted a correlation between the growth of Jehovah's Witnesses and "the failure of the Christian churches to create a highly satisfactory medium of expression for the needs and aspirations of the underprivileged."[77] The impression that Jehovah's Witnesses are motivated by resentments of the dispossessed continues to have some validity, particularly because of their success among the poor and oppressed across the globe.[78] This favorable response may be due in part to the populist rhetoric that continues to fire the Watchtower vision of the coming kingdom. To those suffering the multiple displacements of the powerless in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, Jehovah's Witnesses offer supportive community, traditional moral values, and the promise of a coming paradise in which poverty, crime, hunger, war, exile, and homelessness are forever eliminated.[79] Even though their theology excludes their using a strategy of enculturation, Jehovah's Witnesses are increasing their numbers through conversions in the southern hemisphere.

Even Jehovah's Witnesses who are relatively well-off in countries that are secure and free from religious persecution joyfully anticipate the end of this world in which they are comfortably situated. Their radical critique of dominant social and political institutions in the West strongly resonates in parts of the world where people experience the oppression of those institutions on a daily basis. In those contexts the apocalyptic language of Jehovah's Witnesses in both its negative judgments of this world and its positive descriptions of the utopia to come carries persuasive appeal. By retaining the language of "outsiderhood" as their primary means of self-designation

Jehovah's Witnesses remain deliberately sectarian.[80] The question for the future, as the coming of the kingdom continues to be postponed, is whether the strategy of world denial can be sustained by successive generations of Jehovah's Witnesses for whom the world and its ongoing history remain a stubborn reality.

NOTES

1. *2005 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2005), 38–39.

2. See David L. Weddle, "Jehovah's Witnesses," *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism,* vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 2004), 977–82.

3. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2005), 18–25. Jehovah's Witnesses recognize that some biblical passages are written in symbolic language, such as reference to the "four corners of the earth" (Revelation 7:1), and should be read accordingly.

4. "The subtle influence of Greek philosophy was a key factor in the apostasy that followed the death of the apostles" [*Mankind's Search for God* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1990), 266].

5. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe …* (Washington: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 320. For the interpretation of the prophecies in Daniel, see Clifford Goldstein, *1844 Made Simple* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1988).

6. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1971). The work was originally published in 1888.

7. C.I. Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), 5: "A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some *specific* revelation of the will of God. Seven such dispensations are distinguished in Scripture."

8. Quoted in *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1993), 43. This work is the comprehensive official account of the history, beliefs, and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses. It contains valuable citations from primary materials and is written in a nondefensive style.

9. Paul K. Conklin, *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 146.

10. Quoted in *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom,* 49.

11. Ibid., 58–60. One popular production, "Photo-Drama of Creation," used motion pictures and slides synchronized with sound to present Russell's teachings to over nine million viewers in North America, Europe, and Australia by the end of 1914.

12. In the middle of the second century BCE some Jewish groups began to hope for a world-conquering Messiah and created the distinctive form of religious writing called *apocalyptic.* One group, known as the Essenes, withdrew from Judea to take up residence in the caves of the Dead Sea, preparing to assist the Messiah and his angelic hosts in the final battle against the Romans. They preserved prophetic texts of the Bible, which they interpreted as referring directly to their own experiences. At about the same time the stories of a young Jewish hero were joined with phantasmagoric dream visions of the end of Roman rule to form the biblical book of Daniel. Jehovah's Witnesses are part of a long tradition of believers, both Jewish and Christian, who find the promise of paradise in the symbols of prophecy. For the influence of this approach to the Bible in the United States, see Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More:*

Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 21–45.

13. The date is calculated in *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1982), 136–41; and *What Does the Bible Really Teach?,* 215–18.

14. Barbara Grizzuti Harrison, *Visions of Glory: A History and a Memory of Jehovah's Witnesses* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 73.

15. Russell's complete works are available online at www.heraldmag.org. Russell incorporated The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania in 1884, but when he established The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York in 1909 as the center of all publishing activities, he used the one-word spelling of Watchtower. In 1939 the name of the magazine called *The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* changed to *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom.* In this essay I use the two-word name to refer to the theocratic organization, The Watch Tower Society, and the one-word term for the official teaching published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

16. Conklin, *American Originals,* 153.

17. *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of the Coming Kingdom,* 82.

18. Jehovah's Witnesses explain that translators of the Bible replaced the personal name of God, represented by the sacred tetragrammaton in Hebrew, by the titles God and Lord out of a mistaken concern for Jewish aversion to pronouncing the divine name (*What Does the Bible Really Teach?,* 195–97). Greg Stafford draws on evidence from the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls that the "original NT documents did contain the divine name" in *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics* (Huntington Beach, CA: Elihu Books, 2000), 1–54. Stafford is an able apologist for the doctrinal teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses and maintains a Web site of his articles at http://www.elihubooks.com.

19. *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom,* 724.

20. Pauline Côté and James T. Richardson, "Disciplined Litigation, Vigilant Litigation, and Deformation: Dramatic Organization Change in Jehovah's Witnesses," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 1 (March, 2001): 14.

21. Conklin, *American Originals*, 154–55.

22. *Life Everlasting—In Freedom of the Sons of God* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1966), 29–30.

23. Heather and Gary Botting estimate that from 1965 to 1980 the movement suffered "total attrition in excess of a million" [*The Orwellian World of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), xxxiv].

24. Raymond V. Franz published his account of the affair in *Crisis of Conscience: The Struggle between Loyalty to God and Loyalty to One's Religion* (Atlanta: Commentary Press, 1983).

25. M. James Penton provides an instructive context for Raymond Franz's story in *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985). Penton is a third-generation Witness whose earlier research on the importance of legal decisions won by Jehovah's Witnesses led him to a more general study of the movement. He found evidence of systematic suppression of dissent and unyielding authoritarianism in the Governing Body and was disfellowshipped in 1981 for his criticisms.

26. *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom* (November 1, 1995), 17. For an analysis of this change in interpretation and its implications for the ritual of the Memorial meal, see David L. Weddle, "A New 'Generation' of Jehovah's Witnesses: Revised Interpretation, Ritual, and Identity," *Nova Religio* 3, no. 2 (April 2000): 350–67.

27. The notes from the Annual Meeting of the Society (October 7, 2000) are posted at http://www.watchtowernews.org/reorganization.htm (accessed January 20, 2006).
28. "Whither the Watchtower? An Unfolding Crisis for Jehovah's Witnesses," published on the Web site of the Christian Research Institute, http://www.equip.org/free/DJ550.htm (accessed December 1, 2005).
29. *Worship the Only True God* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2002), 132.
30. Pictures and brief biographies of current members of the Governing Body, http://www.freeminds.org/bethel/gov_body.htm.
31. While Jehovah's Witnesses believe that "the full number of 144,000" of the anointed class is "nearly completed … any individuals proving unfaithful would need to be replaced" [*The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom* (February 1, 1982)]. Thus, a few younger persons may be given the inner assurance of anointing, as described in Romans 8:16 [Ibid. (February 15, 1985)].
32. A decade ago Ronald Lawson found that "Jehovah's Witnesses have demonstrated a remarkable commitment to principle and to their radical apocalyptic" and, therefore, concluded that they remain an "established sect" in contrast to Seventh-day Adventists who made accommodations to prevailing culture ["Sect-State Relations: Accounting for the Differing Trajectories of Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses," *Sociology of Religion* 56, no. 4 (1995): 375]. The rapidly shrinking pool of "spirit-anointed" candidates for the Governing Body makes it uncertain how much longer Jehovah's Witnesses can maintain their "principle" of spiritual leadership.
33. *The Divine Name That Will Endure Forever* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1984), 11.
34. *The Bible: God's Word or Man's?* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989), 108.
35. *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth,* 35–36.
36. Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed,* 196–97.
37. *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1968), 127–28. See also *Insight on the Scriptures,* vol. 2 (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1988), 5–20.
38. *The Divine Name That Will Endure Forever,* 29.
39. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?,* 203.
40. *Insight on the Scriptures,* vol. 2, 56.
41. *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1991). Pages are not numbered; the cited passage occurs in the introduction.
42. Ibid., chap. 12.
43. *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth,* 60–61.
44. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?,* 218–19. See also *Insight on the Scriptures,* vol. 2, 392–94.
45. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?,* 29. Since the "dent" of imperfection is the result of human procreation and carries with it the curse of death, it seems functionally equivalent to inherited original sin. In an earlier book the imperfection is compared to the effects of venereal disease: because our first parents became "unclean" so we are born into sickness, and death (*The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life,* 32). The crucial difference from Augustine's view is that for Jehovah's Witnesses humans possess the freedom to resist the Adamic disposition to rebel and rather choose to obey God. In terms of American evangelical thought, they belong to the Wesleyan strand.

46. *Insight on the Scriptures,* vol. 2, 1005–1006.
47. *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth,* 77.
48. Ibid., 62–63.
49. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?,* 205. Royston Pike found that Witnesses in his day regarded the cross as a pagan "phallic symbol, derived from the ancient Egyptian *cruxansata* that represented the male and female genital organs combined" [*Jehovah's Witnesses: Who They Are, What They Teach, What They Do* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), 37].
50. For those who might ask why there was no decomposing body found in Jesus's tomb Russell replied that God removed it lest it become an obstacle to faith (presumably by inviting veneration) and may have preserved it for display in the future kingdom [C.T. Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures, Series II: The Time is at Hand* (Brooklyn: International Bible Students Association, 1911), 130].
51. *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1995), 83, 85. See also *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth,* 174.
52. *What Happens When We Die?* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1998), 6, 24.
53. *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life,* 87–89.
54. *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth,* 175.
55. *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 139.
56. As quoted from *The Watchtower* (1994:21) by Carolyn R. Wah, "An Introduction to Research and Analysis of Jehovah's Witnesses: A View from the Watchtower," *Review of Religious Research* 43, no. 2 (2001): 165. Wah provides detailed descriptions of weekly meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses.
57. *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom* (February 1, 1997), 28.
58. *Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2001), 153.
59. Translations of current literature are available in some of these languages at the Watchtower Society Web site, http://www.watchtower.org/languages/languages.htm.
60. *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom,* 295.
61. *2005 Jehovah's Witnesses Worldwide Status Report*, www.watchtower.org/statistics (accessed January 20, 2006). The total is down from 30,576 baptisms reported in the United States in 2004.
62. *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life,* 178, 176.
63. *2005 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses,* 30.
64. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?,* 208.
65. See comment on this passage in Ibid., 152.
66. "No matter what country they live in, Jesus' true followers are subjects of his heavenly Kingdom and thus maintain strict neutrality in the world's political affairs. They take no part in its conflicts" (Ibid., 149).
67. "Can We Create a Better World?" *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom* (October 15, 2001), 3–7.
68. David R. Manwaring, *Render Unto Caesar: The Flag-Salute Controversy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
69. William Kaplan, *State and Salvation: The Jehovah's Witnesses and Their Fight for Civil Rights* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

70. Claud H. Richards Jr., "Religion and the Draft: Jehovah's Witnesses Revisited," in *Law and Justice: Essays in Honor of Robert S. Rankin,* ed. Carl Beck (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1970), 47–75.

71. That right was recently upheld in the case of *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York v. Village of Stratton,* decided by the U.S. Supreme Court on October 15, 2001.

72. Olivier Detry et al., "Liver Transplantation in Jehovah's Witnesses," *Transplant International* 18 (2005): 929–36.

73. For a model of such a policy, see Ruth Macklin, "The Inner Workings of an Ethics Committee: Latest Battle over Jehovah's Witnesses," *Hastings Center Report* (February/March, 1988): 15–20.

74. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?,* 130–31. The human cost of this policy is detailed by David A. Reed, *Blood on the Altar: Confessions of a Jehovah's Witness Minister* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996).

75. "The Blood Transfusion Taboo of Jehovah's Witnesses: Origin, Development and Function of a Controversial Doctrine," *Social Science and Medicine* 31, no. 4 (1990): 520.

76. *Mankind's Search for God,* 369. The "enlarged application" of "Babylon the Great" was first announced in 1963 (*Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom,* 147).

77. *The Jehovah's Witnesses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), v. Stroup concluded that "the greater number of Witnesses whom I have studied fall into … 'relief cases, poverty,' and 'working-men …'" (*Jehovah's Witnesses,* 77). Conklin reports that it is still the case: "In most of the world, as in the United States, its membership ranges from the middle to lower social and economic classes" (Conklin, *American Originals,* 157).

78. Conklin, *American Originals,* 159: Jehovah's Witnesses "have been unusually open not only to the poor and rejected but to blacks and Hispanics, although only recently have blacks achieved higher leadership roles. Some estimates place black membership in America at 30 percent, and the local congregations have achieved a degree of racial balance and interaction unique among Christians." Like many religious communities in the United States, however, the Jehovah's Witnesses achieved consistent racial integration only in the past 50 years. Royston Pike wrote in 1954, "In the USA separate assemblies have been held for White and Negro Witnesses" (*Jehovah's Witnesses,* 96).

79. For example, in the kingdom "there will be no dishonest politicians and greedy business leaders to oppress the people … Never again will anyone be without good food and comfortable housing because he cannot afford them. Unemployment, inflation and high prices will be no more.…" (*You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth,* 159).

80. *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans,* 136–39. Conklin notes that since 1916 Jehovah's Witnesses have "become more sectarian, more separatist, and culturally more isolated. This pattern reverses that of Seventh-day Adventists" (Conklin, *American Originals,* 145).

FURTHER READING

Primary Sources

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Christian Science

John K. Simmons

INTRODUCTION

The task of providing an objective historical account of any religious movement begins with a stark revelation; there is no such thing as "a religion." Rather people, real human beings, choose, for one reason or another, in belief and behavior, for better or for worse, to join in "holy matrimony" with that religion. The marriage metaphor is a good one. How the joining of believer and belief plays out in the emotional roller coaster of life makes all the difference in whether a religion is deemed true and worthy or false and destructive. When the marriage of believer to religion is successful, glowing accounts emerge. Historical appreciation and theological clarity are the fruits of matrimonial bliss. On the contrary, divorce produces vitriolic condemnation not only of the religion but also the person (founder or prophet) who configured the religion. Nowhere in the history of religions, and especially in the history of New Religious Movements (NRMs), is this fact more evident than in Christian Science and its founder, Mary Baker Eddy.

Let me begin this essay by warning the reader that it is impossible to arrive at *intellectual* agreement and thoughtful consensus on exactly what Christian Science presents as a religious world view.[1] Only the practicing Christian Scientist knows for sure, and this group of believers is on the endangered species list. However, this conundrum is applicable to most religions. Resonant with the opening "revelation," it may not be possible to objectively, much less flawlessly, describe the theological mind-set of a long dead prophet or flawlessly outline the parameters of any belief system.

Take Christianity, for example. The fires of theological and historical debate rage in undiminished fury 2000 years after Jesus of Nazareth walked the earth. Was he an apocalyptic Jewish messiah, a wisdom teacher, the Son of God, or a radical social reformer? Was "Jesus" a real person or was he born out of human existential desperation, an amalgam of ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman myths created as a buffer against the brutality and brevity of life? "Gospels," written within the first century

after Jesus's death, offer different portraits of this charismatic prophet in which varied theological perspectives are highlighted and supported by historical accounts laced with faith. Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, written within 30 years of Jesus's death, clearly shows that a proliferation of "Christian" sects already existed, all vying for believers. Some of these early marriages ended in divorce, some sects were persecuted out of existence, and eventually a "New Testament" was agreed upon that church leaders hoped would bring order to belief and practice.

It did not and has not. Today, the existence of hundreds of Christian denominations provides sociological proof that the Christian world is not in agreement on who Jesus was or what he taught. How could the situation be any different when an NRM such as Christian Science is a little more than 100 years old? Once again, the "truth" of a religion is *relational* in that it evolves and changes within the marriage between belief and believer. Christian Science can be framed and understood as yet another chapter in the long debate about what Jesus originally revealed. However, the degree to which Eddy's revelation is "Christian" or "scientific" is up to the believer, not withstanding the Christian Science establishment's tireless effort to put forth a single, unassailable interpretation. Though historians of religion or other interested parties may never know precisely what Christian Science offers to the world, the extraordinary success of this NRM in its early years, not to mention the charisma, mystique, and doggedness of Eddy, make Christian Science a worthy addition to any anthology of American NRMs.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND ITS EMERGENCE IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICAN CULTURE

Christian Science, founded by Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910), emerged as a unique religious phenomenon in American culture during the tempestuous latter decades of the nineteenth century. Because it is one of only a handful of major Christian sects actually founded in the United States, the story of the Christian Science movement has as much to reveal about the spiritual yearning of Americans as it does about the complexities and nuances of American culture.[2] The opening line in Eddy's seminal work, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures,* provides an immediate insight into a primary religious impulse of her time. "To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, today is big with blessings."[3] The cultural experience of American citizens living in the late nineteenth century was anything but sustaining. In fact, day-to-day life often seemed as fractured and unstable as bedrock in California. Though all NRMs, to some extent, embody a spiritual search for permanence in a constantly changing world, Eddy's delineation of a "sustaining" metaphysical reality found a ready audience in believers who had lost faith in a traditional Christian world view challenged by scientific and social revolutions. Her promise of unassailable physical well-being gave hope to many sufferers in a time when medical practices were painful and primitive. At least initially, the joining of Christian Science and nervous Americans was a marriage made in heaven. In April 1879, Eddy and ten followers founded the Church of Christ, Scientist. Three decades later, in 1906

when 30,000 Christian Scientists celebrated the dedication of the 4,000-seat domed Italian Renaissance/Byzantine Mother Church in Boston, "the astonishing progress being made by Christian Science was national news in America."[4]

To live in the latter decades of the nineteenth century was to live in a time of disconcerting cultural change. The Civil War left the nation in a state of grief and repentance, and the churches were called upon to provide new visions and new choices for American citizens. But what were those choices to be? The social stability of a nation recovering from a soul-shaking war was rocked again by hurricane-force winds generated by two equally tumultuous revolutions: an intellectual revolution and enormous socioeconomic change.

The intellectual revolution attacked the biblically oriented self-understanding of the United States' destiny on two fronts. First, the thinking, writings, and scholarly investigations of Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx undermined the covenantal biblical notion of a transcendent, moral God who, as was commonly accepted, had chosen the United States and the American people for a special purpose. As if that was not enough, the Bible itself was attacked by scholars who, for the first time, examined the book not as sacred text but as a literary historical account that could be examined from an objective, critical standpoint. For many, this Higher Biblical Criticism, as it was called, undermined the authority of the Bible and thus called into question basic assumptions about the meaning of life.

At the same time, the intellectual, theological, and cultural underpinnings of the nation came under attack, and society was undergoing massive changes. Industrialization, immigration, and urbanization combined to push American society into a complex sociocultural labyrinth without a map for guidance or leaders who possessed the intuitive qualities necessary for successful travel through the maze. The simplicity of agrarian and small-town values, voluntary cooperation, rugged individualism tempered by community spirit, and implicitly accepted Protestant moral precepts such as thrift, sobriety, modesty, hard work, and honesty seemed to set one at a disadvantage in the exploding urban jungles characterized by slums, crime, labor unrest, political corruption, and capitalist exploitation. Furthermore, the immigration of non-Anglo-Saxon, non-English-speaking, non-Protestant peoples into a once homogeneous society caused a severe national identity crisis. People were in genuine distress about the meaning of their own lives, not to mention the life of the nation.

Eddy's contemporaries, both religious and civil leaders, rose to the occasion, offering a highly variegated set of cures for these cultural afflictions. Social Gospelers, Reform Darwinists, Progressives, fundamentalists, Holiness-Pentecostals, Adventists, New Thoughters, postmillennialists, and premillennialists all answered the call led by such disparate notables as Dwight Moody, Washington Gladden, Lester Ward, Emma Curtis Hopkins, John Dewey, Billy Sunday, and Richard Ely. And, of course, Eddy offered the sustaining infinite of Divine Mind as a spiritual balm for cultural upheaval. If a person understood that all the social turmoil was simply the false testimony of what she termed *mortal mind,* an *error* in ontological perception, then Christian Science was, indeed, the remedy for all ills, social and otherwise. Her message was clear: change your thinking, and change your reality. Much to the chagrin of

the religious and intellectual establishment, numerous nervous Americans heard wedding bells and said, "I do" to Christian Science.

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE WORLD VIEW

While Christian Scientists understandably claim Eddy's truths to be part of a unique and final religious revelation, most outside observers place Christian Science in the metaphysical family of religious organizations with roots "both in the idealistic philosophy of the nineteenth century and in the search for alternative means of healing at a time when the healing arts were still in a primitive state."[5] The broad descriptive term "metaphysical" is not used in a manner common to the trained philosopher. Instead, it denotes the primacy of Mind as the controlling factor in human experience. At the heart of the metaphysical perspective is the theological and ontological affirmation that God is perfect Mind and human beings, in reality, exist in a state of eternal manifestation of that Divine Mind. The implications of this type of metaphysical perfectionism are nicely summarized in Eddy's "Scientific Statement of Being":

> There is no life, truth, intelligence nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all. Spirit is immortal truth; matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal. Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness. Therefore man is not material; he is spiritual.[6]

If God is Mind and the substance of being is Spirit, then humans, as the perfect reflection or expression of Mind, must be as perfect as God. Contrary to Protestant orthodoxy, it is not original sin that causes human beings to experience suffering, insecurity, lack, illness, and death but a profound error in thinking, an error Eddy termed, *mortal mind.* While traditional Christianity places the kingdom of heaven in the hereafter, Christian Science calls for the actualization of perfection in the here and now by knowing the truth of being. The Christian Scientist does not pray to a whimsical, distant, "old man in the sky" for health, security, and prosperity. These are qualities of God's unchanging expression that human beings invariably will reflect, experientially, once they depart from erring, limited, mortal thinking. God, as Divine Principle, can be scientifically demonstrated, by anyone who knows and affirms this principle of being. The infinite is sustaining, as the path to salvation becomes strewn with discarded material thoughts. Though Eddy's attackers, and there were many, claimed her theology was irrational, dangerous, and impractical, she stressed the practical nature of her "science." It was in day-to-day challenges and lived experience that Christian Scientists proved that "God's infinitude and omnipotence rule out the legitimacy, permanence, and substantiality of anything contrary to God's nature as Principle, Mind, Spirit, Soul, Life, Truth, and Love."[7] Thus, healing, both of sin and sickness, became a focus of the religion; a practical manifestation of the change in thinking from the material to the spiritual.

On the question of evil, Eddy departed from the more benign interpretations found in other metaphysical religions of the period, collectively called New Thought.

Probably from her strict Calvinist upbringing, Eddy retained an intense, often suffocating awareness of evil, not as a reality in God's perfect creation, but as a definite and dangerous presence in mortal mind. "Mortal mind" and "malicious animal magnetism" are terms she used to describe the mental error that is the collective consciousness of all human beings who have not attained her understanding of humanity as the perfect, ever-unfolding reflection of Divine Mind.

And, in the hands (or minds) of the devious, malicious animal magnetism could be manipulated to actually cause harm to others. According to Gillian Gill's biography, Eddy believed that former students actually had the power to commit "mental assassination." After a breakup with one of her early protégés, Daniel H. Spofford, she thought he was using mental malpractice to undermine her Christian Science practice and ordered her students to stand outside her bedroom door to mentally ward off any attacks by Spofford. In a celebrated case (1878) that earned her much negative publicity, she took part in a lawsuit against Spofford, claiming that he deliberately practiced malicious mesmerism on one of her unhealed patients, Lucretia Brown. Irreverently dubbed "The Second Salem Witch Trial," the suit was eventually thrown out of court.[8] While no Christian Scientist would equate "mortal mind" with the devil of orthodox Christianity, it is hard not to see some parallel with the "hellfire and brimstone" theology of Eddy's early Calvinist upbringing.

The "Christian" element in Christian Science emerges in the teaching that Jesus was the ultimate "Christian Scientist" who overcame sin, sickness, and death through his superior perception of the allness of spirit and the nothingness of matter. Jesus is revered by Christian Scientists, but he is not the messiah as defined by established Christianity. Absent from Christian Science is Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, seen by most Christians as a monumental, cosmos-shaking act that atones for human sinfulness and radically changes humanity's relationship to God. Rather, the Jesus of Christian Science is unique because he was the first human being to understand and fully express Divine Mind. As Stephen Gottschalk notes, Christian Science calls for a "radical reinterpretation of the meaning of the gospel."[9] For Christian Scientists, the gospels portray Jesus as exemplar, a human being who attained Christ consciousness and was then, scientifically, able to demonstrate mastery of sin, disease, and death. While mainstream Christianity describes Jesus's works as "supernatural interruptions of natural process and law,"[10] Christian Science sees no miracle. Rather, the clouds of mental error parted and God's perfect creation was revealed; a creation without sickness, lack, evil, or human suffering.

SPIRITUAL FORBEARERS OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Charismatic prophets like Eddy tend to claim that their revelations are unique. But the study of nineteenth century sectarian religions such as Christian Science shows that a successful prophet is one who profits from popular religious sentiments already existing in the spiritual imagination of the citizenry. The mid-nineteenth century United States was certainly in an experimental mood, and alternative religious perspectives abounded. Without claiming that Eddy studied or even agreed

with these perspectives, one might note that a variety of world views prepared the psychic way for Christian Science, including Swedenborgianism, Mesmerism, Transcendentalism, and Spiritualism. Together they implanted in the American spiritual imagination the connection among physical, psychological, and spiritual health.[11]

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), the extraordinary Swedish visionary, in voluminous writings, taught that the Divine and the natural are consubstantial in God and humanity. Everything that exists visibly, in day-to-day experience, reflects patterns laid out in the spiritual world and is the end product of spiritual force. His doctrine of "correspondence" revealed that the heavenly and earthly levels of existence were intimately connected. And the codoctrine of "influx" promised an unceasing flow of spiritual energy, the power of the spirit, through all manifestation. For Swedenborg's many followers, God had never been more present or more available to meet the challenges of day-to-day living.

If Swedenborgianism offered a unitive view of existence, Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) provided the very principle interconnecting the human and spiritual realms: "animal magnetism," a subtle, universal substance that when properly manipulated could give vitality to the sick and dying. Both teachings stressed that one's relationship towards nature, society, and God depended upon attunement to the harmonizing emanations from the highest realm, Spirit or Mind. In a world that preceded the great war between science and religion and amongst people who were raised to view earthly phenomena through a practical commonsense aperture, Swedenborg and Mesmer gave scientific validity to their quest for self-understanding and religious assurance.

Transcendentalism added to this "can do" religious vitality characteristic of NRMs in the nineteenth century. Immanence, individual effort in self-actualization, intuition, and imagination all became qualities of life designed to pierce the restricting shell of materiality and usher the initiate into direct contact with what Transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson called "Oversoul." At the same time, Spiritualism underscored the possibility of access to spiritual realms by creating the first toll-free connection to those who had shuffled off this mortal coil.

Again, there is no evidence that these spiritualities directly affected Eddy's revelation. In fact, she went out of her way to condemn Mesmerism and Spiritualism and, to a lesser degree, Transcendentalism. The point is that the combined perspectives represented by these world views engaged the religious imagination of the American people as popular religion outside of traditional organized religion. Thus these religious forbearers prepared the way for Eddy's spiritual leap into the sustaining infinite.

MARY BAKER EDDY

The story of the life of Mary Morse Baker Glover Patterson Eddy begins on a sunny, summer day, July 16, 1821. Mary Morse Baker was born in Bow Township, near Concord, New Hampshire, to Abigail Ambrose Baker, 36, and Mark Baker, 35, in the same humble farmhouse where her father, three brothers, and two sisters

were born. The youngest of six Baker children, this imaginative and attractive but emotionally tormented child grew into an adulthood that was a study in misery. Sickness, bad and broken marriages, and emotional disturbances turned her life into an unceasing quest for mental and physical health.[12]

Today, advances in neurobiology and the extraordinary development in our understanding of the complex biochemical "dance" of the brain allow an understanding of human consciousness not available to previous generations. Setting aside armchair psychological theories on Eddy's world view, it is safe to say that, for her, being conscious meant being in emotional and physical pain. Had she not come to the revelations she named Christian Science, she probably would have succumbed to her torments and died a merciful, if early, death. From a medical perspective, there exists no reliable medical diagnosis or evidence of the exact nature of Eddy's illnesses. Clearly, her afflictions—fits, fainting spells, and fever—were, in part, psychosomatic. In the medical lexicon of the nineteenth century, she suffered from "neurasthenia," a catchall diagnosis for what today might be called acute anxiety, depression, nervous exhaustion, or another malfunction of our complex neuropsychological system. Whatever the cause of her ailments, for Eddy, it hurt to be alive. Consequently, her religion is as much about her valiant struggle to reconfigure her personal reality as it is a body of eternal metaphysical truths.

An advanced degree in clinical psychology is not needed to detect the familial roots of spiritual conflict in Eddy's childhood encounter with religion. She provides ample evidence in her autobiographical work, *Retrospection and Introspection,* when describing her admittance into communion at her parents' Congregational church. The Calvinist doctrine of predestination overwhelmed the 12-year-old Eddy, and she succumbed to one of her frequent "fevers," during which, she reflected on her parent's spiritual influence:

> My father's relentless theology emphasized belief in a final judgment-day, in the danger of endless punishment, and in a Jehovah merciless towards unbelievers; and of those things he now spoke, hoping to win me from dreaded heresy.… My mother, as she bathed my burning temples, bade me lean on God's love, which would give me rest, if I went to Him in prayer, as I was wont to do, seeking His guidance. I prayed; and a soft glow of ineffable joy came over me. The fever was gone, and I rose and dressed myself, in a normal condition of health. Mother saw this, and was glad.[13]

In observing Eddy's conceptualization and institutionalization of Christian Science, it would appear that she never "overcame" the influence of her parents. Rather she internalized their disparate perspectives on the nature of divinity as poles. Troubled as a child, the responsibilities that come with adulthood only made her situation more pitiful. The Holy Grail of this quest for health and emotional stability came in the form of spiritual revelation. However, her lifelong inner conflict on the nature of God expressed itself outwardly in the public religious path she named Christian Science.

In 1843, her life seemed to take a turn for the better when she married George Washington Glover. Originally from Concord, New Hampshire, Glover was making

a name for himself as a builder in Charleston, South Carolina. He was about to embark on a major building project in Haiti when a disastrous fire destroyed his building supplies, leading to financial ruin. Within a year, Glover contracted yellow fever and died. The young Eddy was widowed only a year after the marriage and three months before her only child, George Jr., was born. She was then forced to return to her family where she lived for nine frustrating years suffering from chronic ailments, described as dyspepsia, liver complaint, and nervous disease. Nine years later, in 1853, Mrs. Glover married again, this time to an itinerant dentist named Dr. Daniel Patterson. Patterson was never able to make a decent living and even got captured by the Confederate Army during the Civil War. For the next several years, she moved from place to place as her health continued to deteriorate. Finally, in 1862, her desperate quest for health and peace of mind led her to Portland, Maine and Phineas Parkhurst Quimby.

Perhaps no one had more influence on Eddy than Quimby (1802–1866). Quimby was a blacksmith's son born in Lebanon, New Hampshire, who later became a successful clockmaker in Belfast, Maine. In 1838, while attending a lecture by the French mesmerist Charles Poyen, Quimby underwent his first "ecstatic" revelation and gave up his clockmaking career to become a successful mesmerist and healer. In time, however, Quimby suspected that the healings he produced were caused by more than a manipulation of "magnetic fluids." Animal magnetism alone could not account for his enormous healing success. In a flash of spiritual insight, he realized that it was not a physical process at all, but the confidence the healer inspired in his patient and the accompanying expectation of recovery—in other words, mind over material conditions.

Quimby then launched a completely new healing ministry based on an integration of scientifically demonstrable mind healing and Christian teachings. Quimby first coined the term for God, "Divine Mind." He taught that Christ was the spirit of God in all human beings and a channel, when properly attuned, for ailing humans to connect to emanations of health, happiness, prosperity, and abundance. Limited material thinking produced limited experience; spiritual thought generated abundance.

Should Quimby rightfully be considered the "founder" of a "Christian Science" and, thus, the intellectual and spiritual source of the metaphysical movement? Controversy rages to this day. Early leaders of the various New Thought churches, Unity School of Christianity, Religious Science, Divine Science, and so forth, accused Eddy of appropriating Quimby's teachings and claiming them as her own divine revelation. Quimby, however, was not formally educated and left no comprehensive writings of his philosophy. In fact, prolific writers such as Warren Felt Evans (1817–1889), Julius Dresser (1838–1893), and his son Horatio Dresser (1866–1954) popularized Quimby's teachings. In chronicling the emergence of Christian Science, what is most important about Quimby is that in October 1862, he treated and at least initially inspired an intense young woman who eventually went on to found the First Church of Christ, Scientist, one Mary Baker Eddy.

The short respite of peace Eddy enjoyed while studying with Quimby was shattered by his death in 1866. However, following what she believed was her own miraculous healing after a fall on ice—just a few months after Quimby's demise—she became convinced that her purpose in life was to reveal the truth of Christian Science. For the next nine years, she thought, wrote, and lived in poverty, percolating her plan and promise. The year 1875 was pivotal in the emergence of Christian Science because not only did Eddy then establish the first "Christian Scientists' Home" in Lynn, Massachusetts, but she also published the first edition of her textbook, *Science and Health.*

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE: EARLY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

For Eddy, the years from 1875 to the turn of the century were spent honing her world view, spreading her message, and creating an enduring religious institution. Eddy demonstrated an astute awareness of what we now call public relations. To counter attacks on her movement and to spread authentic Christian Science, she founded the monthly *Christian Science Journal* in 1883. In 1898, as the movement entered a period of extraordinary growth in numbers, the weekly *Christian Science Sentinel* appeared, filled with articles that focused on the practical, almost homey side of Christian Science healing. Linking Christian Science with the world, the highly respected *Christian Science Monitor* began in 1908. Meanwhile, Eddy produced a startling number of editions of her textbook, *Science and Health,* completing 382 before her death in 1910.[14]

Institutional mutations were also part and parcel of the early years in Eddy's movement. Although in the beginning Eddy chose not to found a formal institution, she grew dissatisfied with this direction and reversed herself. The early church structure included the establishment of the Church of Christ, Scientist (1879), the Massachusetts Metaphysical College (1881), and the National Christian Science Association (1886). However, when the congregational pattern of church polity, characteristic of her first religious organization, proved too democratic and a catalyst for rebellion, she shocked her followers by disbanding the National Christian Science Association. When, in 1892, she reorganized the Christian Science movement around the Mother Church in Boston, her unwavering motivation was to secure her spiritual vision in institutional form. Eddy selected 12 "Charter Members" and 20 "First Members" as the core group within the Boston church, then urged all Christian Scientists to join this First Church of Christ, Scientist.

All other Christian Science churches became "branch churches," planets revolving around the sun she controlled. There were no ministers in the organization to compete for power. Religious services were conducted by Readers, elected to three-year terms, who read only from the Bible and *Science and Health* and from lessons issued quarterly from the Mother Church. Unauthorized presentations of Christian Science were prohibited.

Strict rules and regulations governing Christian Science were laid out in the *Manual of the Mother Church*. At Eddy's request, the first codification was undertaken by

a committee in 1895 and went through 88 editions. Two weeks after her death on December 3, 1910, the Board of Directors came out with an 89th edition that guides the movement to this day. Since changes cannot be made without her approval, church structure and liturgical activity have remained the same within the movement to the present.

The *Manual* defines the organizational structure of the church, rigidly controls the propagation of Christian Science teaching, and guides the religious practices of Christian Scientists throughout the world. At the international level of organizational structure, The Mother Church, the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, is controlled by a five-member, self-perpetuating Board of Directors of the Mother Church. The *Manual* also affirms the establishment of The Board of Trustees that legally holds and manages church property. In the decade after Eddy's death, a legal battle, known within the movement as the Great Litigation, ensued over the question of who would lead the church. In 1921, the case was decided in favor of a five-person board of directors, based on a legal interpretation of the *Manual of the Mother Church.* The Christian Science Publishing Society (CSPS), directed by the *Manual,* is responsible for the dissemination of all authorized materials on Christian Science. The Publishing Society produces the *Christian Science Monitor, Journal, Sentinel,* and *Herald* and recently began managing the official Christian Science Web site, www.spirituality.com.

Reflecting Eddy's anxiety over the inappropriate presentation of her revelation, a lesser-known but highly effective committee of the CSPS is known as the Committees on Publication (COPs). COPs work regionally and locally to ensure that any presentation, whether a public lecture, academic paper, article, or book, presents a positive view of Christian Science. They doggedly defend the church against attack, censor material, and even raise funds to support legal battles.[15]

As mentioned, Christian Science church services are highly structured. Lessons, chosen by the Mother Church and based on topics selected by Eddy, are read by the First and Second Readers using alternating passages from the Bible and *Science and Health.* Interestingly enough, it is the First Reader who is charged with reading passages from Eddy's textbook while the Second Reader is responsible for reading assigned texts from the Bible. There are no church-sanctioned social functions or charitable causes. The *Manual* prescribes time limits for music, and only a piano or organ is permissible. The stately and quiet nature of the services is not considered suitable for children, who are invited to attend a separate Sunday School up to the age of 20. On Wednesday evenings, branch churches offer selected readings from the Bible and *Science and Health,* presented by the First Reader, and followed by voluntary testimonials of healing by audience members.

Other important quasi-professional positions within the movement include Christian Science teachers, lecturers, practitioners, and nurses. Teachers are board-approved educators who provide class instruction to church members seeking a deeper understanding of Christian Science. Participation in class instruction is considered an honor and an important rite of passage. Teachers are greatly admired within Christian Science. The "best-of-the-best" may become Christian Science lecturers.

The Christian Science Board of Lectureship provides professional speakers, paid by the church, to travel around the world, to conferences, health fairs, gatherings on spirituality, college campuses, and any other venues in which Christian Science can be promoted.

The Christian Science practitioner is really the person on the front lines of healing within this NRM. Practitioners do not diagnose illness or provide medical care. Rather, they assist the afflicted in understanding the spiritual nature of reality, helping them through the error of material thinking into the spiritual reality of health and wholeness. When a Christian Science practitioner is contacted, he or she is given permission to actively help a patient spiritualize thought. The practitioner may read assuring passages from authorized Christian Science literature, especially the Bible and *Science and Health,* and then assign further readings to the afflicted party. The key point is that thought is the source of disease. A Christian Science practitioner, then, treats the erroneous thought, which, then, effects the cure. Practitioners receive nominal fees for their healing skills, and some insurance companies provide coverage for Christian Science treatment. Though it may seem hypocritical to the outside observer, a small number of Christian Science nurses exist. They do not dispense medicine, but provide additional care such as bathing or dressing wounds. The seriously ill can retire to a Christian Science nursing home facility where food, basic care, and prayer are offered.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE: INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Eddy's work ethic throughout the remaining years of her life was extraordinary. She labored tirelessly revising the *Manual* and *Science and Health,* fended off legal and media attacks, and was often embroiled in disputes with former students. In the early years of the twentieth century, when the greatest expansion of her NRM occurred, Eddy expressed some concern that her metaphysical vision might be misused, to the detriment of Christian Science. She wrote that "the growth of the cause of Christian Science seems too rapid to be healthful,"[16] and dictated that no proselytizing or raiding of other denominations for new converts should occur. Between 1908–1910, Alfred A. Farlow, Manager of the Committees on Publication, launched a campaign, with Eddy's blessing, to curb the exuberance of Christian Scientists, strictly control all forms of outreach by the church membership, and most of all, seek out and secure favorable treatment of Christian Science in the media.[17]

The success of Christian Science in the early years brought fame and fortune, but also created a cohort of angry and litigious ex-members, people who experienced the loss of loved ones because they were not healed by Eddy's teachings. Accordingly, in her chapter entitled "Christian Science Practice," Eddy clearly states that the journey towards perfection in Christian Science is a progressive one. First, a potential healer must be spiritually pure; second, she or he must realize that understanding God's perfect creation means demonstrating that perfection in daily living. She admonishes the would-be Christian Science healer:

> In order to cure his patient, the metaphysician must first cast moral evils out of himself and thus attain the spiritual freedom which will enable him to cast physical evils out of his patient; but heal he cannot, while his own spiritual barrenness debars him from giving his patient's thought, yea, while mental penury chills his faith and understanding.… No possible thing do I ask when urging the claims of Christian Science; but because this teaching is in advance of the age, we should not deny our need of its spiritual unfoldment. Mankind will improve through Science and Christianity.[18]

Though Christian Science became associated with the healing of physical illness, practicing Christian Scientists are quick to claim that healing is only one inevitable harmonious manifestation of growing spiritual awareness. In 1990, during a time of intense attack due to the much publicized death of children under Christian Science care, the Church felt compelled to bring out a powerful piece of apologetic literature, *Christian Science: A Sourcebook of Contemporary Materials.* The fundamental message of this book is that Christian Science is about realizing God's totality and perfection and, in doing so, realizing and tearing away the ontological trappings of human limitation, be it expressed in *diseases* of the mind, soul, or body. In defense of the healing arts of the Christian Science practitioner, one contributor admits that it is impossible for the practitioner to divide healing of the physical illness from dealing with emotional problems, questions of employment, schooling, professional advancement, environmental adjustment, theological confusion, existential anxiety, and so forth. "The important thing is that the word *healing* be understood to apply to the whole spectrum of human sins, fears, griefs, wants, and ills …"[19]

THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

The future of Eddy's movement looks bleak. Since the height of membership in the 1950s, Christian Science has steadily declined. While analysts laid the blame for the downward spiral on everything from the invention of penicillin to the secularization of society, it is, ironically, American culture itself that has been a major cause of the group's demise. While the *Manual* locked the church in a crusty, late-nineteenth century Victorian time warp in terms of the language and presentation of Eddy's teachings, the essence of her message was co-opted by everyone from leaders in mainstream Protestant churches to endless New Age writers and self-styled spiritual guides. Preachers such as California's Robert Schuller or his predecessor, Norman Vincent Peale, took the mind over matter, "positive thinking" message of Christian Science and adapted it to a quasi-orthodox Protestant Christian theological stance. Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish religious writers produced books that top the charts while offering thinly disguised Christian Science ideas. The most popular title, Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking,* sold two million copies. Others included Bishop Fulton Sheen's *Peace of Soul* and Rabbi Joshua Liebman's *Peace of Mind.* Finally, Christian Science is on the decline because the message is simply no longer extraordinary in a world informed by quantum physics, neurotheology, New Age spirituality, and the ever-expanding expertise of medical practitioners.

For too long, the *Manual* stifled theological originality and organizational flexibility. As in many a marriage, boredom led to divorce. Spiritual seekers drifted into Christian Science because of Eddy's genuine spiritual insight but continued drifting when their seeking was stifled by the rigid church structure and suppression of spiritual creativity. The tendency within the organization was for members who, for one reason or another, left the church to remain independent, if excommunicated, Christian Scientists. In fact, Gottschalk makes the rather astounding claim that of the 350,000–450,000 people who, today, might consider themselves to be Christian Scientists, the majority do not have formal ties to this NRM.[20] At least two percent of branch churches close each year. The Mother Church, which absorbs the assets of shuttered branch churches—and given the astronomic rise in real estate prices, these assets are considerable—"essentially feeds off the demise of its faithful."[21]

The church leadership, however, is making strides to rectify the situation. In the late 1990s, the 14-acre Mother Church complex in Boston embarked on an extensive construction project. The $50 million Mary Baker Eddy Library for the Betterment of Humanity opened in the fall of 2002 for the purpose of transmitting Eddy's ideas to the general public and making her writings more available to scholars.[22] The official Web site, www.spirituality.com, is state of the art, and, for the first time since Eddy's demise, the presentation of Christian Science is lively and refreshing. Christian Science is still portrayed as an extraordinary and unique spiritual revelation and Eddy is revered; however, the Web site does something previously unheard of in the restrictive world of the Christian Science Publishing Society: it acknowledges other religious or spiritual world views, rather than building philosophical or theological walls designed to protect Christian Science. Will it be too little too late? From a scholarly perspective, whether or not this NRM dies out, Eddy has given the world one of the great stories in American religious history.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: *INSTRUCTIVE CONFLICTS*

In the concluding section of this essay, I want to explore what Christian Science reveals, using a set of *instructive conflicts* that may be universal in the process of emerging NRMs. When contemplating the life and teaching of Eddy, historians of NRMs and the general reader travel over challenging terrain. Confusion, often the better part of controversy, engendered a voluminous production of biographical, historical, and theological materials on Eddy and her religious movement as followers or critics struggle to understand her world view. This understanding is complicated further by the fact that she continuously fine-tuned and toyed with her spiritual vision right up to her death in 1910. For instance, Robert David Thomas spent 15 years studying Eddy and her movement. He describes his experience as "frustrating, rewarding and exhausting" for the reason noted in his preface, a conclusion reached by numerous biographers. He writes, "… from her first fame in the 1870s to the day she died, December 3, 1910, and after, Mary Baker Eddy and her religion have had the capacity to stir deep and conflicting feelings."[23]

Calling, once again, upon the marriage metaphor, I note that writers as well as believers are drawn into a relationship with Eddy and her movement, and their respective works reflect positive or negative aspects of that relationship. Books about Christian Science, then, become part of the data a historian must consider in chronicling this religion. Consider two late twentieth century studies on Eddy and the Christian Science movement. The reader who curls up with Caroline Fraser's *God's Perfect Child* will quickly uncurl in encountering an almost demonic woman who, unwittingly, led hundreds of thousands of spiritual seekers through a kind of metaphysical hell.[24] In contrast, Gillian Gill's *Mary Baker Eddy,* describes a troubled but courageous woman who broke through the social and religious barriers of her time.[25] Unlike Fraser, who suffered through a Christian Science upbringing and uses her considerable literary effort to vent frustration, Gill began her study of Eddy from a position of academic neutrality. Gill makes a notable contribution to Christian Science studies by accurately recording how gender inequities embedded in nineteenth-century society account for much of the legal wrangling and character assassination Eddy endured as she struggled to institutionalize her spiritual vision.

Sexism, indeed, fanned the flames of controversy. No male religious leader, however outrageous his metaphysical claims, ignited such an intense social and religious conflagration. Though straightforward in acknowledging Eddy's many "peculiarities of personality," Gill admires Eddy's stamina and courage in overcoming social and personal challenges. Through research, rather than a personal agenda, Gill produces a balanced report on the conflicted nature of this feisty mystic. These two works by Fraser and Gill showcase only the more recent episode of "battling biographies." Almost as soon as Christian Science took institutional form and gathered speed as a legitimate, if controversial, NRM in the United States, biographers cast Eddy in the role of mediocre metaphysician or Christ-like prophet. When it comes to Christian Science and this NRM's beloved or embattled founder, there is no neutral territory to be found. One Christian Science author, a church member for more than 50 years, laments, "Christian Science became a hugely successful religious phenomenon in the first four decades of existence, but it grew to be world-wide movement only through controversy, skeptical opposition and downright ridicule."[26]

Conflict and controversy can, however, be instructive when analyzing a given NRM. If this is the case, then Christian Science provides a fertile intellectual field, indeed. In fact, as Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright have demonstrated in their book, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions,* dialogue between scholars who also happen to be believers harboring opposing interpretations generates historical clarity and actually increases our understanding of the motivation and intent of a religion's founder.[27] What we gain by analyzing Christian Science and Eddy is a window into the personal and organizational dilemmas that inevitably arise with the institutionalization of any powerful spiritual insight. Also, we learn much about the rocky romances of early followers that lead to either matrimonial bliss or nasty divorce.

In reflecting on the disagreements that swirl around Eddy and Christian Science, we can formulate a set of "instructive conflicts"—conflicts that call for dialogue—that actually facilitate the end goal of any historical analysis: accuracy. Three

"instructive conflicts" that emerge in any encounter with NRMs are (1) faith versus historical fact; (2) conflicts within the *multidimensional personality* of any charismatic religious leader; and (3) the well-known *dilemmas of institutionalization* faced by any NRM.

These three "instructive conflicts" are not new, and that is certainly the case with the first; faith versus fact. As Borg notes, any historian of religions is confronted by the gap between "history remembered and history metaphorized."[28] It is difficult enough to remember accurately and record any past event. For example, when establishing fault in an everyday traffic accident, all participants have a personal perspective that acts as a sorting and separating device when selecting pertinent details. The reality of the past is measured in usefulness, not factuality. Memories are meaningful only if they support a desired future outcome.

Add the power of religious experience to the equation, and the tendency is for participants to reify details with larger-than-life significance. Any time that existential yearning meets even the most trivial of circumstances, the commonplace becomes extraordinary. Historical facts are drawn out to sea in the relentless undertow of meaning. What is "remembered" is "metaphorized," that is, historical facts are turned into faith events.[29] The point is that this process is inevitable and most certainly occurred in Eddy's own recollection of key events in her life as well as in the various renditions, pro and con, of her emergence as a popular, if controversial, religious leader. Religious revelation injects meaning into ordinary events, followers sacralize these events, and the ordinary gives birth to the extraordinary. Religious leaders like Eddy are also taken with their own spiritual prowess as they become more popular. They tend to "remythologize" themselves, as Thomas notes from his exhaustive psychological analysis,

> … there is something else about Mrs. Eddy that makes her difficult to grasp. Some of the most important information about her comes from the reminiscences of those who knew her best, but many of these recollections were recorded decades after the fact, when the people were quite old, and even the sharpest memory is not necessarily a reliable guide to the past. This is especially true of Mrs. Eddy's own memories, which are sometimes crucial. As she grew older and more prominent as a religious leader, one could argue that she was actively reinventing herself by reconstructing her past. She played with her memories in a creative way, altering them into spiritual folk tales, into religious myths.[30]

Nowhere is the remythologization process more evident than in her famous "fall in the ice" in Lynn, Massachusetts, on February 3, 1866. While walking with some friends to attend a meeting of the Linwood Lodge of the Good Templars, she slipped on the icy sidewalk, fell, and was knocked unconscious. The attending physician, Alvin M. Cushing, considered her injuries serious and arranged for her to be taken home. Like so many important incidents in Eddy's life, this accident was later subjected to intense scrutiny. The anti-Eddy camp, lead by Georgine Milmine, portrayed her fall as little more than a bump on the head.[31] However, Eddy interpreted the event as the beginning of Christian Science. According to her, she was at death's door and asked to be left alone with her Bible. Shortly thereafter, she experienced a miraculous healing. To the amazement of friends who gathered to attend her in her

last moments, she rose from her deathbed and walked downstairs in perfect health. Where critics claimed minimal injury or even specious fiction, Eddy triumphantly heralded the moment as one of spiritual revelation. In the first edition of *Retrospection and Introspection,* published in 1891, Eddy writes,

> It was in Massachusetts, in February, 1866 … that I discovered the Science of divine metaphysical healing which I afterwards named Christian Science. The discovery came to pass in this way. During the twenty years prior to my discovery I had been trying to trace all physical effects to a mental cause; and in the latter part of 1866 I gained scientific certainty that all causation was Mind, and every effect a mental phenomenon.
> My immediate recovery from the effects of an injury caused by an accident, an injury that neither medicine nor surgery could reach, was falling apple that led me to the discovery how to be well myself, and how to make others so.
> Even to the homeopathic physician who attended me, and rejoiced in my recovery, I could not then explain the *modus* of my relief. I could only assure him that the divine Spirit had wrought the miracle—a miracle which later I found to be in perfect scientific accord with divine law.[32]

Regardless of what actually happened on that cold day in 1866, for Eddy, over time, this event took on extraordinary meaning. To her credit, she resisted the tendency of her followers to portray her as "The Woman of the Apocalypse," prophesied in Revelation 12 and, thus, to see her as the Christ for this age. Some zealous followers even attempted to trace Eddy's lineage back to King David of the ancient Hebrews, thereby establishing her messianic credentials. Eddy, again to her credit, stifled these claims. She was comfortable with her follower's adulation but did not allow their exuberance to deify her work or see it as parallel to that of Jesus.[33]

The cause of the second instructive conflict is so obvious yet surprisingly is ignored by many historians of religion and almost all believers when describing the life and teaching of their beloved leaders and founders. Every human being has a multidimensional personality.[34] Eddy manifested, at different times, the personality of either an authentic mystic or a scrappy corporate lawyer. Like all mystics, she had moments of extraordinary awareness during which she knew the inseparable connection between humanity and divinity, the goodness of God, and, in a nonrational way, the eternally perfect, oneness of Being. She was also capable of seeing the world as an endless struggle between *Divine Mind* and *mortal mind,* and in this mood, she was a tough, worthy opponent. Inwardly, she was a mystic; outwardly, she was a fighter, battling human enemies who attacked her religion and mental enemies that besmirched the image of spiritual perfection she named Christian Science. Followers as well as historians become confused in analyzing and interpreting Eddy and Christian Science because they do not acknowledge the fact that Eddy, like all human beings, was shaped by her experiences. Like all human beings, her identity was forged in relationship. Eddy's mystical self offers a sublime and peaceful vision of the world, while her "me vs. the world" self is cantankerous, angry, capable of deceit, apocalyptic, and always ready to do battle for her cause. Knowing where she is in any historical situation makes all the difference when interpreting her motivations and actions.[35]

The third instructive conflict plays out in the sociological arena. This enduring challenge is described by sociologists of religion as the dilemma of institutionalization. Put simply, the more successful any organization becomes, the more internal and external challenges it faces. Success, in a sense, becomes a cause of failure. Any time a "mutant strand" of spirituality attempts to institutionalize in the bloodstream of human cultures, the "established species" send out vicious "antibodies" in an attempt to destroy the invader. The cultural collision between new and old religious visions is part and parcel of NRM formation and was certainly true in the case of Christian Science.

Eddy's radical reinterpretation of Jesus's life and teaching offered up an "authentic Christianity" that touched a highly sensitive existential or cultural nerve and unleashed violent attacks by leaders within the established Christian denominations. Sorting through the irrational fear-based attacks on one side and genuine critique of Christian Science theology on the other reveals the extent to which American culture is immersed in a messianic interpretation of Christian mythology. The centrality and all-sufficiency of Jesus is the measure of authentic Christian teaching. Put simply, the United States is God's landing strip for Jesus's triumphant return from the heavens. The political implications of messianic Christianity are an important factor in understanding why believers in the established denominations responded so negatively to Christian Science. While Eddy claimed that Jesus was unique because he was the first human being to realize his perfection as an expression of God, gone is the cornerstone of evangelical Protestantism: Jesus's vicarious atoning death on the cross for sinful humanity. In Christian Science, all human beings can know and be what Jesus was; in fact, they already are as perfect as Jesus in the mind of God.

With or without theological sophistication, a majority of Americans, particularly those from Protestant evangelical traditions, saw Eddy's teaching as an attack on the sacred purpose of the United States. Christians belonging to established denominations envisioned God's own Hand in the making of the United States, and His express purpose was to create a godly kingdom fit for the return of His Son. Regardless of First Amendment freedoms, here is where politics and religion merge for millions of Americans, in Eddy's time and now. By watering down the unique, saving quality of Jesus and devaluing an actual, apocalyptic physical return, Eddy eroded *religiopolitical* validation for the existence of the United States. For many, matrimonial intentions with Christian Science bordered on political treason; thus, the motivations for attacks on Eddy, at times, seem more political than religious. Recognizing these three areas of instructive conflict diminishes the tendency to fall into opposing interpretive camps and, as Borg and Wright demonstrated, invites dialogue and thoughtful consensus, qualities that were lacking in analyses of Christian Science and its founder.

Returning to the marriage metaphor, I note that seeing and handling these conflicts as *instructive* rather than destructive makes all the difference in the quest for a harmonious relationship. Finding a balance between romantic notions of love and the emotional terrain of day-to-day living keeps a marriage healthy. Learning to fit the pieces of the multidimensional personality together with the give and take drawn

from unconditional love and finding a place for freedom, creativity, and authenticity to grow within the often stultifying institutional boundaries of marriage decide the fate of the partnership with spouse and religion.

In sorting out how Christian Science "works" for its adherents, it is useful to keep in mind the *multidimensional personality* "instructive conflict." Eddy the mystic experienced the perfection of being, God's perfection, and this profound, if common, understanding of a good without opposite that empowered her. However, in the process of institutionalizing her mystical vision, the conflicts that arose between her and the religious and medical establishment drew out another personality, the one that saw the world as Armageddon where *malicious animal magnetism* battled Truth to the death. The marriage between believer and Christian Science, then, works when the believer can, to some extent, embody Eddy's own multidimensional personality, to be filled with love but also ready to vigorously defend the faith in the face of outside threats. The bottom line in Christian Science, from the opening tones in 1866 to the complex symphony of the twenty-first century, is healing.

Our three instructive conflicts contribute to all the difficulties in establishing what Christian Science is and what Eddy taught, but Nancy Niblack Baxter, probably motivated by her desperate need to save her own long-term marriage to Christian Science, comes closest to identifying the overarching cause of controversy. In concluding her own analysis of the founding years of the NRM, she notes with clear and fruitful insight,

> Two traditions emerged from the founding period of Christian Science: a method to heal bodily sickness and a refreshingly new interpretation of Christianity. These two traditions would contend during the century to come, and when the one won out, it would come to threaten the very existence of the movement.[36]

Marriages break up for any number of reasons: someone is abusive, someone is bored, someone has drug or alcohol problems, there are financial difficulties, and so forth. In the case of Christian Science, the real test is physical well being, i.e., health and healing. "Christian Science? You're the people who don't believe in doctors." If a religion's existential dilemma could be encapsulated in a simple inquiry, the above conversational exchange between a mildly interested party and a practicing Christian Scientist pretty much summarizes the "problem" faced by Christian Science. It is a comment virtually every Christian Scientist has heard. Imagine Eddy's tireless spiritual struggle, the endless hours spent formulating her world view and then institutionalizing it in a mostly hostile society. Then imagine it all being reduced to "You're the people who don't go to doctors." Is Christian Science the final revelation of true Christianity or an alternative healing method that tangentially and, many would say, loosely makes use of Christian symbolism and mythology to cure human ailments? According to Baxter, the movement will not survive in the twenty-first century unless this key question is confronted and answered. And answering this question may well radically change the movement begun by Eddy.

What is often lost in this debate is the critical importance of health in all our lives. "As long as you've got your health …" is a time-honored cliché indicating that good

health ranks right up there with the most demanding of human needs. More than one courageous chronicler of the origins of religion placed human need—food, shelter, sex, and health—at the murky beginnings of the spiritual quest for well-being. Understandably, human cultures placed health at the pinnacle of the quest for social perfection. Being "sick," in most times and in most cultures, meant that a person was but a step away from death's door. Only in the most recent, miniscule fragment of human history has the quest for well-being evolved into a scientific understanding of microbiology and brought us reliable methods for combating disease.

Before modern medicine, which is by no means "perfect" in healing human ills, sickness was wrapped in superstition, and healing methods were primitive and painful. This was the medical climate of nineteenth-century America. Is it any wonder, then, that Eddy's all-encompassing spiritual reality reflects God's well-being, health as an eternal, even sacred, quality? Thus, in the minds of many practicing Christian Scientists, health equals divinity; well-being is being as God experiences it. In fact, bodily conditions are not the cause of illness in Christian Science. They are the manifestation of a deeper alienation from God. The goal, then, is not to change the evidence of a material situation, but to heal the ontological gap between God and His expression, a chasm that, ultimately, does not exist. For the Christian Scientist who, with steely resolve, decides to walk this path, then even death does not change the rules of the game. Thus, Christian Scientists who are not quickly healed through their own or a practitioner's work may well stay the course and "shuffle off this mortal coil" without calling in the assistance of a medical doctor.

In conclusion, it would be fair to say that what Christian Science primarily teaches can be discovered only in the marriage, the relationship between believer and religion. Eddy, under the influence of Quimby's mind cure methods, initially linked health with divine presence. However, over years of refining her world view, she came to a much more exalted understanding of well being as an expression of an indivisible connection between God and human beings. As noted by Gottschalk, the resolution of the Quimby dispute lies at neither of the extreme positions taken by the New Thought or Christian Science apologists. He writes,

> It lies in a clarification of a fundamental issue which has often been obscured in the course of the debate: the differing religious characters of Christian Science and of Quimby's thought. Christian Science is a religious teaching and only incidentally a healing method. Quimbyism was a healing method and only incidentally a religious teaching.[37]

Christian Science, following Eddy's healing and her decade-long focus on overcoming illness as scientific proof of the efficacy of Christianity, did, indeed, focus on healing. From Baxter's chronicles of the early years of Christian Science, it is known that Eddy and her immediate followers hung out shingles clearly identifying them as healers of illness. Only after several editions of *Science and Health* and years of reflection did Eddy articulate Christian Science as Christianity in its fullness. When one experienced the Christ and lived in him, healing of all human woes inevitably followed. Good health was a positive side effect of religious certainty, not the primary reason why one married her religion.

The difficulty for this NRM, not to mention practicing Christian Scientists, is that some are married to an alternative healing method while others are married to a deeply Christian and spiritually authentic understanding of the presence of God. If Eddy's system requires radical reliance on God, yet the believer is looking only for comfort or release from pain and suffering, without an abiding sense of God's presence in all aspects of life, then it is likely that Christian Science will fail to deliver health. If, on the other hand, a believer is grounded, heart and soul, in God's presence, the focus on "mere" healing will be construed as a belittling or misinterpretation of Eddy's teaching. In this environment of embedded conflict, and without a map to forge an instructive path through these conflicts, Christian Scientists have divorced themselves from the Church for entirely different reasons. In the end, Christian Science is left with historians who misrepresent Eddy's teachings because they do not take the time to fully explore these *instructive conflicts* or with the apostates whose starry-eyed quest for physical healing or spiritual assurance ended with only irreconcilable differences.

NOTES

1. Mary Baker Eddy. *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1906), 497. To be fair, the key points of belief, or "religious tenets" of Christians Science are found on page 497, lines 3-27, of Eddy's seminal work. The difficulty has always been in the interpretation of the following tenets:

   (a) As adherents of Truth, we take the inspired Word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal life.

   (b) We acknowledge and adore on supreme and infinite God. We acknowledge His Son, on Christ; the Holy Ghost or divine Comforter; and man in God's image and likeness

   (c) We acknowledge God's forgiveness of sin in the destruction of sin and the spiritual understanding that casts out evil as unreal. But the belief in sin is punished so long as the belief lasts.

   (d) We acknowledge Jesus' atonement as the evidence of divine, efficacious Love, unfolding man's unity with God through Christ Jesus the Way-shower; and we acknowledge that man is saved through Christ, through Truth, Life, and Love as demonstrated by the Galilean Prophet in healing the sick and overcoming sin and death.

   (e) We acknowledge that the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection served to uplift faith to understand eternal Life, even the allness of Soul, Spirit, and the nothingness of matter.

   (f) And we solemnly promise to watch, and pray for that Mind to be in us which was also in Christ Jesus; to do unto others as we would have them do unto us; and to be merciful, just and pure.

2. Other nineteenth century "made-in-America" religions include Mormonism, Spiritualism, Adventism, Jehovah's Witnesses, New Thought, and Holiness-Pentecostalism.

3. Eddy, *Science and Health,* vii.

4. Gillian Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1998), 477.
5. J. Gordon Melton, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions,* 3rd ed. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1989), 105.
6. Eddy, *Science and Health,* 468.
7. Stephan Gottschalk, "Christian Science," *Encyclopedia of Religion,* vol. 3, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.), 444.
8. Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy,* 252–56.
9. Gottschalk, "Christian Science," 443.
10. Ibid., 444.
11. Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13–77. For readers looking to understand alternative spirituality in America, there is no more complete or insightful history of "unchurched" America. In fact, Christian Science is one of many "churches" that institutionalize the spiritual ideals of the "unchurched." See pages 75–77 for a "creedal statement" of the unchurched.
12. Using the *instructive conflict* model I develop at the conclusion of this essay, the serious study of Eddy might start with Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy,* 1998. Gill has done a masterful job of listing all the texts on Eddy written from interpretive extremes. Arriving at an unbiased appraisal of the Christian Science movement and Eddy's life may require reading biographies at the two extremes. The aforementioned books by Fraser and Gill would provide a start. Robert Peel, the premier in-house biographer of Mary Baker Eddy, is an excellent source; see Robert Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy,* 3 vols. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston), *The Years of Discovery,* 1966; *The Years of Trial,* 1971; *The Years of Authority,* 1977. Peel is openly pro-Christian Science and an in-house historian, but his books are comprehensive, well-written, and well-documented.

On the other hand, in 1906 and 1907, *McClure's Magazine,* the most prominent of the muckraking journals of the time, published a series of articles on Mrs. Eddy by Georgine Milmine that were reissued in revised form as the book, *Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy* (New York: Doubleday, 1909). Milmine's book is also well-documented (if inaccuracies can be "well-documented"), containing many eyewitness accounts of life in the early Christian Science movement, but radically biased against its subject, and is the first in a long line of debunking biographies of the founder of Christian Science.

There is no better compilation and explanation of the theologically intricate teachings of Christian Science than Stephen Gottschalk's *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1973). While Gottschalk is obviously a pro-Christian Science historian, he has the understanding and writing skills to make Christian Science comprehensible to the uninitiated.

13. Mary Baker Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1891), 13
14. Historical details in this essay are drawn primarily from Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy,* from Robert Peel's extensive study of Eddy and Christian Science, or from one other excellent academic study, Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).
15. See Douglas J. Swanson, "Standing Porter at the Door of Thought: The Social Order of the Christian Science Church," http://www.uwlax.edu/faculty/swanson/cs.htm. Swanson's exploration of the organizational structure of the movement is concise and revealing. At the American Academy of Religion meetings in Denver in 2001, I gave a paper on Christian Science. I noticed three or four particularly attentive members sitting in the front row taking

copious notes and recording my paper. After the presentations, these audience members introduced themselves as local and regional members of the Committees on Publication, there, no doubt, to be sure my presentation did no harm to the public perception of Christian Science.

16. Eddy, memorandum in the Archives of the Mother Church, quoted in Robert Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority,* 223.

17. Rolf Swensen, "'Our Cause … Does Not Need Advertising, but Protection': The Christian Science Movement Regroups, 1908–1910," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Metaphysical Religion* 10, no. 1 (2004): 29–79. Swensen's article represents the fruitful result of the Mary Baker Eddy Library for the Betterment of Humanity opening up the archive to outside scholars.

18. Eddy, *Science and Health,* 366, 371.

19. Robert Peel, "The Christian Science Practitioner," *Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 39–43, quoted in *Christian Science: A Sourcebook of Contemporary Materials* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1990), 139.

20. Gottschalk, "Christian Science," 444.

21. Swanson, "The Social Order of the Christian Science Church," 9.

22. See Michael Paulson, "Christian Science Opens Its Doors," *Boston Globe,* September 27, 2002, B1.

23. Robert David Thomas, *With Bleeding Footsteps* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), xvi. Thomas's preface provides a fascinating collection of extreme opinions on Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science including some of Mark Twain's stinging critiques of Christian Science, though Thomas also notes that many initial followers thought of her as "The Wayshower," the Messiah for their time, on the level with Jesus Christ.

24. Caroline Fraser, *God's Perfect Child* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999). The book liner accurately describes Fraser's work as "a passionate expose of religious zealotry." Fraser grew up in the movement, obviously suffered greatly on her metaphysical quest, and, with wit, detailed research, and a "passionate" blow for vindication, provides the best outside-the-movement account of Eddy's strange life and the subsequent development of her "Christian Science" world view.

25. Gillian Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1998). For the reader who desires a more detailed study of the founder of Christian Science, this book is highly recommended. Gill has "struggled" herself to come to an understanding of Eddy's life and teaching, and the end result of her considerable effort is one of the most informative and neutral expositions that has yet been produced. The story of Gill's frustrating but ultimately successful effort to gain access to the Mother Church archives—included in an addendum entitled "Research Note" (pp. 557–62) is a story in its own right, demonstrating that religious institutions that limit access to critical founding documents only fan the flames of controversy and end up contributing to historical distortions.

26. Nancy Niblack Baxter, *Open the Doors of the Temple* (Carmel, IN: Hawthorne Publishing, 2004), 13.

27. Marcus J. Borg and N.T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000).

28. Ibid., 5.

29. In the classic comedy, *Life of Brian,* the Monty Python writers spoof the early years of Jesus and rely on the "existential yearning meets trivial event" device to create numerous hilarious situations. In one scene, "Brian," the recognized, if reluctant messiah, flees an adoring mob. He loses one of his sandals in his haste, and the would-be followers all discard one

sandal, claiming, "the messiah wants us all to wear a single shoe. That is the way to the kingdom of heaven!"

30. Thomas, *With Bleeding Footsteps,* xvi–xvii. Though any further analysis is clearly beyond the theme of this chapter, there is no better example in American religion of history *metaphorized* than in the accounts of Joseph Smith and the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly referred to as Mormons.

31. Georgine Milmine, *The Life of Mary Baker Eddy and the History of Christian Science* (New York: Doubleday, 1909). Milmine's work is one of the first and, unfortunately for Eddy and Christian Science, most critical of the anti-Christian Science biographies. What makes the book interesting is the first person interviews with people, many with an ax to grind, who knew Eddy. Most historians believe the book to be flawed at critical points in its investigation of Christian Science.

32. Mary Baker Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1891), 24. For a detailed account of the "fall in Lynn," see Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy,* 161–68. Amanda Porterfield, *The Transformation of American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 230.

33. Thomas, *With Bleeding Footsteps,* 174–181.

34. I am purposefully avoiding the use of "psychological jargon" (bipolar disorder, paranoid schizophrenic, borderline personality syndrome, manic depression, etc.) in describing Eddy's multidimensional personality. I am not trained in psychology, and, thus, I am not equipped to use clinical terms with accuracy. What I am suggesting comes from experience. There are no saints and no perfect human beings. Every person I have met has good moments and troubled moments, and that definitely includes religious leaders. Conflicts are fueled when in-house historians refuse to acknowledge that human personality is multidimensional and their leader may have had moments in which she/he acted with less than noble intentions. To be fair, Eddy resisted her early followers' attempts to paint her as a female Christ for her time. However, the anxiety she exhibited when she or her organization came under real or imaginary attack is symptomatic of emotional instability. For Eddy, God is "all-in-all," but somehow, somewhere, there was room for Satan to be cast in her grand metaphysical drama as "mortal mind" or "malicious animal magnetism." The problem may lie with the believers rather than the leaders, except in cases where the leader uses and manipulates deification (Jim Jones, David Koresh, and others in our own time).

35. John K. Simmons, "Eschatological Vacillation in Mary Baker Eddy's Presentation of Christian Science," *Nova Religio* 7, no. 3 (March 2004): 63–80. In this article, I explore the multidimensional aspect of Eddy's personality. When she dealt with the trials and tribulations of institutionalizing her religion, she tended to see the world through a dualistic, apocalyptic, and paranoid aperture. When alone in the safety and security of her home and particularly while writing hymns, her mystical nature rose to the surface, and it is in this mode that genuine spiritual insight emerges.

36. Baxter, *Open the Doors of the Temple,* 55.

37. Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 130.

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Peoples Temple: A Typical Cult?

Rebecca Moore

On November 18, 1978, more than 900 Americans in a jungle settlement in Guyana, South America, died in a mass murder-suicide. Led by a charismatic preacher named Jim Jones, the members of Peoples Temple had begun the agricultural project of Jonestown in the northwest territory of Guyana in 1974, had immigrated into the project *en masse* in 1977, and had lived as a community of 1,000 residents for over a year. The circumstances of their departure from the United States, coupled with allegations of criminal and civil wrongdoing both in the United States and Guyana, prompted a U.S. congressman to launch an investigation of the group, which culminated in his visit to Jonestown and his assassination at a jungle airstrip shortly after he left the settlement. In all, five people died at Port Kaituma, Guyana: Rep. Leo Ryan, three reporters who had accompanied him, and a Peoples Temple defector.[1] Evidence indicates that the mass deaths in Jonestown began soon after the airstrip attack.

The events shocked the world, and the bizarre stories of drugs, sex, and guns that were reported in the following weeks—most of which turned out to be false—fueled the sensationalism surrounding the world's introduction to Peoples Temple. The descriptions of the group, provided mainly by former members and critics, and the instant media analyses of life and death in Jonestown shaped public understanding of the Temple and reinforced public perceptions about the dangers of cults. Indeed, Jonestown emerged as the paradigm of the dangerous cult, serving as the benchmark for measuring religious violence in subsequent years. It suggests every negative attribute—brainwashing and fanaticism, maniacal leaders and blind followers—that many of us associate with unfamiliar or unusual religious groups, from the Branch Davidians in Texas to the Taliban in Afghanistan.

But Peoples Temple was far from typical. First of all, external political and social pressures appeared to threaten its survival in very real ways, and the Temple's members responded accordingly. Second, Peoples Temple differed greatly from its contemporary religious movements, most especially in its demographic profile, which featured a predominantly black, family-oriented membership. Third, the group held

the unusual commitment to collective, rather than individual, salvation. If many New Religious Movements (NRMs) focused on helping the individual soul, Peoples Temple emphasized saving the collective body. Finally, with the move to Jonestown, Peoples Temple shifted from being a religious or quasi-religious group living in the world, to being a utopian community set apart from and outside of the world. Thus, to call Peoples Temple a typical cult is inaccurate and inappropriate. Far from being typical, Peoples Temple is anomalous because it differed in so many ways from what cult experts and the general public believe about cults.[2]

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Peoples Temple Christian Church began as a Pentecostal-style congregation in Indianapolis, Indiana, in the 1950s. Its commitment to interracial worship and civil rights quickly brought it into conflict with local churches and the larger community. James Warren Jones (1931–1978) preached a message of social equality that challenged the segregated society of the 1950s. Jones married Marceline Baldwin (1927–1978), a nurse, and together they established nursing homes in cooperation with committed church members, both black and white. In addition to having a biological son, they adopted a "rainbow" family, which included Korean and African American children.

The Temple's congregation in Indianapolis primarily came from the working class, and shared a commitment to an ecstatic, revivalistic form of Christianity. Jones retained the style of a Bible-based Pentecostal minister, warning in one sermon, "Don't you get up and tell me you're born to God. Why, we need to get born to God. Truly and fully born to God. For he that's born to God doth not commit sin."[3] But Jones also radicalized traditional Pentecostalism, where the preacher liberally sprinkles biblical references throughout a free-form sermon, and transformed it into an urgent call to concrete righteousness. The difference between the Temple and other local churches was its emphasis on a social gospel message, where Jones urged blacks and whites to literally take up the gospel and serve the poor and the marginalized in tangible ways. The Indiana Temple implemented Jesus's demand to help the poor, which was evident in the church's soup kitchen and its care facilities for indigents and the elderly.

Jones went beyond conventional interpretations of the charismatic nature of the primitive church as described in Paul's letters and the Acts of the Apostles, to remind his congregation of the foundational egalitarianism of early Christianity described in Acts 2 and 4:

> And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common (Acts 4:32).

Jones took a rather courageous stand, proposing what sounded much like Communism in the 1950s. "Preaching the social gospel, Jones personified the worst fears of the more conservative clergy and FBI director J. Edgar Hoover in the McCarthy

era," writes John R. Hall. "Pulpits were being infiltrated by Communists, sometimes using Black rights as a rallying cry for a movement of communist agitation for the cause of a collective society."[4] But it was a "communism" found in the Bible that the "poor white trash" and the "Negroes" of Indianapolis—both disenfranchised and marginalized—found appealing.

Jones's uncompromising opposition to racial segregation, both in the church and in the community, led to his appointment as the director of the Indianapolis Human Rights Commission in 1961, a position in which he received death threats for his integrationist activities. Perhaps to escape the racial tensions, Jones and his family traveled to Hawaii, and then moved to Brazil where he evangelized the poor in Belo Horizonte.[5]

Different accounts give varying reasons for the Temple's move from Indiana to California. Some say that Jones had a revelation of nuclear holocaust, which he communicated to his congregation, that necessitated a move from Indianapolis to a safer locale. Others say that Jones read an article in *Esquire Magazine,* which claimed that northern California would be a safe haven in the event of a nuclear attack. Still others note that California was a good place for a group of progressive Christians to live and work in the 1970s. For whatever reasons, about 70 people migrated from Indianapolis to Redwood Valley, a small town in northern California, in the mid-1960s. About half of the families were white, and half were black. As in Indiana, the interracial group encountered racism in the predominantly white area of the California wine country, with children facing harassment from schoolmates. At the same time, however, the group began to attract young white educated professionals who facilitated the expansion of the Temple from rural Redwood Valley to urban San Francisco and south to Los Angeles.[6] The Temple saw rapid growth in size and membership in the 1970s, eventually moving its headquarters to the heart of San Francisco's black ghetto at that time, the Fillmore District.[7] It had become a member in good standing of the Disciples of Christ denomination and was the largest donor congregation in that denomination for the year 1978.

With the move to Redwood Valley, and the ultimate relocation to San Francisco, Jones's message grew more political, and Temple members became activists in a number of social movements. The importance of specifically Christian aspects of the gospel diminished, as can be seen in this sermon that Jones preached in San Francisco in 1973:

> Man, the only sin you're born in, is the society, the kind of community you live in. If you're born in a socialist community, then you're not born in sin. If you're born in this church, this socialist revolution, you're not born in sin. If you're born in capitalist America, racist America, fascist America, then you're born in sin. But if you're born in socialism, you're not born in sin.[8]

Jones criticized the "Sky God" of Christianity and replaced it with the impersonal God of Principle: "God is Principle, Principle is Love, and Love is Socialism."[9] The Trinity of Socialism (God), Revolution (Christ), and Justice (Jesus) replaced the passive, do-nothing God of Christianity, which allowed injustice to continue

within the churches.[10] Jones pragmatically, and logically, deduced that such a deity was not worthy of worship. Only the god of righteousness deserved respect, and this god could be seen embodied within Jim Jones himself.

> I'm everywhere. Self has died. I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. I've been crucified with the revolution…. The life that I now live, I live through this great Principle, the Christ, the socialist Principle that was on the day of Pentecost when it said, "God is love, and love means they have everything in common."[11]

Jones was the messiah of the reign of God, the true kingdom where all would be equal and there would be plenty for all.

Remnants of traditions common to evangelical or fundamentalist piety—such as healings, gospel music, long sermons, and plenty of "amens"—coexisted along with an increasingly militant message on the necessity for social change. "At their essence, the worship services at Peoples Temple were constructed around the model of the emotionally expressive Pentecostal tradition."[12] But it was Pentecostalism with a twist: fiery, radical, and political. Jones warned a congregation assembled in Philadelphia in 1976:

> I tell you, we're in danger tonight, from a corporate dictatorship. We're in danger from a great fascist state, or a great communist state, and if the church doesn't build a utopian society, if it doesn't build an egalitarian society, we're going to be in trouble.[13]

What prompted the shift from a Christian social gospel proclamation in Indianapolis to a revolutionary socialist message in San Francisco? The shift is more apparent than real: Jones actually linked Christianity and socialism in his affirmation of "Apostolic Socialism"—the socialism of Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–37. He saw no discontinuity between the two ideas. God is love; love is socialism. Moreover, "the use of Black Power rhetoric by many members of Peoples Temple in the 1970s expressed a genuine desire to locate themselves and their community in the midst of an emergent global political and religious project."[14] In other words, Jones and the Temple were speaking the revolutionary language of the 1970s, within the context of civil rights, Black Power, and emerging nationalism around the world. San Francisco in particular and California in general were hospitable climates for expressing radical political and religious sentiments. People understood the idiom of change and transformation, and could accept it in a Christian setting in those turbulent times.

While Jones declared a gospel of apostolic socialism, he also faked faith healings in order to attract members. Associates colluded with Jones on these healings, pretending to regain eyesight and mobility, or saying they were cured of cancer. They also distributed "prayer cloths" to take to those who could not attend church, and after many Sunday services Temple volunteers sold photographs of Jones to use as healing charms. Immediately following the deaths in Jonestown, reporters and columnists accused Jones of being a con artist, a charlatan, in it for personal gain or self-aggrandizement. These arguments fail in light of the fact that Jones never used the wealth he accumulated for the Temple on personal items such as cars, houses, or clothing. Hall explains that "Jones faked healings and discernments not only to

promote faith that would trigger more miracles but also to groom his own image as the messiah to whom others should look for prophetic leadership."[15] While some members were taken in by the fakery, others knew what was going on and considered it unimportant to the real work of the group, which was to usher in a new society of social justice and racial equality.

Jones still was speaking in religious terms in 1976, especially when he preached to mixed audiences that included outsiders, particularly public officials, as well as insiders. People in San Francisco thought of the Temple as an activist black church with a white pastor. The church was credited with the election in a close mayoral race in San Francisco because of its get-out-the-vote drive, so much so that Jones was rewarded with an appointment to the San Francisco Housing Commission, where he eventually became commission chair. Martin Luther King Day celebrations held at the Temple featured a variety of prominent California Democrats, including the lieutenant governor and the speaker of the state assembly. When Rosalyn Carter traveled to San Francisco during the 1976 presidential campaign, she visited Peoples Temple. Peoples Temple members gave money to political parties—almost exclusively Republican in Republican Mendocino County, where Redwood Valley was located, but chiefly Democratic in San Francisco County. Bay Area activists understood the Temple's involvement in local politics within the context of its commitment to the Christian social gospel.

The overtly Christian elements of the movement faded away almost entirely, however, when the group began the mass migration to its agricultural project in Guyana in summer 1977. The group had been planning a move to "The Promised Land" since 1973, when it broke ground in the Northwest District of Guyana, on the northern coast of South America. Under terms of a lease negotiated with the government of Guyana, a small group of settlers had been clearing jungle, cultivating land, and building housing to accommodate the relocation of the movement in case it faced severe persecution in the United States. "If America ever becomes repressive," Jones told Dr. J. Alfred Smith, "and follows the path of Nazi Germany and turns against people of color, we will have a place to go."[16]

That moment came in 1977, when negative publicity, coupled with potential problems with the Internal Revenue Service, prompted the emigration of almost 1000 members in spring and summer that year. Although the pioneers who constructed Jonestown planned for small groups of people to move in slowly, get acclimated, and learn the ropes before others came too, massive numbers descended all at once and strained the community's limited resources. They found living conditions difficult and, at times, primitive. Despite the hardships, though, people believed they were going *to* something, and not just fleeing *from* something. "We have come here, the people of Jonestown, and we have come to build," wrote Dick Tropp in 1978.

> We have our remorse, our bitterness, our scars. They will never go away. But Jim Jones has always believed in lighting candles rather than cursing the darkness. And we are determined to let our light shine.[17]

And build they did. Residents of all ages worked at a variety of tasks to support the cooperative effort. Most able-bodied adults, including young adults and some teenagers, worked in agriculture production, whether fieldwork, clearing land, caring for animals, or weeding crops. Others worked in construction, employed in the project's sawmill or building houses or making furniture. A number of residents labored in health care, others taught. Senior citizens made dolls and crafts to sell in Georgetown. Others worked in food preparation or taught school to the community's more than 200 children. It took plenty of work to maintain a community of 1000 residents, and everyone was involved in some aspect of the process.

The Temple's headquarters in San Francisco, with its satellite bases in Redwood Valley and Los Angeles, sustained the operations in Guyana in a variety of ways. These included fundraising and ongoing financial support, but also consisted of being the voice of the group to America. Temple members shipped clothing and medical supplies to Guyana. They maintained radio communication via shortwave radio. They served as an ongoing presence in light of the absence of the group's core. The heart had moved from "Babylon" to "The Promised Land."

Removed from the public eye in the remote jungles of the Orinoco River basin, Peoples Temple seemed to abandon all religious discourse. "Jim wasn't talking about God any more," according to Hyacinth Thrash, one of the few survivors who lived through the mass deaths.[18] This is not to say that the members themselves did not retain an essentially Christian faith, as Thrash and others indicate,[19] but rather that Jones's message and the outlook of the project were basically utopian in nature and aimed at survival as a model of apostolic socialism. Jonestown residents lived and worked together, pooled what economic resources they had—such as Social Security checks from the elderly and proceeds from the sale of handmade toys and crafts in Guyana's capital city of Georgetown—and seemed to leave overtly religious rhetoric behind. Tapes made by the community in Jonestown deal with agricultural, political, and personal questions, but no religious issues. For example, a number of tapes deal with problems in food production, with understanding local farming methods, and with division of labor in the fields.[20] Other transcripts from Jonestown feature Jones reading news from Eastern Bloc countries directly from a news wire.[21] Still other tapes reveal how the community sought to inculcate a cooperative spirit and how it disciplined those who failed to measure up.[22]

The most religious rhetoric to be found in Jonestown seems to have been the recurring discussion of sacrificial death in the form of "revolutionary suicide." Huey Newton, a founder of the Black Panther Party, had used the expression to highlight the fact that when people challenge systems of oppression, they run the risk of being killed by those systems. "As Newton used it, the term emphasizes revolution over death."[23] In Jonestown, however, revolutionary suicide had at least three different meanings, according to David Chidester. First, it functioned as a loyalty test; second, it prevented residents from dying a dehumanized and degrading death; and third, "it was used as a threat to force the outside world to accept the inviolable integrity of the community."[24] Religious suicide has a long history in rituals of purification, release from suffering, revenge, and revolution (which includes martyrdom). Jonestown

residents understood revolutionary suicide in all of these aspects, and tapes and documents from 1977 and 1978 show that "men, women, and children came forward, witnessing a willingness to seal their commitment to Jonestown in death."[25]

In Jonestown, martyrdom in the face of an apocalyptic future replaced the more optimistic Christian social gospel of Indiana and California, although suicide had been discussed as early as 1973. Of course, Christianity began with its own martyr, Jesus Christ. But the difference, as noted by Ross Case, one of the Temple's pastors in its early years before he left and became a leader in the opposition, is that Jesus's death offered hope for the future; the Jonestown deaths did not. "The martyrs of Jonestown—that is, those who willingly died," writes Hall, "regarded their fate as connected to the honor of their struggle, not to its hope of triumph."[26] While the message of this kind of martyrdom did not reflect Christian teaching, it was nevertheless essentially a religious commitment that placed loyalty to each other and to the cause of socialism—against a racist and capitalist America—above the value of individual human life.

A number of Jonestown tapes paint a dark and foreboding picture, one in which children denounce their parents, community members are humiliated and frightened with threats (real and imaginary), and a sense of doom and imminent world destruction are pervasive. Less than a month before Ryan's visit, for example, a tape recording features residents of Jonestown explaining why they would rather commit revolutionary suicide than return to the United States. Reasons include avoiding hostile relatives, escaping the state of siege they believed was underway in the United States, disdaining the capitalistic system, and thwarting the conspiracy that they thought existed against the community. One speaker, Edith Roller, concludes a short statement in this way: "I'm glad that my death will mean something. I hope it will be an inspiration to all people that fight for freedom all over the world."[27] A horrifying tape in which residents describe the tortures they would inflict upon critical family members includes a young woman saying that she'd

> personally like to grab my father and string him up by his nuts and have a hot poker, sticking it in some coals and sticking it up his ass, and burning the hell out of him, for doing the things he's doing, because he knows that you [Jones] saved my sister's life and he knows all the good things you did for us both, and he knew that we wanted to come over here and live peacefully, and this is why he's causing all this hell.[28]

While voices of protest can occasionally be heard on various tapes recorded in Jonestown, more frequently residents join in laughter, applause, and approval of what Jones and others say in community meetings.

The people of Jonestown were far from home; dissenters could not leave easily. The lack of communication with outsiders, and the isolation and distance which residents created between themselves and the United States, led relatives and former Temple members to promote investigations of Peoples Temple and Jonestown. Calling itself the Concerned Relatives, the group organized a concerted effort to demand local, state, and federal investigations into Peoples Temple. It also motivated and

helped families to file lawsuits against the Temple for recovery of donated property, for slander, and for child custody. A major custody case brought relatives and Temple members into grave conflict, with both sides viewing custody of a five-year-old boy named John Victor Stoen as pivotal to their success. The Concerned Relatives saw the custody issue as reuniting a family and defeating Jones; the residents of Jonestown also saw it as directed against Jones, but considered it the first step toward the breakup of the Jonestown experiment as well.

Most importantly, the Concerned Relatives encouraged ongoing media coverage that portrayed Jonestown as a concentration camp. While this helped shape public opinion after the deaths, its greater significance was felt before November 18, the date of the deaths, as it created the atmosphere within which government bodies considered issues affecting the community's survival. The Concerned Relatives took their complaints to federal agencies, such as the State Department, the Federal Communications Commission, the Social Security Administration, and to Congress. They persuaded Congressman Leo Ryan (D-CA) to travel to Guyana in November 1978 with an entourage of people whom the Temple considered its worst enemies: hostile reporters and family members involved in legal actions against the Temple.

To tremendous applause, however, Ryan told the assembled residents of Jonestown on the night of November 17 that he could see the positive impact Jonestown had had on their lives.[29] By the next morning, though, a few disaffected residents indicated their desire to leave. The group of defectors grew to about 16. The number might seem small in a community of 1000, but it was momentous because these defectors included members from two families who belonged to the Indianapolis contingent. They were with Jones from the very beginning.[30] When Ryan, the reporters, some Concerned Relatives, and the departing Jonestown residents attempted to board two small airplanes at an airstrip six miles from Jonestown, a group of Jonestown residents pulled up in a truck 100 yards away and began shooting. In all, five people were killed and a dozen were wounded at the airstrip. The shooters took particular pains to make sure that Ryan and the reporters were dead. Larry Layton, who posed as a defector, fired a pistol on board one of the airplanes, but was quickly disarmed. He was the only resident of Jonestown ever to serve prison time for the crimes committed that day.[31]

After Ryan's group left Jonestown in the early afternoon, Jones called people together at the community's central pavilion. An audiotape recorded parts of the ensuing discussion between Jones and community members during the final hours.[32] The tape starts and stops—raising the possibility that the tape might be a fake, assembled from bits and pieces of other recordings—but many audiotapes recovered from Jonestown show that such spontaneous editing was Jones's practice, and so it seems to be a fairly accurate depiction of what happened. One 60-year-old woman, Christine Miller, argued against killing the children and asked about moving to the Soviet Union, a second emigration that had been discussed frequently in Jonestown. Although Jones let her speak for a while, others finally shouted her down. Parents then began to kill their children, forcing them to drink a mixture of tranquilizers, cyanide, and fruit punch.

It is not entirely clear how much coercion was required for people to kill themselves. The late Dr. Leslie Mootoo, chief pathologist for Guyana, believed that most people were murdered.[33] Cecil A. "Skip" Roberts, Guyana's Assistant Crime Commissioner, came to a different conclusion. "Jones was clever," he told us six months after the deaths. "He had parents kill their children first. Who would want to live after that?"[34] Jones also gave orders via radio transmission to the members at the San Francisco headquarters to commit suicide and also to those in Georgetown, where about 80 people were staying in the Temple's headquarters in Guyana's capital city. Only one woman in Georgetown, Sharon Amos, obeyed the order, slitting the throats of her birth daughter, her two adopted children, and then herself.

Altogether, 918 people died that day: 909 in Jonestown; five at the Port Kaituma airstrip; and four in Georgetown.

THE MODEL OF A DANGEROUS CULT?

There are several reasons why it is inappropriate to identify Peoples Temple as the model for dangerous cults. The first takes into account the unique external pressures that contributed to the deaths in Jonestown. The second considers the makeup of the Peoples Temple membership, a predominantly black demographic that challenges traditional understandings of NRMs. The third comes from the theological-political beliefs that the group held, a blending of the Christian social gospel and progressive —perhaps even radical—politics. A final reason is that Peoples Temple changed from a religious body to a utopian experiment with the move to Jonestown. These unique dynamics make it difficult for us to generalize about NRMs from the exceptional Peoples Temple experience.

The first reason for challenging Jonestown's paradigmatic status as a dangerous cult concerns the relative importance of external in relation to internal factors in the final days of Jonestown. Should the tragedy of November 18, 1978, be blamed primarily on Jim Jones and his leadership team? Should responsibility be shared with those groups exerting pressure on the Jonestown community, namely the Temple's opponents, which included hostile relatives, critical government representatives, and a sensationalistic media? If we look at external in addition to internal factors to explain the tragedy, can we still consider Peoples Temple a good example of a dangerous cult?

These questions hint at a larger debate about the nature of new religions. Do NRMs primarily act out of internal dynamics—that is, from endogenous factors, as sociologists of religion call them? Or do they also respond, or even primarily relate, to external forces—or exogenous factors? In other words, do NRMs function according to their own internal mechanisms, oblivious to the outside world? Or do they change and adjust as a result of what is happening outside the confines of their world view, in response to negative media attention, for example, or to child custody cases? The essentialist view—the opinion that NRMs work within a cultural and social void and respond only to internal stimuli and conflicts—does not adequately consider the importance of outside influences upon Peoples Temple. Essentialists

must take this approach, because otherwise anticultists would have to take some responsibility for cult violence. But we must ask what might have happened—or not happened—if the community in Jonestown had not felt under constant attack.

A number of comparative studies of Peoples Temple and the Branch Davidians followed in the wake of the confrontation between the Davidians and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the Federal Bureau of Investigation at Mount Carmel, Texas, in 1993.[35] In several such studies, scholars wrote that, comparatively speaking, exogenous factors played a greater role in the demise of the Branch Davidians than they did in the deaths at Jonestown. After all, the Davidians confronted an armed force, whereas the residents of Jonestown faced an unarmed congressman and reporters. Others, however, believe that exogenous factors also played a significant role leading to the deaths in Jonestown. Hall, for example, consistently pointed to the threats that Concerned Relatives, and their allies in the media and the government, made against Peoples Temple, calling these groups "cultural opponents."[36]

I would agree that the role of cultural opponents should not be dismissed in assessing causes, or blame, for the deaths in Jonestown.[37] Few groups operate in a vacuum, and, given the high profile Peoples Temple had in San Francisco politics, it was impossible for it to go unnoticed, especially by the news media. Apostates (i.e., members who leave an NRM) and relatives of Temple members also sought to publicize their concerns and mounted an extensive lobbying campaign against the Temple beginning in 1976. The campaign prompted numerous government investigations, which led, at times, to serious threats against Jonestown's very existence. For example, a letter-writing campaign alerted the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to Temple use, and abuse, of shortwave radio frequencies. The FCC investigated the Temple's use of the radio waves and issued several complaints and citations against Temple radio operators for conducting business over the amateur airwaves. If the FCC had shut down Jonestown radio operations, the group would have had difficulty communicating its needs to its headquarters in California. Allegations of gunrunning pushed the U.S. Customs Service to conduct random searches of Temple crates being shipped to Guyana. Although these searches revealed no weapons or other customs violations, they did delay the arrival of clothing and medical supplies to the community. The Social Security Administration temporarily held up checks legitimately intended for senior citizens who moved to Jonestown. Without those funds, residents would have starved.

While Leo Ryan and those who accompanied him were, in fact, unarmed, they jointly represented the force of government and its ability to destroy Jonestown. Residents sincerely believed that Ryan and his entourage represented a grave threat to their community. The week before Ryan arrived Jones reminded the group that:

> We are still in a state of siege. We are going to be under siege beginning Tuesday, when the first of the group we have found will be arriving by commercial airlines. We are hoping and feeling that the Guyana government will block them from staying longer… Their plans for the mercenaries, we do not know. We don't know if it is taking place now, or if it will start when the legal actions start, I mean their legal entry… So I wanted to warn you again and again and again, to be together with the community, to stay in the

> sight of the community, do not leave the central area, do not get away from this circle of protection.[38]

Tim Stoen, a leader of the Concerned Relatives, told the State Department he would retrieve his son, John Victor, from Jonestown "by force if necessary." Shortly before Ryan's visit an aide to Charles Garry, the Temple's San Francisco lawyer, wrote to Jones that "It has become clear to me that anything Stoen's involved in has as its goal the destruction of you (Jim Jones) and ultimately the organization."[39] Jones's anxiety about Ryan's trip with the Concerned Relatives therefore had some legitimate basis.

Actions have consequences, and the actions of the Temple's opponents—the Concerned Relatives and the news media—did indeed have dire consequences. To consider Peoples Temple as responding completely, or almost completely, to endogenous factors—such as Jones's deteriorating mental health in Guyana or the declining financial status of the organization—ignores the important role opponents had in affecting that health, or precipitating that status.

It is clear that members of Peoples Temple lived and worked in a dynamic tension with antagonistic critics who were unsympathetic to the aims of the group and who had vowed to destroy Jones. None but the largest and most visible NRMs—such as the Church of Scientology or The Family/Children of God—face this kind of relentless animosity. The difference, however, was that Temple enemies seemed to have all the force and might of the American government behind them.

A second problem with making Peoples Temple the paradigmatic evil cult stems from its utterly anomalous racial composition. Analyses of NRMs in the 1980s, coming out of the study of counterculture youth movements in the 1960s and 1970s, focused on middle-class, educated, white young people. In a book on NRMs published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1989, Saul V. Levine observed that, "[w]ith few exceptions, the members are young (median age 22), white, middle-class, relatively well-educated, and from intact families."[40] Other chapters from the same volume presuppose a youthful, white membership, including "Contemporary Youth: Their Psychological Needs and Beliefs," and "Families of Cult Members: Consultation and Treatment." And an example from "Religious Cult Membership: A Sociobiologic Model":

> University campuses are particular targets of cult recruiters, especially at the beginning of new academic terms. Adolescents have always been prone to sudden religious conversions.… [M]odern adolescents and college students are particularly likely to be disaffiliated from their families on one hand and from adult groups on the other.[41]

As early as 1978, Archie Smith Jr. criticized the dominant white paradigm for analyzing NRMs,[42] but ten years later the APA continued to interpret cult membership as a white phenomenon. Even as recently as 1998, Lorne Dawson wrote that, "the members of most NRMs are disproportionately young," although he does add that the figures are changing as some groups age.[43] Eileen Barker recognized the unusual membership profile of Peoples Temple and the Branch Davidians, writing that members were "not as disproportionately young" as those in movements like the Children

of God, Hare Krishna or ISKCON, and the Unification Church of Rev. Sun Myung Moon.[44]

If the psychiatrists are correct, then Peoples Temple is a bad example of a typical cult because it violates the most typical demographic norms. Though led by a white preacher, Peoples Temple was a black religious institution in terms of its numbers. Initial calculations of Jonestown victims estimated that approximately 70 percent of those who died were African American.[45] An extensive demographic survey that Fielding McGehee and I conducted broke this figure further into its constituent parts.[46] About 67 percent of the people living in Guyana—both Jonestown and Georgetown—were black; that figure reflects the percentage of those who died as well. Almost half of those who lived and died in Jonestown were black females, with the majority of those women being over age 50. There are two age "bumps" in the numbers of Jonestown residents: children under the age of 20 make up one bump, and African American adults over the age of 50 compose the other. In other words, children (including teenagers) and old people made up the majority of residents in Jonestown, in contrast to the twenty-something membership of more representative groups. Moreover, though residents of Jonestown came from a variety of jobs and professions, the majority came from the working classes, such as clerical, domestic, agricultural, and building trades, as distinct from the typical college-educated cult member.

Mary Maaga highlighted the problem of considering members of Peoples Temple as a uniform mass, whether black or white, young or old.[47] She identified three distinct groups that existed side-by-side within the organization: older whites, who had joined in Indianapolis and moved with the group to California; younger whites, who joined in California and who fit the APA profile of cult members; and a cross-section of the black community. Furthermore, my own research indicates that membership in Peoples Temple embodied numerous interlocking family relationships. In other words, everyone seemed to be related to everyone else, either by marriage, by adoption, by partnership, or by guardianship. Far from being a group of disaffected young people, Peoples Temple was a group in which members had strong biological, family, and affective ties.[48]

In short, Peoples Temple looked much more like a church than an NRM in its membership. One might as well say that black churches in America are dangerous cults, given the fact that Temple demographics more closely resemble those institutions than any others. But if an NRM is by definition a countercultural youth movement, which is what the APA claimed—as do many other NRM analyses—then Peoples Temple fails as a model or warning of anything relating to NRMs.

In addition to failing the NRM demographic test, Peoples Temple fails the NRM belief test. Some analysts see the movement as fitting squarely within the paradigm of Third World anticolonial revolutions, with its work being comparable to that of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California.[49] The Temple provided meals to residential members and to others and offered health screenings for seniors, child care for working parents, and assistance in navigating the social welfare system to those in need. It also engaged in grassroots political organizing activities, ranging from

participation in demonstrations in support of fair housing, or against evictions of low-income tenants, to donation of financial aid to Dennis Banks, a leader of the American Indian Movement who was fighting extradition to South Dakota. The group made donations to the defense funds of reporters jailed for refusing to reveal sources. Speakers at Temple services included Civil Rights activists and international political figures, while topics included the American-choreographed overthrow of Salvador Allende's socialist government in Chile and the subsequent torture of dissidents, to the evils of apartheid in South Africa, as well as from the persecution of blacks in American cities and the deep South to Supreme Court decisions expanding police powers.

While many NRMs today espouse capitalistic values—such as the Church of Scientology, the Unification Church, or a number of Christian "cults"—Peoples Temple adopted countercultural economic values, namely socialism and communalism, and critiqued the rugged individualism of American life. "Jones had become an obscure socialist thinker, blending elements of atheism, Christianity, Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, and Third World revolutionary rhetoric into a complicated brew of political sentiments."[50] While it seems dangerous to assume that Jones's followers shared all of their leader's beliefs and principles, nevertheless those who disagreed with the organization's politics probably left. Certainly there were older people who relied upon the Temple for food, housing, and health care, and they undoubtedly held onto some Christian traditions. But as Anthony B. Pinn notes, we should not neglect the role that "nontheism" played within the group.

> It seems unlikely that African Americans would remain in Peoples Temple and Jonestown if bothered by the humanist teachings simply because they did not want to appear to be "traitors." For some this may have been the case, but it is plausible that for others the humanist teachings rang true.[51]

We can see this in the comments of one member who said that, for the first time, "she had found a society free of sexism and racism and one in which she experienced full acceptance as a Black woman. She had a cause to live for. American society had never given her that."[52] The social and political commitments of members of Peoples Temple, therefore, are at odds with the supernaturalist beliefs of many NRMs, and with the other-worldly orientation of many black churches in America. Salvation was this-worldly, to be created in the promised land of Guyana.

Most popular discussions of Peoples Temple neglect the distinct change in its organization and purpose after the move to Jonestown. While it employed the language, the facilities, the organization, and even the beliefs of a Christian group during its Indiana and California years, it is clear that Peoples Temple functioned as a utopian community upon relocation to Guyana. Jones did not preach any Christian messages on the audiotapes recorded in Jonestown, as opposed to those taped in the United States.[53] Even in the so-called "Death Tape" made on the last day, it was a Temple leader, and not Jones, who assured the dying that "everybody was so happy when they made that step to the other side."[54] There were no religious symbols in Jonestown, although there were what we might call religious rituals or rites, such as

rehearsals for suicide and testimonies of those stating their willingness to die for the community.

The traditional practice of Christianity died out in Jonestown, and religious language disappeared, although some argue that the commitment to socialism took the form of a religious obligation. Jones criticized the assembly in Jonestown for its nostalgia for long-established Christian beliefs and practices, saying, "You used to rise when you talked about heaven. You'd rise. You'd rise to your feet. You stand up and you'd wave your hand, talk about heaven. And you never saw no goddam heaven, 'cause no goddam heaven ever existed."[55] Jones added that people would have liked him better if he had driven a Cadillac and lived in a mansion than if he had told them the truth. Follow-up notes to a "Peoples Rally" held in August 1978 state what Jonestown residents are to say to visitors who ask about religion:

> Church?—No, we don't "have" church here. We have town forum every week once, but never more than twice in a week. They don't like you to go if you feel bad—we have nurses that check you and watch over any who aren't well.[56]

A final example of the turn from religion appears in a brochure published by Peoples Temple, called "A Feeling of Freedom," which presented photographs and comments by people who lived in or visited "The Peoples Temple Agricultural/Medical Project in Guyana, South America." The *only* reference to religion appears in a comment made by my mother, Barbara Moore, who visited the community in May 1978 but was never a member. She said, "In a sense it reminds me of … a New Testament community, in the purest sense of the word, in the love and concern for all, that we observed."[57]

The absence of familiar religious elements indicates a distinct shift in the Peoples Temple's operation, if not in its self-understanding. Hall defines a utopian group as follows:

> [G]roups of three or more individuals, some of whom are unrelated by blood or marriage, who live in a single household or interrelated set of households and engage in attempts at value achievement not available in society-at-large.[58]

Hall expands upon Rosabeth Moss Kanter's examination of communal commitment. Kanter identified six characteristics of utopian groups: perfectibility, order, brotherhood, merging mind and body, experimentation, and uniqueness.[59] In many respects, Jonestown follows Kanter's model. Certainly those who moved to Jonestown believed in and worked toward creating a new society. While they gave up on fighting racism and injustice in the United States, they did not surrender the dream of building a new world of brotherhood and sisterhood in Jonestown and perfecting themselves by eliminating personal racism, elitism, sexism, and classism. Such a dream required order, however, and this quest for discipline led to excesses, such as keeping people under sedation, scaring children by telling them about tigers in the Guyanese jungle, confessing sins, and even using a sensory-deprivation chamber for hard cases.

By merging mind and body, Kanter meant living life holistically, working and living for a common cause. Cultivating the land allowed for such merging, and clearly

people in Jonestown had the opportunity to integrate their political goals with the life they were leading. A spirit of experimentation accompanied this effort to live holistically. A letter from my sister Annie Moore described some of the local plants the Jonestown medical staff were testing.

> We have been using papaya on wounds and I have never seen anything like it. The skin on this woman's leg ulcer all grew a layer of skin within one day with the papaya on it. It was truly amazing.[60]

Charles Garry remarked with similar amazement at the fact that old people were learning Russian in Jonestown, in preparation for a move to the Soviet Union. When we visited Jonestown in 1979, our Guyanese guide showed us a venting system from the kitchen to the laundry area that someone in the community had devised for drying clothes. The sense of experimentation extended to child rearing, in which a kibbutz-like separation of children from parents emerged as a way to instill a communal ethos in the next generation. In addition, the group's commitment to racial integration led to a number of interracial partnerships and families, with the number of mixed race children apparently growing.

Other writers have recognized the utopian nature of Jonestown.[61] Although a church of sorts remained in California, Jonestown itself was a utopian experiment, unusual in its commitment to true racial integration. Only a few other communes in American history, such as Koinonia Farm in Georgia, ever attempted to live a life of intentional interracial harmony.[62] Despite the contradictions that existed in Jonestown between goal and reality, the pledge to racial equality and justice made the project unique.

Peoples Temple's uniqueness makes it a bad example of a dangerous cult. In law, unusual cases set bad precedent; in religious studies, unusual religions make bad paradigms. Peoples Temple is without question an atypical NRM. Nevertheless, anticultists continue to evoke the specter of a vat of poison surrounded by corpses when they talk about NRMs. For example, opponents of David Koresh linked him to Jones and predicted collective suicide by the Branch Davidians. "The central point of comparison that was repeatedly made between Waco and Jonestown concerned first the possibility and eventually the actuality of mass suicide."[63] When we look objectively at Jonestown and Mount Carmel, however, we see numerous differences, ranging from geographic isolation at Jonestown, to a profound respect for biblical prophecy at Mount Carmel. Moreover, there was never any discussion of suicide at Mount Carmel, although its residents expected to fight to the death at the battle of Armageddon.

Jonestown was useful to the nascent anticult movement in the 1970s and 1980s. It "provided the modern American anticult movement (hereafter ACM) with the strongest, most dramatic evidence possible of its allegations that some new religious movements … hold an awesome destructive potential."[64] A number of leaders of the ACM in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Ted Patrick and Margaret Singer, repeatedly invoked Jonestown as the justification for advocating restrictions on both personal freedom and religious liberty. Even today, "cult watchers not only worry about

sequels but have proof of the likelihood—in the 39 members of Heaven's Gate who linked their fate to the Hale-Bopp comet, covered their bodies with purple shrouds and suffocated themselves in March 1997," according to an article on the Rick Ross Web site, an anticult source. "They say similar groups, led by megalomaniacs who believe they alone have the ear of God, likely exist but closet themselves so well they will be detected only when exploding in tragedy."[65]

More recently, Jonestown and Jones were identified with al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden, with a San Francisco reporter writing after September 11, 2001 that "one way to understand the cult of bin Laden is to look back on the horrors of Jonestown."[66] A number of editorialists and correspondents linked the Taliban with Jonestown, and Jim Jones with Osama bin Laden. Any type of religious fanaticism that involves suicide, no matter how different or unusual, now seems to be associated with Jonestown. Even the expression "drinking the Kool-Aid" means showing one's unwavering loyalty—to a product, to a sports team, or to an idea.

A final reason Peoples Temple must be considered unusual is its demise. A cataclysmic and violent end is the exception, rather than the rule, for NRMs, despite the impression we might get from events of the 1990s and our own century, such as the Aum Shinrikyo gas attack in Tokyo (1995), the murder-suicides of members of the Solar Temple (1994, 1995, 1997) in Canada and Switzerland, the Heaven's Gate UFO-related suicides (1997), or the mass deaths of 800 members of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Uganda (2000). These are unusual and dramatic events, however, given the thousands of NRMs that exist around the world. NRMs typically exist for only about a generation; groups that exist into the second and third generations are considered unusually successful. Very few NRMs die out as dramatically as the groups noted above. That is why Peoples Temple and Jonestown do not make for a very good paradigm when attempting to describe a typical NRM.

THE FUTURE

It might seem that all there is to say about Peoples Temple has been said, but this is far from the case. As more Temple documents are released from government agencies through *Freedom of Information Act* requests, scholars gain new insights into the workings of the organization. As additional relatives, apostates, survivors, and others reflect upon their experiences in Jonestown, fresh perspectives augment our understanding. As other incidents of religious violence occur, comparative studies will shed new light on the events in Jonestown.

Almost three decades after Jonestown, books and articles (like this one) are still coming out. In 2005 Denice Stephenson, an archivist for the California Historical Society, published selections from the society's Peoples Temple collection.[67] That same year, a play called *The People's Temple* premiered in the San Francisco Bay area. Several authors are writing novels featuring different characters from Jonestown. A number of Peoples Temple survivors (as opposed to critical former members) are

writing their own accounts. Children's books, conspiracy books, Internet sites, works of art, and other productions continue to emerge. In the absence of a definitive explanation of "what happened" and, equally important, "why," it is likely that Jonestown will generate more and more works in the future, and so the interpretation of events will persist.

In addition to getting more analyses that compare Peoples Temple to other alternative religious groups, I think there is a need for further study of Jonestown as a utopian community. Viewing Peoples Temple as a utopian experiment will help broaden historical studies of American utopian and communal groups. It can extend our appreciation of the institution and its aims and practices and provide new ways of interpreting the group.

Pinn argues that considering Peoples Temple as a black religious institution illuminates the organization in important ways.[68] The volume *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America* has begun the process of recasting Peoples Temple in this way, but more research and analysis need to be done. For example, only a few accounts describing the experiences of black members of the Temple have been published.[69] More are forthcoming, but additional critical analyses would help fix Peoples Temple within black religious studies.

A topic that remains unexplored is that of the role of Peoples Temple ex-members, or apostates. Although a number of former, disaffected Temple members have written accounts of their experiences within the group, none have reflected on their activities—whether on their own or as part of a larger organized effort—to bring media and government pressure on the organization.[70] It is an important part of the Jonestown story, and it is still missing.

Finally, until all government documents concerning Peoples Temple are released for public consideration, the complete story of the institution will never be fully told. In 1979 the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives classified 20 chapters of material it had accumulated in its investigation of the assassination of Leo Ryan. Those chapters have never been seen by researchers. In addition, the FBI and the CIA maintain the secret classification of agency documents pertaining to Peoples Temple and Jonestown. When those documents are made available by statute in 2009, a fuller understanding of the American government's role in the tragedy will be possible. The documents may allay the suspicions of conspiracy theorists, or they may reveal that the federal government knew about the impending disaster, and perhaps even provoked it. Whatever these classified documents contain, their release will almost certainly revise academic considerations and public policy debate on Jonestown and NRMs in general.

The saga of Peoples Temple continues to unfold as former members tell their stories, as more documents become available, and as a younger generation of scholars brings new questions to old data. It is difficult to say whether or not new discoveries will dramatically change our understanding of Jonestown, however, since Jonestown seems destined to remain a symbol of dangerous cults, even if in reality it parallels other American social and cultural institutions.

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NOTES

1. Those killed at the airstrip included Rep. Leo J. Ryan, San Francisco *Examiner* photographer Greg Robinson, NBC News cameraman Bob Brown, NBC News reporter Don Harris, and departing Jonestown resident Patricia Parks.
2. John R. Hall with Philip D. Schuyler and Sylvaine Trinh, *Apocalypse Observed: Religious Movements and Violence in North America, Europe and Japan* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 17, 25.
3. FBI Audiotape Q 1058 (part 2), dated to early 1960s. All audiotapes cited in this paper are available at http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/tapes/tapes.html, unless otherwise noted. The tapes, generated by Temple members in the United States and Guyana, are part of a collection gathered by the FBI and obtained under the *Freedom of Information Act.*
4. John R. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History,* 2nd. ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 25.
5. Jim Hougan, "Jonestown: The Secret Life of Jim Jones: A Parapolitical Fugue," *Lobster* 37 (Summer 1999): 2–20.
6. Mary McCormack Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 80–81.
7. Tanya Hollis, "Peoples Temple and Housing Politics in San Francisco," in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America,* ed. Rebecca Moore, Anthony B. Pinn, and Mary R. Sawyer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).
8. Q 1053 (part 4), dated to early 1960s.
9. David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown,* rev. ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 53.
10. Ibid., 59–60.
11. Q 1059 (part 1), dated to spring 1973, quoted in Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide,* 61.
12. Milmon F. Harrison, "Jim Jones and Black Worship Traditions," in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America,* ed. Moore, Pinn, and Sawyer, 129.
13. Q 162, 1976.
14. Duchess Harris and Adam John Waterman, "To Die for the Peoples Temple: Religion and Revolution after Black Power," in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America,* ed. Moore, Pinn, and Sawyer, 105.
15. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land,* 36.
16. J. Alfred Smith, "Breaking the Silence: Reflections of a Black Pastor," in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America,* ed. Moore, Pinn, and Sawyer, 147.
17. Dick Tropp, "Who are the People of Jonestown?" in *Dear People: Remembering Jonestown,* ed. Denice Stephenson (San Francisco and Berkeley: California Historical Society and Heyday Books, 2005), 82.
18. Catherine (Hyacinth) Thrash, as told to Marian K. Towne, *The Onliest One Alive: Surviving Jonestown, Guyana* (Indianapolis: M. Towne, 1995), 93.
19. Mary R. Sawyer, "The Church in Peoples Temple," in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America,* ed. Moore, Pinn, and Sawyer.
20. See, for example, transcripts of agricultural meetings on Q 736, Q 741, Q 743, and Q 807. Brief summaries prepared by the FBI of other Jonestown meetings, which seem to

include agricultural reports, are available at http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/Tapes/Tapes/ FBISummaries/fbi.html.

21. Transcripts of news reports are available of the following tapes: Q 235, Q 284, Q 320, Q 323, and Q 759.

22. Transcripts of disciplinary proceedings can be read of tapes Q 595, Q 598, Q 635-639, Q 743, and Q 807.

23. Harris and Waterman, "To Die for the Peoples Temple," 112.

24. Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide,* 130.

25. Ibid., 147.

26. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land,* 298.

27. Q 245, October 1978.

28. Q 594, April 1978.

29. Q 048, November 17, 1978.

30. Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown,* 127–29.

31. After serving a total of 18 years—first in a Guyana jail, and then in U.S. federal penitentiaries— Layton was paroled on the recommendations of the man who disarmed him and the federal probation officer who originally recommended a sentence of five years to the judge in the case.

32. Transcripts of the so-called "Death Tape," Q 042, are available at http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/tapes/death.html.

33. Hougan, "Jonestown: The Secret Life of Jim Jones," 3–5.

34. Rebecca Moore, *A Sympathetic History of Jonestown* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 329.

35. Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony, "Sects and Violence: Factors Enhancing the Volatility of Marginal Religious Movements," in *Armageddon at Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict,* ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 236–59; Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony, "Religious Totalism, Exemplary Dualism, and the Waco Tragedy," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements,* ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 261–84; John R. Hall and Philip Schuyler, "Apostasy, Apocalypse, and Religious Violence: An Exploratory Comparison of Peoples Temple, the Branch Davidians, and the Solar Temple," in *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements,* ed. David Bromley (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 139–69; and Hall, Schuyler, and Trinh, *Apocalypse Observed;* Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000); and Catherine Wessinger, *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

36. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land,* 184–90, 210–35, 242–47; Hall, Schuyler, and Trinh, *Apocalypse Observed,* 16–43. Thomas Robbins disagrees with this analysis in "Comparing Incidents of Extreme 'Cult Violence': A Comment on 'Is the Canon on Jonestown Closed,'" *Nova Religio* 5, no. 2 (September 2002): 372–82. My rebuttal to Dr. Robbins follows on 383–85. Catherine Wessinger offers a middle position between Hall and Robbins, in *How the Millennium Comes Violently.*

37. Rebecca Moore, "The Vise," in *A Sympathetic History of Jonestown,* chap. 11; and Rebecca Moore, "'American as Cherry Pie': Peoples Temple and Violence in America," in Wessinger, *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence*, 121–37.

38. Stephenson, *Dear People: Remembering Jonestown,* 108, 110.

39. Pat Richartz, quoted in Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land,* 260.
40. Saul V. Levine, "Life in the Cults," in *Cults and the New Religious Movements: A Report of the American Psychiatric Association,* ed. Marc Galanter (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1989), 100.
41. Brant Wenegrat, "Religious Cult Membership: A Sociobiologic Model," in *Cults and the New Religious Movements,* ed. Galanter, 200.
42. Archie Smith Jr., "Black Reflections on the Study of New Religious Consciousness," in *Understanding the New Religions,* ed. Jacob Needleman and George Baker (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 209–19.
43. Lorne Dawson, *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements* (Ontario, Canada: Oxford University Press, 1998), 86. He goes on to comment on the educational and class status of "typical" members, noting that they come "disproportionately from middle- to upper-middle-class households," 88.
44. Eileen Barker, "New Religious Movements: Their Incidence and Significance," in *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response,* ed. Bryan Wilson and Jamie Cresswell (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 21.
45. Archie Smith Jr., *The Relational Self: Ethics and Therapy from a Black Church Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 229–31.
46. Rebecca Moore, "Demographics and the Black Religious Culture of Peoples Temple," in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America,* ed. Moore, Pinn, and Sawyer.
47. Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown,* 74–86; see also http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/articles/three.html.
48. Moore, "Demographics and the Black Religious Culture of Peoples Temple" in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America,* ed. Moore, Pinn, and Sawyer.
49. Harris and Waterman, "To Die for the Peoples Temple," 103–22.
50. Ibid., 106.
51. Anthony B. Pinn, "Peoples Temple as Black Religion: Re-imagining the Contours of Black Religious Studies," in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America,* ed. Moore, Pinn, and Sawyer, 15–16.
52. Archie Smith Jr., "We Need to Press Forward: Black Religion and Jonestown, Twenty Years Later," published 1998 at http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/Articles/smith.htm.
53. With 750 voice tapes available, and about one-fifth transcribed, it is possible this might change.
54. Q 042.
55. Q 596a, date unknown.
56. Stephenson, *Dear People: Remembering Jonestown,* 86.
57. "A Feeling of Freedom," in the Moore Family Papers, MS 3802, at the California Historical Society.
58. John R. Hall, "Social Organization and Pathways of Commitment: Types of Communal Groups, Rational Choice Theory, and the Kanter Thesis," *American Sociological Review* 53 (October 1988): 680.
59. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 32–54. Jonathan G. Andelson criticizes Kanter's model as being too static in "Coming Together and Breaking Apart: Sociogenesis and Schismogenesis in Intentional Communities," in *Intentional*

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63. James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 159.

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The Children of God / The Family

James D. Chancellor

INTRODUCTION

The Children of God (COG), now known as The Family, originated in the United States in the late 1960s. It is the most controversial group to arise out of a broader religious landscape known as the Jesus Movement. The COG called young people to a life of radical separation from family, school, work, and normal social relationships. Their rejection of American values and confrontational style resulted in considerable hostility from family members, government, and the media. David Brandt Berg, founding prophet of The Family, left the United States in 1972.[1] He encouraged his followers to flee to more hospitable lands in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. The majority of the disciples responded to this call, and those who remained went underground. The Children virtually disappeared from the American landscape.

Over the next 25 years, this small, North American countercultural movement had grown into a worldwide religious subculture of some 10,000 people. Through those years The Family went through radical theological, organizational, and lifestyle changes. This chapter outlines the history of the movement, describes the people who make up The Family, identifies its major theological landmarks, deals with the more controversial issues of Family life, addresses the substantive changes in The Family since the death of the founding Prophet in 1994, and offers some thoughts on the future of The Family.

HISTORY OF THE FAMILY

The Children of God

The COG begins with the prophetic experience of David Brandt Berg, an ordained itinerant minister loosely associated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. By the mid-1960s, David Berg saw himself as a uniquely called missionary to the lost and confused youth of America. After several years of itinerant evangelism,

Berg and his extended "family" settled in Huntington Beach, California. He and his children began an evangelism ministry aimed at the counterculture youth of Southern California, and the first shot in the Jesus Revolution had been fired. Berg's revolution was not only for Jesus. It was also against what he termed the "System," the corrupt educational, political, economic, and religious structures of contemporary American society. Those who received Jesus as personal savior were further challenged to "forsake all" by rejecting every tie to the System, committing full time as a disciple, and joining him and his growing "family."

In the spring of 1969, Berg took his followers on the road again. The community settled temporarily at a campground in the Laurentian Mountains in Canada. Here Berg announced the foundation prophecy for the Children of God: "A Prophecy of God on the Old Church and the New Church."[2] He also announced to his inner circle that he was separating from his Old Wife and taking his young secretary, Maria, as his New Wife. She gradually rose in status within the movement, and eventually inherited the mantle of leadership upon Berg's death.

Soon the disciples were on the road again. By February 1970, they numbered nearly 200 and had settled on a ranch in west Texas. During this phase, the basic patterns for COG life were established. The disciples settled into a routine of Bible memorization, Bible studies developed by Berg, provisioning, jobs to maintain community life, devotional and fellowship meetings, training in witnessing strategies, and witnessing ventures. By the end of 1971, the movement had grown to nearly 1500, and the disciples were scattered in 69 colonies spread out across the United States and Canada.

The summer of 1971 marked the beginning of FREECOG, one of the original anticult organizations. FREECOG was formed and sustained primarily by concerned parents of young disciples. FREECOG accused the COG of kidnapping, drug use, and "brainwashing" innocent young people. Attacks like these exacerbated COG's fortress mentality that already saw the outside world as both degenerate and a threat.

In December 1970, Berg had a dream that led him to withdraw from personal contact with the disciples,[3] teaching and guiding them through his writing. He channeled his charisma and authority through his correspondence, known as MO Letters.

In the spring of 1972, Berg had a vision of mass destruction in the United States. He urged his North American followers to flee and to begin the missionary task of reaching the world for Jesus. Within a year colonies were established in Western Europe, Latin America, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and India.

As Berg began to envision the COG as a worldwide missionary enterprise, the confrontational, antiestablishment aspects of the COG's message began to wane. The rapid growth, geographic dispersion, youth, and inexperience of most disciples resulted in serious leadership problems. In 1973, Berg attempted to slow the growth of the movement and develop more capable leadership. He also introduced a new evangelistic method, the distribution of COG literature, termed "litnessing."[4] Since the literature was exchanged for "a small donation," finances improved dramatically.

Music always played an important role in the COG. Disciples wrote hundreds of songs of protest, praise, and proclamation. By 1974 several COG musical groups had achieved wide public acceptance and popularity in Europe and Latin America.

In the early 1970s David Berg began the most controversial and widely known aspect of his "Revolution," a transformation of sexual ethics. Not long after taking Maria as a second wife, Berg began sexual encounters with female disciples in his inner circle. The top leaders also experimented with multiple partners. These activities were unknown to the disciples, whose sexual mores continued to reflect their evangelical Christian roots.

In the spring of 1974 Berg relocated to the Canary Islands where he gathered a small group of attractive female disciples to begin an experiment in a new witnessing strategy, which he termed "Flirty Fishing" (Ffing). Eventually Berg made it clear that Ffing was for all disciples and should be implemented right away. The female disciples used the full range of their feminine charms and sexual allure, including sexual intercourse, to witness for Jesus and to develop supporters for the organization. In 1976 MO Letters described the Ffing of Maria and others in graphic detail and encouraged the disciples to begin this new "ministry."[5] Many disciples had strong reservations, and approximately 600 left the movement.

Flirty Fishing marked significant changes in the COG Family ethos. Confrontation was left behind, replaced by an emphasis on the love of Jesus. And the "hippies and drop outs" were no longer the target audience; the target shifted to what Berg termed "up and outs." These and other substantive shifts brought serious internal conflicts.

The Family of Love

Toward the end of 1977, several leaders began to question Berg's status as End Time Prophet and King of God's New Nation. They raised doubts regarding his teachings, particularly the radical shift in sexual mores. At the same time, Berg became more aware that many leaders were abusively authoritarian and lived in luxury on the backs of ordinary disciples. In January 1978, Berg issued "Reorganization Nationalization Revolution."[6] He dismantled the organization and dismissed some 300 leaders. The movement was renamed "The Family of Love." All those loyal to the King and Prophet were welcome to remain.

Life changed dramatically for most disciples. There was considerable loss of membership. The Jonestown tragedy brought fears of anticult hysteria, so the disciples were urged to go underground. Many "went mobile," traveling about as itinerant missionaries, often not identifying themselves as members of The Family. The disciples continued to litness and witness, but Flirty Fishing increased substantially and in some areas became the primary means of witness and financial support.

In the mid-1970s, the sexual mores of The Family grew increasingly unconstrained. The practice of multiple sexual partners (sharing) had filtered down to the field colonies. Berg strongly encouraged sexual experimentation, and he freed the

disciples from almost all constraints. Nudity and sexual liaisons between members became common practice.

Berg taught that sex is a beautiful, natural creation of God. In exploring how this principle might relate to children, he sent out Letters detailing his early childhood sexual experiences and directives for adults to allow children the freedom to express their natural sexual inclinations. From 1978 to 1983, he and much of The Family were exploring the outer limits of sexual freedom. Most disciples were aware that sexual contact between adults and children was occurring in Berg's household.[7] In some locations, the disciples interpreted the MO Letters to allow for sexual interplay of adults with minors. It is not possible to determine the extent or degree of this activity, but it was occurring in Family homes around the globe.

As the decade of the 1980s opened, The Family of Love was growing again, but dispersed throughout the world. Most disciples were isolated and somewhat adrift. In 1981, Berg ordered the disciples to begin weekly fellowship meetings in their area.[8] A new hierarchical structure was established. Large homes were set up in each country as national headquarters.

In 1981 there were 719 births, and, from this point on, children constituted the majority of members. The care, discipline, and education of the children soon demanded an increasing amount of energy, time, and resources.

The Family

From 1982 to 1984, Berg reordered the movement back into a tightly knit organization. Many Disciples responded to his call to the "Third World." By the end of 1982, 34 percent of the disciples were in Latin America and almost 40 percent in Asia.

By 1982 the children began to play an even greater role in outreach ministries. Child rearing became a priority. Most significantly, The Family began to see the youth as the hope of the future. The recruitment of new disciples fell considerably.

As the first wave of children became teenagers, trouble ensued. "School homes" were set up for the education and discipleship of the growing number of teens. In 1983, Berg heard reports of misconduct at one of the teen homes. He responded with strict guidelines for the youth and high expectations for their personal conduct.[9] These measures eventually led to harsh physical and psychological discipline of many youth.

By the early 1980s Flirty Fishing was central to the life of most Family homes. Originally conceived and justified as an evangelistic strategy, it was never intended nor did it prove to be a useful tool to recruit new disciples. However, as many female disciples established long-term relationships with wealthy or influential men, Ffing became a primary source of financial support and political protection. In some areas of Asia, Europe, and Latin America, females went to work for escort services, providing sex for a fixed fee.[10]

Sexuality played an increasing role in Family life. In the spring of 1980, Berg sent out "The Devil Hates Sex!—But God Loves It!"[11] In his "revolutionary" style, he

told the disciples they served a "sexy God" and that God loved sex and wanted his Children to enjoy it fully. But as nudity and open sexuality became more and more common, real problems developed.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) were introduced into The Family through Ffing. Since it was common practice to have a considerable amount of sexual sharing at area fellowships, STDs spread quickly from home to home. In March 1983 Berg issued "Ban the Bomb!"[12] This MO Letter halted sexual encounters at area fellowships, limiting all sexual relationships to persons residing within the same home. Of course, he exempted himself from this restriction. Finally, The Family began to face the negative spiritual and social consequences of unrestricted sexual freedom. In December 1984 Maria prohibited new members from sexual encounters during their first six months.[13] The edge of the envelope had been reached, and the sexual ethos began a slow swing back toward a somewhat more conventional standard.

As The Family reconfigured toward a more tightly structured organization of large communal homes, other problems developed. In 1985, World Services, the leadership apparatus of The Family, received reports of harsh and oppressive leadership practices. They responded with literature affirming the hierarchical structure, but insisted that local and area leaders carry out their responsibilities as servants, dealing with disciples with love and understanding.

In the late 1980s, many former disciples began to return to the fold. Some were teenagers who were in need of spiritual direction and training. As well, many of the long-term youth exhibited behavioral problems and were not buying into the Family vision. To meet this need, The Family established Teen Training Camps (TTC) in Mexico, South America, Europe, and Asia. These camps were the venue for some of the more abusive treatment of teenagers. The camps did not solve the problem. Disruptive and sometimes destructive conduct increased. The Family responded with "Victor Programs," periods of intense discipline, work, and spiritual oversight. In some places these programs were harsh and abusive. A substantial majority of the first wave of teens rebelled and left. In time, Family leadership became sensitized to the harshness of these programs, and they were ended. Maria apologized and ordered the key adult leadership to apologize personally to teens they had mistreated.[14]

During this time, several teenage girls reported inappropriate and uninvited sexual advances by adult males. In August 1986, Maria prohibited sexual contact between adults and minors. However, since The Prophet had affirmed sex to be enjoyed as fully as possible, stepping back from such a total affirmation proved difficult. Soon, any adult sexual contact with minors was made an excommunicable offense, but as late as 1989 the problem still existed in some locations. The leadership continued to place further limits on sexual expression. By the end of the decade, sexual activity among children or young teens was increasingly discouraged. Current policy forbids sexual intercourse between children under age 16. Of course, the policy is not uniformly obeyed. However, sexual contact between adults and minors is now a serious breach of Family rules and results in excommunication.

By the late 1980s, The Family also began to reconsider Flirty Fishing. Many communities had become dependent on it, relying on influential supporters in long-term relationships with Family women. However, the AIDS epidemic ended Ffing. In the fall of 1987, a policy memo banned sexual contact with outsiders, except "close and well-known" friends who had long-term relationships with Family women. Though never repudiated, Flirty Fishing passed from The Family scene and is now but a memory.

In 1988, the government of India began to expel hundreds of Family disciples who were in the country illegally. By the end of 1989, over 800 disciples had returned from the East. These battle hardened missionaries exposed the rather lax "standard" of Family life in North America and Europe. In order to prepare God's End Time Army for the Great Tribulation, World Services (the international leadership structure) suspended all homes in North America and Europe until they could be thoroughly examined and recertified as legitimate Family communities.

Many disciples failed the test. A new category of membership was established, Tithe Report Form Supporter (TSer). These were persons who wished to remain connected to The Family, but were unable or unwilling to maintain the rigors of full time disciple life.[15] In 1989 almost 1400 were "TSed," essentially expelled from The Family. Fully committed disciples were prohibited from direct contact with them. Yet, many of these people remained loyal and retained a status as partial members, provided they continued in their financial support. From 1989 to 1994, the total number of disciples remained at approximately 12,000, but the percentage of those on TS status increased from approximately 10 to 25 percent.[16] After 1993, the attitude toward TSers softened considerably.

Times of Testing

Toward the close of the 1980s, a weary and ill Prophet retired, and Maria assumed the role of spiritual leader and guide. Peter Amsterdam assumed administrative control. These changes at the top were never formalized or announced, and few field disciples were aware of them.

In October 1994, David Brandt Berg died. Shortly after his death, Peter Amsterdam and Maria were married and now lead The Family as a divinely guided team. However, Berg still speaks regularly from the Spirit World. The death of David Berg brought substantive changes to The Family, which will be addressed below.

While numerous internal dynamics worked to constantly reconfigure the community, forces from the outside fostered a significant shift in the early 1990s. The disciples never had an easy life. They were harassed, kidnapped, and assaulted by distressed family members and religious opponents. They have been repeatedly intimidated, arrested, and imprisoned by law enforcement authorities. All attacks were seen as persecution by the Evil One or Satan. When the hard times came, they suffered, sought the assistance of "friends," and went underground or moved on. All that changed when their children became the targets.

At the end of the 1980s, embittered ex-members and anticult professionals began to lay charges of child abuse and sexual molestation against Family communities in Europe, Australia, and South America.

When government agencies seized the children, Berg instructed The Family to stand and fight. In many localities, disciples conducted public protests against the governments that were attacking their communities. In some places, communities took preemptive measures, inviting law enforcement and social services agencies to conduct investigations of the children. As well, Family leadership opened their communities to legitimate scholarly inquiry, confident they had nothing to hide.[17]

Irrespective of their success in self-defense, these experiences changed The Family. The single most traumatic event began in 1993. A wealthy English widow filed suit in British High Court, seeking custody of her daughter's infant son. The judge conducted a lengthy inquiry into the circumstances of the child in question, but then extended his inquiry into Family history, ideology, and moral conduct. The anticult establishment became involved, and the case lasted almost three years.

Throughout these proceedings, leaders of The Family were forced to face the past, to explain literature that both condoned and modeled sexual contact with minors, and to respond to the painful and heartrending testimonies of former members who had been mistreated and abused. The skeletons were brought out of the closet and into the bright light of the court. And in the midst of the whole painful process, the Prophet died.

To fully satisfy the judge, Peter Amsterdam wrote an open letter admitting some of the policies and practices of The Family had been wrong and harmful. This letter laid primary responsibility for these abuses on Berg. It was a forced, painful, and wholly necessary catharsis.[18]

Denial of past sexual, physical, and emotional abuse is no longer possible. However, the disciples have successfully defended themselves against current charges of sexual misconduct with minors, or any form of child abuse or neglect. Across the globe, over 600 children have been forcefully removed from their homes, often at gunpoint, and examined by court appointed experts. These experts have detected no abused children. There is simply no doubt that numerous incidents of child abuse occurred in Family communities. Most of the abusive acts occurred years ago in places distant from the United States. Those remaining within The Family have attempted to put these things behind them. To date, no adult has been convicted of misconduct. But attempts will surely continue to bring offending individuals and Family leadership to justice over this sad and bitter aspect of their past. The 1990s witnessed renewed "persecution" and was a time of casting out disciples who were not fully committed to the Family vision. But it was also a time when the high tension with the outside world began to ease. Berg had always lambasted the established Church, "the god damned, hypocritical, idol worshipping, churchianity of the System."[19] However, in late 1991, he instructed his disciples to fellowship with open-minded congregations and to direct their many converts toward local churches for care and training in the Christian life.[20] This was a short-lived strategy, but is clear evidence that The Family was beginning to mellow. Attitudes toward members

who left began to soften. As an increasing number of teens were leaving, many parents hoped to maintain good relationships with their departing children. This pattern led to a reversal of a very sensitive issue. The Family now understands that only a few children will remain as committed disciples. Much greater efforts are made to prepare the others for life on the outside, and parents are encouraged to keep the lines of communication open. This softened attitude also came to bear on former members. Beginning in 1994, Family leadership committed to a "Ministry of Reconciliation,"[21] attempting to reach out to ex-members around the world in an effort to heal old wounds and establish friendly relationships where possible. The Ministry of Reconciliation had limited success, particularly with first generation ex-members. Small cadres of former members, particularly youth born into the movement, remain hostile.

The change in attitude toward the outside was accompanied by a transition in the approach to social ministries. From the start, the disciples were concerned almost completely with the spiritual salvation of souls. But in 1992, David Berg directed his followers to help the poor and the helpless, "like Jesus did."[22] Almost immediately, disciples all over the world began started ministries to prisoners, street gangs, illegal aliens, unwed mothers, drug addicts, refugees, and abused women and children. Social ministries have taken root very quickly and are now central to the lives of most disciples, particularly the second generation.

The Post-Prophet Era

David Berg died in the fall of 1994. The transition of authority had been ongoing for a number of years, and his mantle fell easily on Maria and her consort, Peter Amsterdam. While the transition went quite smoothly, The Family changed dramatically in 1995. World Services implemented the "Charter of Rights and Responsibilities." The Charter contains the movement's basic beliefs and details the fundamental rights and responsibilities of the disciples, as well as the rules and guidelines for communal life. Queen Maria and King Peter retain overall and supreme authority, but day-to-day life is far more democratic. The disciples are strongly encouraged to live "according to their own faith" with much less supervision and direction from a radically altered leadership structure. Smaller home size is mandated, and, most significantly, disciples have the right of mobility. Recently, The Family has moved toward a "Board Vision" in which the various aspects of communal life and ministry will be under the direction of a wide and popularly elected board of directors.[23]

The Love Charter greatly improved the life experience of most disciples and went some way toward curbing the mass exodus of young people from the movement. However, these changes have created, or brought to light, a whole new set of problems. The Family has struggled to find its way under the kinder and gentler approach to leadership. Toward the end of the 1990s, Maria and Peter became increasingly concerned with the lax attitudes and low productivity of many disciples. In 2000, they issued S2K—Shake Up Two Thousand.[24] Discipline and community standards were reaffirmed, and those unwilling to conform were strongly encouraged to

become Fellow Members, the new designation for TSed disciples, those who wish to remain connected to The Family but who are unable or unwilling to maintain all the standards of disciple life, or leave the movement completely. This attempt to clean house has continued, and some 1500 disciples have been pushed out into the world.[25] The quest has been to create a leaner and more productive Army of the Lord, more prepared to carry out the mission and to face the tumult of the End. The Family has recently restructured again, creating three levels or tiers of membership: Family Disciple, Missionary Member, and Fellow Member. In addition, outside converts who do not "join" the movement are now divided into General Members and Active Members.[26]

Spiritual life and community vision are the two most significant changes in The Family since Berg's death. Interaction and communication with the Spirit World has always been a feature of Family life. Disciples were open to the possibility of prophetic experiences and guidance from those who have gone on. But the vast majority of substantive communication came through Berg. Shortly after his death, Maria opened up the channels in several significant ways. Berg continued to guide the community from the Spirit World by "speaking" prophetically through Peter Amsterdam and several other receptors in the central household. This quickly expanded. Now Jesus, David Berg, the apostle Paul, and any number of other persons regularly communicate with The Family. Much of the guiding vision and strategy comes directly from above, and substantive portions of the Letters are direct utterances from the Spirit World, most often from Jesus and the Prophet.

All disciples are strongly encouraged to develop their prophetic gifts and most have. Direct revelations and prophecies are normal features of disciple life, either in private experience or community prayer.[27] The vast majority of disciples now look to prophecy to guide decision making in virtually all aspects of their lives. The shift to a stronger emphasis on individual access to the spirit world has created a greater sense of ownership in their various ministries, confidence, and a sense of shared vision. To minimize the disruptive potential of such openness to prophecy within a tightly structured community, Maria has retained the role of "Wine Taster," essentially holding the keys to the kingdom. Prophecy that might impact the broader community in any way is subject to her validation.[28]

An equally significant shift has occurred in the purpose of The Family. From the very beginning, witnessing for Jesus and the spiritual salvation of as many souls as possible has been the essential task. To that end, Family disciples have been highly mobile and generally not geared toward the spiritual development and care of converts. The development of literature, the involvement in social ministry, and the encouragement of converts toward outside churches represent the beginnings of a shift. But at the opening of the twenty-first century, a fundamental reorientation has occurred. The "Activated Program" has been developed and implemented worldwide.[29] The goal of the Activated Program is to develop "outside members" who will support The Family and receive essential spiritual direction from Family disciples, but will not be required to make the commitments necessary for disciple life. It is not an option, but rather the new Family vision. Considerable resources have been

poured into developing educational materials for new converts. And Family disciples are strongly encouraged to settle down in one place, focus their evangelistic efforts, and work at developing what are essentially congregations that are directly related to local disciple homes, and look to those disciples as spiritual mentors, guides, and pastors.

Analyzing the motivations for significant shifts in movements like The Family is no easy task. Two factors seem to be at work here, both growing out of an apparent delay in the Second Coming of Jesus. To date, The Family claims to have led more than 24 million persons to pray the salvation prayer and receive Jesus as their personal savior. However, that is simply a number on a piece of paper. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the disciples have had little or no contact with these "converts." For most of their history, The Family lived in high expectation of an immediate end to human history as we know it, and their goal was to save as many people as possible. The care of souls was a low priority, if one at all. It seems clear that the Activated Program represents the beginning stages of an accommodation to the possibility of a much longer than expected mission in this world.

Beyond that, many of the disciples are beginning to age. Having lived their lives with a strong apocalyptic bent, most have made no provision at all for an extended life. But the passing of time is changing all of this. Family leadership is quite open in describing the Activated Program as the potential retirement package for faithful disciples.[30]

It is difficult to predict how well the "radical revolutionary Children of God" can adjust and survive in a more conventional religious environment. There are other challenges, especially the degree to which outside members can participate in some of the unconventional Family mores. Yet, the disciples appear to have fully accepted this new direction. The Activated Program seems strongest in Latin America and Asia, where the disciples have generally been more geographically stable. While the number of committed, full time, communal disciples is down somewhat, the overall "membership" is expanding. It seems clear that the "radical revolutionary Children of God" are taking their first steps down the road to becoming a more normative religious movement.

THE DISCIPLES

Family Leadership

David Brandt Berg (1919–1994) founded the Children of God in 1968 as an evangelistic ministry to reach the troubled youth of America with the message of Jesus. He had been in various pastoral and evangelistic ministries for over 20 years. During these early years of The Family's history, Berg established himself as the absolute sovereign over his young disciples, and proclaimed himself as God's Final End Time Prophet. Known within the movement as "Moses David," "Father David," or simply as "Dad," Berg channeled his charisma and authority through his written correspondence to the disciples. These "MO Letters" soon became part of "the Word,"

revelations given equal status with the Bible. Berg also established a leadership structure that consisted primarily of his extended family and a few long term and trusted disciples. The upper echelon lived in Berg's home and evolved into World Services. To meet the organizational needs of the growing community, Berg proclaimed the "New Revolution" in 1975, setting up a "Chain of Cooperation" as the primary leadership structure for the COG and The Family. However, the Chain led to authoritarian rule and abuse of lower ranking disciples. In 1978, Berg announced the "Reorganization Nationalization Revolution," which effectively disbanded the organization.[31] Most dispersed into smaller units, maintaining contact with Berg and the movement through the Letters. In 1981, Berg brought the movement back together under a new administrative structure, with various levels of office and authority, starting with the local home and reaching to the top. Though there has been any number of minor alterations since then, this basic structure remains in place.[32]

Berg had taken Maria (Karen Zerby) as his secretary and sexual consort in the early years. Maria remained faithfully at his side and gradually rose within the movement. She assumed the mantle of leadership at Berg's death in 1994. She quickly "mated" with Peter Amsterdam, the chief administrator for The Family, and they now lead the organization together.

The Disciples

Though The Family began as an American counterculture religious movement, it has become a highly diverse and widespread organization. The adult population falls neatly and fairly evenly into two categories, First Generation Adults (FGA), who joined the movement from the outside, and Second Generation Adults (SGA), who were born into the movement. The demographic for the FGAs is fairly clear. A substantial majority were born in North America, followed by groupings born in Europe, Latin America, and Asia.[33] The picture is not nearly as clear for SGAs. The Family quickly became an ethnically, nationally, and racially diverse organization and often encouraged marriages across those lines. However, extramarital sexual intercourse was encouraged and practiced, and from 1974 to 1987, most female adults had regular sexual relations with men outside the communities. And birth control measures were prohibited. A substantial, but difficult to determine, number of children were born from these liaisons. [The "typical" SGA has parents of mixed ethnicity or nationality, grew up in several locations around the world, and has spent little time in the country where he or she holds citizenship.]

The identity of Berg's disciples is a complex matter. Generalizations are risky, but the vast majority of the First Generation view their pre-Family lives as shallow, lacking in meaningful relationships, and "searching." They joined The Family, not to follow Father David, but to be part of a committed, close-knit, and meaningful community. And they joined to follow Jesus. Almost all disciples directly link their movement into The Family to a call of God to serve Jesus as fully as possible. The Second Generation disciples share a similar religious vision. Regardless of their very acute

particularities, the disciples understand themselves as soldiers in God's Endtime Army, whose mission is to evangelize and minister in the name of Jesus, until the final tumult begins.[34]

THEOLOGY OF THE FAMILY

The Family is a religious movement grounded in a clearly articulated belief system. Though characterized by an extraordinary range of educational, religious, cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds, the disciples are guided and sustained by a common vision and a coherent set of religious commitments. The theological system has developed through the years. It is grounded in Biblical authority and the prophetic office of Father David. In the early years, the Christian Bible was the sole source of religious authority, and the vast majority of disciples are deeply committed and well versed in this sacred text. However, Berg placed great emphasis on his prophetic role and gifts, which kept open the possibility of revision or change, and placed his writings on an equal footing with the Bible.[35]

The full Statement of Faith is readily available on The Family Web site.[36] I attempt to explore the core beliefs that are central to the Family experience. These beliefs center on the Prophetic Office of David Berg, Jesus and human Salvation, the Spirit World, the End Times, relationship to the outside world, and the sexual ethos.

The Prophet

In the beginning, David Berg made no claims regarding his own status or office. But, in a relatively short time, he came to a radically different self-understanding. By the end of 1970, he emerged as God's Prophet for the End Time and established his absolute authority over the disciples. His claims of divine appointment and absolute spiritual authority roughly coincided with his withdrawal from direct contact with the disciples. He channeled that authority through the MO Letters, affirming them as "new Scripture" that clarified or superseded the Bible and that was more likely to be of immediate value.

While he consistently emphasized his own humanity and fallibility, he remained throughout his life (and beyond) as the divinely anointed leader and spiritual guide for the Children. He also claimed the title of King of God's New Nation. After the necessity to win souls for Jesus, Father David's claim as Prophet and King is the most consistent theme in Family thought and literature. The full acceptance and affirmation of The Prophet is a central component of the socialization process. Disciples can remain in the community while harboring "doubts and struggles" over some of his more extreme claims, some viewing him as both a prophet and "a weird old man." But no open challenge to his position or authority is possible. Many of the disciples, particularly the females, developed extraordinary emotional bonds as well.

If anything, Berg's status has been enhanced by his death. Though Maria and Peter now rule over The Family as coregents, Father David sits at the very right hand of Jesus, still leading and guiding his Children.

Jesus and Salvation

Eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior is the bedrock of Family theology. The message is clear and unambiguous. Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for the sins of the world, rose from the grave, and is returning soon to this earth. Those who do not "know Jesus" are "lost," but eternal salvation is freely available to all who will simply put their faith in Jesus. Witnessing, or the attempt to get as many people as possible to pray a simple prayer of faith, has been the central task of disciple life from the beginning and remains so today. Paradoxically, Father David taught that in the end, all creation would be reconciled to God. But this universalism sets very lightly on the disciples and has never dampened their evangelistic zeal.

The Spirit World

From the very beginning, the disciples were attuned to the reality of spiritual forces. Berg's direct engagement with the Spirit World began in 1970, when Abrahim, a fourteenth century gypsy Christian, entered his body and began to speak through him. This was a watershed event for the Children of God.[37] From that point on, angels, spirit helpers, and dark spirits became an ever-increasing dynamic of Family life. It is common practice for disciples to pray for and receive comfort, assurance, and guidance from God through dreams, visions, or experiences of "prophecy."

The Spirit World also has a dark side. Satan and his demons are actively at work in the world, with The Family as their primary target. All external opposition and persecution, physical illness, community discord, behavior problems in children, and personal failures of all types are primarily understood as the result of Satan's attacks. However, the disciples do not live in fear. They are confident that God is with them and that He will always provide adequate spiritual power to thwart any attack from the Dark Side.

Most disciples practice a form of spiritual healing common to the Pentecostal wing of Protestant evangelicalism. Modern medical care is accepted, and those who pursue treatment for medical problems are not viewed as problematic. However, the root cause of illness or physical affliction is most often viewed as spiritual. Therefore, it is prudent to seek a spiritual cure as a first response.

The Family generally conceptualizes personal problems and human weakness in distinctly spiritual terms. A significant number of young adults harbor unresolved resentment because typical childhood misbehavior was often dealt with as a spiritual problem. However, most disciples are strengthened and empowered by their direct access to Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Father David, and other spiritual entities. The disciples interpret life as a profoundly spiritual adventure that is both personal and cosmic in scope.[38]

The End of Time

Catastrophic millennial expectation is a significant component of the belief system. Berg taught that human history would climax in a worldwide political,

economic, and moral implosion. Then Antichrist will emerge as deliverer and for 3 1/2 years will reign as a wise and benevolent leader. When his true nature is revealed, he will declare his divinity and require the world to worship and obey him, persecuting unto death all those who refuse. All people will be required to carry the "Mark of the Beast" as a control mechanism. Then Christ will return for his Church. The Antichrist will be defeated in the Battle of Armageddon, Satan will be bound, and Christ will establish His Millennial Reign on earth. At the end of 1000 years, Satan will be released for one final confrontation. With Satan's final defeat, the Kingdom of Heaven will be established forever, and God's Children will live with Him in the Heavenly City.[39]

There is nothing particularly new or unique in this formula. Family distinctives are the special role they play in this grand drama, and the intensity of their conviction that the End is near.

For most of their lives, Family disciples have lived in near certainty that they would play a real role in the final events of human history. Early in the movement there was considerable hope that 1993 would be the time, and there was real disappointment as the year passed without apocalyptic incident. Since then, The Family has been reluctant to set specific dates. But the knowledge that they live in the shadow of the End remains a powerful dynamic and informs life at all levels. That hope is the primary motivation and justification for a life of sacrifice and hardship. Until very recently, disciples have been reluctant to make long-term plans for life in this world. Significant life decisions are profoundly informed by the imminence of the End. The depth and intensity of their End Time Vision clearly sets them apart. There is also a strong sense that their separation from the world, dependence on God, communal lifestyle, persecution, and hardship will uniquely prepare them not only to survive the Great Tribulation, but to lead other faithful Christians through those terrible times. It is only within the past year that The Family appears to be coming to terms with a lengthy delay in their millennial expectations.[40]

The World Outside

From the earliest stages of the movement, the Children maintained a powerful sense that the outside world was alien to their own communities. The outside is generally referenced as "the System." The System is under the full control of Satan and is evil, dangerous, corrupt, and forms the fundamental "other."[41] As a general rule, the disciples insulate themselves from the System as far as possible. They do hold passports, obtain driver's licenses, and sometimes get legally married. But they have tended to operate on the fringe, with a minimum of interaction with any System institution. For the most part, they homeschool their children. In general, their sense of separation extends to Christians outside the movement, especially the institutional church. Some moderation has occurred recently, and the disciples are much more open to working in cooperation with Christians outside their community. But they generally do not identify or "fellowship" with outsiders, and continue to see the Church as part of the System.

Being a soldier in God's End Time Army comes with a price. An army requires dedication, unity, submission to authority, and sacrifice. And strong authoritarian leadership has been the norm. Under the Love Charter and the leadership of Maria, the leadership structure is more open and democratic. However, God's elite End Time Army still requires total obedience to God and to the structures of authority God has ordained.

In general, the disciples are fully aware of the difficulties this style of leadership has caused them and their community. They tend to hold a complex and somewhat ambivalent appreciation of the authoritarian nature of their movement. Though fully aware of the trials, trauma, and abuse many have suffered, they tend to attribute these difficulties to the character flaws of individuals and not to the nature of the community or the leadership. The Prophetic office of David Berg, Jesus as the only Way, the Spirit World, and the End Time Vision inform every facet of Family life. The "Revolution for Jesus" goes on, nowhere more clearly than the total restructuring of the sexual ethic.

THE CONTROVERSIES

Sexual Ethos

A truly "revolutionary" theology of human sexuality is the Family's most distinctive characteristic and, in the minds of many observers, marks them as a "dangerous cult." The sexual ethos is based on two principles that flowed straight from the creative mind of the Prophet. The first is that sex is not only a pure gift of God, but also a basic human need no different from sleep, food, or shelter. It is not just acceptable, but a Christian duty to meet the needs of a brother or sister.

The second principle relates the special nature of the time and the people. Berg instructed his disciples that the end times required new and innovative understandings of God's purposes. God's Chosen End Time Army had received a special dispensation, freeing them from some of the legal and ethical constraints that are normative and proper for the less committed Christian communities still in the System. This is "The Law of Love."[42]

Though sexual purity characterized the early COG, the "revolution" came swiftly and completely. Many disciples fled. Loyal disciples made the adjustment, and the new sexual ethos spread rapidly. The three principle components of the revolution were sexual sharing, Flirty Fishing, and childhood sexuality.

Sexual sharing had a twofold purpose. The first was sexual pleasure and fulfillment by as many disciples as possible. The other purpose was to break down old, "System" loyalties and allegiances and to establish primary loyalty to The Family and to the Prophet.

By the early 1980s, The Family had reached a level of sexual freedom and experimentation rarely even imagined in other religious communities. Nudity was common. Flirty Fishing was ubiquitous, and the vast majority of women were having regular sexual encounters with both strangers and long term "fish," both to fulfill

the mission and to support the homes. Sexual sharing with multiple sexual partners became so commonplace that in some homes the leader would post "sharing schedules" on the bulletin board. Children were considered "adults" at age 12 and often were sexually initiated into the group. Sexual interplay with even younger children was never officially sanctioned, but it was modeled by the highest level of leadership and did occur from time to time and place to place. But this almost limitless freedom came with a heavy price.

We have already addressed the spread of STDs throughout the movement. Beyond that immediate threat, such unrestrained sexuality placed considerable tension on normal marital and family relationships. Many disciples were scarred, but the children bore the greatest impact. They suffered not only from direct sexual encounters with adults, but also from the severe instability of family. It is little wonder that few of the first wave of children remain in The Family.

In time, Family leadership became cognizant of these terrible costs of their "revolution." Flirty Fishing was halted, and all sexual contact with the outside world was banned.[43] Strictly enforced limitations were placed on the sexual experience of children, and fixed age limits were established for any sexual contact. These rules remain in place today, and there is no evidence that Family children are now in any more danger of sexual predation than children in the world. However, this adjustment took time, and many young lives were damaged before The Family fully came to its senses.

The intense sexual atmosphere also cooled among the adults. The practice of sexual sharing has slowed considerably, since the wild years of the early 1980s. As the first generation grays, it is hard to imagine them keeping up the pace. And since the second generation paid much of the price for such rampant promiscuity, they are not anxious to head down that road.

However, the theological and ethical convictions behind the sexual ethos remain. Flirty Fishing was halted, but never renounced. The practice is still viewed as a valid and proper technique for the times, and some women are nostalgic for those days. The Law of Love remains in force, and sexual sharing is still a significant component of The Family life and a critical aspect of communal bonding. Maria has actually found it necessary, on several occasions, to admonish the older teens and young adults to be more sexually active, participating more fully in the "sexual fellowship" of the community.[44]

The most recent sexual innovation, the "Loving Jesus Revolution," points to the central role sexuality still plays in Family life. Maria and Peter received revelations from Jesus that he was pleased with their commitment and sense of mission, but was not fully satisfied with the level of their devotion, particularly the expression of their love for him. Jesus desires the Children as his Bride, and He their Husband.[45] To that end, in 1996 The Family began to incorporate sex acts into their private devotion. This is done by autostimulation, or during sexual intercourse with a partner, imagining that partner as Jesus and expressing one's love for the Lord through the sexual partner. The Loving Jesus Revolution, like many of the "revolutions," was too much for some disciples, and they moved on. But, in general, it has been

accepted and is now a common feature of the disciples' devotional life. Strict guidelines prohibit children from involvement or observation of this practice.

The Broken Ones

Beginning in the mid to late 1980s, hundreds of older teenagers and young adults began leaving The Family. A good number, but by no means all, had been hurt, and some terribly scarred, by their experiences in The Family. They had suffered hardship, dislocation, broken families, deprivation of adequate educational opportunities, and serious emotional and sexual abuse. As these young people have matured, many have struggled deeply to overcome their past. Over the past few years some have attempted to loosely organize some type of united effort in coping with the past and seeking justice and compensation for the wrongs they suffered.[46] For its part, The Family has offered several general apologies for past wrongs, with the hope that everyone involved would forgive and forget. Most of the aggrieved ex-members are profoundly unimpressed by these gestures.

The cause of these young people has been energized by a terrible tragedy. In January of 2005, Ricky Rodriquez, the oldest child of Maria who had departed the movement in 2000, murdered Angela Smith, Maria's long time secretary. He then took his own life. His intent was to torture Ms. Smith to learn the location of his mother so that he might kill her. For a short time, this tragic event focused intense media coverage on The Family.[47] Several active ex-members are now attempting to gather affidavits with the hopes of a class action suit against The Family and criminal proceedings against guilty parties within the group. Their efforts are frustrated on several fronts. Most of their parents are either still in The Family or so conflicted about their own complicity in the abuse that they will not cooperate or testify. Most of the criminal conduct occurred outside the legal jurisdiction of the United States and was many years ago. Civil action is complicated by the difficulty of even locating "The Family," and the lack of any substantive financial resources to go after. This whole process is ongoing, and it is difficult to predict where it might all end. It is almost certain that new and more lurid accounts will appear in the near future. The trauma and harm these people suffered is not self-mending, and their efforts to retaliate and seek some form of justice will surely continue, and most likely intensify.

THE FUTURE OF FAMILY

The 1960s are no more. The golden age of the "radical, revolutionary Children of God" may well have gone the way of the 1960s. The Consider the Poor Ministry, the large number of the second generation leaving, the three-tiered level of commitment now accepted, and the more recent Activated Program are blurring the once very sharp lines between disciple life and the outside world. Yet, Father David's Children still understand themselves to be God's unique End Time Army. The Family would like to live in peace with the System and the Church, but has no interest in joining the team.

The Family now faces two substantive challenges to a healthy and meaningful future. The first is external: how to deal with damaged and angry ex-members, many of whom would like nothing better than to see The Family destroyed. The second is internal. Their very identity is in their mission, and that remains justified and energized by the passionate expectation of the imminent End of Days. Many similar movements before them have shown a capacity to adjust to an extended stay in human history. And if The Family is anything, it is capable of fundamental change, even "revolution." Over some 35 years, the disciples have survived repression, persecution, monumental leadership failures, self-inflicted wounds, and radical theological restructuring. They have survived the death of the Prophet. They are beginning to come to terms with the loss of most of their youth. Given their eccentricities, The Family will never become a large movement. But they are confident in their calling and mission and believe they are empowered by God's Spirit. That confidence has brought them through many dark days, and there is no reason to believe that it will not carry them well into the future.

NOTES

1. "The Great Escape!" MO Letter #160 (Zurich: World Services, April 1972).
2. "The Old Church and the New Church!" MO Letter #A (Zurich: World Services, August 1969).
3. "I Gotta Split?" MO Letter #28 (Zurich: World Services, December 1970).
4. "Shiners?—or Shamers!" MO Letter #241 (Zurich: World Services, June 1973).
5. "The Family of Love—Sin or Salvation?" GP #502R (Zurich: World Services, 1977).
6. "Re-organization Nationalization Revolution," MO Letter #650 (Zurich: World Services, January 1978).
7. *The Book of Davidito* (Zurich: World Services, 1982).
8. "Fellowship Revolution," MO Letter #1001 (Zurich: World Services, April 1981).
9. "Teen Terrors!" MO Letter #1512 (Zurich: World Services, May 1983).
10. "The Seven Fs of Ffing," MO Letter #1083 (Zurich: World Services, January 1983).
11. "The Devil Hates Sex!—But God Loves It!" MO Letter #999 (Zurich: World Services, May 1980).
12. "Ban the Bomb!" MO Letter #1434 (Zurich: World Services, March 1983).
13. "Sex with Babes?" MO Letter #1909 (Zurich: World Services, December 1984).
14. "Discipleship Training Revolution," MO Letter #2677 (Zurich: World Services, January 1992).
15. WS Advisory, "Tightening up our Family" (Zurich: World Services, July 1989).
16. "1994 Family Statistical Report" (Zurich: World Services, January 1995).
17. "PEN—Persecution End Time News" (Zurich: World Services, October 1993).
18. See "BI Case" in James D. Chancellor, *Life in The Family: An Oral History of the Children of God* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 133–134.
19. "The Old Church and the New Church!" MO Letter #A (Zurich: World Services, August 1969).
20. "Go to the Churches," MO Letter #2867 (Zurich: World Services, November 1991).
21. "The Ministry of Reconciliation," *New Good News,* no. 653 (Zurich: World Services, October 1995).

22. "Consider the Poor!—Our New Ministry in the U.S. to the Poor!" MO Letter #2755 (Zurich: World Services, March 1992).
23. "The Board Vision," GN #949 CM/FM (Zurich: World Services, March 1992).
24. "The Shakeup 2000—The S2K!" GN #3257 (Zurich: World Services, September 1999).
25. "Coming Persecution: Conviction versus Compromise Part 1," GN #957 CM/FM (Zurich: World Services, September 2001).
26. "The Family—Restructuring and Renewal: An Overview of Organizational Changes—1994–2006" (unpublished document presented at the CESNUR Conference in Waco, TX, on June 18, 2004), 17–21.
27. "Understanding Prophecy!" GN #876 CM/FM (Zurich: World Services, January 2000).
28. "Three Gifts of the Lord's Love!" MO Letter #3005 (Zurich: World Services, March 1995).
29. "Heading into 2002!" GN #3382A CM/FM (Zurich: World Services, December 2001).
30. Personal interview with Maria and Peter Amsterdam, October 2002.
31. "Reorganization Nationalization Revolution," MO Letter #650 (Zurich: World Services, January 1978).
32. J. Gordon Melton, *The Children of God: The Family* (Signature Books, 2004), 4–10.
33. William Sims Bainbridge, *The Endtime Family: Children of God* (New Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 25–29.
34. See Chancellor, *Life in The Family,* 34–57.
35. "The Word, The Word, The Word!" MO Letter #2494 (Zurich: World Services, November 1988).
36. The complete text can also be found in Chancellor, *Life in The Family,* 255–270.
37. "Abrahim The Gypsy King: The True Story of Our Spirit Guide," MO Letter #296 (Zurich: World Services, April 1970).
38. See Chancellor, *Life in The Family,* 77–83.
39. See Chancellor, "Eschatological or Prophetic Considerations," *Life in The Family,* Appendix A, Section 29, 267–270.
40. In June 2004, Peter Amsterdam presented an update on The Family to the annual conference of CESNUR. For the first time to my knowledge, a Family spokesperson equivocated on the End Times. When questioned, he insisted there was no change in Family theology. However, it seems clear that The Family is beginning the process of redefining this critical dimension of their ideology.
41. "A Prophecy Against Our Enemies!" MO Letter #188 (Zurich: World Services, October 1972).
42. "The Law of Love!" MO Letter #302 (Zurich: World Services, March 1974).
43. "The Ffing / Dfing revolution—The Book is the Hook!" MO Letter #2313 (Zurich: World Services., March 1987); "Moma on the New AIDS Rules—its Come to That!" MO Letter #2346 (Zurich: World Services, September 1987).
44. Personal interview with Maria and Peter Amsterdam, October 2002.
45. "Loving Jesus Revelation!" MO Letters #3024 and #3025 (Zurich: World Services, July 1995).
46. The World Wide Web is the most effective tool for this process, and several Web sites function as meeting ground. Unfortunately, along with genuine grievances, many exaggerations and outright falsehoods find their way here as well, seriously diminishing the credibility of the movement.

47. I did several interviews for local TV outlets in California and Arizona and was flown to New York to tape a full hour segment of NBC *Dateline* dealing with this event and its implications for The Family. That segment of *Dateline* was preempted by the death of Johnny Carson, then "scooped" by a similar presentation by ABC. However, within a few months the NBC drama *Law and Order* ran a very thinly disguised program based on this incident, in which the "Maria" figure is convicted of second degree murder. This popular dramatic presentation has apparently stimulated a surge of interest on the part of aggrieved ex-members.

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The Branch Davidians

Eugene V. Gallagher

Like many other members of New Religious Movements (NRMs), the students of biblical prophecy who eventually came to be known as the Branch Davidians had long conducted their religious lives in a quiet and unassuming fashion that left them almost totally unnoticed by the general public. Their obscurity was transformed into international notoriety, however, in the course of a single day. On February 28, 1993, the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF) staged a raid on the home and church of this millennialist, sectarian group outside of Waco, Texas. The thoroughly botched attempt to serve a search warrant took the lives of four BATF agents and six members of the communal group and led to a 51-day siege that climaxed with a devastating fire that claimed 74 more lives. Only nine people survived the deadly blaze that burnt the Mount Carmel Center to the ground, although 35 people, including 21 children, surrendered to the authorities during the prolonged standoff. Although many of the people at Mount Carmel simply saw themselves as students of the Bible and particularly the apocalyptic message of the Book of Revelation, they became known to the public as Branch Davidians and followers of the self-proclaimed messiah, David Koresh (1959–1993).[1]

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The group that gathered around Koresh had a long history in the Waco area and an even longer history before that, ultimately reaching far back into the biblical tradition. The expectation of an imminent, divinely authored renovation of this world is a major theme in the Hebrew Bible and Christian Scriptures. Prophets in the Hebrew Bible like Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel announced the coming of the "day of the Lord," which would bring destruction for those who sinned but would pave the way for the construction of a society in conformity with God's law.[2] Texts composed both during and after the Babylonian exile (587–539 BCE) in Jewish history are filled with apocalyptic passages and themes that anticipate the destruction of an immoral world and the establishment of a holy kingdom in its place.[3] Noncanonical

literature from the centuries immediately preceding and following the beginning of the Christian movement, such as the diverse material attributed to Enoch, many of the "Dead Sea Scrolls" found at Qumran near the northwest corner of the Dead Sea, and apocalypses attributed to biblical characters such as Ezra, Baruch, and Abraham, among others, also form a part of the broad biblical apocalyptic tradition.[4]

Not only do many of the same themes and motifs occur in the texts now collected in the Christian New Testament, but many of the Christian texts actually cite and comment on earlier apocalyptic texts. For example, the long apocalyptic speech attributed to Jesus in chapter 13 of the gospel of Mark turns on his citation of an image that appears in Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11 in slightly varying forms. Jesus's reference to a "desolating sacrilege" originally referred, in Daniel, to a profanation of the Jerusalem temple committed by the Syrian emperor Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BCE, but in Mark's gospel it refers, most likely, to the destruction of the same temple in 70 CE by Roman forces commanded by the future emperor Titus. Apocalyptic themes are evident outside of the gospels as well. The letters of the early Christian missionary Paul of Tarsus, written in the decade of the 50s CE, reveal a strong expectation that the world would soon end. In his earliest extant complete letter, written to the community of Thessalonica on the Greek mainland, Paul addresses a question about the salvation of Christians who have already died. He issues the following affirmation: "for this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep" (I Thessalonians 4:15). Similarly, in a later letter to a Christian community in Corinth, he reminds his audience that "the appointed time has grown very short" (I Corinthians 7:29). Finally, the last book of the Christian Bible, Revelation, spins out an elaborate apocalyptic scenario in vivid but enigmatic imagery that continued to stimulate the imagination of interpreters for nearly 2,000 years. The book of Revelation was so important to the community at Mount Carmel that Koresh claimed that "every book of the Bible meets and ends in the book of Revelation."[5]

Koresh and his fellow students, of course, were not the first to be intrigued by the biblical statements about the end of the world as we know it. In virtually every century, if not decade, after the inception of the early Christian movement, biblical interpreters were convinced that Jesus's reassurance that "this generation will not pass away before all these things take place" (Mark 13:30) applied to them and to their own situation. The prophetic Montanist movement of the second century CE expected the "New Jerusalem" to descend upon the Phrygian backwater village of Pepuza.[6] Norman Cohn vividly chronicled a variety of later movements in *The Pursuit of the Millennium.*[7] The popularity of Christian millennialism today is evident in the millions of copies sold by Hal Lindsey, author of *The Late, Great Planet Earth* among other apocalyptic tracts, and Tim La Haye and Jerry B. Jenkins, authors of the massive *Left Behind* series that presents a fictionalized Christian story of the end times.[8] The Branch Davidians, then, fall within a complex and long-lived tradition of anticipation of the world's end that is laid out in a series of seminal biblical texts that were subjected to elaborate commentaries by multiple generations of interpreters.

More specifically, the Branch Davidians are part of the Adventist tradition that first took shape in the mid-nineteenth century in New York state. With only a few exceptions, Koresh's disciples had religious roots in the Seventh-day Adventist tradition, which itself grew out of the Millerite movement of the mid-nineteenth century. After painstaking study of the scriptures, William Miller (1782–1849) came to the conclusion that the second coming of Jesus Christ would occur sometime between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. When the second date passed without incident, the Millerites recalculated the date to October 22, 1844. The failure of Jesus to return on that second date provoked what was known as the "Great Disappointment," but it only diffused rather than decreased the general Adventist fervor. Many of the disappointed did not abandon their expectation of an imminent millennial transformation of this world and continued to search the scriptures, and their own situations, for the signs that would herald the beginning of the end. By the end of 1845, for example, a small group of New Hampshire Millerites had begun to observe the Sabbath on the seventh day, Saturday, and to fashion a new understanding of Miller's prophecy. Led by Joseph Bates, James White, and Ellen G. Harmon, who married White in 1846, the group argued that October 22, 1844, was, in fact, a crucial date for human salvation, because Jesus Christ entered the heavenly temple on that day in preparation for the final judgment. His return would happen at an unspecified time in the future.[9]

To their observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, Bates and the Whites added another distinctive theological tenet. They believed that God's will is revealed progressively and that each new generation could expect to receive its "present truth" or "new light." That doctrine introduced a dynamism into the Seventh-day Adventist tradition that contributed to the schisms that eventually produced Koresh's group of Branch Davidians.

FROM DAVIDIANS TO BRANCH DAVIDIANS

The Davidian Adventists, precursors to the Branch Davidians, originated in 1929 in the teaching of Victor Houteff (1885–1955). A Bulgarian immigrant to the United States, Houteff became a Seventh-day Adventist in 1918. His intensive study of biblical prophecy led him to two conclusions that conflicted with orthodox Adventist doctrine. First, he indicted the church for being complacent and too "worldly." Houteff believed that his divinely appointed task was to purify the church from within and to gather the 144,000 "servants of God" mentioned in Revelation 7 to wait for the imminent arrival of Jesus Christ. Although Houteff accepted Ellen White as a prophet, he asserted that God did not reveal to her the complete message for the last days. In a pattern that was repeated by subsequent leaders within the Davidian tradition, Houteff saw himself as a prophetic figure for his own time, one who would announce the fullness of God's revelation about the imminent transformation of the world. Second, in contrast to the standard teaching of White that the Kingdom of God was a spiritual phenomenon and that the faithful would spend a millennium in heaven with Christ before the renovation of the world, Houteff

concluded that the coming Kingdom of God would be a literal, physical, millennial rule on earth, centered in the Holy Land of Palestine. Houteff's teaching, much of which he published in a periodical called *The Shepherd's Rod,* attracted some of his fellow Adventists, but church elders quickly barred him from teaching and in 1934 officially removed him from membership.[10]

Forced out of the mother church, Houteff named his movement the Davidian Seventh-day Adventists to echo the importance of a Davidic messiah in the first centuries CE and to emphasize their belief in the imminent restoration of a Davidic messianic kingdom in Palestine whose practices would closely follow those of traditional Judaism. Houteff saw himself as the seventh and final link in a line of reformers including Martin Luther, William Miller, and Ellen White. As relations between his group and the main body of Adventists worsened, Houteff condemned the denomination as a heathen, apostate group and focused on drawing the truly faithful out of its ranks. In 1935 he moved the Davidians to an isolated 189-acre parcel of land outside Waco and named their settlement Mount Carmel, after the site where the prophet Elijah contended with the prophets of Baal and proved to the awestruck onlookers that the Lord whom he served was the only true God (see I Kings 18:20–40). Although the anticipated move to the Holy Land never materialized, in Texas Houteff led Bible studies every night and eventually conducted a vigorous proselytization program that sent out tracts to thousands of Seventh-day Adventists and missionaries to Adventist groups throughout the world. Both practices remain at the core of the Davidian and Branch Davidian traditions.

When Houteff died in 1955, he was succeeded by his wife Florence. Convinced that the end would come in 1959, she urged Davidians and Adventists all over the world to assemble at the new Mount Carmel Center located on 941 acres near Elk, Texas, which the group had recently purchased. In April 1959 some 900 Davidians gathered there. But, in an outcome reminiscent of the Great Disappointment of Miller's time, their expectations were frustrated. The numbers of faithful quickly dwindled and Florence Houteff herself moved away and became inactive. The events of 1959, however, were not be the last time that the faithful were called to assemble at Mount Carmel in anticipation of the dawning of a new world.[11]

Out of the infighting among those remaining in the 1960s, Ben (d. 1978) and Lois Roden (d. 1986), who took up residence at Mount Carmel in 1955, eventually took control of the Mount Carmel property and became the leaders of the handful of stalwarts who still lived there. Like Miller, Ellen White, and Houteff before him, Ben Roden believed that he had a prophetic calling. He portrayed himself as the anointed "Branch" mentioned by Zechariah (see 3:8 and 6:12) who was to organize the theocratic Kingdom in preparation for Christ's return. Roden revived the group, adding the biblical festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles to their ritual calendar and renewing Houteff's publishing and missionary programs. On his death in 1978, Ben Roden was succeeded by his wife, Lois, as leader of the Branch Davidians, now a distinct offshoot from Houteff's movement. As had been the case with the Houteffs and was still the case with Koresh, the primary audience for the Roden's missionary appeals was members of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Under the

Rodens, the Branch Davidians maintained a sectarian consciousness, hoping to rescue the truly faithful from their hopelessly compromised parent body, even as they continued to introduce innovative practices and ideas.[12]

Like her predecessors, Lois also claimed special revelations. She taught that the Holy Spirit was a feminine figure and that the coming messiah would fully embody the female aspects of the divinity. Lois actively spread her new version of the Branch Davidian message through extensive missionary travels and the publication of a magazine named *SHEkinah,* after the feminine Hebrew word for the spirit or presence of God, a revelation of new light that troubled some members but secured the assent of a core group of loyalists who later became followers of Koresh as well. Like her predecessors, Lois Roden continued to expect the establishment of a literal Davidic kingdom in Israel. She was even able to secure permission from Israeli authorities to have her husband buried on the Mount of Olives, and she was buried next him after her death in 1986.[13]

Lois Roden was the leader of the Branch Davidians when Koresh, then known by his given name of Vernon Howell, joined in 1981. Koresh's embrace of Lois Roden's teachings, the possibility that they formed an intimate personal relationship, and her implicit recognition of Koresh as her successor, sparked the enmity of Lois's son George, who had tried to establish himself in a leadership position during his mother's travels. Even before Lois's death in 1986, relations between George and Koresh were hostile; by 1987 they flared into violence over George's bizarre challenge to Koresh that he, George Roden, could resurrect a member of the community who had been buried on the property for 20 years. When Koresh and his armed followers tried to secure evidence of George Roden's grotesque practices, a gun battle erupted between the two groups. In the ensuing trial, Koresh's accomplices were found not guilty, and the jury split on the question of Koresh's guilt, with the judge declaring a mistrial. After an unrelated incident, George Roden was found guilty of murder, declared insane, and sentenced to a state mental hospital. Koresh managed to pay the back taxes on the property, and his group took over the Mount Carmel Center.[14]

THE BRANCH DAVIDIANS UNDER DAVID KORESH

Koresh's leadership of the Branch Davidians was based on his ability to interpret the Bible. Many of those who lived with him at the Mount Carmel Center explicitly cited his unparalleled exegetical ability as the reason they moved to the Mount Carmel Center. Steve Schneider, who held a prominent leadership role within the community, told one of the FBI negotiators during the siege that "the reason they came here, all that they are and what they want to be revolves around what they see him [Koresh] showing from that book."[15] Livingstone Fagan, one of the adults who left during the standoff and who remains imprisoned in the United States after being convicted of participating in the February 28 shootout, recounted his decision to move to Mount Carmel in his unpublished manuscript, "Mt. Carmel: The Unseen Reality" (1994). Fagan was a Seventh-day Adventist theological student pursuing a Master's degree at Newbold College in England when he heard Koresh speak in a

Bible Study in 1988. After only three hours Fagan was deeply impressed. He recalled that "during that short time, I had perceived more significant biblical truths than I had done, the entire eight years I had been involved with organized religion."[16] After completing his studies in December 1988, Fagan visited the Mount Carmel Center several times. In 1992 he decided to move to Mount Carmel "in order to keep pace with the truths being revealed."[17] Fagan found Koresh's teaching about the book of Revelation thoroughly compelling. He recounts that

> on this last visit, approximately six months into our study, it was in our opinion impossible to leave without doing damage to our grasp of this continuing revelation of truth. We therefore decided to stay. It is important to note, the purpose of Mt. Carmel was the pursuit of truth.[18]

The characteristic mode of that pursuit of truth was the oral Bible Study, led by Koresh himself. Those study sessions often lasted several hours or more. Koresh drilled his audience in what he saw as the message of the book of Revelation and recited many portions of the Bible from memory, weaving them into a single apocalyptic scenario and exhorting his students to prepare themselves for the coming end. Like the others who gathered at Mount Carmel, Fagan dedicated his life to intensive study of the Bible. He reflected on their study of the scriptures in this way, emphasizing Koresh's prophetic inspiration:

> it involves choice experiences and an extensive grasp of the scriptural text. Further, honesty and openness, with a willingness to relinquish all human aspirations. All of this takes place in an atmosphere of faith. Finally, and most important, inspiration, direct divine intervention. By these experiences, the residents of Mt. Carmel, were able to hear God's word, while blocking out the artificial noise of humanity.[19]

In sum, according to Fagan, who is referring to the scroll sealed with seven seals in Revelation 5, "Mt. Carmel was a place where David Koresh opened the Seven Seals."[20]

Although much of his teaching resembled that of many other Christian millennialists, Koresh saw things in the Bible that no one before him had. Most strikingly, he saw himself. Koresh's authority as an interpreter of scripture was rooted in an extraordinary experience that he apparently had in Israel in 1985; as he understood it, it revealed his true identity and his mission in life. According to Koresh, he was taken up into the heavens, in an experience much like the one described by the apostle Paul in II Corinthians 12 and the "night journey" attributed to Muhammad in the Islamic tradition.[21] During the standoff, on March 7, Koresh made this somewhat obscure and disjointed statement to one of the negotiators:

> In 1985, I was taken, when I was in Israel, … I was taken, in my perceptions of my being, to a place where I was shown all things pertaining to the seals. This is my work. … Okay. From 1985, to the present time, I am not a person who studies the Bible night and day. You can ask anybody that knows me.[22]

In allusive fashion, Koresh asserted that his knowledge of the seven seals was not the result of his personal industry or superior interpretive talent, but was instead the result of a divine gift, acquired during his visit to a mysterious "place." As he said

on April 5 to another negotiator, "in 1985 the seals, everything pertaining to the seals which is the Bible was opened up and thoroughly locked in for presentation."[23] Both Koresh's mission and the content of his preaching were irrevocably set by his extraordinary religious experience. That experience was so profound that Koresh referred to Psalm 2:7 and a variant reading of Luke 3:22 to describe it. On March 5, Koresh told an FBI negotiator concerning imminent salvation that

> it says right there in Psalms 2—and this is where I'm coming from. I will declare the decree—I mean this is the law of God. The Lord said unto me, thou art my Son; this day I have begotten thee [see Psalm 2:7; Luke 3:22].
> Ask of me, Son, and *that's what happened to me in heaven,* my friend. You may not believe it. But God says ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen … for thine inheritance.[24]

Again, Koresh's language was imprecise, allusive, and difficult to interpret because of his breathtaking claim to divine authority. Koresh thought that the mysterious place that he visited was heaven and while there he was adopted by God himself, like ancient Israelite kings and Jesus of Nazareth, into the most intimate relationship of sonship. He was also divinely commissioned to undertake the conversion of the heathen before the imminent judgment through his preaching of the seven seals.

Koresh's conviction that he was chosen for a prophetic and messianic mission supported all of his other claims to authority. It helps us to understand how he saw himself in scripture and claimed a status ordinarily reserved for Jesus. On April 15, for example, Koresh explicitly appropriated two titles intimately associated with Jesus; one of them, "the Lamb," is the primary designation for Jesus the Christ in the book of Revelation. He told the negotiator, "look. If the seven seals are true, yes, I'm the Lamb of God. Yes, I'm Christ. If the seven seals are true."[25] In a more esoteric reference, Koresh also claimed that he personified the message of the seventh angel of Revelation.[26]

But Koresh also acknowledged, at least superficially, an important check on his claim to ultimate authority, signaled on April 15 by his repeated conditional references to the truth of the seven seals. Koresh frequently told his followers and the outside world that his message must be measured against the evidence of the Bible. He claimed that he was renovating tradition, not creating something wholly new. In fact, those who could not reconcile either Koresh's doctrines or his self-understanding with what they saw in scripture often left the group.[27] Koresh himself also stated that he tested his own preaching against what he found in the Bible. On March 9 he disclosed to a negotiator that

> the thing of it is is that I can only move on the foundation that God has established. Now, how do I know that the spirit that speaks with me is the true spirit of God, how do I know? Only unless it's perfectly in context with what's been stated beforehand, you know.
> … Then how can I believe? Well, especially in the revelation when there's these seven simple steps, seven seals.… You know, either we understand them or we do not. If someone says they do, we can't deny it unless we've sat down and honestly, candidly opened up to see what insight this person may or may not have on the subject.[28]

In discussing Koresh with a negotiator during the siege, David Thibodeau, one of the survivors of the April 19 fire, gave a similar explanation. Thibodeau stated that his presence at Mount Carmel "really has nothing to do with David's charisma, … it's just opening the book for myself, seeing what it says and saying, wow, is this guy found in the book, you know, and all the Psalms, you, you, really got to sit down and listen to him talk, I mean with the book open."[29] Similarly, commenting on Koresh's refusal to speak with negotiators on April 9, Schneider observed that "unless he can bring in what he is, and that's the Bible, [then he won't speak]. I mean he'll talk about that [leaving] but always in relation to the Bible so you can understand where and why."[30] In the end, Koresh's students so thoroughly assimilated his message about the seven seals that they could not use the Bible as an independent source against which to judge Koresh's message. Nonetheless, the movement held to a theoretical standard, in addition to Koresh's personal authority, against which Koresh's pronouncements could be measured. Many of his followers said that they used that standard; in the judgment of some it led to a strengthening of their faith in the message of the seven seals, but in the judgment of others it helped them to unmask Koresh as a prophetic pretender.

In the daily life of the Mount Carmel community, Koresh's status as an authoritative interpreter of the Bible depended less on his claims to an extraordinary religious experience in Israel in 1985 and more on his repeated ability to make sense of the millennial message of Revelation in his Bible Studies. In the view of his students, at least, Koresh's authority was tested every time that he proposed an interpretation of scripture. Like Thibodeau, they could easily sit before him and check what he said against the text itself. On the other hand, every time his students accepted his interpretation of the Bible, Koresh's authority was reinforced. The daily Bible Studies thus became Koresh's most important tool to maintain and enhance his power, authority, and status within the group. His status as an inspired biblical interpreter was subject to daily renegotiation. It is a measure of his unassailable confidence in his mission, persuasive ability, and facility with the biblical text that Koresh successfully maintained his position, but it is also a measure of their deep yearning for the thorough social, moral, and religious renovation of the world that the others at Mount Carmel continued to cherish Koresh's teaching about the seven seals and find in it the possibility of their eternal salvation.

Although the comments of Schneider, Fagan, and Thibodeau indicate that some of his followers could follow, accept, and act on the elaborate developments of Koresh's apocalyptic message, even among his target audience of Seventh-day Adventists Koresh never succeeded in attracting a large number of recruits. His following always remained in the low hundreds. Even that committed group was dramatically shaken by a new light revelation in 1989 that required celibacy of all male followers and reserved all females for mating with Koresh in order to produce children who would inherit an exalted status in the coming Kingdom of God. Apparently Koresh thought that his biological children would fulfill the roles of the 24 elders described in Revelation 4:4 as sitting on their own thrones surrounding the throne of God.[31] Like the new light that Lois Roden proclaimed about the feminine nature of the

divine, Koresh's doctrinal innovation both secured and intensified the loyalty of those who were able to accept it and cost the allegiance of some who could not. Among the latter was the Australian Marc Breault, who would soon be instrumental in spreading damaging information about Koresh to the media and to the United States government.

FROM CONTROVERSY TO ARMED CONFLICT

Up until February 28, 1993, the community at the Mount Carmel Center experienced a relatively uneventful history. Those living at the Center devoted most of their time to Bible Studies and missionary outreach, while they struggled to transform the ramshackle buildings on their property into suitable dwellings. Members performed a variety of tasks to earn enough money to support the community, including operating an automobile body shop and selling guns and other paraphernalia at gun shows. But the center of their lives was the study of the Bible. Although the group kept to itself, members, including Koresh himself, frequently went into Waco and were well-known to many of the citizens. The defections that occurred in the wake of the 1989 new light revelation, however, created persistent animosity between those who left and those who stayed. But even those hostile relationships did not portend the dramatic and ultimately tragic events that were triggered on February 28.[32]

Breault played a pivotal role in the events that led up to February 28. He left Mount Carmel in 1989 after concluding that he could not accept Koresh's scriptural justifications for the new light doctrine that gave him a sexual monopoly over all the women in the group while enforcing celibacy for all the males. After spending a few months in seclusion with his wife, Elizabeth Baranyi, in Australia, Breault emerged convinced that he must put "a stop to Vernon Howell before he ruined too many more lives."[33] Breault's efforts moved in two complementary and sometimes overlapping directions. First, he deftly used the news media to broadcast his version of life inside Mount Carmel. Among other things, he cooperated with Martin King, host of the Australian TV program *A Current Affair* on a segment that offered a "behind the scenes" look at Koresh's teaching and behavior, and then he collaborated with King on a sensationalistic book that was billed on its cover as "a member's chilling, exclusive account of madness and depravity in David Koresh's compound."[34] Second, Breault cooperated with the United States government in various investigations of the Mount Carmel community. He provided sworn testimony damaging to Koresh in a Michigan child custody hearing for Kiri Jewell, whose father petitioned to have her removed from Mount Carmel, where she had been living with her mother. Breault also served as an informant for the BATF in its investigation of whether the Branch Davidians were producing illegally modified firearms.

The BATF began investigating possible firearms violations at Mount Carmel in the spring of 1992, and Breault acknowledged that both he and his wife contributed extensively to the investigation. The central issue was whether legal, semiautomatic weapons were converted into illegal automatic weapons at Mount Carmel. The role

that guns played in life at Mount Carmel remains in dispute. Many members asserted then and now that they had nothing to do with the guns and that the resale of weapons and other military paraphernalia at gun shows was a business conducted by just a few members of the community. On the other hand, Koresh frequently exhorted his Bible students to prepare for the coming climactic battle at Armageddon. At any rate, it is clear that Breault also fueled the BATF investigation.[35]

The fruits of the BATF's efforts are evident in a search and arrest warrant composed by agent Davy Aguilera. The document is fascinating not only for what it reveals about the BATF's suspicions but also for how it shows that polemics of disaffected former members like Breault and other opponents of purportedly dangerous "cults" penetrated its rationale. Its central claim was straightforward enough. Aguilera asserted that Koresh and his followers unlawfully manufactured and possessed machine guns and explosive devices. But woven into its presentation of information directly relevant to weapons charges were substantial prejudicial digressions about Koresh's religious beliefs, his claim to unlimited sexual access to all female members of the community, visits to the Mount Carmel Center from Joyce Sparks of the Texas Department of Human Services concerning possible child abuse, the immigration status of foreign nationals at Mount Carmel, and speculations about Koresh's connections to known drug users. All of the supplementary material was designed to justify the BATF raid by heightening the impression that the Mount Carmel Center was a nest of criminal activity. Aguilera's affidavit does report that Koresh stated that most of the adults did not know of the firearms, but it does not take his statement seriously in building a portrait of Mount Carmel as a lawless community. The hyperbolic language of the warrant decisively shaped the BATF's plans for serving it at the Mount Carmel Center.[36]

Apparently because it anticipated a violent response by the Branch Davidians, the BATF planned a "dynamic entry" to deliver the warrant. On the morning of February 28, 1993, an 80-vehicle convoy, including two cattle trailers packed with 76 heavily armed agents, began the "dynamic entry." Although surviving Branch Davidians and their supporters deny that they initiated the exchange, clearly shots were fired, and the ensuing battle eventually claimed the lives of four agents and six residents of Mount Carmel. Soon after the gunfire died down and the BATF agents and the Branch Davidians, now barricaded inside the Mount Carmel Center, settled into a tense standoff, FBI agents arrived to manage the situation. A 51-day standoff, punctuated frequently in the opening days by intense negotiations, then ensued.

The February 28, 1993, assault unsettled the Branch Davidians' expectations. In some ways it seemed that the forces of "Babylon" had, indeed, begun the apocalyptic battle, but not in Israel where it was anticipated to take place. During the 51-day siege, in addition to striving unfruitfully to explain his theological system to a series of FBI negotiators, Koresh attempted to fit the unfolding events into his scenario of the end. In an April 14 letter to his attorney, Koresh claimed that he had finally received "word from God" that he could write down his message of the seven seals and share it with the world. In that letter Koresh promised to finish his commentary as quickly as he could and then to come out of Mount Carmel to answer any

questions about his actions. The FBI agents in command, however, did not take the offer seriously; the final assault was quickly authorized, and early on the morning of April 19, 1993, the sequence of events that initiated the catastrophic fire commenced. One of the nine people who escaped the flames carried with her a computer diskette of Koresh's unfinished work.[37]

UNDERSTANDING THE STANDOFF

The siege that dramatically forced the Mount Carmel community out of its decades of obscurity was not inspired by theological issues. Although its search and arrest warrant was complicated by extraneous issues and thinly supported at best by the BATF's surveillance of Mount Carmel, its focus was the illegal conversion of weapons. The timing of the raid was hastened by the imminent publication of a critical investigative report by the *Waco Tribune-Herald,* entitled "The Sinful Messiah." In the later stages of their preparations, BATF agents were worried that the group would react negatively to accusations of brainwashing, sexual exploitation, and stockpiling weapons. The BATF's planning and execution of the raid, the FBI's conduct of the standoff and the final assault, and the media's coverage of the ongoing drama were all influenced by powerful stereotypes developed by the American anticult movement over the previous two decades. Building primarily on the example of the 1978 murder-suicide of 914 people at the Peoples Temple Agricultural Mission in Jonestown, Guyana, a loose confederation of aggrieved parents, moral entrepreneurs, concerned mental health professionals, and other sympathizers aggressively marketed the notion that all NRMs or cults were led by dangerously unstable con men who destroyed the mental freedom of their members and could easily lead them to their deaths. The anticult caricatures, aggressively purveyed by Breault and other defectors from the group and their supporters, so thoroughly shaped public and governmental understandings of the Branch Davidians that it still remains difficult to come to a balanced understanding of the siege and its aftermath, even after multiple government, academic, and other investigations, as well as several court cases.[38]

In that context, the question of whether the Branch Davidians illegally converted firearms largely fades into the background. Even if they were, the violation is typically punishable by a simple fine. Also, survivors of Mount Carmel vigorously dispute the claim that they were training for an apocalyptic war. They assert that the weapons were the lucrative hobby of a few members who sold them at gun shows for a profit. The BATF affidavit's assertions about drug manufacturing were totally discredited. But the accusations of child abuse gained increasing support as the extent of Koresh's sexual involvement with young girls came to light. Proper investigation and prosecution of those charges should definitely have taken place. It would, however, involve agencies other than the BATF.

Even in the report developed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, which oversees the BATF, the agency was severely criticized for both its planning and execution of the initial raid and for its failure to arrest Koresh during his frequent trips off the property. Similarly, although the Department of Justice report was much more

forgiving, many external observers, including some of those engaged by the government to review the events at Mount Carmel, sharply criticized the FBI for failing to take Koresh's religious concerns seriously and for quickly deciding that they were merely "Bible babble." But reorganizations within the FBI, concerted efforts to learn from scholars of religion, and the conduct of subsequent encounters, such as the 1996 Montana Freemen standoff, suggest that the FBI is developing a sensitivity to religious factors in encounters with unconventional groups. On the other hand, the anticult movement seized upon "Waco" and subsequent events, such as the 1995 Aum Shinrikyo attack in Tokyo and the 1997 Heaven's Gate suicides, as further proof that all cults are prone to violence and must be constantly monitored and militantly opposed. In the minds of many, and despite more nuanced analyses, the Branch Davidians were indelibly identified as a "cult" and Koresh stands as the paradigm of the manipulative cult leader who exploited his followers for his own gain.[39]

THE BRANCH DAVIDIAN MOVEMENT AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MOUNT CARMEL CENTER

Although the April 19, 1993, fire virtually obliterated the Branch Davidian community, several people have tried to keep it alive—each in a very distinctive way. What remains of the Mount Carmel Center became both a memorial and a contested site. The various appropriations, elaborations, and refutations of David Koresh's religious message in the aftermath of the near total destruction of the community that embraced it and the prophet who communicated it to the community suggest both the remarkable persistence of millennial convictions and their impressive mutability. It also points to the sometimes extraordinary volatility of NRMs in the years immediately following the death of a charismatic leader.[40] Even within a religious tradition marked by multiple splinterings throughout its history, the diversity of contemporary claimants to positions of leadership among the Branch Davidians is remarkable.

Though she no longer lives on the property, Amo Paul Bishop Roden, the former wife of George Roden, has abandoned neither her claims to Mount Carmel nor her claims of leadership of the Branch Davidians. She argues that when the majority of the community chose to accept Koresh's leadership rather than that of her former husband George, they "turned their back on the prophetic voice of the church, exactly as Satan planned they would."[41] Drawing on a biblical paradigm, Roden issued a thoroughgoing critique of Koresh and his followers as idolaters: "Koresh, the molten image, is a golden calf to his followers, who are led to forsake God's law by him. He lies down at Mount Carmel in peace, and there he consumes his followers with iniquity."[42] Not content merely to criticize Koresh and implicitly support George Roden's claim to succeed his parents in the leadership of the Branch Davidians, Roden herself claimed divine inspiration. In 1999 she wrote to an anthropologist who interviewed her that

> The message God sends through me just keeps flowing. You did ask me to send the continuance along. I am therefore enclosing "Messiah and Elijah: The Second Coming," the scriptural promise of the announcement of the Second Coming (as a Thief) and the seven Spirits of God. I also have rewritten "Unsealing the Thunders" because I thought the last page was pretty limp. After I wrote it, God showed me that the unsealing of the Book of Daniel was the type and put me in a position to show from both the thunders and the seals that the revelation was to be the meaning of the Bible.[43]

Roden maintained the community's consistent focus on the book of Revelation; both the seven thunders and the seven spirits refer to passages from that text. But she clearly claimed to have a separate, superior, and divinely sanctioned insight into both Revelation and the "meaning of the Bible." Like other Davidians before her, she aimed to provide new light, and like other contenders for leadership within the tradition, she found her own role in the disclosure of the imminent apocalyptic drama to be utterly essential.[44]

Clive Doyle, who survived the fire in which his daughter died, lives in a trailer on the Mount Carmel site and leads a small group of survivors, but the claim of those faithful to Koresh to legal ownership of the property remains unsettled. Despite his own difficult economic circumstances, Doyle helped to erect a small chapel at Mount Carmel and to conduct the annual memorial services. Unlike Roden, Doyle accepted then and continues to accept now the religious claims that Koresh made for himself and about the book of Revelation. In 2003 Doyle told a reporter, "The reason I'm still here is I know what went on and why we were here and I want to explain this to people. I still believe in David. I lost a daughter and a lot of friends, some of whom I'd known for 30 years."[45] Doyle expressed his faith in the imminent end of the world simply and directly to another reporter: "our hopes are that God will intervene prior to the rest of us dying."[46]

From prison, Fagan, who left Mount Carmel during the siege and after a controversial trial is now serving a prison sentence for his actions on February 28, 1993, continued to represent Koreshian orthodoxy in his self-published writings, including most importantly *Mt. Carmel: The Unseen Reality.* Fagan is convinced of Koresh's messianic mission and limits his own contribution to re-presentation and clarification of Koresh's message. Borrowing the language from Revelation 5, Fagan asserted that "to know the seals you're either a servant of the Lamb or the Lamb himself."[47] Accordingly, Fagan conceived his writings not as interpretations of either the Bible or of what Koresh himself preached but literally as re-presentations of an unchanging biblical message. One clear indication of how Fagan conceived his fidelity to both Koresh and the biblical text is that he re-presents the entire text of the book of Revelation in his manuscript, with only minimal commentary. Fagan, through his manuscript, aimed to convince readers that he accurately presented the message of Koresh, which in turn accurately presented the message of Revelation and the entire Bible. In so doing, Fagan gave a more theological expression to Doyle's plainspoken profession of faith in Koresh.[48]

Another imprisoned Branch Davidian, Renos Avraam writing as the "Chosen Vessel," claimed divine approval to develop further Koresh's message of the seven

seals. Appealing to the familiar Adventist concept of "present truth" or new light, the Chosen Vessel emphasized the limitations and inaccuracies of Koresh's message and claimed that his book revealed the necessary new understanding of the imminent end. Like Amo Paul Bishop Roden, the Chosen Vessel appealed to a biblical paradigm for his claim to supercede Koresh's authority. He argued that

> The Lamb and the Chosen Vessel of the remaining Bride are typified by Elijah and Elisha of the past. When Elijah was caught up to God, he left his mantle with Elisha, and Elisha was given a double portion of Elijah's spirit. In the latter day scenario, when the Manchild (*Lamb*) was caught up to god (see Rev. 12:5), the Lamb's wisdom was given in double portion to the Chosen Vessel who is of the Remaining Bride. The chosen Vessel has the same wisdom of Prophecy within him, as he understands both sides of the double sided scroll; the one side which was revealed and fulfilled by the Lamb, and the second side which concerns the remaining Bride's destiny.[49]

As the Chosen Vessel's literary output continued to grow, he became more direct about his relationship to Koresh. One recent text simply asserts that "this Chosen Vessel is the successor to David Koresh. Only the living Chosen Vessel can reveal all Bible prophecies relating to end-time events."[50] The Chosen Vessel now anticipates the predicted apocalypse in March 2012.

Roden, Doyle, Fagan, and the Chosen Vessel retained the apocalyptic expectations that were so central to the Adventist and Branch Davidian traditions, but Roden and the Chosen Vessel claimed insights that eclipsed even Koresh's. The development of Branch Davidian thought and practice after David Koresh is clearly fluid and multifaceted; some wait for Koresh's imminent resurrection, while others put forward innovative interpretations of his teaching about the seven seals. Although some new converts to the message about the seven seals have been made, by all accounts no substantial influx of converts into the movement occurred after 1993. The fate of the Branch Davidian movement remains fragile at best, even as the events at the Mount Carmel Center in 1993 fade from public memory.

Beyond the small circles of surviving and newly converted Branch Davidians and their sympathizers, the destruction of the Mount Carmel Center and the near extinction of the community had other reverberations. Orthodox Seventh-day Adventists reviewed events to see if they could identify why faithful Adventists accepted Koresh as a self-proclaimed messiah. Members of several other NRMs tried to distance themselves and their groups from association with Koresh's abusive leadership in order to avoid public criticism and potential governmental intervention. Extremists who advocate the right to bear arms made the Branch Davidians into symbols of the damaging effects of the United States government's efforts to curtail individual freedoms. Most noteworthy among the latter group was Timothy McVeigh, who was executed in 2001 for his role in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. McVeigh explicitly characterized his actions as revenge for what the government did at Waco. Depicting his actions as retaliation against a government that had far overstepped its boundaries, McVeigh said, "I didn't define the rules of engagement in this conflict.… The rules, if not written down, are defined by the aggressor. It was brutal, no holds barred. Women and

kids were killed at Waco and Ruby Ridge. You put back in [the government's] faces exactly what they're giving out."[51] McVeigh also put his actions into an explicitly apocalyptic context, writing to a friend that "Blood will flow in the streets, Steve. Good vs. Evil. Free Men vs. Socialist Wannabe Slaves. Pray it is not your blood, Steve."[52]

CONCLUSION

At least some of the Branch Davidians continued to live on after the trauma of the destruction of the Mount Carmel Center. Some of the survivors struggled to rebuild their lives and to stay together as a worshiping community despite their radically diminished membership; writing from prison, movement theologians endeavored to keep alive the message of the seven seals even as they contended over what constitutes an adequate interpretation for the present time. For some Seventh-day Adventists, the events at Waco provided a cautionary tale about the consequences of accepting false messiahs. For other NRMs, the destruction of the Mount Carmel Center raised the specter of the awesome power of the state to crush religious innovation. And for the shadowy and overlapping subcultures of self-styled patriots, constitutionalists, militia members, and other denizens of the radical right, the Branch Davidians embodied their worst fears about a rogue government turning its military might against its own citizens. The remaining Branch Davidians continued to voice their own millennial hopes, and now they also serve as a point of reference for the millennial expectations of others.

NOTES

1. For accounts of the "Waco" incident see James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Dick J. Reavis, *The Ashes of Waco: An Investigation* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998, reprint of 1995 ed.); Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000); Stuart A. Wright, ed., *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

2. See, for example, Isaiah 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 2:11. All biblical citations and quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

3. On the beginnings of apocalypticism in the Hebrew Bible see Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic,* rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); for the deeper roots of apocalyptic thinking in the ancient Near East see Norman Cohn, *From Chaos to Cosmos* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

4. For an introduction to this material see John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocclyptic Literature,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman's, 1998).

5. David Koresh, "The Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation," in *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America,* Tabor and Gallagher, 191–203, passage quoted from p. 197.

6. On Montanism see Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender Authority, and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ronald E. Heine, *The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989).

7. Norman Cohn: *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages,* rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

8. See Hal Lindsey, with C.C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970); on Lindsey see Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); for the *Left Behind* series see Bruce David Forbes and Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *Rapture, Revelation, and the End Times: Exploring the Left Behind Series* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2004); and Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

9. On the Millerite movement in general, and especially the "Great Disappointment," see Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, eds., *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

10. For a summary of Houteff's teaching in the Davidian movement see *Why Waco?,* Tabor and Gallagher, 33–39.

11. See ibid., 38–39.

12. See ibid., 39.

13. See ibid., 41.

14. See ibid., 43

15. Tape 129, March 15, 1993, 43. Transcripts of the negotiation tapes are available at the Reading Room in FBI headquarters in the Hoover Building in Washington, D.C. For a brief study of the negotiations see Eugene V. Gallagher, "Negotiating Salvation," *Nova Religio* 2 (1999): 8–16. For a fuller study from the perspective of conflict resolution see Jayne Seminare Docherty, *Learning Lessons from Waco: When the Parties Bring Their Gods to the Negotiating Table* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001).

16. Livingstone Fagan, *Mt. Carmel: The Unseen Reality,* 1:5. Many of Fagan's writings from prison were collected and made available at Mark Swett's extraordinary electronic archive of material on the Branch Davidians, http://home.maine.rr.com/waco. When Swett shut down his site, copies of those documents were posted on other sites. For Fagan, see now http://www.fountain.btinternet.co.uk/koresh/writings/. I retain Fagan's occasionally idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., 1:6.

20. Ibid., 1:15.

21. For background and analysis of this motif in Late antiquity see James D. Tabor, *Things Unutterable* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986). On Muhammad's night journey and ascension into the heavens, which are briefly mentioned in Sura 17 of the Koran, see Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 159–75.

22. Tape 81, March 7, 1993, 29–30.

23. Tape 231, April 5, 1993, 10.

24. Tape 57, March 5, 1993, 30. My emphasis.

25. Tape 232, April 15, 1993, 41. See tape 72, March 6, 1993, 29; tape 77, March 7, 1993, 8–10.

26. See Howell, "The Identity of the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man" (1985): (author's collection).
27. Perhaps the most celebrated and important defection was that of Marc Breault, who had once been very close to Koresh. Breault could not accept the so-called "New Light" revelation that Koresh proclaimed in August 1989, in which Koresh claimed that only he had the right to procreate and that all women within the group should be sexually available to him while all others must practice celibacy. Breault left, along with his wife, Elizabeth Baranyi, and became Koresh's most persistent and effective opponent. Breault tells his own story, in tabloid fashion, in *Inside the Cult,* with Martin King (New York: Signet, 1993).
28. Tape 98, March 9, 1993, 12–13.
29. Tape 87, March 7, 1993, 26.
30. Tape 201, April 9, 1993, 48.
31. See *Why Waco?,* Tabor and Gallagher, 74–76.
32. For a former insider's account of that hostility see Breault and King, *Inside the Cult.*
33. Ibid., 208.
34. Ibid., cover.
35. See ibid., 295, for example.
36. For the text of the affidavit see http://www.totse.com/en/conspiracy/waco/waco-war.html.
37. See Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?,* 189–190.
38. Both the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Department of Justice issued lengthy reports soon after the events. Other official reports and hearings followed. See Richard Scruggs et al., *Report to the Attorney General on the Events at Waco, Texas: February 28 to April 19, 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993); United States Department of the Treasury, Waco Administrative Review Team, *Report of the Department of Treasury on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Investigation of Vernon Wayne Howell Also Known as David Koresh* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993); United States Department of Justice, comp., *Recommendations of Experts for Improvements in Federal Law Enforcement after Waco* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993); United States Congress, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime and the Subcommittee on National Security, International Affairs and Criminal Justice of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, *Activities of Federal Law Enforcement Agencies Toward the Branch Davidians* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996); John C. Danforth, *Final Report to the Deputy Attorney General Concerning the 1993 Confrontation at the Mt. Carmel Complex Waco, Texas* (November 8, 2000), www.apologeticsindex.org/b10a03.html#danforth.
39. See, for example, Margaret Singer, with Janja Lalich, *Cults in Our Midst: The Hidden Menace in Our Everyday Lies* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 3, 28, where Singer asserts that "Waco was a replay of Jonestown," (p. 28) and uses both Waco and Jonestown as paradigms of the destructive cult.
40. For a collection of essays on that theme see Timothy Miller, ed., *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991).
41. As quoted in James Faubion, *The Shadows and Lights of Waco: Millennialism Today* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 64.
42. Ibid., 63.
43. Ibid., 95f.
44. For a selection of Lois Roden's writings see www.the-branch.org.

45. Alex Hannaford, "Return to Waco," *The Guardian,* October 28, 3003, www.cesnur.org/2003/waco_10.htm.

46. Howard Witt, "Waco Sect Survives, Waits," *The Chicago Tribune*, June 14, 2004; available at www.cesnur.org/2004/waco_12.htm. Catherine Wessinger has conducted extensive interviews with Doyle, other survivors, and others directly involved with Koresh's Branch Davidians and is planning a series of publications.

47. Fagan, *Mt. Carmel,* 2:6.

48. For a selection of Fagan's writings, see www.fountain.btinternet.co.uk/koresh/writings/; on Fagan's theology see Eugene V. Gallagher, "The Persistence of the Millennium: Branch Davidian Expectations of the End After 'Waco,'" *Nova Religio* 3 (2000): 303–19.

49. The Chosen Vessel, *Seven Seals,* www.branchdavidian.com or www.sevenseals.com.

50. http://www.sevenseals.com/march2012introduction.html.

51. As quoted in Lou Michel and Dan Herbeck, *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City Bombing* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 225.

52. Ibid., 154.

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Christian Identity: An American Millennial Mythology

Philip Lamy

"Christian Identity" is an apocalyptic religion and subculture steeped in racist, anti-Semitic, and millennial mythology. It took root in the United States in the mid-1940s, providing a theological justification for a variety of racist, anti-Semitic, and antigovernment groups in the decades leading up to the year 2000—-the third Christian millennium. Identity is not a well-organized religion with centralized institutions or an identifiable leadership structure, nor is its theology or belief system codified or highly detailed. However, Christian Identity does provide the most unifying theological underpinning for white supremacists, right wing survivalists, antigovernment "patriots," and other American extremist groups. Through its literature, radio programs, videotapes, CDs, and Internet Web sites, Christian Identity serves as a forum for geographically disparate groups such as the Aryan Nations, the Posse Comitatus, the Ku Klux Klan, and the neo-Nazi National Alliance. In addition, some of its adherents have figured in notorious and violent clashes with law enforcement and the federal government, especially during the 1980s and 1990s.

The core beliefs of Christian Identity include the notion that whites, especially those of northwestern European origin, are the direct descendents of the biblical "Tribes of Israel" and thus are God's chosen people. According to Identity theology, those claiming to be Jews are in reality descended from the offspring of Cain, the child of Satan and Eve. Where "white Aryans" are the children of Adam, Jews are the children of the devil. Therefore Identity prescribes a righteous hatred for Jews and a right wing inspired paranoia of world domination by the Jews and other nonwhite, "mud peoples." Christian Identity is a millennialist subculture, focused on the belief that we are living near the "end times" and that the final battle of Armageddon between the forces of good and evil—white "Aryan Israelites" and the demonic Jews of Babylon—is about to begin. Many have moved "off the grid" and formed survivalist family compounds or joined survivalist communities with the hope of surviving Armageddon. Separating themselves from society, and in some cases running afoul of political and legal authorities, has often brought Christian Identity believers

into conflict with law enforcement and government, in some cases with fatal consequences.

HISTORY

Christian Identity's theological roots reach back to mid-nineteenth century Great Britain and to the formulation of the school of religious thought called "British Israelism." Its early proponents included John Wilson, a Scotsman who, in 1840, published the book *Our Israelitish Origins.* Edward Hines, an Englishman, wrote *Identification of the British Nation with Lost Israel* in 1871, elaborating Wilson's ideas. According to Hines, the essence of British Israelism is that among the biblical "Lost Tribes" of the Israelites are the people and cultures of the Aryan race: Anglo-Saxons, Celts, Scandinavians, Germans, and other "white Aryan" cultures. According to Christian Identity, the Jews of history are descended from Mongolian-Turkish "Khazars." Khazars, they allege, derive from "Ashkenazim," one of the two major religious and cultural divisions among Jews, and refer to Central and Eastern European, Yiddish-speaking Jews. The "Sephardim," who settled throughout the Mediterranean and later in Britain and America, they identity with the British Israelites.[1]

According to British Israelism (also Anglo-Israelism), Abraham's son Isaac and his tribe supposedly split from the Davidic state about 1000 BCE and migrated through the centuries to the west and north among the Lost Tribes. Isaac's sons, or "Saxons," finally crossed the Caucasus Mountains (today the Caucasians) that divide the Black and Caspian Seas. Settling in northern Europe, in what is now the British Isles, the Saxons established "British Israel" and believed they were God's chosen people. According to British Israelism, when Europeans colonized (North) America, the "new world" became a holy land as well.

Established by the late Herbert Armstrong, the 70,000-member Worldwide Church of God is the largest church of British Israelism in the United States, with congregations in about 90 nations. A former advertising executive, Armstrong was ambitious and skilled at popularizing the new religion. In the 1950s and 60s millions of Americans read Armstrong's magazine *The Plain Truth,* attended his lectures, and tuned in to his radio show, "The World Tomorrow." Through his meticulous study of the Bible, Armstrong claimed that he had deciphered a code by which formerly hidden biblical truths were revealed to him, including the sacred origin of the Aryan race. Armstrong, and British Israelism in general, held out hope for the Jews, believing that they were half-brothers, and thus were entitled to forgiveness. In addition, he believed, Jews might still convert to Christianity before the return of Christ. Since the 1980s, under the leadership of Joseph Tkach, and later his son, Joseph Tkach Jr., the Worldwide Church of God has undergone major changes in theology, attempting to move closer to orthodox Christianity.[2]

However, among other believers, particularly in the United States and Canada, British Israelism took on an anti-Semitic cast, beginning with The Anglo-Saxon Federation of America, the main British Israelist organization in the United States. Founded in 1930 by Howard Rand, the organization became increasingly anti-

Semitic during the 1930s. Ford Motor Company executive William J. Cameron fueled the British Israel anti-Semitism in the United States as editor of the *Dearborn Independent,* owned and published by Henry Ford. During the 1920s, *The Independent* published stories and editorials stating that Jewish bankers were behind Ford's and the world's business troubles and that a Jewish-led conspiracy was about to plunge the world into economic and political chaos and war.

The myths of demonic and conspiratorial Jews in line with Satan and bent on world domination found expression in Christian Identity. After World War II Christian Identity began to assert its independence from British Israelism and evolved into a distinctly race-centered religion. Early Christian Identity ministers included Wesley Swift, William Potter Gale, and Bertrand Comparet. All were Southern California followers of anti-Semitic political organizer, Gerald K. Smith. In 1946, Swift, a former member of the Ku Klux Klan, gave British Israelism a stronger "identity" theology centered on a racist millennial mythology. In this mythology the white race is sacred and supreme, Jews are demons and the Jewish world conspiracy is real, and a race war that ignites Armageddon is imminent.

In the Garden of Eden, according to Swift, Adam and Eve had two sons, Abel and Seth. Eve was also seduced and impregnated by the devil, whose seed produced Cain. The "two-seed" theology posits Adam as the seedline of the white race and Satan as the seedline of the Jews. Blacks and other "nonwhites" were "mud people," preached Swift, the false starts before God made the pure (white) Adam and Eve. Preservation of racial purity or "identity" was the struggle of the Aryan Israelites, maintained Swift, not maintenance of religious identity. If they hoped to maintain their racial identity, then marriages, or any cooperation between Jews and Christians, or between the "races," were forbidden by God.[3]

Swift held firmly to the veracity of *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion,* the infamous Russian forgery purporting to be the plan for a Jewish led conspiracy to take over the world (see below). For Swift, *The Protocols* "proved" the prophecies of Christian Identity and foreshadowed the battle of Armageddon between Jews and Aryans that would soon begin as the next millennium and the Apocalypse unfolded. Swift founded the Church of Jesus Christ—Christian in the 1940s, a ministry that spread the Identity message. Following Swift's death in 1970, his widow, Lorraine, carried on the Church and ministry until turning it over to Kingdom Identity Ministries in 2002.

In addition to their racist and apocalyptic beliefs, most Identity Christians are strongly antigovernment. First and foremost, they believe, the United States is a "Christian Republic," ruled by Christian Common Law, not state and federal laws. Many refuse to pay taxes, use paper money, or send their children to public schools, all of which they believe are unconstitutional. The belief that the U.S. government is a puppet of the Jewish-led one world government has led Identity Christians to distrust all federal and international political organizations, including the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Reserve Bank, the World Bank, and the United Nations. According to Christian Identity, sovereign governments, international organizations, and global corporations are falling like dominoes into the hands of the conspirators.

Ultimately, the prophecy of a one-world government controlled by the Jews will be fulfilled, resulting in slavery for the Aryan race and the attempted extermination by Jews of America's Christian heritage.

At this point the apocalyptic battle between white Israelites and demonic Jews will commence. Unlike other millennial Christians, who believe that prior to Armageddon they will be taken up into the heavens during the "Rapture," Identity Christians believe that they will witness and perhaps participate in the battle of Armageddon. This is why many practice "disaster preparedness" and have been linked to the rise of the survivalism, the militia movement, and other paramilitary extremists in the millennialism drenched final decades of twentieth century America.

Christian Identity remains a marginal religion and subculture, concentrated in small, nondenominational churches and communities in areas of the Southwest, the Pacific Northwest, the Ozarks, and the southern Appalachians. New members are sometimes recruited from other racist or anti-Semitic groups and individuals, such as skinheads and prison inmates, and from the economically marginalized.

Given that many are fearful of government and law enforcement or live as survivalists or separatists, Identity followers tend to keep a low profile. Organizations that track extremist groups, such as The Southern Poverty Law Center and the Boston-based Political Research Associates, estimate that between 10,000–100,000 individuals subscribe to Christian Identity. A Southern Poverty Law Center report identified 94 active Christian Identity ministries in 34 states, ranging from small congregations to the large and imposing LaPorte, Colorado, Church of Christ, run by pastor Pete Peters.[4] In addition, Identity ideas have made inroads into American mainstream culture through Internet Web sites like Christian Identity Online and Kingdom Identity Ministries, the subculture's numerous periodicals, and its sometimes spectacular clashes with American law enforcement. Today Christian Identity has also tried to soften its image and rhetoric and has reached out to some Christian fundamentalist churches and conservative political organizations.

Christian Identity weaves together various religious and political mythologies to forge its uniquely American millennial theology. Among the more significant are myths regarding the demonic nature of the Jews and the Jewish-led conspiracy to control the world, millennial visions of the end times and their role in it, and Identity's relationship to survivalism.

THE MYTH OF THE JEWISH WORLD CONSPIRACY

> I know thy works, and tribulations, and poverty, but thou art rich; and I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan (Rev. 3:9 King James Version).

The demonology of the Jews is at the core of Christian Identity's theology of white Aryan supremacy. It is worth exploring the historical roots of this demonology from which Christian Identity draws so much of its racist millennial mythology. Since the Diaspora—the centuries-long scattering of the Jews outside of the Holy

Land—hostility against the Jews has been ubiquitous. For centuries the foremost allegation against the Jews was that they were the "crucifiers of Christ." One of the most important Christian thinkers of his time, Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430), argued that in refusing to accept Jesus as the messiah, the Jews lost God's favor. Even more serious was the allegation that the Jews were aligned with the Antichrist, the "false prophet" identified in the biblical *Book of Revelation.* According to *Revelation* the Antichrist would rule the world in the years prior to the second coming of Christ. Catholic priests who believed these apocalyptic stories preached to their congregants that the Antichrist would be a Jew. Twelfth century folktales of Jewish deviltry told how the Jews stole and sacrificed Christian children to their God during Passover, and throughout the Crusades the Jews were seen as the servants of Satan. While it is true that popes and bishops condemned these fictions, the lower clergy continued to propagate them, and in the end they became generally believed by the populace, surviving as folk mythology. As Christianity spread throughout Europe, the mythology of the "Synagogue of Satan" became a powerful metaphor for the Jews. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the myths of the demonic Jew survived in Eastern Europe and Poland, and by the twentieth century, anti-Semitism in Europe culminated in the 1930s with the rise of Nazi Germany and Adolph Hitler's "Final Solution."

> It is contended that nations can rise in arms against us if our plans are discovered prematurely; but in anticipation of this we (the Elders of Zion) can rely upon throwing into action such a formidable force as will make even the bravest of men shudder. By then metropolitan railways and underground passages will be constructed in all cities … (and) subterranean places (where) we will explode all the cities of the world, together with their institutions and documents (9th "Protocol" of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*).[5]

Perhaps the most influential forgery concerning world conspiracy is *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*—the supposed conspiracy devised by a cabal of powerful and secretive Jewish elders to seize world power. Scholars have traced the forgery to the Russian secret police, which created *The Protocols* to discredit adversaries of the Russian czar when the Bolshevik Revolution began in 1917. Allegedly written by Jewish "elders," *The Protocols* were supposedly a record of meetings held at Basel, Switzerland, in 1897, at the time of the first Zionist Congress, when Jews and Freemasons hatched the plot to undermine Christianity and gain control of world power. According to the *Protocols,* through a global network of disguised national and international agencies, this secret Jewish cabal controls governments, the media, public opinion, banks, and economic development. In the event that the conspiracy was detected or the insurrection failed, all of Europe's major cities were to be destroyed.

The Russian newspaper *Znamia (Banner)* published an abridged version of *The Protocols* in 1903 and then again in 1905. Subsequently translated into German, French, English, and other languages, *The Protocols* were disseminated to millions of readers during the first three decades of the twentieth century, becoming a classic of anti-Semitic propaganda.[6]

Hitler and his Nazi Party promoted the myth of the Jewish world conspiracy during their rise to power in the 1930s. Writing of "world Jewry" with the zeal of a prophet, Hitler was quite familiar with biblical apocalyptic texts and *The Protocols.* "The Jew goes his fateful way," wrote Hitler in his biography, *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*), "until the day when another power stands up against him and in a mighty struggle casts him, the heaven-stormer, back to Lucifer."[7] The Nazis used *The Protocols* and the mythology of the Jewish world conspiracy to generate popular support for Hitler and his party. At the same time, the extermination of the Jews was seen in mythical terms, as a central chapter in the evolving story of the Aryan Race and the Third Reich.

American industrialist Henry Ford both believed in and promoted *The Protocols* in his newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent.* Often referenced as evidence of a Jewish deception, *The Independent* ran a series on *The Protocols* in 1920, entitled "The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem," which was distributed throughout Michigan and in every Ford dealership across the country. Ford alleged that internationalist Jews were rapidly gaining control of global political and economic institutions and were a major threat to the United States. Ford's biographers note that the same man who helped to create the modern world held a romantic notion of a preindustrialized bucolic past. He blamed the Jews, ironically, for destroying that past, when, in fact, his industrial innovations and achievements did more to erase a bygone rural utopia than all the supposed Jewish cabalists together. A libel suit that could have ruined him forced Ford to make a public apology in 1927, admitting that *The Protocols* were fictitious.

Until his death in 1947, Ford held firmly to the mythology of Jewish world conspiracy and the imminent collapse of western culture and Christianity. It may be that Ford issued the public admission to placate the public, and it also may be that true believers (like Ford) held fast to their convictions in spite of evidence to the contrary. While deemed fraudulent by historians, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* has continued to serve as an excuse and justification for anti-Semitic beliefs. Not surprisingly, *The Protocols* found their way into the sermons, book catalogs, and Web sites of Christian identity. For Identity followers, the Jewish conspiracy is close to achieving its aims, at least until the day when the Aryan race will take on the Synagogue of Satan in the battle of Armageddon.

IDENTITY AND THE MILLENNIAL MYTH

The apocalyptic prophecy of Christian identity derives in part from the millennial myth, whose origins can be found among some of the oldest Hebrew and Christian scriptures, especially those concerning the events leading up to and including the end of the world. The biblical *Apocalypse,* or *Revelation to Saint John the Divine,* is the most famous example of the millennial myth. *Revelation* was written at a time when the new Christian church was under attack for refusing to show reverence for deified Roman emperor Domitian, around 95 CE (Christian Era). *Revelation* was later canonized as the final book of the New Testament in the Christian Bible. What

makes *Revelation* millennial is that its prophecies are "apocalyptic"—about the "end times."

The Roman persecution of Christians is cast by John, the book's author, as the beginning of the final war between the forces of good and evil. As Hebrew prophets had written in the past, John details a series of terrible "tribulations" that will befall the world, climaxing in the rise of the "False Prophet" or Antichrist. Accompanied by an army of Christian saints at His "Second Coming," Jesus Christ the Messiah defeats the Antichrist, brings salvation for true believers, and institutes a new heaven on earth for 1000 years of spiritual bliss—the long prophesied Millennium.

Revelation is a grand myth, in that it provides the "big picture" of human history, proclaiming that there are holy beings guiding and directing human behavior and history. Written in a coded and ambiguous style and language, presumably for its early Christian audience, the millennial mythology of *Revelation* adapts easily, though erratically, to changing historical times and events. Its very ambiguity has allowed multiple, often conflicting interpretations to take root and spread in a great variety of social, cultural or historical settings.[8]

Throughout its history the millennial myth has inspired and supported the development of revolutionary, utopian, and apocalyptic movements. From the Crusades to the Reformation, and from the World Wars to the Cold War, the millennial myth has been used to explain and guide people, including leaders and nations, through dramatically changing times or disastrous events.

American history and culture is steeped in millennial mythology as well. In the American millennial myth Americans are a chosen people and the United States is a holy land. From the nation's manifest destiny to its political demonology, the millennial myth has molded the American character and, at times, American history as well. Historians believe that Columbus's discovery and exploration of the New World was guided in large part by apocalyptic prophecy. The "fire and brimstone" sermons of Puritan ministers were constructed around the stark apocalyptic imagery of the King James Bible. From the demonization of Native American "savages" during the westward movement of European Americans, to America's "mission" to save the world for freedom and democracy, the nation's history has been influenced by a millennial mythology rooted in Judeo-Christian apocalyptic scripture.[9]

Between 1970 and 2000 there was a revitalization of apocalyptic belief and millennial movements in the United States, which continues to the present. From the post-1960s Aquarian Age came the New Age movement, intergalactic messiahs, and the Harmonic Convergence. With the rise of the "religious right" came an "awakening" of fundamentalist and evangelical Christianity. In the wake of America's loss in Vietnam came "secular millennialists" like militias, survivalists, and antigovernment extremists.[10]

Some of the more notorious millennial groups included messianic movements like the survivalist-oriented Branch Davidians, led by self-proclaimed messiah, David Koresh; the Heaven's Gate UFO cult, whose members committed group suicide in anticipation of the alien messiah; and Aum Shinrikyo, the millennial cult linked to the poison gas attacks in the subways of Tokyo in March 1995. The apocalyptic

rhetoric and actions of militant Islamic groups like Al Qaida has been noted in the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, and in militant Islam's holy war against western Christendom and Zionist Jews.[11] Several events have converged to create the resurgence of millennialism during this era. These include widespread social change, globalization, and the turn of the second millennium—important historical changes have always driven the millennial myth.

Christian Identity was another of the more bizarre and dangerous manifestations of late twentieth century American millennialism. The Identity millennial mythology is constructed around tales of demonic Jews, global conspiracies, survivalism, and the approach of Armageddon. The Identity Apocalypse will climax in a race war between the messiah and his white Christian followers against the Antichrist, most likely a Jew, who along with his Jewish armies and teeming "mud peoples" will ultimately be defeated. In any event, they hope to survive Armageddon. [12]

It is perhaps not surprising that Christian Identity would find meaning, as well as a means to take action, in the subculture of survivalism, another site where late twentieth century visions of apocalypse, both sacred and secular, were being manifested. Stripped of religious connotation, survivalism addresses the physical survival of any number of major natural and societal disasters, through crisis relocation, the stockpiling of food and weapons, and the development of survival strategies. In breaking away from society and becoming self-sufficient, survivalists believe they are prepared to survive the coming devastations, whether caused by nature, humankind, or God. Many survivalists are convinced that the nation and the world are on the verge of collapse, and so they have taken steps to prepare for its imminent decline.

Many are distrustful of the federal government and fearful of "globalization," and they are convinced that a global "readjustment" is coming. Unlike Christian Identity, most survivalists are not racists and anti-Semites. Nor are they ready to take violent action against government and law enforcement. While survivalists may be viewed as "secular millennialists," an exaggerated "boy scout" philosophy of "always be prepared" seems to define the character of many members of the subculture.[13]

Filtered through the prism of Christian Identity, survivalism stands for more than simply "being prepared." Like other separatists, some Identity survivalists have decided to withdraw from society as much as possible and to become self-sufficient, living away from what they perceive as a dangerously intrusive and deteriorating society and world. Part of Identity survivalism includes stockpiling weapons, both to protect themselves from intrusive law enforcement, and to participate, quite possibly, in the "end times" events, including the massive race war that Identity theology prophesies will occur. Survivalism offers Identity Christians a plan of action and a chance at "salvation" by surviving Armageddon and perhaps fighting at the side of Christ. Christian Identity fuses survivalism with its racist and anti-Semitic millennial beliefs to produce a fascinating though hateful and volatile American millennial mythology.

It is unclear how many Americans are survivalists, or to what degree survivalism is practiced, especially since concealment of one's "cache" and identity is central to survivalist practice. Federal agencies, like the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and

the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF), and private groups, like the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti Defamation League, keep track of the movements of extremist paramilitary groups of the "survivalist right" such as the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, the Posse Comitatus, and other racist or antigovernment extremists stimulated by Christian Identity.

CONFRONTATION WITH CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

In the 1970s and 1980s the myth of the Jewish-led conspiracy, and copies of *The Protocols* themselves, resurfaced in the literature of Christian Identity and the "survivalist right." A farm crisis in the American heartland, rising unemployment, and a growing millennialism, fueled the evolution of right-wing Christian survivalist groups and communities, especially across the agrarian and rural areas of the country. Spewing the Identity rhetoric of the Jewish world conspiracy as the root of America's problems, some of these groups became linked to paramilitary and survivalist groups, the Ku Klux Klan, and numerous small, shadowy groups of the survivalist right.[14] With the rise of this new and volatile millennial movement came the rekindling of dormant white supremacy in the United States and further and potentially violent expressions of the American millennial myth.

The Posse Comitatus is perhaps the most investigated organization of the survivalist right and one of the earlier Christian Identity influenced groups to gain attention from the public and the government. An American neo-Nazi organization called the "Silver Shirts" gave birth to the Posse in the late 1960s. The *Posse Comitatus Act of 1878* provides the political and theological basis for the contemporary Posse's world view. Passed in the wake of the Civil War, the *Posse Comitatus Act*, in part, restricted the government's use of the Army (later, the Air Force) to enforce domestic laws except where expressly authorized by the Constitution (which they believe is God's law) or Congress. The Posse interpret this to mean that no American is bound to the legal authority of anyone higher that a county sheriff. Many go further, refusing to pay federal taxes, purchase an automobile license, or vote in national elections.

Specifically, they hold that the Act is designed to prevent the military from intervening in local police matters or enforcing domestic laws. The Identity Montana Freemen, who held to the *Posse Comitatus Act,* tried to use constitutional analysis and "common law" procedures and courts to sanction their flouting of local, state, and federal laws in their attempt to create a separatist and autonomous "township" in the spring 1996 standoff with the FBI.

Employing Identity theology, the Posse believes that God gave the Constitution to the nation's founders. Others claim that all Amendments enacted after the Bill of Rights are unconstitutional because they were endorsed and supported by illegal legislative bodies that were doing the bidding of the Jewish-led conspiracy. Particularly abhorrent to Posse members is the Sixteenth Amendment, which allows the national government to tax a personal income. To the Posse, the income tax pays for and justifies the conspiracy. Wealthy and powerful families like the Rockefellers are viewed by the Posse and other Identity Christians as the "Money Czars"—the

major financiers of the new world government. For example, in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1975 the FBI foiled an assassination attempt of Vice President Nelson Rockefeller by Posse Comitatus members.

One of the more spectacular incidents involving the Posse occurred during the manhunt for Posse member Gordon Kahl, a North Dakota tax protester, who became a martyr for the Posse, Christian Identity, and others on the survivalist right. Kahl was imprisoned for failure to file his federal income taxes and for his efforts to promote tax resistance. Upon release, Kahl vowed never to allow himself to be arrested again and continued to refuse paying his taxes or cooperating with the government during his parole.

In February 1983 six U.S. Marshals attempted to arrest Kahl near his hometown of Medina, North Dakota, on the misdemeanor charge of failing to meet his parole officer. A shootout erupted and two U.S. Marshals were killed. Kahl escaped and led federal law enforcers on a manhunt. During the manhunt, Kahl sent letters to the newspaper *The Fargo Forum* defending his actions and blamed the "Jewish-Masonic-Communist Synagogue of Satan," for his troubles. Federal agents tracked Kahl to Smithville, Arkansas, where on June 3, 1983, Kahl's battle with the "forces of darkness" ended. A local sheriff was shot and killed by Kahl as he tried to enter a house where Kahl was hiding out. A gunfight ensued with local police and U.S. Marshals. Kahl's defenders argue that members of an FBI swat team poured diesel fuel into the house's air vent on the roof, causing the house to catch fire and burn for over two hours while the gunfight continued. Kahl's charred remains were later found inside the house.[15]

Perhaps the most infamous Christian Identity organization was The Silent Brotherhood, responsible for a number of robberies, killings, and shootouts with law enforcement in the 1970s and 1980s. But they are best known for their assassination of Alan Berg, a controversial talk radio personality in Denver in the early 1980s. Among Berg's listeners were neo-Nazis, white supremacists, "John Birches," and survivalists, who called at every opportunity to rant about government-funded abortions and homosexual rights. They ridiculed "women's libbers" like Jane Fonda and "liberal pansies" like Senator Ted Kennedy. They argued against immigration and for "Americans first."

They blamed "Jewish bankers" like the Rothschilds, and the "Zionist Occupation Government" in Israel for the economic problems in the United States, as well as the decline of Western Christian civilization in general. Callers also argued that the Jewish Holocaust was a hoax, perpetrated by the Jews in an effort to gain sympathy for their Zionist cause and to discredit the supremacy of the Germans and the larger white race. Some callers put an apocalyptic spin on their arguments, reciting the doctrine of Christian Identity and stating that they belonged to organizations like the Aryan Nations or the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord, or dozens of other small, obscure groups with few members and little influence.

Berg confronted them all; they became his stock in trade. Among those who took Berg's taunts seriously was Robert Jay Matthews, the 31-year-old founder of the Identity inspired *Bruders Schweigen,* or the Silent Brotherhood. The group engaged

in a string of robberies in the 1980s to raise money to help build and maintain their organization. Motivated and justified by the anti-Semitism and apocalyptic beliefs of Christian Identity, the Silent Brotherhood assassinated Berg on the night of June 18, 1984, as Berg was returning home from dinner. Thirteen bullets from an automatic MAC-10 pistol hit Berg, who died instantly.[16]

The shootout at Ruby Ridge, involving Christian Identity follower Randy Weaver, left an indelible mark on the survivalist right and became a rallying cry for antigovernment groups across the United States. Weaver, a 44-year-old Identity survivalist, was suspicious of all government agencies, including law enforcement, the courts, the public schools, and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The main threats to the United States, according to Weaver, were Jews, liberals, and "internationalists." In preparing for the collapse of society and the unraveling of the monetary system, Weaver and his son stockpiled guns and explosives and frequently engaged in target practice on their sprawling ranch home, angering neighbors and attracting the attention of law enforcement.

In the process of purchasing and stockpiling weapons, Weaver was caught in an FBI sting operation involving illegal weapons. Since April 1990, when he ignored a court summons to answer for those violations, Weaver was a fugitive from justice. Along with his wife, four children, and a friend, Weaver withdrew to his mountain retreat for the next 18 months. He swore to oppose any government intrusion on his property, even while a warrant for his arrest had been turned over to the U.S. Marshals. The Marshals devised plans for a possible assault, yet for several months they tried to end the standoff through negotiations. On August 21, 1992, the Marshals attempted to forcibly execute their arrest warrant, prompting a gunfight in which a marshal and Weaver's 13-year-old son Samuel were killed.

The standoff continued into the next day, as agents of the FBI took command. Another shootout ensued between Weaver, family friend Kevin Harris, and federal sharpshooters. Tragically, Weaver's wife Vicky was shot and killed by an FBI marksman as she stood in a doorway holding her infant daughter. Though wounded in the gunfight, Weaver continued to resist until the FBI granted his request for a negotiator—long-time friend, former Green Beret, and fellow Identity Christian, James "Bo" Gritz. A one time third-party presidential candidate and among the most decorated veterans of the Vietnam War, Gritz is rumored to have been the model for Sylvester Stallone's character in the Rambo films.

While complaining to Gritz that he would never get a fair trial in the country's "Babylon court," Weaver finally gave up. Convicted of a misdemeanor for failure to appear before a judge, all other charges were dropped, including the murders of federal officers and the original weapons' charge. Weaver's lawyers convinced a federal jury that the BATF had illegally entrapped their client. The court awarded Weaver and his surviving family $3.1 million for the wrongful deaths of Vicky and Samuel Weaver.[17]

The "attack on Ruby Ridge" became a rallying cry for Christian Identity and the survivalist right, and it served to pump new life into old antigovernment groups like the Christian Patriot Movement and emerging paramilitary groups like the militias.

These groups had been warning of the increasing militarization of law enforcement and the government's willingness to use it against its own citizens. Ruby Ridge, they warned, was only the beginning.

Inspired by Christian Identity and the rise of the survivalist right, other extremist individuals and groups found an opportunity to promote their racist, anti-Semitic, and antigovernment beliefs. Founded in 1957 by Willis Carto, the Liberty Lobby was a new "populist party" that challenged the "internationalist" government in Washington and promoted the values of the organization, its members, and its Identity director. With over 100,000 readers by the mid-1980s, the weekly magazine, *The Spotlight,* expressed the views and strategies of the Liberty Lobby, its parent organization. Besides accounts of government deception and global conspiracy, the magazine featured heartrending stories of the plight of working class Americans. If elected to office, members of the Liberty Party would seek to abolish the IRS, end aid to Israel, and reveal the Holocaust as a hoax.

Since 1993, Carto and the organizations he created and controls, have been involved in a bitter and costly legal and public relations dispute with the Institute for Historical Review, a revisionist publisher with which Carto and his wife were once affiliated. The Institute sued the Cartos after evidence was discovered showing that they embezzled funds from the organization, an accusation later proven in court. The Liberty Lobby and *The Spotlight* have since gone out of business.

Richard Girnt Butler founded the Aryan Nations (also Aryan National Alliance) in 1974 as the political wing of the Christian Identity Church created by Wesley Swift. In the racial strife and farm crisis of the 1970s and 1980s Butler saw the Jewish-led conspiracy and the Antichrist at the heart of social and economic problems in the United States. Pastor of an Idaho-based Church of Jesus Christ–Christian until his death in 2004 at the age of 86, Butler established his church on a 20-acre compound in the vast woods of Northern Idaho on Hayden Lake. With meeting halls, outdoor facilities, a media center, and publishing house, the Hayden Lake Church was home to the annual Aryan Nations World Congress until 2001.

The Hayden Lake Church of Jesus Christ–Christian went bankrupt in 2000, after losing a lawsuit to Victoria and Jason Keenan, who were attacked by Aryan Nations Guards in 1999. The court awarded the Keenans $6.3 million, as well as the Hayden Lake property and all the organization's intellectual property in 2001. With the loss of its leader and its headquarters, the Aryan Nations has decentralized into local and regional groups. The new Aryan Nations World Headquarters and its greatest concentration of adherents now exists in Potter County, Pennsylvania, under the leadership of August Kreis.[18]

Many of these racist and anti-Semitic groups also subscribe to apocalyptic and survivalist beliefs as both practical and spiritual pursuits. "Christian survivalists" like James Ellison, and members of the Covenant, Sword, and Arm of the Lord (CSA), believed they were living in the time of the Apocalypse. Like many survivalists, CSA members saw the world spinning out of control, and civil and global wars would define the future. To survive the coming devastation and societal collapse, they preached "disaster preparedness"—the mantra of survivalism. The group

believed that Armageddon would begin with nuclear war and quickly move to a race war. The Messiah would then call on CSA soldiers to fight with him during these final battles to initiate the "white" Christian Millennium.

The more militant segments of the Posse Comitatus, the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nation, and others have openly advocated a race war, refusing to participate in what they regard as an illegitimate and "unconstitutional" political system. Their goal is to help bring the "system" down. Since the collapse of the entire social, political, and economic system is imminent, it is better to help the system collapse sooner and prepare to survive the coming years of "tribulation" later.

The details of that collapse can be found in the novel *The Turner Diaries,* written in 1978 by Andrew McDonald, under the pseudonym William Pierce, a member of the neo-Nazi National Alliance. The book has become to segments of the survivalist right what *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* were to anti-Semites of the 1930s and 1940s. The fictional story begins in 1991 when a war begins between forces of the Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG) in Washington and white Christian guerrilla warriors. As civil war erupts in the United States, revolutionaries destroy public buildings and utilities, poison reservoirs, and attack the representatives of ZOG, including federal officials, policemen, and politicians. Ultimately, they overthrow the government and purge the country of all Jews and minorities. Whites of mixed marriages and people of mixed race are hanged and draped with signs saying, "They defiled their race." Finally Israel is destroyed with the nuclear arsenal inherited from ZOG.[19]

According to federal authorities, *The Turner Diaries* may have provided inspiration and direction for Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols in the bombing of the federal office building in Oklahoma City in 1995. In the book, white Christian guerrillas bomb a federal building in a manner similar to the Oklahoma City bombing. In any event, there is little doubt that the Oklahoma City bombers were familiar with the racist and apocalyptic beliefs of organizations like Christian Identity and the National Alliance.

The National Alliance also operates National Vanguard Books (NVB), a publishing house for Christian Identity literature and electronic media, whose catalog includes *The Turner Diaries* among its listings. On the inside cover of the 1990 catalog it states: "National Vanguard Books … (are) providers of knowledge and inspiration for the survival of the White race."[20] The catalog offers a free bumper sticker that reads, "Earth's Most Endangered Species: The White Race. Help Preserve It." NVB provides books on a variety of subjects, including European prehistory, archaeology, religion, race, war, and international politics. Alongside Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* and *Bullfinch's Mythology* can be found titles like *White Power, Race and Reality,* and *The Armageddon Network.* There is also an entire section on the Jewish world conspiracy, with books such as *The Zionist Connection, Thirteenth Tribe,* and *The World Conquerors.*

NVB has a children's books section, with books "chosen to serve a racially constructive purpose by providing White role models, instilling White values, (and) building a sense of White identity through the teaching of White history and

legend." Featured books include Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* ("portrays White life at its best), *Aesop' Fables* ("1912 edition has escaped 'sanitizing' by racial equalizers"), and J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* ("draws heavily on pre-Christian White legend and mythology").[21]

In recent years the Liberty Lobby, the National Agricultural Press Association, and other groups who call themselves "Christian Patriots," have attempted to soften their racist and violent rhetoric, hoping to attract more mainstream audiences and political legitimacy. Patriotic, Christian, and wrapped in the American flag, they use politically correct language to make their points, preferring to speak of "globalists," "white rights," and "Christian heritage." They encourage their followers to "get involved" at the grass roots, to run for local office, or to serve on local school boards. Some have formed political action committees to raise funds and support candidates who will enact legislation to abolish the IRS and the Federal Reserve, pull the United States out of the United Nations, and establish the public practice and expression of America's Christian heritage.

Into the 1990s, Christian Identity recruiters achieved some success attracting racist skinheads. Generally white, uneducated, and unemployed, American skinheads are the violent and racist spin-offs of the British punk and skinhead subculture of the 1970s and 1980s. Blaming their problems on affirmative action and immigration, skinheads were involved in numerous violent attacks on blacks, immigrants, gays, and other minorities in the United States and Europe in the past two decades. While not easily organized and prone to favor beer drinking and all night partying above all else, skinheads have found sympathy and support from some in the Identity movement.

At the turn of the millennium, Christian Identity remains a small, largely unorganized extremist religion and subculture, existing on the fringes of society while anticipating the rise of the Jewish Antichrist and the onset of Armageddon. In addition to the shadowy Identity survivalists, the subculture is kept alive in numerous Identity churches, voluminous literature, and several Internet Web sites. Identity "churches" on the Internet in recent years include America's Promise Ministries, Stone Kingdom Ministries, and Kingdom Identity Ministries, now home to Wesley Swift's Church of Jesus Christ–Christian. In addition, numerous Klan Web sites commonly provide information on Christian Identity, some proclaiming it their religion.

Identity religious groups use the Internet to market their ideas and products and recruit new members for their local churches and organizations. The Stone Kingdom Ministries Web site lists hundreds of Christian Identity books and tracts, Bible study tapes, music CDs, bumper stickers, T-shirts, decals, and other merchandise. At the Kingdom Identity Ministries Web site, Identity-based books for children are available, as well as a "Certificate in Christian Education" for graduates in a Christian Identity online "college."[22]

Christian Identity continues to exist as a fringe subculture in the sea of contemporary American extremism and millennialism. Whatever their differences, many in this movement are tightly bound by Christian Identity's ideological and theological

threads. While fueling racial hatred and millennial fears, and in some cases inspiring violence and violent government rebuke, Christian Identity has not generated a unified political and social movement. In the years following Waco, Oklahoma City, and 9/11, the American justice system and federal law enforcement have increased surveillance and arrests of extremists and disrupted the movement of many right-wing, antigovernment groups. In addition, the activities of Identity followers and other violent racists stimulated an interest in "hate crimes"—crimes directed at individuals or groups because of their religion, race, ethnicity, politics, or sexual preference. Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center has successfully sued the Klan and several other racist organizations since the 1990s, thereby severely weakening their financial status and ability to organize.

CONCLUSION

The millennial myth continues to evolve in American culture and throughout the world. In the past, millennial movements often arose during periods of intense social change, natural disaster, or the end of an age or an era. In many ways modern millennial movements like Christian Identity reflect the major social changes that the United States and the entire world experienced at the close of the second millennium CE and the beginning of the third. They reflect the "tribulations" and "plagues" of rapid and widespread social, cultural, and technological changes that are transforming the world into a "new world order" in the rapidly globalizing twenty-first century. The dramatic flourishing of millennial movements at this period in history demonstrates the power of grand myths like the millennial myth to evolve and influence, sometimes in violent ways, individuals, groups, and even nations.

In many ways this was the case in the United States during the zenith of Christian Identity from 1970 to 2000, when it became a seedbed for the fascist millennial dreams of a new Christian white supremacy. In Ruby Ridge, Waco, and Oklahoma City, we saw the crystallization of modern apocalyptic fears translated into acts of violence and destruction in a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. Today the fears of Identity Christians have not abated, as they point to the problem of uncontained immigration, the loss of American jobs to developing nations, wars in the Middle East, and the threat of international terrorism. From the Jews the demonology has extended to the American government, to organizations connected with the international order, and to the Islamic world. "Globalization" is now a code word for Babylon—the doomed center of the Antichrist's worldly power.

Perhaps the greatest danger that Christian identity and other potentially violent forms of millennialism pose to society is their self-fulfilling prophecy. When you believe that the prophecies of your millennial mythology are both righteous and imminent, and that you are justified in participating in those prophecies, then the potential for violence increases dramatically. We saw this in the many instances where Identity Christians, acting on their beliefs through separation, resistance, and violence, legitimate the violent acts against them with more violent acts, often resulting in the death and destruction of themselves and others.

NOTES

1. Edward Hines, *Identification of the Ten Tribes of Israel with the Anglo-Celtic-Saxons* (Vancouver, Canada: The Association of Covenant People, 1970).

2. Herbert Armstrong's son, Garner Ted Armstrong, served with his father at the Worldwide Church Of God, in Pasadena, California until 1978, when his father threw him out of the church over charges of sexual impropriety. Following his separation from the Church, Garner Ted founded the Intercontinental Church of God and The Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association, both located in Tyler, Texas. Garner Ted Armstrong's organizations continued to promote the tenets of British Israelism. In 1997, the leadership of the Church of God International removed Garner Ted from Church leadership following new accusations about his sexual misconduct. Garner Ted then created a new organization, The Intercontinental Church Of God, which comes under the umbrella of his Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association. After his death in 2003, his son, Mark Armstrong, assumed control of The Intercontinental Church Of God and its affiliated organizations.

3. Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

4. Southern Poverty Law Center Web site, "Identity Crisis: Expanding Race-Hate Faith Underlies Movement," www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?pid=755 (2005).

5. Sergei A. Nilus, trans., *World Conquest Through World Government: The Protocols of The Learned Elders of Zion. The Protocols* can be found on the Internet, accessed through Christian Identity, Patriot, and militia Web sites.

6. Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Serif Publishing, 1996 [1966]).

7. Ibid., 189.

8. Philip Lamy, *Millennium Rage: Survivalists, White Supremacists and the Doomsday Prophecy* (New York: Plenum, 1996).

9. Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1992); Michael Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie: And Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation, The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

10. Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Daniel Wojcik, *The End of the World as We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America: Millenarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer, eds., *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Philip Lamy, *Millennium Rage: Survivalists, White Supremacists and the Doomsday Prophecy* (New York: Plenum, 1996).

11. Richard Landes, "Apocalyptic Islam and Bin Laden," Center for Millennial Studies Web Site, www.mille.org/people/rlpages/Bin_Laden.html (2001).

12. Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right;* Lamy, *Millennium Rage.*

13. Philip Lamy, "Secularizing the Millennium: Survivalists, Militias and the New World Order," *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements,* ed. Robbins and Palmer.

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Judaism and Christianity Unite!: The Unique Culture of Messianic Judaism

Yaakov Ariel

In the late 1960s and 1970s, both Jews and Christians in the United States were surprised to see the rise of a vigorous movement of Jewish Christians or Christian Jews. For many observers such a combination seemed like an oxymoron, because they saw the two faiths as completely separate from each other. While Christianity started in the first century of the Common Era as a Jewish group, it quickly separated from Judaism and claimed to replace it; ever since the relationship between the two traditions has often been strained. But in the twentieth century groups of young Jews claimed that they had overcome the historical differences between the two religions and amalgamated Jewish identity and customs with the Christian faith. Attempting to overcome the historical differences between the two religious traditions, these Jewish converts to Christianity define themselves as Messianic Jews, thus pointing to the movement's ideology of returning to the roots of the Christian faith. To some Jews and Christians such groups are a curiosity, a symptom of "crazy times," and they view the new movement as they look upon other New Religious Movements (NRMs), as a "cult." But others accept the new movement of Messianic Jews.

Messianic Judaism developed throughout the period from the 1980s through 2000s into a large movement. By the early 2000s, there were about 400 Messianic congregations making a noticeable presence on the American religious scene. There are currently Messianic congregations or fellowships in virtually every city in the United States, wherever a Jewish community of a few hundred families or more exists. Whereas previously membership was almost insignificant in comparison to the larger Jewish population, the size of the current movement is larger than that of Reconstructionist Judaism. From both a Jewish and a Christian point of view, Messianic Judaism signified a new development in the history of their faith.

How the movement struggled to do justice to the two religious traditions and the challenges it faced can shed light on the relationship between the two faiths. Further, it can point to the dynamics of an NRM at the turn of the twenty-first century that defies previous conventions and establishes new ones instead.

THE ROOTS OF A NEW MOVEMENT

Even before the rise of Messianic Judaism, there were groups that promoted the creation of congregations of Jewish believers in Jesus. The roots of this ideology are in previous attempts to promote the idea that Jews who embraced the Christian faith could still view themselves as Jewish and even establish their own communities. Eighteenth and nineteenth century Pietist and Evangelical missions to the Jews in Central Europe, Great Britain, and the United States were the first Christian bodies to create an ideology that made being *both* Jewish and Christian possible. Their missions promoted Jewish symbols, such as the Star of David or the Menorah, and advocated the position that accepting the Christian faith did not contradict retention of Jewish identity.[1]

Abandoning traditional Christian claims to have inherited God's promises to Israel, such Pietists and Evangelicals were motivated by a biblical-Messianic premillennialist view that considered the Jews to be the Chosen People and heirs to the covenant between God and Israel. In addition to faith in Jesus's Messiahship, Pietists and Evangelicals held to a messianic faith in the imminent arrival of Jesus to redeem earth. This premillenialism inspired their missions, offering further incentive for evangelizing the Jews.[2] Dispensational premillennialism, the dominant Christian messianic faith in our generation, remains a central theological element of Jewish Christian groups, energizing them for further evangelism and recruiting more Jews to form congregations of Jewish Christians.

In the nineteenth century many attempts were made in the United States to create Hebrew Christian Brotherhoods, designed as centers for Jews who converted to Christianity. But such experiments were short-lived. The number of American Jewish converts was small, and the few Jews who converted felt no need to join the brotherhoods. Jewish converts established their own organization in Great Britain as early as 1860 and in the United States in 1915.[3] Most members of these Hebrew Christian organizations were active missionaries or ministers in various Protestant churches, and their willingness to create separate Jewish Christian congregations was limited.[4]

In the late nineteenth century Joseph Rabinowitz (1837–1899), a Zionist activist who converted to Christianity, directed a congregation of Christian Jews in Kishinef, which at that time was part of Russia. The London-based Mildmay Mission to the Jews sponsored this experiment.[5] Rabinowitz's center was known among American missionaries, who praised his work and invited him to evangelize in the United States. In the early 1890s, the Hope of Israel mission established a congregation of Jewish converts to Christianity in the Lower East Side of New York City. This effort succeeded because the mission's directors, Arno Gaebelein and his deputy Ernest Stroeter, believed that Jews who accepted Christianity had the right to observe the Jewish Law.[6] However, many of the early attempts at building Jewish congregations were short-lived. Gaebelein gave up on the idea of separate Jewish Christian congregations and disbanded his group. Rabinowitz's congregation in Kishinef dissolved following his death. The Christian evangelical community as a whole did not see a particular merit in encouraging the establishment of Jewish Christian communities.

For Christians, "Judaizing" was traditionally considered heresy, and many Christians were alarmed at "Judaizing tendencies" and had difficulty relating to the new Jewish congregations as legitimate churches. The converts, for their part, were often afraid that the authenticity of their conversions was suspected by Christians, and generally they joined non-Jewish churches.[7] Even those converts who did wish to congregate with fellow Jews were reluctant to do so since they did not feel that their Protestant environment approved of separate communities of Jewish Christians.[8]

In the 1930s, Presbyterian missionaries initiated the establishment of several Hebrew Christian congregations under their auspices. The director of the Department of Jewish Evangelization of the Presbyterian Church, USA, John S. Conning, considered it more economical to create independent Jewish congregations that would serve as centers of evangelization and would raise funds on their own, rather than keeping fully subsidized missionary centers. The leaders of the newly created Presbyterian Jewish communities believed that many converts would feel more at home in communities of their own, where being Jewish and acting Jewish was normative. Some of those congregations attempted to create a unique Jewish-Christian liturgy, but mostly they followed Presbyterian hymnology.[9] These Presbyterian congregations are the oldest Jewish-Christian communities in the United States and the most obvious forerunners of the Messianic Jewish movement.

In addition to congregations, numerous individuals expressed a combined Jewish Christian identity prior to the rise of Messianic Judaism. One was Joseph H. Cohn (1886–1953) of the American Board of Missions to the Jews, who expressed in his autobiography, published in the 1950s, a strong sense of Jewish identity and pride vis à vis the evangelical community, whose approval and support he wanted.[10] The novelty of the Messianic Jewish movement in the 1970s, and its Jewish-Christian ideology, was that a set of ideas previously expressed only sporadically, partially, and hesitantly, found a stronger and more assertive voice and became a more acceptable option for Jewish converts to Christianity, as well as gained more acceptance and support in the larger Christian evangelical community. Although missionaries to the Jews were alarmed when they first confronted the more assertive and independent movement of Messianic Judaism, nonetheless they were the ones responsible, if indirectly, for the very conception (if not birth) of Messianic Judaism. The ideology, rhetoric, and symbols they promoted for generations provided the background for the rise of a new movement that missionaries at first rejected as going too far, but later embraced enthusiastically.

Like other NRMs of the period, Messianic Judaism represented a remarkable freedom of choice and selection, including the amalgamation of traditions, which were considered by previous generations to be alien and hostile to each other. The crossing of historical boundaries offered members of Messianic Judaism a sense of mission—they were working to "make things right" and bring together the truth and beauty of both religions: the faith in Jesus, or Yeshua, with the belief in the special role of Israel in history and the traditional symbols of Judaism. In previous generations, the missionary claim that Jews could be true to their Jewishness while adopting the Christian faith did not persuade potential Jewish converts. To both Jews and Christians, Jews

were Jews, and Christians were Christians. But the generation that came of age in the 1960s and 1970s thought differently about these matters. They wanted to make their own choices and did not feel constrained by old boundaries and taboos. Judaism and Christianity could go hand in hand. Its conservative character in matters of personal morality notwithstanding, Messianic Judaism is a product of the age and the generation that allowed itself unprecedented freedom of choice and self-fulfillment. The new movement turned conversion to Christianity into an exciting option; one was not joining the traditional "old" Christianity, but rather a young, enthusiastic version that worked around the traditional definition of Christianity as an alien religious community.

THE RISE OF MESSIANIC JUDAISM

In the first phase of the movement, during the early and mid-1970s, Jewish converts to Christianity established several congregations at their own initiative. Unlike the previous communities of Jewish Christians, Messianic Jewish congregations were largely independent of control from missionary societies or Christian denominations, even though they still wanted the acceptance of the larger evangelical community. On the other hand, most new congregations of Messianic Jews during the late 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s were established on the initiative, or at least with the assistance, of missionary societies that appreciated the relative success of Messianic communities in promoting conversions of Jews to Christianity. Yet the fact that the early congregations were independent of missionary or denominational control shaped much of the self-perception of the movement as well as its image within the Christian evangelical camp. In its own eyes, it has been an independent movement that made its own choices and decisions, and as such was much more assertive and outgoing in its Jewishness than previous expressions of Christian-Jewish life.[11] With those new congregations Messianic Judaism was born.

The term Messianic Judaism came into public use in America in the early 1970s, to designate groups or individuals who viewed themselves as fully Christian and fully Jewish at the same time, and were assertive about their ability and right to express both Jewish identity and the Christian faith. The term, however, was not entirely new. It was used in internal debates in the community of converts as early as the beginning of the century. At that time, it referred to a very small minority of converts who wanted to retain elements of Jewish tradition and law.[12] When the term resurfaced in Israel in the 1940s to 1950s, it designated all Jews who accepted Christianity in its Protestant evangelical form. Missionaries such as the Southern Baptist Robert Lindsey noted that for Israeli Jews, the term *nozrim,* "Christians" in Hebrew, meant, almost automatically, an alien, hostile religion. Because such a term made it nearly impossible to convince Jews that Christianity was their religion, missionaries sought a more neutral term, one that did not arouse strong negative feelings. They chose *Meshichyim,* Messianic, to overcome the suspicion and antagonism of the term *nozrim.*[13] *Meshichyim* as a term also had the advantage of emphasizing messianism as a major component of the Christian evangelical belief that the missions and

communities of Jewish converts to Christianity propagated. It conveyed the sense of a new, innovative religion rather that an old, unfavorable one. The term was used in reference to those Jews who accepted Jesus as their personal Savior, and did not apply to Jews accepting Roman Catholicism who in Israel have called themselves Hebrew Christians.[14] The term Messianic Judaism was adopted in the United States in the early 1970s by those converts to evangelical Christianity who advocated a more assertive attitude on the part of converts towards their Jewish roots and heritage. At the turn of the twenty-first century many Jewish Christians began using the term "Jewish Believers in Jesus," to designate all Jews who practice Christianity, including groups of Jews other than Messianic Jews. Thus, different terms exist to describe the different groups of Jewish believers in Jesus.[15]

The rise of Messianic Judaism had much to do with the atmosphere that developed in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Six Day War in 1967 strongly affected both Jewish self-perception and the manner in which evangelical Christians viewed the Jews. It profoundly affected Jewish converts to evangelical Christianity. As a result of that war, Jewish converts' status was raised within the larger evangelical milieu. The war also boosted their self-esteem, their interest in their roots, and their desire to remain part of the Jewish people. Jewish converts published articles and books to convey their impressions of the Six Day War and its impact, expressing pride in Israel and in their Jewish heritage.[16] Impressed by the positive attitude that developed in evangelical circles towards Jews and Israel, converts felt that they had more room within the larger evangelical community to celebrate their unique heritage and their feelings of attachment to the Jewish people.

Another cultural development helped reinforce such an attitude. The same years that saw a profound shift in Jewish converts' self-image as well as their status in American society also witnessed dramatic changes in the way Americans related to ethnic heritage in general. Whereas previously American Jews tended to eradicate tribal features, that trend in those years reversed.[17] Not only Jews but African Americans, Native Americans, and others found renewed pride in their roots, emphasizing their unique ethnic attributes.[18] In such an atmosphere, the prospect of Jews joining Anglo-Saxon, "Gentile" Christian congregations and disappearing into the general non-Jewish milieu seemed less attractive than before.

Amazingly, the encounters of Jewish converts with the evangelical community only helped to reinforce such notions, since evangelicals were also taking a renewed interest in Jews. The 1970s witnessed something of an awakened interest in Jewish culture, history, and spirituality among young American Jews.[19] For Jews, as for others, the resurgence of ethnicity was not merely nostalgia, but rather helped them integrate their perceptions of their collective past into their current identities.[20] This new emphasis in American culture on ethnicity and ethnic pride, together with a renewed interest in Jews and Israel in the aftermath of the Six Day War, provides the background for the rise of Messianic Judaism and accounts for its relative success in attracting young Jewish men and women. The cultural context also explains the movement's acceptance by the evangelical community.

CONGREGATIONS

Beth Messiah in Cincinnati holds the honor of being the first congregation of the new movement. Its founder and first leader, Martin Chernoff (d. 1985), began as a missionary on behalf of the Chicago-headquartered American Association for Jewish Evangelism, a premillennialist evangelical missionary group. What later developed into an independent Messianic Jewish congregation started as a missionary center.[21] In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a relatively large number of Jewish students from the University of Cincinnati responded to Chernoff's evangelism by declaring their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Never before had a mission to the Jews succeeded in converting, in a relatively short time, such a large and dynamic group of young people. This group held great promise for the community of Jewish converts, in later years producing many leaders of the Messianic Jewish movement in the United States. The Cincinnati congregation chose to become independent from missionary control, acquiring a distinct character of its own. It was assertively Jewish, and, in contrast to the American Association for Jewish Evangelism and other major missions to the Jews during this period, became Charismatic. It incorporated enthusiastic modes of prayer, such as extensive use of music, the raising and clapping of hands, dancing during the service, and such practices as "being slain in the Spirit." The new community struggled from the 1970s to the 2000s to find a path that would allow expression of its Christian beliefs, its Charismatic worship style, and its renewed emphasis on its Jewish roots. Incorporation of Jewish elements was gradual, as would be the case in other Messianic Jewish congregations, and was not without debates and struggles.

Another early congregation, even more central within Messianic Judaism, was Beth Yeshua in Philadelphia. The story of Beth Yeshua resembles that of Beth Messiah, as the new group also broke away from a missionary center to create a new community. Its history reveals the reasons why young Jews during the late 1960s and early 1970s were attracted to evangelical Christianity. The group that served as the nucleus for Beth Yeshua was known originally as Fink's Zoo. In the late 1960s, Joe Finkelstein, a chemist and Jewish convert to Christianity, gathered at his home in Philadelphia a group of Jewish teenagers who were looking for an alternative to their parents' middle-class environment. They also yearned for a haven from the more dangerous aspects of the 1960s counterculture. In the guise of a rebellious act—choosing a new and historically alien religious community—the converts actually embraced a conservative lifestyle, which promoted middle-class values and offered a sense of security.[22] The Messianic communities advocated abstinence from drugs, alcohol, and premarital sexual intercourse and encouraged their members to work hard and obey the law. Finkelstein brought the new converts to the Presbyterian-sponsored Hebrew Christian center in downtown Philadelphia, where they worshipped and worked for a number of years. But these young adults did not take well to the older Jewish-Presbyterian congregation. They viewed the downtown community, which was established in the 1930s by the Department of Jewish Evangelization of the Presbyterian Church USA, as too stiff and "square," lacking in both

spiritual expression and Jewish atmosphere.[23] They decided to establish their own congregation.

Like Beth Messiah, Beth Yeshua also chose to become Charismatic, incorporating such features as raising of hands, and performing songs and dances as part of the members' expression of faith. Like its sister congregation in Cincinnati, it struggled throughout the period from the 1970s to the 2000s to express its identity as simultaneously a Jewish and a Charismatic Christian community. The biggest problem they faced was how many traditional Jewish artifacts and symbols to incorporate into worship. The congregation eventually chose to conduct its weekly prayer meetings on Friday nights, asked its male members and guests to wear *yarmulkes,* short round head coverings, during prayers, and decided to light Shabbat candles before the service. It even installed an Ark with a Torah scroll in the prayer hall. These changes did not come about at once, and not without deliberations within the community.

Beth Yeshua is composed of upper-middle-class, well-to-do professionals. The socioeconomic status of the community, which is above the average for Messianic congregations, helped the community to develop its own agenda. It could do well on its own without the support of missionary societies or denominational bodies, and therefore did not have to conform to the latter's tastes and expectations. This does not mean that the congregation wished to exclude itself from larger Christian communities. But it did allow the congregation considerable freedom to pursue the incorporation of elements from Jewish tradition.

Beth Yeshua's affiliation with the Charismatic movement is manifested in its style of worship and in its affinity with the larger Charismatic community. In the 1990s, for example, the congregation adopted a Charismatic practice known as the "Toronto Blessing" or "Being Slain in the Spirit," a devotional scene attributed to the Holy Spirit in which members fall on the floor, helped by other congregants, who hold them and see to it that they stay safe. Members of the community traveled to Toronto, Ontario, to observe the new practice, and maintain close contact with other Charismatic congregations around the world. On traveling to Israel, for example, they visited and prayed at Charismatic Messianic congregations rather than at non-Charismatic ones.[24]

Situated in a middle-class Jewish neighborhood in Philadelphia, Beth Yeshua is one of the larger Messianic congregations, with several hundred adults participating in its activities. A few of the congregation's members play an active role in the Messianic Jewish movement. Martin Chernoff and David Chernoff, father and son who served consecutively as the pastors or Messianic rabbis of the congregation, also served as successive presidents of the American Messianic Jewish Alliance. Joel Chernoff, also a son of Martin Chernoff, led "Lamb," one of the better-known Messianic Jewish musical bands, and also served for several years as the president of the Messianic Jewish Alliance. Joe Finkelstein also served as a president of that organization. Another member of the congregation, Dr. Robert Winer, a neurologist and historian of Messianic Judaism, served as the head of the Alliance's public relations committee. The congregation established a day school, Chalutzim (Pioneers, in Hebrew), where children of members can study from kindergarten to high school.

The school's name, which carries a strong Zionist connotation, is indicative of Messianic Judaism's strong support of Israel.

Like all Messianic congregations, Beth Yeshua is committed to the evangelization of Jews. In the 1980s it established its own evangelism agency. But even without an adjunct missionary organization, the Messianic congregation serves as a natural and vibrant center of evangelism. Messianic congregations promote the Christian message merely by existing in their given locales. Members invite friends to attend services, and curious observers and seekers also come by. Almost all sermons are evangelistic in nature, striving to inspire conversion among the nonconverted in the audience. They emphasize the necessity of accepting Jesus as Savior, being born again in Christ, and cultivating the view that Jewish converts become better Jews when they accept Jesus as their Savior. Messianic leaders consider their achievements in evangelism to surpass those of specially designated missions to the Jews, and consider their enterprises to be beneficial for the propagation of the Gospel among the Jews.[25] Since the late 1970s, the tensions between the established missions and the Messianic movement eased considerably.[26] Missions now recognize the merits of Messianic congregations as centers of evangelism and began founding such congregations themselves. Missionary societies such as the Chosen People Ministries, Jews for Jesus, Ariel Ministries, and denominations such as the Assemblies of God, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and the Southern Baptist Convention decided to establish and support congregations of Messianic Jews.[27] In the eyes of such missionary groups, these congregations proved to be effective in evangelizing Jews, as they demonstrated both the spiritual and communal merits of the Christian evangelical faith, and were particularly compelling for those Jews who wished to retain their Jewish identity and continued to identify with Jewish causes. They also presented a new relationship between evangelists and prospective converts based on interaction among peers of similar ages and backgrounds.[28] Messianic Jews in all walks of life served as undeclared and nonprofessional evangelists, by just being who they were: arousing curiosity, answering questions, offering literature, and inviting friends and acquaintances to attend services.

The American Board of Missions to the Jews became a major initiator in that field, sponsoring the establishment of dozens of new congregations. This became their major agenda.[29] The first congregation the mission opened was the Olive Tree, in a northwestern suburb of Chicago.[30] This congregation, like many earlier ones, emerged out of an older missionary outpost. Adus was a Presbyterian missionary center. Presbyterian commitment to evangelizing Jews decreased considerably, and to overcome a budget crisis and avoid closing the center, the Presbyterians first turned Adus into a joint project with the American Board of Missions to the Jews, and later transferred it altogether into the hands of the American Board. In 1976, the Board decided to turn the missionary center into a Messianic Jewish congregation. From the perspective of the Board, it proved to be a spectacular success.[31] Its first years as a Messianic congregation were so successful that the Olive Tree produced a sister congregation, the Vineyard, in a western suburb. This left the Olive Tree a not very large community, with a membership of no more than 100 people. Some of the

members also belong to non-Jewish churches. Established by the American Board of Missions to the Jews, the Olive Tree is noncharismatic and takes a nontraditionalist outlook on expressing its Jewishness.[32] The services in the Olive Tree have no chanting of the Torah in its customary Jewish form, for example. Similarly, the members have not worn *yarmulkas* or *Talitot, prayer shawls,* during the services, and the assembly hall does not contain an ark.[33] The Olive Tree's non-Charismatic character explains in part its small constituency, as many Jewish converts to evangelical Christianity in the northern suburbs of Chicago prefer to join Charismatic non-Jewish congregations, such as the Vineyard Fellowship in Evanston.[34] In a manner typical to many Messianic communities, the Olive Tree shares a building with a Korean congregation. The Jewish group meets on Saturdays, and the Korean one on Sundays. The Korean congregation is similar in faith and character, and the sharing of space signifies the affinity. The arrangement also demonstrates mutual recognition and acceptance of ethnically oriented congregations by the larger evangelical community.

While the American Board embraced the idea of Messianic congregations and turned them into its means of evangelism, the congregations it established were not the independent, more traditionalist and Charismatic congregations that formed the emerging Messianic Jewish movement of the early 1970s. By sponsoring congregations, missionary groups influenced their character, and as a result these congregations are milder and less assertively Jewish than the revolutionary congregations of the early 1970s. In describing the first congregation in Northern Chicago, its first pastor, John Bell, spoke about "planting Jewish oriented Church[s]." Another missionary of the American Board wrote: "If we can share the Gospel with a Jewish accent, we can have a local congregation with a Jewish flavor that is reaching out to Jews and Gentiles."[35] The missionary sponsorship of congregations affected Messianic Judaism, which blended more and more with the missionary organizations, turning at times into a single movement. Perhaps not surprisingly, the American Board of Missions to the Jews decided in the 1980s to change its name, remove the term "missions" and adopt a more neutral name "The Chosen People Ministries." It signified the mission's premillennialist understanding of the Jewish people and its role in history and demonstrated its desire not to be identified with missions but rather to adopt the Messianic Jewish rhetoric and vocabulary.

THE CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH REACTION

How did the established communities of Christians and Jews welcome the Messianic Jewish movement? Amazingly, the missionary community, whose theology and message helped bring about the rise of Messianic Jewish congregations, at first reacted with suspicion. Their initial reaction is epitomized by that of the Fellowship of Christian Testimonies (FCTJ) to the Jews, the umbrella organization of missions to the Jews at the time.

In the missionaries' eyes, Messianic Judaism represented misguided forms of Jewish pride, and could compromise the status and achievements of the entire missionary movement. Members of the FCTJ resented not only the more assertive liturgical

innovations of the Messianic Jewish movement, but also the fact that Christian Jews created a network of congregations outside the auspices of established missions, or Christian denominational bodies. The representatives of the missions were aware that it was their work and ideology that had brought about the new movement. But they feared that Messianic Jews went beyond accepted theology and customs of the evangelical community and therefore could become an embarrassment for them.

On its annual meeting held at Keswick, a renowned evangelical Christian conference center, October 16–19, 1975, the organization adopted a statement, which denounced Messianic Judaism. Parts of it read:

> Whereas a segment of Messianic Judaism claims to be a synagogue, and not a church, we of the FCTJ affirm that the New Testament clearly distinguishes between the synagogue and the church; therefore, Bible-believing Hebrew Christians should be aligned with the local church in fellowship with Gentile believers.
>
> Whereas a segment of Messianic Judaism adopts the practices of rabbinic Judaism (instituted by Jewish leadership who rejected the Person and work of Jesus Christ), e.g. kosher laws, wearing skullcaps and prayer shawls, et al., we of the FCTJ affirm that any practice of culture, Jewish or non-Jewish, must be brought into conformity with New Testament theology.
>
> Whereas a segment of Messianic Judaism isolates itself from the local church rebuilding the "middle wall or partition," thus establishing a pseudo-cultural pride, we of the FCTJ affirm the necessity of Hebrew Christian expressing his culture and his spiritual gifts in the context of the local church, thus edifying the Body of Christ as a whole, and not an isolated pseudo-culture.
>
> Whereas a segment of Messianic Judaism opposed the usage of terms such as "Jesus," "Christ," "Christian," "cross," et al, and insists on using the Hebrew terms *exclusively,* we of the FCTJ affirm that though we endorse tactfulness in witness, we reject a presentation of the Gospel which is a subtle attempt to veil and camouflage the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The resolution indicates that what particularly alarmed some missionaries was the fact that among Messianic Jews, some manifested a positive attitude towards the observance of Jewish rites and customs.[36] The language used by the FCTJ indicates, however, that the members of the organization were not always fully acquainted with the atmosphere of the new Messianic congregations. Although Messianic Judaism strove for recognition both by Christians and Jews, it did not attempt to become a Jewish denomination alongside Orthodox or Conservative Judaism. Many Messianic Jews agreed with the theological standing reflected in the resolution. They did not try to join the Synagogue, but rather attempted to become a new subdivision within the evangelical movement. The doctrinal basis of the FCTJ, as well as Messianic Jewish communities, was the traditional, almost standard conservative evangelical creed of the time. It included clauses that asserted the supreme authority of the Scriptures and reaffirmed an orthodox view of the Trinity and of the nature and role of Jesus Christ. As a body representing a premillennialist outlook, it also endorsed the belief in the imminent second coming of Jesus. Messianic Jewish congregations promoted the same articles of faith. What the missionaries who gathered at the annual meeting

of the FCTJ did not perceive accurately was the willingness of the evangelical community to accept such a conformist subdivision as the Messianic Jews.[37]

Although the FCTJ was suspicious towards the Messianic Jewish movement, its members nonetheless invited Larry Rice, the general secretary of the Messianic Jewish Alliance, to present his objections to the FCTJ's negative standing on Messianic Judaism. This sign of openness in the midst of suspicion proved significant. Not long after the FCTJ condemnation, the missionary movement began coming to terms with Messianic Judaism and its methods, adjusting itself to the new changes, and tried to make the most of the new Messianic ideology and methods to help advance evangelism among Jews. Missions that promoted the FCTJ denouncement of Messianic Judaism and published it in their journals, such as the American Board of Missions to the Jews, changed their minds about that just a few years later and became, by the 1980s, sponsors of Messianic congregations.

The change in the missions' attitude resulted from the realization that they had not interpreted the situation correctly. In fact, the evangelical community was much more open to Messianic Judaism than they thought. There was, at first, a certain amount of uncertainty in evangelical circles, during the early and mid-1970s, concerning Messianic congregations. These constituted a new development, and many in the evangelical community were uninformed about its exact nature and purpose. Major evangelical publications such as *Christianity Today, Missiology,* or *Moody Monthly* published articles in which spokesmen of Messianic Judaism presented their case. As such accommodations indicate, there was no immediate rejection or censorship of the movement. The evangelical community was willing to give Messianic Judaism a hearing.

In 1974, *Christianity Today* published an article that told the story of a Jewish family of converts entitled, "More Jewish Than Ever—We've Found the Messiah."[38] This article was preceded by a more theological essay by Louis Goldberg entitled "The Messianic Jew."[39] A professor at the Moody Bible Institute and the director of its department of Jewish evangelization, Goldberg presented himself as a Messianic Jew, a daring act considering the antagonism of the missionary community that historically had cosponsored the department at Moody. Messianic Jews, he claimed, were Jewish believers in Jesus as the Messiah and were part of the Church —the body of the true believers. As such, the professor of Jewish evangelism argued, they were "princes of God," persons who came to know God. But as Goldberg saw it, Jews who accepted Jesus were not merely Christians who happened to be of Jewish origin. As Jews, they served a special role as witnesses to fellow Jews. The call to the evangelical community to accept Messianic Jews as a legitimate group was based on the idea that Messianic Jews were especially effective as evangelists to other Jews. Nonconverted Jews, regular Christians, and Jewish believers in Jesus, each had different roles in history, the Moody professor asserted. The place for Jewish believers in Jesus, he concluded, was with all Christians in the local assemblies, but they still had the right to take interest in their brethren and be attached to them.

Goldberg's openness to Messianic Judaism made the Moody Bible Institute and the program he directed attractive to the new generation of Jewish converts. These

were interested in the very kind of education the program offered. Similarly, a new, dynamic missionary organization, Jews for Jesus, built a working relationship with the department at Moody—among other things, students in the program did field work with Jews for Jesus ministries. Moody served as a vehicle through which Messianic Jewish activists became members of the missionary or Messianic Jewish leadership. Since the 1980s, graduates of the program pursued careers not only as missionaries but also as leaders and pastors of Messianic congregations and institutions. None of the Messianic Jews who studied at the Moody Bible Institute were "traditionalists," wore yarmulkes, or kept the Jewish dietary laws. The Jewish program, however, has celebrated Jewish holidays such as *Rosh HaShana,* the Jewish New Year's Eve.

Another open defender of Messianic Judaism was James Hutchens, who wrote a doctoral dissertation at the evangelical school Fuller Theological Seminary, "A Case For Messianic Judaism." Hutchens, who converted to Judaism while holding his belief in the Messiahship of Jesus, advocated Messianic Judaism as a means for Jews to accept the Christian faith while retaining the cultural components of their Jewish heritage. He believed that it would help overcome Jewish opposition to conversion.[40] Beyond "the core faith," the cultural dress was variable, he contended, and open for choice.[41] That such a dissertation could be written and approved in a conservative evangelical theological seminary was proof that evangelicalism as a whole was much more open and inclusive than the old guard missionaries had presumed. Fuller Theological Seminary might have been more inclusive and open to cultural variations than other conservative evangelical schools,[42] but other evangelical institutions of higher learning, such as Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, the Moody Bible Institute, and the Dallas Theological Seminary, also opened their doors to Messianic Jews. Being admitted to such schools signaled acceptance by the heart of the conservative evangelical community.

Non-Jewish evangelical observers did not take the missionary point of view either. *The Moody Monthly,* the bulletin of the Moody Bible Institute, published, as early as 1972, "A Breakthrough for Messianic Judaism," an article that presented the movement in very positive terms and noted its potential for converting large numbers of Jews. "The ministry of sharing Jesus with Jewish people is a much more rewarding enterprise than it was a decade or so ago," the journal noted. *Christianity Today* published a series of articles starting in 1971 on Messianic Judaism in an approving, even enthusiastic tone.[43] *Christianity Today* continued to publish favorable articles on Messianic Judaism, demonstrating the interest in and support for the movement by mainstream American evangelicalism.

The positive response of members of the evangelical camp towards Messianic Judaism is best illustrated by a book published in the early 1980s by an evangelical scholar. David Rausch, a professor at Ashland Theological Seminary of Ashland, Ohio, traveled among the fledgling Messianic congregations of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and wrote sympathetically on the movement. He was particularly appreciative of individuals who chose to incorporate Jewish observance with Christian evangelical beliefs.[44] Rausch defended Messianic Judaism in the pages of the more

liberal Protestant weekly *Christian Century.*[45] "The fact that Judaism and Christianity are not incompatible has, it seems, been a well-guarded secret" he approvingly quoted a Messianic leader as saying.[46]

Arguments for and against the existence of a separate network of Jewish Christian congregations continued to appear in Christian evangelical publications. Generally Messianic Jews have been welcomed as members of the larger evangelical community. Whereas on the whole evangelical Christians were open to accepting Messianic Judaism, liberal Protestants were less favorable. The years when Messianic Judaism made its debut were also the heyday of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Mainline Protestant denominations, such as the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, and the Methodists, published declarations absolving the Jews from the deicide charge, and asserted the legitimacy of Judaism existing alongside Christianity.[47] Representatives of liberal churches met with Jewish leaders in interfaith gatherings.[48] Most significantly, liberal Christian denominations closed down their missions to the Jews. From the liberal Protestant viewpoint, there was no need for Jews to turn to Christianity.[49] Neither the Jewish nor the Christian aspects of Messianic Jews appealed to the liberals. They were interested in speaking with "real" Jews, and in learning from authentic rabbinical Judaism, a "brother religion," not from Messianic Judaism, which they considered an invalid form of Judaism. Ironically, liberal Protestants shared the prevailing Jewish view, which refused to see Messianic Judaism as a legitimate expression of Judaism. The Messianic Jewish creed sounded too much like that of evangelical Christianity to be Jewish.[50] Liberal Christians also became aware of how resentful Jews were of missionary activity in all forms, and as long as the evangelizing of Jews went on, they themselves—as liberal and accepting as they were—were perceived by Jews as members of a proselytizing religion. This unfavorable attitude on the part of Christian theologians and activists towards their movement, its claim to be authentically Jewish, and its methods of evangelism did not really bother Messianic Jews. Most of them did not look favorably on liberal Christianity, which they viewed as an unsatisfactory form of Christianity.

The Jewish community's reaction to the growing movement of converted Jews was not always unified or consistent, but certain common responses were evident. Jews often shared, during the 1960s and the 1970s, the prevailing liberal image of conservative or fundamentalist evangelicals as anachronistic and marginal to the cultural and intellectual trends of the day.[51] Significantly, Jewish activists and writers often related to missionaries and converts within the larger framework of "cults," as part of what they conceived to be the attraction of young Jews to new "bizarre" religious groups. Jews did not take seriously the Messianic Jewish claim that one could embrace Christianity and remain Jewish. As a rule, Jews looked upon converts to evangelical Christianity as a small group of marginal, eccentric people, who had no real significance within American Jewry.[52] Holding such an outlook, some Hillel campus centers invited representatives of Jews for Jesus to present their case.[53] They ceased inviting them when they became more aware of the nature of the group and the scope of its activity.[54] Many Jews found the new movement to be strange and confusing. They interpreted Messianic Jewish claims to be both Jewish and Christian

either as fraudulent or as an indication that Messianic Jews were just another "crazy cult." "Beth Yeshua," wrote Michael Mach on the major Messianic Jewish Congregation in Philadelphia, "is part of … an Orwellian world of Jewish-Christian confusion where things are never as they ought to be, and rarely as they seem.…"[55] This attitude is manifested in numerous books and articles where little attempt was made to differentiate between conversions to Christianity and joining such new religious groups as the Unification Church or the Meher Baba.[56] Rabbi Ronald Gittelsohn, in a 1979 article gave expression to a common Jewish perception: "Jews for Jesus is only one of several aberrant religious or pseudoreligious cults flourishing today on the American scene."[57] He offered a psychological explanation for the attraction of young Jews to these groups:

> What a blessed and wonderful relief to throw all this heart-breaking, backbreaking, brain breaking worry onto a gentle Messiah who will solve everything? Jesus or Krishna, or Sun Myung Moon—represents to them the kind, loving daddy they knew, or for whom they desperately yearned as children, the daddy who would answer all their doubts, assuage all their hurts.[58]

Much of the Jewish reaction to Messianic Judaism followed the pattern of the anticult movement, which prevailed in America in the 1970s through the 1980s and looked upon NRMs as harmful and illegitimate.[59] They considered Jews who became Messianic Jews to be deserters from the ranks of normative Judaism.

Jewish activists suggested that stopping desertion from the faith should be done through inner reform: strengthening the Jews' commitment to their tradition, Jewish education, and reemphasizing the spiritual dimensions of Jewish religious life. In fact, Jewish anticult literature did not direct its criticism so much against NRMs, such as Messianic Judaism, as against Jews. It faulted Jewish parents for failing to raise their children in a committed Jewish home, criticized the Jewish community for its inadequacy in making Judaism attractive to the younger generation, and chided Jewish education for failing to transfer Judaism to the next generation. Many of these writers also criticized Jewish congregations for their lack of spirituality, warmth, and a sense of community.

In the mid-1970s, Jewish activists founded Jews for Jews, its name unmistakably inspired by that of Jews for Jesus. Disbanded after a few years, it was replaced by a new organization, Jews for Judaism. The organization sponsored lectures in Jewish centers on university campuses, published antimissionary material, and organized demonstrations at missionary or messianic Jewish gatherings. A similar organization was the Anti Missionary Institute, which in the late 1970s and early 1980s became a notable organization in the field. The antimissionary groups were, as a rule, small in size, budgets, and scope of activities. Their small size and short-lived histories indicated that they were not high on the list of priorities of the American Jewish community. American Jews gave large sums of money to the arts, higher education, or the State of Israel, but they did not show the same generosity towards combating missionaries. Most Jews did not take the missions, or their fighters in the Jewish camp, very seriously.

On rare occasions Jews reacted violently against Messianic Jews. Such behavior almost always came at the initiative of individuals or small groups and did not represent official Jewish policy on behalf of local communities or national organizations. This does not mean that there were no instances of intimidation directed against the new congregations of Messianic Jews. In February 1980, two young men entered a Messianic Jewish congregation, Ahavat Zion (Love of Zion), in Encino, Los Angeles. What occurred next became a matter of opinion.[60] No one disputes the fact that a Torah scroll was missing following that unsolicited visit. The young men were convinced that they had liberated the scroll since its use by a Christian congregation was desecration, whereas for members of the congregation as well as the police and the general public, it was a theft.

According to newspaper reports, the Messianic Jewish congregation in Philadelphia, Beth Yeshua, encountered Jewish opposition when it tried to build its center in a Jewish neighborhood.[61] In addition, an unidentified Orthodox group called for an *Oneg Shabbat,* an after-service social gathering on Friday night, not far from the messianic group's prayer house, in protest against the activities of the Messianic congregation. The description of the Messianic community in the leaflet announcing the *Oneg* echoes common Jewish perceptions of Christian evangelists and Messianic Jews. The appeal to come to the *Oneg* reads: "Jewish residents of Overbrook Park: There is a cult in your midst. Like the Moonies and the Krishnas … they are the Messianic Jewish Movement."[62]

Much of the Jewish activity against missionaries and Messianic Jewish rhetoric was directed inwards—to the Jewish community. Jewish activists, thinkers, and organizations thought that they should prepare Jewish youth for a possible encounter with Christian evangelism. They wanted to provide young Jews with interpretations of theological claims and biblical exegesis. From the 1970s through the 2000s a number of Jewish activists published "know what to answer" books and pamphlets.[63] These tracts did not speak with one voice. Each book represented a different Jewish point of view and a different denominational affiliation. *What to Say When the Missionary Comes to Your Door* was one such brochure prepared by Rabbi Lawrence M. Silverman of Beth Jacob, a Reform Congregation in Plymouth, Massachusetts.[64] Written from a liberal Jewish perspective, Silverman reflected the Reform opinion of Messianic Jews. His prose included clauses such as, "The messianic age will come to pass in this world! Whatever else it may be, in our view, the Messianic Age will at least be a this-worldly happening," or "We do not believe that personal salvation and eternal life should be overriding concerns in one's life." Many conservative and most Orthodox Jews would probably have not agreed with Silverman's views.

The United Synagogue of America's Department of Youth Activities circulated a guidebook for conducting such a program: *The Missionary at the Door—Our Uniqueness.*[65] Developed by Rabbi Benjamin Segal, it has a series of essays discussing such issues as, "Why Aren't We Christians?" and "Was Jesus the Messiah? Let's Examine the Facts," in which its author, Pinchas Stoper, argued that biblical descriptions of the Messiah do not relate to Jesus. The book includes a "Discussion Leader's Guide" for workshops of the conservative youth movement. The guide illustrates some of the

problems Jews faced in trying to counter present-day Christian evangelists. Members of Jews for Jesus as well as Messianic Jewish groups take pride in their ethnic Jewish identity, and make extensive use of Jewish symbols and language. It has become increasingly more difficult for defenders of Judaism to discredit the claim that Jews could retain their Jewishness while accepting Jesus as Messiah. The discussion guide thus insisted that Judaism was a religion, and not merely an ethnic grouping, and that being a "Jewish-Christian made no more sense than a capitalist-communist."

But many of the Jews attracted to Christianity did not join their new faith on a theoretical, theological basis. Their Messianic Jewish environment offered them a sense of community and a network of fellowship and support. Promoting a conservative evangelical world view, their new environment also made demands of them and imposed clear boundaries and guidelines. By preferring evangelical Christianity, the newly converted signaled that they had found in their new religious community a more nurturing environment than in liberal Jewish congregations or in secular, unaffiliated Jewish life. The writers of "know what to answer" books found it easier to believe that the adoption of the Christian faith resulted from a lack of biblical-exegetical knowledge; all would have been well if only converts to Christianity were provided with the right answers. They were correct to assume that many of the young Jews attracted to Christianity had a poor knowledge of their Jewish heritage and faith. They were mistaken, however, in their assumption that "how to answer" tracts could have made a significant difference when such Jews encountered individuals or communities propagating the Christian faith.

Jewish scholarship of converts to Christianity during this period followed the pattern of underrating the scope and importance of the movement. In 1978, David Eichhorn, a Reform rabbi, published a historical survey of Christian missions to the Jews in the United States.[66] Throughout this work, Eichhorn degraded and mocked both missionaries and converts. Another study was done by sociologist B.Z. Sobel. Beginning his research while working for the Anti-Defamation League, Sobel studied a congregation of Jewish converts to Christianity. His conclusion was that converted Jews were sad, marginalized people. Such studies confirmed what Jewish leaders and activists wished to believe.[67] Matters changed in the 1990s, following the publication of the findings of the 1990 National Jewish Demographic Survey. Many read in the Survey alarming data pointing to the dwindling of the Jewish ranks, due to negative demographic trends—decline in reproduction, intermarriage, and desertion of the faith.[68] The survey's estimates of the number of Jews who joined non-Jewish religions confirmed the most pessimistic estimates. Concern over the future of American Jewry as a distinct and vital religious and ethnic community became the norm. That was perhaps one of the reasons for a change of attitude in the way the Jewish community began approaching the subject of Jewish conversions to Christianity. By the mid-1990s, it became clear to many in the Jewish community that during the 1970s and 1980s large and vital groups of converts were created and their numbers were far greater than those most Jewish activists previously estimated. And the newer attitude toward Jewish converts dropped the stereotypes of those converts as down and out.

As the data emerging from the survey became more well-known and discussed among Jews, Jewish publications began reporting on missionary activity and the community of converts in a new manner. Articles on Messianic Jews in *Moment* and *The Jerusalem Report* appearing in the 1990s through 2000s treated Christian converts respectfully, presenting their case in a surprisingly impartial tone—a long shot from the articles of the 1970s through 1980s, which related to that movement in a condescending manner, or attributed to it conspiratorial motives.[69] The writers described the converts, many of them actively evangelizing among their fellow Jews, in realistic terms as perfectly normal people, whose faith offered them meaning, community, and a sense of purpose.

MESSIANIC JEWISH CULTURE

When the evangelical group the Promise Keepers launched a major rally, in Washington, D.C., in 1997, two groups of born-again Christians who participated in the rally were particularly visible. One was a group of Messianic Jews, who came to the gathering dressed with *Talitot,* prayer shawls, and holding *Shofarot,* rams horns. The other was a Native American group who came dressed in traditional attire and decorated with American Indian symbols. Both groups signified the inclusiveness of the rally. The Promise Keepers emphasized the unity of all conservative evangelicals, by allowing for cultural diversity, at the same time that a common faith and set of values were declared. The rally signified the acceptance of these two traditions: Native Americans and Jews in their evangelical form, by the larger community of born-agains. There were other religious groups during that era that also amalgamated rites taken from religious traditions that only a few years earlier were considered irreconcilably alien to evangelicalism. The most striking example has been Pentecostal Roman Catholicism, which first appeared on the scene in 1964. Another hybrid previously unthinkable was Evangelical Greek Orthodoxy, which came about in the 1970s.[70] Messianic Judaism has become something more than being both Jewish and Christian.

From the 1980s into the 2000s, Messianic Jews built their own subculture, complete with national organizations, youth activities, prayer books and hymnals, publications and periodicals, including Messianic Jewish theological, apologetic, and evangelistic treatises.[71] One series of yearly Messianic conferences occurs each summer at Messiah College in Pennsylvania. Sponsored by the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America and other Messianic organizations, the gathering offers a window into the Messianic movement, which includes youth groups, bands of singers and dancers, as well as missionary organizations such as Ariel Ministries and Jews for Jesus.

Chalutzim, the day school Beth Yeshua had built, represents this particular Messianic Jewish subculture. Members of the congregation did not wish to send their children to public schools where they confronted "impending strikes, lack of quality academic opportunities … and the teaching of secular humanism, situational ethics, and decadent sexual mores."[72] At the same time, the congregations' members felt

that neither Christian evangelical nor Jewish day schools would do, for neither fully represented the congregations' values and needs.

Consequently, they built their own school. Similarly, Messianic Jewish hymnologies are not merely Christian evangelical ones. Many Messianic hymns do resemble their non-Jewish evangelical counterparts, and the music is often the contemporary rock-influenced "New Christian Music," yet they remain in a category of their own. Most hymns were written and composed by Messianic Jews, offering an opportunity for songwriters and musicians to express their literary and musical talents. Many of the hymns relate to Israel's role in history, convey a Messianic hope, and refer to Jesus as the Savior of Israel. In addition, small changes differentiate them from the usual contemporary evangelical hymns, such as in the use of the name Yeshua instead of Jesus.[73] Messianic hymnals, such as that of Beth Yeshua, also include a large number of Israeli songs.

Messianic Jews share many of the values of the larger evangelical Christian community. For example, Messianic Jews, without exception, believe that the way to eternal life is through acceptance of Jesus as one's personal Savior and that no obedience to the Jewish Law or "works" is necessary in order to obtain that goal. Those in the evangelical community insisting on the need to observe elements of the Law as a prerequisite for salvation gravitated towards another movement, B'nai Noah ("the Sons of Noah"), composed of evangelical Christians who adopted modes of Jewish observance.[74] But, as a rule, such groups neither presented themselves as part of the Messianic Jewish movement nor were accepted as such. Remarkably, it has been exactly this adherence to the basic Christian evangelical faith that has allowed Messianic Jews to adopt and promote Jewish rites and customs. They are Christians in good standing and can retain whatever cultural attributes and rites they choose. In principle, there is no reason, except for cultural prejudices, to follow in the customs, habits, and regulations of mainstream Anglo-Saxon churches, and Jewish manners and cultural heritage are just as good as whatever cultural trappings other evangelicals choose to adopt.[75]

The movement is far from united. It has many subdivisions and groups, colors and shades. A major division between Messianic congregations exists between Charismatics and non-Charismatics. Most of the early congregations chose to become Charismatic, but many of the ones established by the mostly non-Charismatic missionary societies and denominations are not. This reflects divisions within the larger evangelical community. Since the 1970s, Charismatics were particularly successful, within the framework of evangelicalism. Their advocacy of a direct personal encounter with the divine and their more joyful and expressive services appealed to many young people, including Jewish converts. Charismatic Messianic Jews and non-Charismatic Messianic Jews formed different union organizations; yet despite differences, arguments, and rivalry, the mutual campaign for recognition by the evangelical community as genuine Christians and by Jews as authentic Jews, and the basic sense of identity as Messianic Jews, often transcended these divisions.[76]

Another major difference between Messianic congregations arises over the relation of Jews who accepted Christianity to Jewish tradition and rites. On one end of the

spectrum are those who entered since the 1970s to identify themselves as Messianic Jews but followed in the footsteps of Hebrew Christianity, the older, milder form of Jewish Christian congregations. The latter were more hesitant to observe Jewish rites and customs and adopted a liturgy close to that of non-Jewish evangelical Protestant congregations. On the other end of the spectrum are "traditionalists" who advocate preservation of Jewish rites, such as the wearing of *yarmulkas* during prayer and sometimes even on a daily basis. Some introduced into Messianic service rites the wearing of *Talitot,* the traditional Jewish prayer shawls, reading from the Torah as part of the service, chanting prayers according to traditional Jewish melodies, and carrying the major weekly services on Friday nights or Saturday mornings. None, however, made the claim that one must observe such rites as a prerequisite for salvation.[77]

Many, if not most, Messianic congregations found a middle road between the more traditionalist and the more moderate Hebrew Christian approach. John Fischer, a pastor of a Messianic Jewish congregation in Florida and director of Menorah Ministries, compiled a Messianic Jewish *Siddur* (prayer book), which became popular in the Messianic movement.[78] The Siddur selectively picks elements of the traditional Jewish prayer book. It compensates for omitted passages by inserting prayers that express faith in Jesus and his role as the Redeemer. Fischer attempted to establish a Jewish Christian *Yeshiva,* a theological seminary for Messianic Jews, which was designed for the specific needs of Messianic Jewish ministers.[79]

Almost all congregations retain some traditional Jewish rites, the most popular of which is the yearly celebration of Passover, and a reading of a Messianic Jewish Haggadah.[80] An examination of Messianic Jewish *Haggadot* reveals that they are different from the conventional Jewish ones.[81] One of the more popular, by Eric Peter Lipson, *Passover Haggadah: A Messianic Celebration,* is distributed by Jews for Jesus. This Haggadah is almost entirely in English and assumes no prior knowledge of Jewish customs nor previous participation in a Passover celebration. It maintains major features of the traditional Jewish Haggadah, such as the Four Questions, the four cups of wine, and an additional fifth, for Elijah the Prophet. Lipson's version, however, cuts out passages of the traditional Haggadah, most notably those of the *midrash,* rabbinical extrapolations and elaborations on the Exodus story. Instead, the text offers numerous quotations from the New Testament, such as from John 20:19 on Jesus's appearance before his disciples after his resurrection from the dead.[82] Lipson's Haggadah also includes prayers relating to Jesus's role as Savior, including the following prayer: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, king of the Universe, who had sent Thy son, Thine only son, Y'shua the Messiah, to be the light of the world and our Paschal Lamb, that through him we might live. Amen."[83]

J. Ron Tavalin's *Kol Hesed Messianic Haggadah* incorporates more Hebrew than many other Messianic Haggadot. "The Messianic Believer's Haggadah," Tavalin explains in the preface, "differs from the traditional Haggadah in that we who maintain the Messiahship of Yeshua (Jesus) see an even greater blessing and redemption than that one contained in the book of Exodus. Even as the Israelites were redeemed from Slavery to Pharaoh, so all peoples, Jew and non-Jew, through the New

Covenant of the Messiah, are redeemed from bondage to sin and death.…" Like Lipson, Tavalin assumes no prior knowledge on the part of his readers of the customs and terminology of the *Seder,* the Passover night, and offers both a glossary of terms and ample explanations throughout the text. Like the *Passover Haggadah, Kol Hesed* eliminated the *Midrash* passages, and instead relates to Jesus and his role as the Redeemer. The first blessing reads: "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us through faith in Yeshua Ha Mashiakh and commanded us to remove the leaven."

Messianic Jews wish to retain many of the traditional features of the Passover Seder, the most widely celebrated Jewish holiday, yet they also give expression to their Christian evangelical faith as well. Celebrating the Passover night became, by the 2000s, fashionable in the evangelical camp. Evangelical churches conducted Seder demonstrations, usually under the leadership of Messianic Jewish guests. This is now a common means for missions, such as Jews for Jesus, to approach the evangelical community, advertise their agenda, and apply for funds. Likewise it is a means for the Messianic Jewish movement to turn its own rites into acceptable customs for the evangelical community as a whole. Conservative evangelical scholarship in the last generation paid attention to the Jewish roots of Christianity, a reality that enhanced the interest in Jewish holidays going back to Jesus's era and that were mentioned in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.[84] Similarly, the Passover Seder is a prime time to invite potential converts to Messianic Seders, either at private homes or in congregational settings.[85] The unique manner in which Messianic congregations choose to celebrate the Passover points to the dialectical approach of that movement. It cherishes and promotes attributes of the Jewish heritage, while remaining within the boundaries of evangelical theological correctness and public approval.

In addition to the divisions between Charismatics and non-Charismatics, and varying levels of observation of Jewish rites and customs, congregations differ as to the percentage of Jews versus non-Jews they have as members. According to a survey conducted by Michael Schiffman, "most Messianic congregations … have percentages of Jewish membership between twenty-five and fifty percent," which "illustrates that Messianic congregations are not putting up a 'middle wall of partition' between Jewish and non-Jewish people."[86] The percentage of intermarried couples within the congregations surpasses the average for the general Jewish population.[87] Ironically, Messianic congregations serve not only as centers of evangelism for Jews and non-Jews, but also as assemblies where non-Jews receive education in and are oriented towards knowledge and celebration of Jewish holidays and customs. Although such communities are Christian, the non-Jewish members nonetheless resemble non-Jews joining synagogues. In both cases, non-Jews show interest in elements of the Jewish tradition, and join in as members in houses of worship, which define themselves as Jewish.[88] Such a phenomenon could not have taken place before the late 1960s, and the new attitude that came about towards Jews and Israel.

Communal affinity also varies from one Messianic congregation to another. Members of Beth Yeshua tend to live in the same area. Some even moved in order to be

part of the community, in proximity to each other. In other congregations such as the Olive Tree, this is not the case: members come to services once a week, but are scattered geographically, and live in various neighborhoods in the northern and western suburbs of Chicago. They do not necessarily interact with each other during the week. Their social milieu includes non-Jewish evangelicals as well as Messianic Jews. There are also differences between congregations regarding the socioeconomic profile of the community. The gap in this respect between Beth Yeshua in Philadelphia and Beth Messiah in Cincinnati, or the Olive Tree in Chicago, is striking.[89] No comprehensive survey on the socioeconomic nature of Messianic congregations has so far been conducted, and so assessing this aspect of Messianic life is based merely on observation.[90] Yet it seems that Beth Yeshua is an exception, and most congregations do not possess such a high socioeconomic profile; most of their members tend to be in the lower-middle class. Whereas the congregations are not short on people holding bachelor's, and at times graduate degrees, few, if any, academicians in the humanities and social sciences, or people in the arts, are parts of these congregations. In sharp contrast to the demographics of American synagogues, the Messianic communities consist mostly of persons of the baby-boom, baby buster, and Generation X age groups—those who came of age in the 1960s and later.

A social, cultural, and spiritual institution that offers an illustration of the special subculture of Messianic Jews is the Messianic Bar Mitzvah. The Bar Mitzvah serves as a major social and communal institution in American Jewish life.[91] It is therefore understandable that Messianic Jews decided to incorporate it as a major celebration. Giving up Bar Mitzvahs would have meant giving up a major Jewish rite of passage, whereas embracing it made a statement that Messianic Jews do practice Jewish culture. Yet the Messianic Bar Mitzvahs differ from traditional Jewish ones. They follow the standard Jewish Bar Mitzvah as far as the social institution is concerned—a major celebration to which family members gather from all around the country and to which friends and colleagues are invited as well as members of the congregations in which the Bar Mitzvahs are celebrated. But the religious ceremony takes a new twist. It does not follow traditional Jewish rites such as the chanting according to old melodies of a full *parasha:* a portion from the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses, followed by a portion from the Prophets. Instead, there is a short reading from the Pentateuch, usually in English, and a reading from the New Testament. The *Drasha,* or Dvar Torah, interpretation of or extrapolation on the Torah portion, that Bar Mitzvah boys used to deliver, is instead a public declaration, which reaffirms and promotes the Messianic Jewish creed.[92] By the age of 13, Messianic Jewish children are expected to accept Jesus as their Savior and become fully acquainted with Messianic Jewish theology. The Bar Mitzvah serves therefore as a communal forum for 13-year-olds to declare their faith, affirm the Messianic Jewish agenda of being Jewish and Christian at the same time, and, like all Bar Mitzvah children, receive the community's attention and approval. It has come to demonstrate, together with the day school, the summer camps, and other Messianic youth activities, the community's determination to raise a second generation of Messianic Jews and to transfer the community's faith and character to its children.

Most remarkably, Messianic Judaism created its own vocabulary, strongly influenced by the evangelical rhetoric of conversion, yet somewhat different. Messianic Jews avoid using terms that might scare potential converts away, or that do not go hand in hand with the theological perceptions of Messianic Judaism and its unique sensitivities. The use of the terms "mission" and "missionaries," which was quite legitimate in previous generations, became something of a taboo. Similarly, the term "proselytizing" was rejected, since Messianic Jews do not see themselves as moving from one religion to another.[93] In their eyes, they were, and have remained, Jewish. So new terms are employed. Rather than "evangelizing," Messianic Jews speak about "sharing" and "witnessing," "coming to the faith," or "coming to know Jesus" or, preferably, "coming to know Yeshua" (the term "Christ" being equally passé). They talk about "believers" to designate born-agains and differentiate between "Gentile believers" and "Jewish believers," the first being non-Jewish evangelical Christians and the second, Jews who accepted the Christian evangelical faith.[94] The vocabulary helps to shape a communal spirit among the converted. The adoption of this language signifies the acceptance of Messianic theological perceptions and communal norms and plays an important part in the conversion process.[95]

Converting to Christianity means accepting evangelical morality and refusing some of the freedoms of American secular culture.[96] In principle, members of Messianic congregations do not smoke and refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages, although some Messianic Jews occasionally drink wine. Similarly, Messianic Jews view sexual relations as reserved for marriage. In principle, they promote a conservative sexual morality, not unlike that of evangelical Christians or Orthodox Jews. Messianic Jews share the values of the general culture in the realms of finances, money, and professional goals. Most of them, like conservative evangelicals in general, subscribe to conservative social and political views. Likewise, American Messianic Jews see the United States as a nation with a special mission in the world and see themselves as devoted American patriots. At the same time, not unlike the conservative evangelical community in general, Messianic Jews support Israel. Their understanding of Zionism and the State of Israel resembles that of premillennialist evangelicals.[97] For Messianic Jews, their relation to Israel serves to reaffirm their Jewish identity as it carries the theological perceptions and political agenda of the evangelical camp.[98] Messianic congregations incorporate Israeli songs into their hymnals, organize tours to Israel, and take a deep interest in the fate of that country.

THE THEOLOGY OF MESSIANIC JUDAISM

Having built a unique subculture within the larger evangelical camp, Messianic Jewish thinkers produced a series of theological and apologetic tracts that define and defend the movement. In accordance with the relatively pluralistic nature of Messianic Judaism, their work is not unified, but instead articulates a broad spectrum of opinions. Among the better-known theologians are John Fischer, Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Daniel Juster, and David Stern.

In a manner reminiscent of other NRMs, Messianic Jews claim that their movement is ancient, not new. Jews that embraced Christianity were the original Christians, making Messianic Judaism the authentic, *ur,* form of Christianity. In the *Jewish New Testament,* David Stern, a leader in the Messianic Jewish movement in the United States and Israel, changed the traditional translation of Paul's *Epistle to the Hebrews* into *A Letter to the Messianic Jews.*[99] Messianic Jews also viewed Jewish converts to Protestant Christianity throughout the centuries as forerunners and predecessors.[100] At the same time Messianic Jews see their movement as innovative and daring, carving a completely new path for Jewish converts to Christianity and for the relationship between the two formerly alien religious communities.[101] The notion of having created a movement and a formula that managed to transcend the historical differences between the two religions and unite them served as a major inspiration and offered an enormous sense of purpose for the movement and its *esprit de corps.*

The move into a more independent and assertive form of Jewish-Christian identity is manifested in the work of Arnold Fruchtenbaum. In the 1970s, Fruchtenbaum defined himself as a Hebrew Christian and was skeptical about the more assertive forms of Messianic Judaism.[102] In *Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History and Philosophy,* Fruchtenbaum presented his views on Jewish converts to Christianity, their faith, community, and their relation to the Jewish people. He defended Hebrew Christians and presented them as solid Christian believers in good standing:

> Do Hebrew Christians behave differently from Gentile Christians? Regarding the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, the answer is no. Among fundamental believers, certain teachings are held in common, such as the substitutionary atonement of Christ for our sins. On some minor issues, such as baptism, there are differences of opinion. These differences however are … between believers in general; Jewish and Gentile Christians will be found on both sides.

On this issue, Hebrew Christians and Messianic Jews of all colors and shapes agreed with him. But assertive Messianic Jews did not share his views on where Jewish converts should look for a community. Having emphasized the idea that Jewish converts were an unalienable part of the Christian community, Fruchtenbaum categorically declared that "the Hebrew Christian should be a member of the local church along with Gentile believers."[103] He modified his views a number of years later, and Ariel Ministries, which he led, was instrumental in the establishment of a number of Messianic congregations. In 1985, Fruchtenbaum defended the right of Jewish believers in Jesus to establish congregations and observe Jewish rites if they wished, as long as they looked upon it as an option, and did not consider it a requirement for salvation.[104]

Next to Fruchtenbaum's *Hebrew Christianity,* David Stern's *The Messianic Jewish Manifesto* is one of the better-known Messianic theological tracts.[105] In it, the author, an American businessman from California who immigrated to Israel and became a leader in a traditionalist Messianic congregation, presented a comprehensive defense of Messianic Judaism, its ideas, and its goals. "By providing a Jewish environment for

Messianic faith, Messianic Judaism is useful in evangelizing Jews," argues Stern. He goes on: "It is useful in focusing the Church's attention on the Jewish people."[106] The last argument relates partially to evangelism. Messianic Jews wanted to keep the evangelization of the Jews a high priority in the evangelical camp and served, since their inception, as a pro-Israel lobby within the larger evangelical camp.

Besides the belief in the Messiahship of Jesus, an important feature of Messianic Judaism is the conviction of the imminent return of the Messiah, uniting almost all members of Messianic communities. As a rule, Messianic Jews embrace enthusiastically the Messianic premillenial dispensationalist faith, which is very popular among evangelical Christians. In Messianic Jewish theology, Jesus is destined to come back to Earth in the near future to usher in the kingdom of God. This hopeful development will come after an apocalyptic era, the Great Tribulation, when Earth and humanity will go through a series of physical and political disasters as well as moral challenges. The Jewish people have a special role in the developments that will lead to the end of time, as well as during the millennial kingdom itself. The Jews, according to that view, are heirs to biblical Israel and will be rejuvenated as a nation when the Messiah comes. This aspect of the messianic faith offers Messianic Jews a sense of pride and self-esteem within the larger evangelical community.

Another major Messianic theological work is Daniel Juster's *Jewish Roots: A Foundation of Biblical Theology For Messianic Judaism.* Juster led Beth Messiah in Rockville, Maryland, since the 1970s, one of the largest and most influential Messianic congregations. It chose a more traditionalist path, but not necessarily an outright Charismatic one. Juster's definition of Messianic Judaism is, however, broad and inclusive, "… It is a movement among Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Jesus of Nazareth who believe that it is proper and desirable for Jewish followers of Jesus to recognize and identify with their Jewishness." In Juster's view, "The central question" is "whether there is a biblical basis for Messianic Judaism." The author examines numerous passages in the New Testament, such as Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," which potentially (and often in actuality) is used to negate the idea of separate Jewish Christian congregations. He refutes such a notion, "Both may be called to different styles of life and witness to different fields of service, yet they are spiritually one in the Messiah."[107]

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Messianic Judaism is a growing movement. It is no longer in its infancy, but retains youthful vigor and enthusiasm. It is characterized by considerable optimism, resulting from its relative success and growth, and a strong sense of mission. They sense that they are taking part in a groundbreaking historical experiment—amalgamating the Christian faith with the Jewish heritage, thus healing old wounds. Messianic Jews believe that they have arrived at just the right formula to set things right. "The Messianic Jewish community will be the vehicle for healing the worst schism in the history of the world, the split between the Christians and the Jews.…" declared Stern enthusiastically.[108]

Messianic Judaism is the logical outcome of the rhetoric and activity of the Protestant missionary movement and its biblical-Messianic dispensationalist theology. It was, however, the spirit of the age that brought about the move from the more moderate and hesitant forms of Hebrew Christianity to the large, proud, and assertive movement of Messianic Judaism. The post-1967 image of Jews and Israel in evangelical eyes; the rise in the interest in and the emphasis on roots, heritage, and ethnic pride; and the self-proclaimed liberties and prerogatives of a new, Baby Boomer generation, which not only felt more at ease in crossing religious and communal boundaries, but also saw no difficulty in picking, choosing, and bringing together rites and customs from different traditions—all worked to push the Hebrew Christian movement a step forward.

Messianic Judaism added more color to the American religious map and challenged the long-standing definitions of Judaism and Christianity as well as the relationship between these two religions. While the initial reactions of many Christians and Jews was mockery, if not shock, and while Messianic Jews continued to encounter doubts over their unique position as Jews and Christians, the Messianic Jewish movement carved a niche for itself within the larger evangelical network, and on the whole was accepted as a legitimate subdivision within that larger culture.

Together with the energetic Jews for Jesus, the Messianic Jewish movement gave a new burst of enthusiasm to the old Christian goal of converting the Jews to Christianity and helped keep the evangelization of Jews high on the evangelical priority list. Likewise, it served as a Jewish interest group within the larger conservative Christian community, advocating good will towards the Jews and support for Israel. In spite of the Messianic Jewish commitment to Jewish identity and its incorporation of Jewish symbols and customs, the acceptance of the new movement by the Jewish community has been slower. While Jews traditionally viewed conversions to Christianity as desertion from the Jewish ranks, their opposition to Messianic Jews weakened throughout the years, and many Jews came to treat the movement with respect. In the early years of the twenty-first century, Messianic Judaism is a thriving community. It has become a solid movement within the American religious scene.

NOTES

1. On such eighteenth and nineteenth century missions and the new spirit and some of the methods they introduced, see, for example, Barbara Tuchman, *Bible and Sword* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 175–207; Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion* (London: Hodder E. Stoughton, 1991), 1–163.

2. William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thoughts and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987).

3. See Robert I. Winer, *The Calling* (Philadelphia: The Messianic Jewish Alliance of America, 1990).

4. For an interesting discussion of Jewish Christian hymnology before the rise of the modern movement of Messianic Judaism, see Gershon Nerel, "Messianic Jews in Eretz-Israel (1917–1967) Trends and Changes in Shaping Self-Identity" (Ph.D. dissertation, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996), 248–66.

5. Kai Kjaer-Hansen, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995).

6. David A. Rausch, *Arno C. Gaebelein, 1861–1945 Irenic Fundamentalist and Scholar* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983), 19–52; Yaakov Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel* (New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1991), 99–108.

7. Cf. Elias Newman, "Looking Back Twenty Five Years," *The Hebrew Christian Alliance Quarterly* 25 (1940): 24.

8. For an early debate whether or not Jewish believers in Jesus should go out on their own and establish their own independent congregational movement, see "The Formation of a Hebrew-Christian Church: Is it Desirable?" *The Jewish Missionary Intelligence* 2 (May 1902): 67–69.

9. Yaakov Ariel, "Eschatology, Evangelism, and Dialogue: The Presbyterian Mission to the Jews, 1920–1960," *American Presbyterians: The Journal of Presbyterian History* 75, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 29–41.

10. See Joseph Cohn, *I Have Fought a Good Fight* (New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 1957).

11. This comes across very clearly in the writings of Messianic Jews who emphasize the new, independent spirit of their movement. See, for example, Michael Schiffman, *Return of the Remnant: The Rebirth of Messianic Judaism* (Baltimore: Lederer Publications, 1992).

12. S.B. Rohold, "Messianic Judaism," *Prayer and Work for Israel* (January 1918): 8–11; David A. Rausch, *Messianic Judaism: Its History, Theology and Polity* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 32–43.

13. For example, Robert L. Lindsey, ed., *Christian Terms in Hebrew* (Jerusalem: United Christian Council in Israel, 1976).

14. In 1949, Joseph Cohn, the director of the American Board of Missions to the Jews, introduced the term into the missionary Yiddish literature the mission was circulating. He had to explain the term and its meaning. See "Wer is a Meshichi," in the Yiddish section of *The Shepherd of Israel* 31, no. 10 (June 1949).

15. Cf. Jeffrey S. Wasserman, *Messianic Jewish Congregations: Who Sold this Business to the Gentiles* (London: University Press of America, 2000); Rich Robinson, *The Messianic Movement: A Field Guide for Evangelical Christians* (San Francisco: Purple Pomegranate, 2005).

16. For example, Charles L. Feinberg, ed., *Prophetic Truth Unfolding Today* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1968); Charles L. Feinberg, *Prophecy and the Seventies* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971); Louis Goldberg, *Turbulence Over the Middle East*, a book based on a series of articles he published in 1968–1969 in *The Moody Monthly.*

17. On the trend among the previous generation to downplay and eradicate Jewish attributes, see Calvin Trillin's autobiography, *Messages From My Father* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1966).

18. A famous book which gave expression to, as well as enhanced the trend, was Alex Haley's *Roots,* which became an international bestseller and a movie.

19. Cf. M. Herbert Danzger, *Returning to Tradition: The Contemporary Revival of Orthodox Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

20. Cf. Nathan Glazer, *Ethnic Dilemmas, 1964–1982* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 17.

21. Much of the information on Martin Chernoff, and the early beginnings of the Messianic Movement in Cincinnati, was provided by Mrs. Johannah Chernoff in an interview in Philadelphia, October 27, 1995.

22. I am thankful to Michael Wolf, the Messianic Rabbi of Beth Messiah Congregation, Cincinnati, and his wife, Rachel, as well as to Joe Finkelstein himself, for the information on "Fink's Zoo."

23. Cf. Carol Harris-Shapiro, "Syncretism or Struggle: The Case of Messianic Judaism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1992), 44.

24. On Beth Yeshua see Carol Harris-Shapiro, *Messianic Judaism: A Rabbi's Journey through Religious Change in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

25. This came up, for example, in interviews with David Chernoff, Rabbi of Beth Yeshua in Philadelphia, October 1995, and with Harold Sevener, president emeritus of the Chosen People Ministries, in an interview in Chapel Hill in 1995. See also Elliot Klayman, "Messianic Zionism: God's Plan for Israel," *The Messianic Outreach* 7, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 3–8.

26. In June 1976, merely a year after the statements of condemnation, which the FCTJ and the American Board of Missions to the Jews issued, both missionary and Messianic leaders met together in Chicago to reconcile their differences. The initiative for the conference came, not surprisingly, from leaders of evangelical institutions such as Arthur Glasser, the Dean of Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Missions, and Herbert Kane, the president of the American Society of Missiology. Its resolution read: "we recognize that different methods may be used to communicate the message of Jesus the Messiah to the Jewish people. We accept the validity of the various congregations' structures and modes of worship for Jesus believers." *Insight* [an in-house journal of the American Board of Missions to the Jews] (June, 1976): 3.

27. Jeffrey Goldberg, "Some of Their Best Friends Are Jews," *The New York Times Magazine* (March 16, 1997): 42–44.

28. Cf. Louis Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 108–13.

29. Harold A. Sevener, *A Rabbi's Vision* (Charlotte, NC: Chosen People Ministries, 1994), 420–21, 453-456.

30. Ibid., 453–54.

31. Ibid., 454–55.

32. I owe thanks to a number of friends who have invited me to visit their congregations in Northern Chicago, among them Kroy Ellis, Rivka Katzir, and Derrel Simms.

33. See the congregation's brochure, "Olive Tree Congregation." Among other things, it states in an apologetic tone: "You will notice a genuine Jewish 'flavor' to our worship… The Jewish roots of our faith in Messiah Jesus are important to us… But you don't have to be Jewish to be here!" The brochure ends with a declaration of the community's obligation to evangelizing. "We are committed to sharing the Good News of the atonement Messiah Yeshua has provided, for the sin of all men. We want to communicate with both Jewish and Gentile people, whether its across the street or around the world!"

34. Cf. Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 17.

35. Sevener, *A Rabbi's Vision,* 454.

36. Cf. Rausch, *Messianic Judaism,* IX–XVIII. See also *Orthodox Messianic Judaism* (Odessa, TX: The House of Yahweh, n.d.).

37. On similar fears among members of the older generation of Hebrew Christians, see David A. Rausch, "Hebrew Christians Renaissance and Early Conflict with Messianic Judaism," *Fides et Historia* 15, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1983): 67–79.

38. Abe, Rachel, Sarah, and Esther Cohen, "More Jewish Than Ever—We've Found the Messiah," *Christianity Today* (February 1, 1974): 11–17.
39. Louis Goldberg, "The Messianic Jew," *Christianity Today* (February 1, 1974): 6–11.
40. James Hutchens, "A Case for Messianic Judaism" (doctoral dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1974).
41. Ibid., preface.
42. George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987).
43. Edward E. Plowman, "Turning On to Jeshua," *Christianity Today* 16 (December 17, 1971): 34–39; Carl F.H. Henry, "Jews Find the Messiah," *Christianity Today* 17 (April 13, 1973): 28–29.
44. Rausch, *Messianic Judaism.*
45. David Rausch, "The Messianic Jewish Congregational Movement," *The Christian Century* 99 (September 15–22, 1982): 926–29.
46. Ibid., 928–29.
47. See, for example, *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988).
48. Yaakov Ariel, "Protestant Attitudes to Jews and Judaism During the Last Fifty Years," in *Terms of Survival: The Jewish World Since 1945,* ed. Robert S. Wistrich (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 334–39.
49. For example, Andre Lacocque, "Key 73, Judaism and the Tragedy of Triumphalism," *The Christian Century* 90 (May 30, 1973): 629–31.
50. In 1977, the Board of Governors of the Long Island Council of Churches noted "with alarm" that certain groups are engaging in subterfuge and dishonesty in representing the claims of their faith groups. There is a confusion that results in mixing religious symbols in ways that distort their essential meaning. The Board also deplores the pressures that result when any faith group calls into question the right to continued existence of another faith group.
51. Cf. David Rausch, *Communities in Conflict: Evangelicals and Jews* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 6, 84–85.
52. For example, David Eichhorn, *Evangelizing the American Jew* (New York: Jonathan David, 1978).
53. "Jews For Jesus is New Freak Group," *The Jewish Post and Opinion* (May 14, 1971).
54. In March 1972, the Northern California Board of Rabbis issues a statement warning against this practice. Cf. Rausch, *Communities in Conflict,* 126.
55. Michael Mach, "Their Mission: Converting Jews," *Jewish Exponent* (January 29, 1982): 45.
56. For example, in articles collected by Gary D. Eisenberg, ed., *Smashing the Idols: A Jewish Inquiry into the Cult Phenomenon* (Northdale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1988); Aidan A. Kelly, ed., *Cults and the Jewish Community* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990).
57. Ronald B. Gittelsohn, "Jews for Jesus: Are They Real?" in *Smashing the Idols,* ed. Eisenberg, 171.
58. Ibid., 172.
59. Harvey Cox, "Deep Structures in the Study of New Religions," in *Understanding the New Religions,* edited by Jacob Needleman and George Baker (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 122–30.
60. Kenneth Freed, "Torah Dispute," *Los Angeles Times,* March 1, 1980.

61. See "Beth Yeshua's Bid Meets Resistance," *Main Line Times* 46, no. 34B (October 25, 1979), 1; "Messianic Jews Zoning Opposed in Merion," *The Bulletin,* October 22, 1979, 18A; "Messianic Jews Fight For a Home," *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* November 6, 1979; Linda Loyd, "Love Thy Neighbor?" *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* April 19, 1981, 1B–2B. I am indebted to Mrs. Johanna Chernoff for providing me with copies of the articles, as well as with other sources on this topic.

62. A copy in the possession of Yaakov Ariel.

63. See Gad Malamed, "How to Answer Street Missionaries," in *Kol Yarneh* 4, no. 5; republished in the *Jewish Digest,* (February 1977), 49–51; ibid., 49; Gerald Sigal, *The Jew and the Christian Missionary: A Jewish Response to Missionary Christianity* (New York: Ktow Publishing House, 1981). On the complex aspects of the conversion process, in which theological arguments play a very small part, see Louis Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

64. Lawrence M. Silverman, *What to Say When a Missionary Comes to Your Door* (Plymouth, MA: Plymouth Lodge-B'nai B'rith, n.d.).

65. Benjamin Segal, ed., *The Missionary At the Door—Our Uniqueness* (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1983).

66. Eichhorn, *Evangelizing the American Jew.*

67. B.Z. Sobel, *Hebrew Christianity: The Thirteenth Tribe* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974).

68. Cf. Sidney Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry: Insights from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey," *American Jewish Year Book 1992,* 77–143.

69. Alan Edelstein, "Jews Who Chose Jesus," *Moment* 19, no. 4 (August 1994): 30–39; Vince Beiser, "For the Love of Jesus," *The Jerusalem Report* (January 26, 1995): 26–31.

70. On such groups, see, for example, Vincent M. Walsh, *A Key to Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church* (St. Meinard, IN: Abbey Press, 1974), or the Web site http://www.cwo.com/ pentrack/catholic/index.html.

71. See the yearly advertisements of the Messiah Conferences.

72. See the brochure *The Chalutzim Day School of Philadelphia.*

73. See, for example, *Magnify and Sanctify His Name,* produced by Zion Messianic Fellowship, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1987; *Messianic Congregation Peniel, Songbook* (Tiberias: Peniel Fellowship, n.d.).

74. On B'nai Noah, see Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America: Millenarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 100–26.

75. See, for example, Hutchens, "A Case for Messianic Judaism."

76. In the 1990s, two organizations of Messianic Jewish congregations that were previously divided along Charismatic/non-Charismatic lines decided to unite, a major sign that the tensions between the two groups were easing, and that the Messianic Jewish identity often takes precedence over the divisions between Charismatics and non-Charismatics.

77. See *Sheelot ve Teshuvot* [in Hebrew] (Rischon Letsion: Hagafen Publishing House, 1986), 17–18; "Frequently asked questions about Messianic Judaism," Covenant and Love Messianic Outreach, http://www.teshuvah.com/tomj/index.html (accessed March 21, 1995).

78. John Fischer and David Bronstein, *Siddur for Messianic Jews* (Palm Harbor, FL: Menorah Ministries, 1988).

79. John Fischer, "The Development of a Professional Competencies Program as a First Stage in a Yeshiva Curriculum for Training Messianic Jewish Leaders" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Florida, 1987).
80. Shoshanah Feher, *Passing over Easter: Constructing the Boundaries of Messianic Judaism* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 1998).
81. See, for example, Eric Peter Lipson, *Passover Haggadah, A Messianic Celebration* (San Francisco: JFJ Publications, 1986); Ron Tavalin, *Kol Hesed Messianic Haggadah* (n.p.: Dogwood Press, 1993); Harold A. Sevener, ed., *Passover Haggadah for Biblical Jews and Christians* (Orangeburg, NY: Chosen People Publications, n.d.).
82. Lipson, *Passover Haggadah,* 66.
83. Ibid., 23.
84. For example, Brad H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989).
85. See, for example, *A 100 Years of Blessing, 1887–1987: The Centennial History of the American Messianic Fellowship* (Lansing, IL: American Messianic Fellowship, 1987), 31.
86. Schiffman, *Return of the Remnant.*
87. Cf. Schiffman, ibid., 126; and Sidney Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry: Insights From the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey," *American Jewish Year Book* (1992): 124–128.
88. On non-Jews versus Jews in Messianic Congregations, see Feher, *Passing Over Easter.*
89. Cf. Rausch, *Messianic Judaism,* 167.
90. For example, ibid., 145–62.
91. On the Bar Mitzvah in American Jewish life, see Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 89–133.
92. I am thankful to Richard and Sherry Heller for inviting me to their son Eli Robert's Messianic Jewish Bar Mitzvah.
93. "Do Messianic Jews Proselytize?" *The IRC Report* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 68–69.
94. See Manny Brotman, *A Training Manual on How to Share the Messiah* (Bethesda, MD: The Messianic Jewish Movement International, 1977).
95. Cf. Susan F. Harding, "Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion," *American Ethnologist* 14 (1987): 167–81. For an interesting discussion of the role of language in the process of conversion, see also Peter G. Stromberg, *Language and Self-Transformation: A Study of the Christian Conversion Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
96. Cf. Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997).
97. See, for example, David Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto* (Jerusalem: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1988), 99–119.
98. See the brochure of the program Beth Yeshua prepared for the Israeli Day of Independence 1991. "Yom Haatzmaut: Day of Independence," Congregation Beth Yeshua 5751, 1991.
99. David Stern, *The Jewish New Testament* (Jerusalem: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1990).
100. For example, David Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto,* 74–76.
101. See, for example, Schiffman, *Return of the Remnant.*
102. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History and Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974).
103. Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity,* 88.

104. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, "An Interchange on Hebrew Christian/Messianic Jewish Congregation," in *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1983), Appendix 3, 917–49.
105. David H. Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto.*
106. Ibid., 12.
107. Daniel Juster, *Jewish Roots: A Foundation of Biblical Theology for Messianic Judaism* (Rockville: Pacific Palisades, 1986), 111.
108. Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto,* 4.

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Introduction

Although new or alternative religious movements, or New Religious Movements (NRMs), have always been part of the American religious landscape, they have not always received broad public attention. Most often, their formation, attraction of members, and growth or decline have occurred beyond the harsh glare of prolonged public scrutiny. In some striking cases, however, a new or alternative religious movement has dominated the news for a period of time, usually because the movement itself, or some of its members, became involved in something that was widely perceived to be illegal, immoral, or simply destructive. For example, in the wake of the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Minister Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam became notorious for his comment that Kennedy's murder meant "the chickens had come home to roost." In the 1970s saffron-robed members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, also known as Hare Krishna, became so well known for seeking donations and engaging strangers in conversations in public that they were easily lampooned in the comic film "Airplane." In the 1980s, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, leader of the Unification Church (or Moonies), was found guilty of tax evasion by diverting church funds for his personal use. More recently, in 1993, the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms staged a raid on the home and church of a small group of Bible students outside of Waco, Texas. In addition to the ten lives lost in the botched raid, the 51 day standoff between the students of David Koresh, a group widely known as the Branch Davidians, and agents of the federal government, particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation, culminated in the loss of 78 lives in a fire that consumed the Mount Carmel Center where the Branch Davidians lived. In 1997 followers of Marshall Applewhite, forming a group called Heaven's Gate, joined him in committing suicide so that they could all progress to what they viewed as "the evolutionary level above human." The list of such incidents could easily be multiplied.

In the late twentieth century as new and alternative religious movements continued to receive public attention for elements of their practice or belief that were highly controversial, a dominant image of such groups began to solidify. That image was

fostered by the activism of groups of former members, their families, some professionals in social work and psychology, and various other volunteers. When the opposition to new or alternative religious groups originated with more or less secular individuals, those opponents were generally called anticultists. When opposition originated with Evangelical Protestant Christians, those opponents were usually called countercultists. The tireless work of such activists, anticultist or countercultist, quickly produced a standard understanding of new and alternative religions that united a wide variety of groups under the umbrella category of "cults." In the perceptions of their anticult opponents, cults posed serious threats to vulnerable individuals and, ultimately, to the stability of American society itself. Anticultists and countercultists believed that cults had three prominent characteristics. First, they were led by unscrupulous, manipulative, and insincere individuals who sought only to increase their own power, wealth, and/or sexual enjoyment. Second, cults preyed upon unsuspecting, confused, and vulnerable individuals, often using sophisticated and virtually irresistible tactics of influence. Third, participation in a cult would surely bring harm to individual participants and might also lead them to commit any number of antisocial actions that threatened the public good. The stereotype of the "destructive cult" was aggressively marketed by the loose coalition of anticultists, particularly when disturbing news about any new or alternative religious movement became public. Thus, on the one hand, while a variety of events created a broad interest in learning about individual religious groups, their practices and beliefs, organizational structure, leadership, and many other topics, on the other hand, the predominance of the cult stereotype inevitably skewed the information available, attributed the perceived faults of any one group to all of them, and created expectations that any group labeled a cult must necessarily be worthy of suspicion, scorn, and vigorous opposition. Despite their prodigious efforts at educating the general public, the various anticult and countercult activists have, in fact, promoted much more misunderstanding than accurate understanding of the religious lives of some of their fellow citizens. Consequently, they have helped to create a very hostile environment for anyone whose religious practices do not fit within a so-called "mainstream." The personal and social costs of such religious bigotry may actually be higher than what the activists fear from cults themselves.

This set of volumes on "New and Alternative Religions in America" intends to rectify that situation for the general reader. It aims to present accurate, comprehensive, authoritative, and accessible accounts of various new and alternative religious movements that have been and are active in American society, as well as a set of essays that orient the reader to significant contexts for understanding new and alternative religions and important issues involved in studying them. The presentations are predicated on a simple but fundamental assumption. It is that accurate description and understanding must precede any judgment about the truth, validity, morality, or trustworthiness of any religious group or person. Accurate description demands that the group be presented in terms that it could itself recognize and acknowledge as being at least close to the way it understands itself. Providing an accurate description of the history, organization, practices, and beliefs of a particular group does not, in

any way, constitute an endorsement of that group, but it does provide an indispensable baseline for any further discussion. Such a baseline has often been lost in the public discussions of new and alternative religious movements, because their most bizarre, threatening, or even humorous aspects have been exaggerated. What is missing from such caricatured presentations is a sense of how any person could find such apparently ludicrous, lethal, or laughable groups worth joining. Simple dismissal of new or alternative religions as absurd, erroneous, or pernicious misses the social influence that they can have and demonstrably have had. Whatever an outsider's perception of new and alternative religions might be, many clear-thinking and well-intentioned individuals, throughout American history, have associated themselves with such groups. This set is founded on the idea that members' or participants' reasons for their decisions and their accounts of their experiences form the primary data for understanding new and alternative religions. Both hostile and approving accounts of new or alternative religions from outsiders provide a different sort of data, which reveals the social location and often-controversial careers of new and alternative religions. But neither approval nor criticism by external observers should take precedence over the self-understanding of each group as articulated by its members in establishing a baseline of descriptive accuracy.

Readers of this set of volumes will thus encounter both information and analytical frameworks that will help them arrive at an informed and appropriately complicated understanding of new and alternative religious movements in American history and society. Volume 1 provides a set of analytical perspectives on new and alternative religions, including the history of such movements in the United States, the controversies in which they have often become embroiled, the roles of leaders within the groups and the processes by which individuals become members and also leave their groups, the legal and global contexts in which new and alternative religions function, and a variety of prominent themes in the study of new religions, including roles of gender, children, and violence.

The four volumes that follow generally present accounts of individual groups, many of them well known but some much less so. Each chapter presents information about the origin and subsequent development of the group in question, its internal organization including the predominant type of leadership, its most important practices and beliefs, and controversies that have put the group in the limelight. Volume 2 focuses on groups that have developed out of the broad biblical tradition—Judaism and Christianity—and have achieved such a distinctive status as to be considered, at least by some observers, as independent religious groups rather than simple sectarian variations of more mainstream Jewish or Christian traditions. Volume 2 accordingly raises most acutely the problems of definition that are involved in using the admittedly malleable categories of "new" and "alternative" religions.

The description of a religious movement as *new* or *alternative* only begs further questions. Novelty can be in the eye of the beholder, or in the mind of someone claiming to be innovative. That is, religious movements are judged to be new, alternative, or anything else only in particular contexts and by certain audiences. They may claim, for example, to retrieve and correctly interpret or represent past beliefs

and practices, which have been neglected or forgotten. But their opponents might view the same claims as dangerous and deviant inventions. New religions themselves often manifest a pronounced ambivalence about their own novelty. A fundamental dynamic in new and alternative religions is that they strive to present themselves as both new and old, as unprecedented and familiar. The novelty of new religions cuts both ways; it can just as easily excite the interest of potential adherents as it can strain their credulity. As they spread their messages to those whose interest, approval, and even acceptance they hope to secure, NRMs proclaim both their challenging novelty and their comforting familiarity.

In their sectarian forms, these movements attempt to recapture the lost purity of an idealized past. Sects typically have prior ties to larger religious organizations from which they have intentionally broken off. They aim to return to the pristine origins of the tradition and reestablish its foundations. Sectarian forms of Christianity frequently exhort their partisans to get "back to the Bible"; contemporary Islamic sects similarly yearn for the purity of the times of the prophet Muhammad. Even the Church of Satan, founded by Anton Szandor LaVey in 1966, has spawned sectarian groups that accuse the original Church of Satan of having abandoned its initial commitments and emphases. Sects thus define themselves both in relation to the broader world and in relation to their specific tradition, both of which are perceived to threaten their purity of belief and practice.

In their typology of responses to secularization, Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge contrast cults to sects. Rejecting the polemical definition of cults spawned by their cultural opponents, they define cults as independent religious traditions. Cults may be imports from another culture or independent products of the society in which they develop. Like sects, cults often find themselves in tension or conflict with broader society, simply by virtue of being new and different. Because they, too, want to locate themselves in relation to an authoritative past, cults also lay some claim to previous tradition. What separates cults from sects in their relation to previous traditions is that cults typically do not have a history of institutional conflict and eventual separation. Cults are marked from their beginnings as new entities. Both sects and cults, then, simultaneously declare their novelty and sink their roots in the past. In order to avoid confusion about the term "cult," which has such negative connotations in contemporary American society, this set will keep to the designations of new and alternative religions, which are widely employed by many scholars even though they are somewhat imprecise. The choice of which groups to include in Volume 2, as with the other volumes, is a judgment call. The guiding principle was not only to provide a representative sample of new and alternative religious groups throughout American history, but also to present the groups in sufficient detail to enable the reader to form a complex understanding of them.

Volume 3 investigates groups in the occult or metaphysical tradition, including nineteenth century Spiritualism, the Theosophical Society begun by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in the late nineteenth century, and the contemporary New Age movement. Like the groups discussed in the second volume, those in Volume 3 are part of a broad tradition that has deep roots in

antiquity. For example, in *The Secret Doctrine* Madame Blavatsky included the ancient Vedic sages of India, the Buddha, and a collection of ancient Greek philosophers among the ancient teachers whose wisdom about the nature of human beings and the nature of god was being given its fullest expression in Blavatsky's modern Theosophical system.

The religious movements discussed in Volume 3 typically present a different organizational profile from those in Volume 2. The groups in Volume 2 have made substantial efforts to maintain boundaries between themselves and their surrounding social environment, demanding exclusive allegiance of their members; vesting authority over practice, doctrine, and group life in charismatic leaders; and offering new and improved interpretations of familiar texts already acknowledged to have broad cultural legitimacy. In contrast, the movements in Volume 3 center on individual teachers who attract shifting groups of students with varying degrees of commitment for varying lengths of time, leave the ability to determine the authority or validity of any pronouncements in the hands of individual seekers, and claim to bring to light extraordinary wisdom from previously unknown or underappreciated sources.

Many of the religions that have appeared to be innovative developments in American religious life have actually been transplanted from other cultures where they have often enjoyed long histories. The openness of the United States to immigrants has always been an important factor in promoting American religious diversity. The 1965 repeal of the 1924 *Asian Exclusion Act,* for example, permitted a variety of Eastern religious teachers to extend their religious activities to the United States. Late in his life, for example, Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, made the United States the focus of his efforts to awaken love for Krishna in as many people as possible. Military personnel returning from service abroad, often with spouses from countries where they had been stationed, also helped to introduce new religious practices and movements to the United States. This was the case, for example, with the form of Japanese Nichiren Buddhism known as Soka Gakkai. Even where it is difficult to provide independent corroboration of claimed international ties, they can nonetheless be claimed. A dramatic example here was the assertion that the elusive figure at the origins of the Nation of Islam, W.D. Fard, arrived in Detroit, Michigan, in 1930 from Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The movements in Volume 4 show clearly that religious innovation in the United States always needs to be considered in a broader, global context. That is no less true of the groups discussed in other volumes as well. For example, Ann Lee's small band of Shakers began in Manchester, England; David Koresh gathered Bible students from Australia, England, and other foreign countries as well as the United States. Theosophy's Madame Blavatsky was a Russian émigré. Finally, the Church of Scientology, like many other new religions that have begun in the United States, conducts a vigorous international missionary program.

The frequent movement of individuals, practices, and ideas across national borders could make a focus on new and alternative religions solely in the United States vulnerable to a myopia that could distort the nature and significance of those movements. That caution holds equally for homegrown and imported religions. Few

religions in the contemporary world, no matter what their age or relation to a mainstream, are confined within a single set of national boundaries. Nonetheless, the focus of this set remains on a selection of religions that have had, for one reason or another, a significant impact on religious and social life in the United States. Prominent in that selection is a group of religions that have been independently founded in the United States. For example, although the contemporary revival of Paganism can be traced to the career of Gerald Gardner in England beginning in the 1930s, many influential Pagan thinkers and teachers, such as Z Budapest, Starhawk, and Isaac Bonewits have flourished in the United States. Similarly, the Church of Satan and its subsequent offshoots owe their inspiration to Anton Szandor LaVey, who produced *The Satanic Bible* and other fundamental texts in San Francisco, California, in the 1960s. Also, beginning in the 1950s the prodigious literary output of L. Ron Hubbard gave rise first to the therapeutic system known as Dianetics and then, as his purview broadened, to the Church of Scientology. Other founders of NRMs in the United States, like Marshall Applewhite of the Heaven's Gate group, attracted far fewer adherents than the Church of Scientology but nonetheless carved out a place for themselves in American religious history through their dramatic, and sometimes tragic, actions. Volume 5 thus focuses on both new developments in international movements within the United States, such as the rise of Neo-Paganism, and the conscious construction of new religions, such as the Church of Scientology, by American teachers and organizations.

As this overview suggests, the definition of what counts as a new or alternative religion is frequently open to argument. Many groups that appear dramatically novel to external observers would claim that they are simply being faithful to ancient traditions. Joseph Smith, for example, claimed that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, was a restoration of primitive Christianity. Groups that claim to be innovative often express their messages in the form of fresh interpretations of ancient texts, as with Swami Prabhupada's effort to present the ancient Indian classic, the Bhagavad-Gita, "as it is"; or Rael's contention that the mentions of "Elohim" in the biblical book of Genesis actually refer to extraterrestrial beings who came to earth in space ships. Because of the subjective nature of the categories —new to whom? alternative to what?—it will always be difficult to delimit precisely which groups definitely do, and do not, "count" as new or alternative. Moreover, in popular discourse, where the category cult is frequently used but appears devoid of anything other than emotional content, and in interreligious arguments, where cult easily expands to include "virtually anyone who is not us," attempts at substantive definitions give way entirely to polemics. Discussion of new and alternative religions in the United States thus always refers to a shifting and vigorously contested terrain where categories like "alternative religion" or "cult" and implicit comparisons like those implied by "new religious movement" are used to establish, reinforce, and defend certain kinds of individual and group identities, even as they threaten, compromise, or erode other kinds of individual or group identities.

No mapping of such terrain can hope to be definitive. Too much is in flux. Those who enter the terrain need trustworthy and experienced guides. The essays in these

five volumes provide just such guidance. Experienced, authoritative, and plainspoken, the authors of these essays provide both perspectives on some of the most prominent general features of the landscape and full descriptions of many, but by no means all, of the specific areas within it. Those who want to explore the terrain of new and alternative religions in the United States will find in this set multiple points of entry. They may want to focus on a specific local part of the larger area, such as the Theosophical tradition, the Branch Davidians, or Heaven's Gate. On the other hand, they may want to investigate the characteristic dynamics of the broader field, such as the processes of conversion into and defection from groups or the interactions between new and alternative religions and their cultural opponents. There is much to explore—much more than can even be covered in these five volumes. But this set aims to equip the would-be explorer with enough tools and knowledge to make the exploration rewarding and worthwhile.

Swedenborgianism

Jane Williams-Hogan

INTRODUCTION

Based on the religious writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), the Swedenborgian faith emerged in Europe and North America toward the end of the eighteenth century—a century defined by innovation and revolutionary change. Changes occurred in almost every area of human endeavor: science, philosophy, agriculture, manufacture, politics, and religion. In the clash between the traditional and the modern, some people abandoned the old faiths in the name of science or philosophy, others found comfort in new formulations of the old confessions, and a few sought out radically new religions, today called New Religious Movements (NRMs).

Many of these new faiths did not survive beyond the founding generation. The story of Swedenborgianism is different. Perhaps because Swedenborg's new Christian revelation explores the root cause of the broad intellectual and social changes that ushered in the modern world or because it offers a rational faith compatible with the needs of the new age. In *True Christianity* published in 1770, Swedenborg wrote in number 508: "Now it is permitted to enter with understanding into the mysteries of faith."[1]

Swedenborgianism survived beyond the first generation of believers in the eighteenth century, and over the centuries grew in a variety of cultural soils and climates, although better in some environments than others. By 1800, believers were found in the European nations of England, Sweden, France, Germany, and Russia as well as in the United States. In the nineteenth century, the number of believers grew, taking root in Africa, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. The number of believers and their locations continued to grow in the twentieth century, and by the beginning of the twenty-first century they are on every continent in the world with the possible exception of Antarctica. In 2005 there are approximately 50,000 members of Swedenborgian religious organizations worldwide. The small number may be due to the doctrinal emphasis on freedom and the teaching that heaven is open to all who live a good life irrespective of their faith.

Swedenborgianism draws its doctrines from the religious writings of Swedenborg. He wrote in *True Christianity* number 779 that the Lord would "establish a new church, … by means of a man, who is able not only to receive these doctrines in the understanding but also to publish them by the press." For 23 years (1747–1770) Swedenborg wrote and published a new revelation he claimed was from God (he published the books anonymously until 1768). He produced 18 different titles in 30 volumes, but he never attempted to found a church. When he died in 1772, only a handful of readers of his religious writings professed them to be the true word of God. However, 15 years later in 1787, a church based on those teachings was established in London by individuals who never knew Swedenborg or anyone acquainted with him. Since then, other people in other countries have also established churches after reading Swedenborg's writings. Thus, it might be said that, unlike many churches founded by charismatic leaders, who their followers believed to be filled with grace, this church is founded instead through the "charisma of the book."

In order to understand this type of charisma and the basic characteristics of the Swedenborgian faith, this chapter explores the following: Swedenborg's life, Swedenborgian doctrines, the establishment, history, and practices of Swedenborgian Churches, the impact of the Swedenborgian Movement on Western culture, controversies and issues, and the future.[2]

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

Swedenborg's life was long, productive, and eventful. He published over 128 different works and left manuscripts for another 182.[3] He published poetry and scientific, civic, philosophical, and religious books. He traveled extensively throughout his life, leaving his native Sweden for the eleventh and last time in 1770 at the age of 82. However, his most remarkable journeys were not to European destinations, but were mental and spiritual in nature. He claims he had his spiritual eyes opened, and to "have seen, heard, and felt" in a world beyond the natural.[4] What follows is a brief overview of his extraordinary life.[5] It can be readily divided into three periods: (1) childhood and education; (2) career; (3) religious call and revelator.

Childhood and Education

Swedenborg was born on January 29, 1688 in Stockholm Sweden. He was born Emanuel Swedberg, and became Emanuel Swedenborg in 1719 when and he and his brothers and sisters were ennobled by Queen Ulrika Eleonora (1688–1741). He was the third child and second son of Jesper (1653–1735) and Sara (nee Behm 1666–1696) Swedberg. The Behm and Swedberg families had extensive mine holdings, and were part of Sweden's upper class. This wealth provided an inheritance for Swedenborg in his adult life that gave him the resources to independently publish his own writing.[6] Looking back on his life from the perspective of his "call" and his claim to be a revelator, what is noteworthy about his childhood is the fact that his

father was a Lutheran pastor, and he was raised in a religiously conservative home. Although Swedenborg recalled late in life that his parents believed that "angels spoke through me," his first passion in life was science.

He graduated from Uppsala University in 1709, then went on an extended European tour from 1710–1715 to complete his education. The purpose of his trip was to absorb the latest scientific developments. He studied in England, France, Holland, and Germany by reading about new discoveries, attending lectures, and meeting with well-known scholars. In addition, he stayed in the homes of trained craftsmen and learned their trades. In this way he learned engraving and lens grinding among other skills.

Career

Swedenborg came home ready to be of service to his nation. First he published a scientific journal (Sweden's first) with the hope that he could contribute to the intellectual and economic development of his homeland. Six issues of the journal *Daedalus Hyperboreus* were published in 1716 and 1717. He included descriptions of some of the inventions he had developed during his trip.[7]

The journal brought Swedenborg into contact with Sweden's most highly regarded inventor Christopher Polhem (1661–1751) and the king, Charles XII (1682–1718). He was invited to be Polhem's assistant, and together they traveled to Lund to meet the king. Impressed with Swedenborg's talent, the king gave him an appointment as Extraordinary Assessor on the Board of Mines, the oversight agency for Sweden's vital mining industry.

Before assuming his duties as a mine inspector and judge, Charles had several pressing engineering projects that required immediate attention, and Polhem and Swedenborg were engaged to oversee them. The final project entailed the transportation of the king's navy overland for a surprise attack on Norwegian forces at Fredrikshall. This campaign ended with Charles's death on November 30, 1718.

That royal death affected Swedenborg's career. His appointment to the Board of Mines was no longer automatic. He attempted to bolster his claim by learning about mining techniques and practices through direct observation during a trip to Europe in the early 1720s. His diligence and persistence were rewarded. He secured a paid position in 1724. For the next quarter of a century Swedenborg dedicated his public life to the administrative and judicial duties of that position. Less successful in private life, although interested, he never married.

Like others during the Enlightenment, he used the tools of natural philosophy to explore nature, as a mirror of God's order and a vessel for his purposes. His *Basic Principles of Nature,* published in 1734, articulated a nebular hypothesis similar to the later theory of marquis La Place (1749–1827) to account for the creation of our solar system. His initial projects had the same goals as his contemporaries; however, his religious writings were at odds with both the rationalist philosophers and religious enthusiasts.

During this phase of his life, Swedenborg used his time outside of his official position to wrestle with understanding the creation of the universe, the formation of the human being from the soul, and the relationship between creation and God. He published extensively on these topics. He studies the mineral kingdom and the cosmos in search of the creator, and the human body—the soul's domain—in search of the redeemer.

In 1743 he asked for a leave of absence from the Board of Mines to go to The Hague and published what he hoped would be his *magnum opus,* the *Soul's Domain.* In preparation for this work, Swedenborg compiled notes from various philosophers, classical and contemporary. Among others he cited the works of Plato, Aristiotle, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646–1716), and Christian Wolff (1679–1754). Wolff was of particular interest because of his attempt to reconcile reason with the doctrines of the Christian Church. This had direct bearing on Swedenborg's project to find the soul within the human body. While he did publish two volumes of this work in The Hague in 1744, and another volume in London in 1745, at this same time, he experienced a spiritual crisis that profoundly changed his life.[8]

Religious Call and Revelator

When Swedenborg left Sweden in July 1743, his mind was no doubt focused on the task that awaited him at his journey's end—overseeing the printing of the manuscripts of the *Soul's Domain.* He reveals his excitement and anticipation, when he showed them to Adolph Fredrich (1710–1771) the future king of Sweden. He was certain that this was an important work because he believed that his demonstration of the existence of the soul to the senses might help others to banish the human propensity to unbelief.

In mid-August en route to The Hague via Amsterdam, he began to experience dreams sufficiently extraordinary in nature that he recorded them in his travel journal. For the next year Swedenborg recorded his dreams. The journal was never intended for publication. Nevertheless, it was discovered and authenticated in the 1850s and 99 copies were published in Swedish as *Swedenborgs Drommer* by G.E. Klemming. The journal contains 286 entries, although the first ten are observations made during his trip to Amsterdam. It is perhaps the oldest and longest series of dreams ever recorded. Soon after he began recording his dreams, Swedenborg also began to interpret them.

He believed that his dreams were communications about his state of spiritual health. These dreams penetrated his pretenses and laid bare his vanity, arrogance, sense of superiority, conceit, and pride. In one dream, he is lying beside a pure woman, who he believed was his guardian angel. She told him that he smelled ill. This signaled the beginning of strong temptations, which at times brought him to the edge of despair. Gradually his temptations alternated with feelings of blessedness. For example, on the night after Easter, April 6–7, 1744, Swedenborg heard a loud thunderclap and was cast face down on the floor. He prayed and felt the presence of Jesus Christ, and then he saw him face-to-face. Jesus asked him if he had a clean bill of

health. Swedenborg responded, "Lord, you know better than I." "Well do so," he said.[9] This image of a bill of health harkened back to Swedenborg's youth, when he broke the quarantine imposed by London harbor officials, fearful of the plague, on the ship he had taken on his first trip from Sweden to England. Encouraged by friends, he entered London without a "clean bill of health." In Swedenborg's analysis in his journal, God's command signified "love me in reality." When God said, "Well, do so," he was asking Swedenborg to do what he had not done in his youth, when he had acted out of self-interest and could have imperiled the lives of thousands. God now demanded that he love others more than himself. This dream was life altering for Emanuel Swedenborg. As he said,

> I have now learned this in spiritual [things], that there is nothing for it but to humble oneself and to desire nothing else, and this with all humility, than the grace of Christ.… The Holy Spirit taught me this; but I, with my foolish understanding, left out humility, which is the foundation of all.[10]

In one of his last recorded dreams, he was told by Christ not to undertake anything without him.

Although he oversaw the third volume of the *Soul's Domain* through the press in London, he began to write a very different sort of book. Called *The Worship and Love of God* (London, 1745) it is a prose poem written as an offering of love to God. Not long after the publication of the first two parts of this little book (the third part was never finished), Swedenborg returned to Sweden in the summer of 1745 still seeking a focus for his "call."

For the next two years, he continued his work on the Board of Mines. He also delved into the study of the Bible. Bible study was essential because it is God's Word, and he spoke to Swedenborg in it. The Bible was to be his guide and his sole source of divine truth. He had been warned in his dreams not to read theology written by others to prevent contamination.[11] He mastered Hebrew in order to read Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) in the original. He attempted to interpret the story of creation and developed a Biblical index through which he hoped to discover the deeper meaning of the text. He read and reread the Bible, he prayed, and he saw visions of the spiritual world. In 1747, he began to record these visionary experiences, somewhat like scientific field notes, in what is now called *Spiritual Experiences.* It was also a multivolume work, written over an 18-year period and left in manuscript form.

In 1747, two events occurred that signaled a shift in Swedenborg's focus. First, he was unanimously nominated to be President of the Board of Mines, an honor that recognized his enormous contribution to the activities of the Board. He declined the offer, however, and instead petitioned the king, Frederick I (1676–1751), to relieve him of his duties, and to grant him a pension of half his salary in retirement in order that he "could finish the work on which I am now engaged."[12] The King accepted his request, as a way to recognize Swedenborg's outstanding civic and intellectual contribution to the nation.[13] To the regret of all his colleagues, Swedenborg took leave of the Board of Mines on July 17, 1747.

He left Sweden almost immediately for Amsterdam. The second event took place on August 7. He recorded it in one of the indices of the Bible he was working on. He wrote, "1747, August 7, old style. There is a change of state in me into the heavenly kingdom, in an image."[14] Swedenborg's followers interpret this to mean that he was now in full communication with the heavens and understood his call.[15]

Swedenborg saw himself as a revelator for a new age. As he interpreted the role, he was not called to be an Old Testament prophet or to be another Christ. He was called to serve the Lord Jesus Christ as a scribe of heaven, faithfully using the doctrine of correspondences to interpret the internal or spiritual sense of the Old and New Testaments and to record for mortal eyes the wonders of heaven and hell. The nature of Swedenborg's prophecy was not to speak new words or share new visions clothed in mystery and symbol, but to write and publish the secrets of heaven and eternal life, making them available for all sincere seekers. He strove to interpret the old symbols, making them accessible for future generations, knowing that those generations would demand clarity and rationality in spiritual things.

The first book that Swedenborg produced, using the doctrine of correspondence, was the *Arcana Coelestia,* or *Heavenly Secrets.* Correspondence, according to Swedenborg, is a relationship of causality, and therefore it denotes a similarity between something spiritual and something physical.[16] For example, truth on the spiritual plane does what water does on the physical plane, it purifies; love enlivens the spirit, just as the heat of the sun causes plants to grow in the natural world. He published the first volume anonymously in London in 1749. The remaining seven volumes were published regularly until 1756.

The manner in which Swedenborg published his religious works mirrored his earlier publishing efforts. Through the resources he had inherited and his salary or pension, Swedenborg had sufficient financial resources at his disposal, enabling him to travel outside of Sweden, hire a printer, and pay for the printing and binding of several hundred copies of his books. He was able to do this for the nine major philosophical volumes he published, as well as for the 18 religious titles. He chose to publish outside of Sweden because of the strict censorship laws found there.

The publication of *Heavenly Secrets* marked the opening of the public phase of Swedenborg's spiritual mission. In the middle of this period (1759), he had a verified clairvoyant experience. He saw a fire break out in Stockholm while at dinner with friends and acquaintances in Göteborg. He reported what he saw to his dinner companions, and the next day he was asked to repeat them for the governor. The following day news came of the fire, and the report of the course of the fire matched his description. Stories concerning this circulated in Europe, so that even Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was asked to comment on this and other of Swedenborg's clairvoyant experiences by a friend (1763).[17] Nonetheless, he continued to write and publish his religious works anonymously until 1768. Thirteen different titles were produced during this time period.

In 1768 Swedenborg published in Amsterdam *Marriage Love* and signed it "Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swede."[18] In the book, he also advertised his previous religious works and listed a forthcoming title. He may have revealed his identity as the

author, at this time, for two reasons: first, by 1768, it was fairly well known that Swedenborg was the author of these works, because stories of his clairvoyant experiences circulated fairly widely; and second, Swedenborg, now 80 years old, may have been aware that acknowledging authorship might be the best way to preserve these books for future generations.[19]

Swedenborg returned to Sweden one last time in 1769 and discovered that two Lutheran pastors and personal friends, who read his books and became convinced of their truth were on trial for heresy in Göteborg. The findings about heresy were inconclusive, and the case was sent to Stockholm for judgment to determine whether the gymnasium teachers had taught and encouraged heresy. After two years the case was dropped, and no action was taken against the men. There was even talk among some clergy about bringing charges against Swedenborg himself, but, perhaps because he had influential friends among the nobility and royalty, that did not happen. Nonetheless, stories circulated, questioning Swedenborg's sanity. Swedenborg expressed no concern about these charges, telling friends in Sweden and England he felt secure with heavenly protection.

Swedenborg left Sweden for the last time in July 1770. He settled in Amsterdam and oversaw the publication of his last work *True Christianity.* The two-volume work was ready in 1771, and he signed it "Emanuel Swedenborg, Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ."[20]

Not long after the publication of *True Christianity,* Swedenborg traveled to London, where he suffered a stroke in December 1771. Although he partially recovered, he remained essentially bedridden. Sometime in early 1772 he received word that John Wesley wanted to meet him (because of his reputation as a seer), but he died on March 29, 1772, before any meeting could take place. On two occasions after his stroke he was asked whether his writings were true, supposedly he said, "I have written nothing but the truth … and I could have said more, if it had been permitted."[21]

DOCTRINES

Swedenborg left an impressive spiritual legacy of his call and mission in the many volumes he published between 1749 and 1771. His corpus of religious works includes 18 titles in 30 volumes. Some of his works are exegetical in nature, such as *Heavenly Secrets* (London 1749–1756) and *Revelation Unveiled* (Amsterdam 1766); others are based on his spiritual experiences, such as *Heaven and Hell* (London 1758) and the *Last Judgment* (London 1758); another group is doctrinal in nature, such as *Lord* (Amsterdam 1763), *Sacred Scripture* (Amsterdam 1763), *Life* (Amsterdam 1763), *Faith* (Amsterdam 1763); another two are philosophical, *Divine Love and Wisdom* (Amsterdam 1763) and *Divine Providence* (Amsterdam 1763); *Marriage Love* (Amsterdam 1768) might be considered sociological, addressing as it does the foundational love of human societies on earth and in heaven; and finally some are theological in nature, such as *Survey* (Amsterdam 1769) and *True Christianity* (Amsterdam 1771). Despite the variety in both the substance and style,

Swedenborg's essential teachings are found throughout all of them. His corpus presents a universal theology that is supported by his spiritual experiences, biblical exegesis, rational explanation, biblical quotations, and deductive logic.

Fundamental to the whole of his New Christian theology is his claim that the Lord Jesus Christ called him to see the reality of the spiritual world by opening his spiritual eyes, thereby permitting him contact with that world on a regular, almost daily basis. He wrote in the preface to *Heaven and Hell* that he was given this ability in order to prevent the negative attitude of agnostics and atheists "from infecting and corrupting people of simple heart and simple faith."[22] For this purpose, he was not only able to see into heaven and hell, but he was allowed to describe what he saw and heard, "in the hopes of shedding light where there is ignorance, and of dispelling skepticism."[23]

Swedenborg believed that his task was to lay the foundation for a restored and revitalized Christianity. While in agreement with many of the basic tenets of Christianity, his teachings differ from traditional Christianity in several fundamental ways. He offers a new vision of God, human nature, the requirements for salvation, the nature of heaven and hell, marriage, correspondence, and the Last Judgment.

GOD

According to Swedenborg, from the beginning of time and for all eternity God is one. He is "the Lord, who is the God of the universe [and he] is uncreated and infinite," and therefore "he is that essential reality that is called Jehovah and is life itself or life in itself."[24] In him the trinity makes one "as soul, body, and operation make one in man."[25] The divine "esse" constitutes the soul; the "divine human," or the divine nature of the son (Jesus Christ), constitutes the body; and the divine proceeding, or the holy spirit, constitutes the operation. The true essence of the divine is love and wisdom. God's love called forth the creation of a human race, through his wisdom, for the purpose of eternal conjunction with it. Conjunction was the purpose, not union, because it is an activity or process that retains the identity of the participants.

The whole of the finite universe and everything in it was created to be a recipient of life from the Lord; human beings were specifically created with the capacity not only to receive life and love from the Love, but with the additional capacity to return it. God's love desires nothing more that to give of itself, freely and fully. For the return to be complete, it must not only be received, but it must be returned in the spirit in which it was given. That is, it must be both received and returned freely and with conscious rational understanding.

HUMAN NATURE

In order to play their unique role in creation, human beings, according to Swedenborg, have a dual inheritance. They are both natural and spiritual. They are created or are born into the order of the natural world with the capacity to become spiritual. This does not happen automatically, however, but only if they truly desire it and

choose to do what is necessary to achieve it. In all of creation, the human race alone was created in the image and likeness of God, as a form of love and wisdom (Swedenborg makes it clear in his religious writings that the earth is not the only home of the human race, and that human beings in the image and likeness of God exist throughout the created universe).[26]

To this end, "God created the human rational mind in accordance with the order of the whole spiritual world, and the human body in accordance with the order of the whole natural world, and this is why everyone was called by the ancients a little heaven or a little cosmos."[27]

THE REQUIREMENTS OF SALVATION

The human race was endowed with the faculty to receive love and wisdom from God and with the freedom and rationality to acknowledge him as the sole source of their life. They are also free to reject him. Human beings may embrace their natural inheritance as the only true reality and, thus, reject their spiritual potential. Or they may choose to acknowledge their spiritual potential, seek the path of regeneration or rebirth, and, in this way, come into their spiritual inheritance.

Human beings are granted the freedom to reject God, according to Swedenborg, because a relationship that is compelled is really no relationship at all. The Lord does not wish to compel people to accept his life, because compulsion is foreign to his essence. Compulsion, by its very nature, is a natural, not a spiritual quality. Human spiritual choices, made with the divine gifts of freedom and rationality, lead a person either to heaven or to hell.

Human beings are born into the fixed reality of time and space, in order that they may choose what they truly love and, thus, who they are. One way leads to heaven, the other to hell. As Swedenborg wrote in the opening sentence of *Divine Love and Wisdom,* "Love is our life Even though the word 'love' is commonly on our tongues,… We are wholly unaware that it is our very life—not just the general life of our whole body and of all of our thoughts, but the life of their every least detail."[28] People reveal what they love in their actions.

According to Swedenborg the Lord wills everyone to heaven, and he provides all people with the means to reach heaven. The religious writings of Swedenborg clearly state that salvation is not dependent on knowing specific doctrines or belonging to any particular faith. It is dependent only upon living a life of useful service based upon universally available truths. However, the Lord saves no one apart from his or her life's work because, according to Swedenborg, the Lord saves in conjunction with the efforts the person made during his or her life in this world.[29]

According to Swedenborg, religion has two universal characteristics: one should acknowledge God and refrain from evil because it is contrary to God.[30] He further states that the Lord provided for some religion to be present nearly everywhere, and that the two universals of religion exist almost everywhere. Thus, everyone who acknowledges God and refrains from evil should have a place in heaven.

THE NATURE OF HEAVEN AND HELL

Swedenborg humanizes heaven and hell as well as what he calls the world of spirits (where people go immediately after death). The spiritual world, he describes, has both form and substance. His work *Heaven and Hell* offered a vivid and compelling picture of the afterlife to countless readers seeking to know the next world. Some are spiritual seekers, while others take solace in its pages after the death of a loved one. The picture is comforting because, although the laws of spiritual life differ from natural life in some very fundamental ways, in appearance the two worlds are very similar.

Swedenborg describes the process of waking after death, the fact that we experience ourselves as substantially as we did on earth, and the process of personal discovery and revelation concerning who each of us really is—that is, how we become what we really love. Those who love the Lord and the neighbor come into heaven, where they engage in useful employments of every kind, while those who deny the Lord and burn with hatred to the neighbor form themselves into hell. Heaven in all its forms, from the highest to the lowest, is created by a life of use to others. Hell, from the darkest to the mildest, is fashioned by a love of self and the world.

Swedenborg, in his discussion of heaven and hell, makes it clear that all spirits, whether in the world of spirits, heaven or hell, were all born on one of the many earths in the universe. Angels were not created as a race apart, and the devil was not formed from an angel of light cast down into hell. The spiritual realms of heaven and hell are peopled by individuals who were born into the natural world on some earth in the universe, lived a life there, and made choices that then created his or her own personal heaven or hell.

Throughout a person's life, the forces of heaven and hell are kept in equilibrium, so everyone is free to choose either heaven or hell for his or her eternal home. There is an intimate and mutually dependent relationship between these two worlds, so that "The human race apart from heaven would be like a chain without a hook; and heaven without the human race would be like a house without a foundation."[31]

Even though human beings live simultaneously in these two worlds during their earthly life, they focus primarily on life here. In the other world, after a time an individual's awareness of the natural world dims. At the end of the process of self-discovery and spiritual examination, the good seek the path to heaven and find a home provided for them. Evil spirits undergo the same process of self-examination. When it is complete, they wander until they find their own special spot in hell.

Swedenborg desired to make it clear that "Death is not the extinction but the continuation of life."[32] Spiritual life is lived in an eternal present. Angels are continually advancing to the springtime of life, as they lovingly serve others.

MARRIAGE

According to Swedenborg, heaven is not filled with ethereal asexual beings, but consists of couples living in loving eternal marriages. Couples in heaven share all the delights of earthly married life, and they feel themselves to be one angel as they

work together. Human beings were created male and female not just for the sake of natural reproduction, but for essential spiritual purposes.

Men and women were created so they would differ not just in body and appearance but, according to Swedenborg, also as to their form of mind. Masculinity is a form of truth, and femininity is a form of love. Every truth has its corresponding love, and together they generate a special use. The sacred and eternal nature of marriage is founded on this idea. Swedenborg called monogamous married love "the precious treasure of human life."[33]

Marriage is, in fact, the dominant metaphor found in Swedenborg's theology. Marriage is the concept used to describe the union of love and wisdom within God himself. That union is the source of all creation—that marriage is life itself.

Swedenborg called the marriage relationship the seminary of the human race, and he wrote that because of this, the Lord conferred on it the greatest possible delights and happiness. In fact, Swedenborg states that "into this love are gathered all joys and delights from their first to their last."[34]

Swedenborg's teaching on the central importance of married love for the renewal of Christianity is a clear departure from the Christian ideal of *agape* or brotherly love. Nevertheless, his emphasis on the eternal nature of marriage resonates with many, loving married couples unable to imagine being separated after death.

CORRESPONDENCES

In Swedenborg's published religious writings he frequently mentions the internal or spiritual sense of the Word (his name for the Bible) and the concept of correspondences. Correspondences, for Swedenborg, are the key to the inner meaning of the Word. They are as old as the human race and were the transparent language of the inhabitants of the Golden Age, or, as Swedenborg identifies them, members of the Adamic or Most Ancient Church. These early humans could "read" nature, each other, and the events of their own lives, correspondentially. That is they could grasp

> something spiritual in something earthly, people saw heavenly qualities reflected in the trees, plants, and animals around them. As well as in each other and the events of their lives. Having no spoken or written language, and needing none, they received direct revelations and guidance from God through the mirror of nature, through dreams and visions, and through their contact with angels.[35]

The ability of humanity to understand life through correspondences was lost as a result of the fall. Swedenborg believed that it was his role as revelator to restore them, through revealing the spiritual message of the Bible, long hidden in the historical and literal sense of the Word.

THE LAST JUDGMENT

The writings of Swedenborg outline God's relationship to humanity through an examination of the history of the five churches that they describe as having existed

on the earth.[36] The Bible is the source of that history, and the internal or spiritual sense of the literal Biblical narrative revealed in the writings, through the doctrine of correspondences, documents the rise and fall of the first four of the five churches established on earth by God (the fifth is the New Christian Church that Swedenborg claimed was to be established through his revelation). These churches correspond to five states of human spiritual development. Swedenborg identified these churches as the Most Ancient Church (Adamic Church), the Ancient Church (Church of Noah), the Jewish Church (the church established by Moses), the Christian Church (established by the Lord Jesus Christ), and the New Christian Church (based on the second coming of the Lord).

According to the writings, churches are instituted by God to provide humanity with the tools needed to understand God, his love for humanity, and his statutes, as well as how to live to achieve happiness in this world and eternal life. Each church has been given a revelation suitable to its character, although the universal principles of love to the Lord and charity to the neighbor never change. The integrity of each church was dependent upon its members remaining faithful to the universal principles of faith and charity. According to Swedenborg, the conjunction of faith and charity sustains a church, and their separation results in their fall.

Churches fall when the revelation given to them is perverted or "seen through." The love of self and the world are the sources of perversion. The people in these churches stopped relying on the Lord's revelation to know what to do and how to live, and chose to rely on their own natural wisdom instead. God's revelation seems inadequate and child-like to them, because "seeing through" shifts the terms or requirements by which an individual will see the truth.

Thus, each new revelation is accommodated to the new requirements of rationality demanded by humanity. The deeper the level of human self love, the greater is the requirement that revelation speaks to an individual's need to know, to understand, and to explain everything. Retrospectively, all previous accommodations or forms of revelation seem mysterious and incomplete. In Swedenborg's recounting of the history of the four previous churches, each one of them fell, and a judgment took place.

According to Swedenborg, the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity at the Council of Nicea in 325 CE set the stage for the Last Judgment because it interrupted the unfolding of human spiritual perception that would have developed if Jesus Christ had been acknowledged as One with Jehovah. The formulation of a "trinity of divine persons from eternity" confounded reason and prevented the worship of the One God.

In addition to this fatal understanding of the trinity, an emphasis on miracles and the miraculous clouded people's understanding and perverted their freedom. People sought salvation in miracles, rather than seeking to understand God's Word and applying his eternal principles to life. The Protestant Reformation and the formulation of the "doctrine of faith alone" completely ruptured the already tenuous bond between charity and faith that existed in the Christian Church.

By the eighteenth century the "end of times" had come. According to Swedenborg, the description of the devastation associated with the Last Judgment in *Revelation* did not describe the end of the natural world as we know it, but was, in fact, a spiritual event that took place in 1757. The judgment was spiritual and not natural, because, as has been shown, the Word is essentially a document that focuses on spiritual matters.[37]

Swedenborg in his works made it clear that the Second Coming is now taking place. It does not refer to the physical coming of the Lord into the world a second time, but that the Lord is now fully revealed in the spiritual sense of the Word. The Second Coming is, therefore, an event that occurs in the minds and hearts of everyone who acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ whose divine human is made fully visible within the New Christian Church.

THE NEW CHRISTIAN CHURCH

When Swedenborg died in 1772 no church organization dedicated to his revelation existed. Knowing Swedenborg's Swedish heritage, it would be natural to assume that some organization devoted to his religious vision might emerge there among his most intimate associates. The hostility of the Swedish Lutheran Church to religious innovation in general and to Swedenborgianism in particular made initial efforts to organize in Sweden futile.[38]

One interesting outcome of the suppression of Swedenborgianism in Sweden is that no one who personally knew Swedenborg was involved in the founding of a church based on his revelation. This is contrary to taken-for-granted expectations of church foundation, as well as to the general theoretic formulations on the subject. The church, when it was established, was founded by the *charisma of the book*.[39] This means that organizations were established by men and women who spontaneously found the power of the vision and the ideas in the books themselves so compelling that they decided to create organizations to preserve and sustain the message and to help them order their lives around it. This happened for the first time in London in 1787. It happened again in the Americas, Australia, and various European countries in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, it occurred in Ghana, Japan, Korea, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and the Ukraine. In the twenty-first century to date, additional organizations have been established in Kenya and the Philippines, and efforts are underway in China.

Starting groups based on common adherence to books takes more time than when a charismatic leader is involved. But clearly organizations have been and can be formed wherever the books happen to turn up. The circulation of books, although related to the movements of peoples, can also occur independently. Discovery of the books is, therefore, less dependent on religious structures and possible wherever books are found. However, it is important to observe that the growth of literacy and freedom is integral to a religion based upon the *charisma of the book.*

SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCHES

Swedenborgianism exists in three, well established, organizations in the world, all found in English speaking countries—one in Great Britain and two in the United States. Several less stable organizations also function, one is headquartered in the United States with strong ties to South Africa, and the other indigenous to South Africa. In addition, over the last 20 to 25 years, a number of new Swedenborgian organizations spontaneously arose in a variety of countries around the world.

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

The establishment of the very first Swedenborgian or New Church organization took place in Great Britain in 1787. The organization is called The General Conference of the New Church. Two events mark the founding of this church: the baptism of five men into the Lord's New Church on July 31, 1787, and the ordination of two men into the priesthood of the New Church on June 1, 1788. These people were artists, artisans, merchants, and traders (farmers were conspicuously absent). Their religious backgrounds varied, but many were Methodists and other types of nonconformists. While these events sociologically mark establishment, almost 20 years passed before the organization was stable. Problems arose almost immediately after the initial acts of foundation due to deeply held differences among the founders about how the organization ought to be structured—whether hierarchical or congregational. Many nonconformists in England were congregational in form, but Methodism embraced hierarchy. As the newly founded Swedenborgian Church drew almost equally from nonconformists and Methodists, a struggle about what organizational form the church should take was almost inevitable. Swedenborg's writings themselves support a hierarchical church structure. Robert Hindmarsh (1759–1835), a printer in London and former Methodist, was a forceful advocate for this position. However, numerically the church was strongest in Lancashire, an area long noted for nonconformity. In 1815 a congregationally organization church was established at a conference held in Manchester, Lancashire. That organization still exists today.[40]

The high point of church membership for the Conference was in 1900, with a membership of 6,337 in 73 societies. Decline in the twentieth century was due to the general unchurching of Great Britain, but also to an insufficient number of trained ministers and the limited ability of congregational structures to deal with such broad societal change. One response was the decision in the late 1990s to ordain women. An even more radical departure from the past was the centralization of key functions of the Conference in 2000. Membership figures at that time show a total of 1,198 members in 30 congregations. In addition to centralizing, the Conference decided to deemphasize the Christian nature of Swedenborgianism and to take advantage of the Internet.

The challenges facing the Conference are all too clear; they must creatively respond to them or face failure and extinction. It is too early to assess the outcome of the changes they have made.

THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

In 1817, only two years after the organizational structure of the General Conference was secured in Great Britain, the General Convention of the Church of the New Jerusalem was established in the United States. In that year, readers of Swedenborg's religious writings (first brought to the new nation in 1784) were scattered throughout the United States. They came together in Philadelphia to strengthen themselves through the creation of an organization. Although they were aware of the British Conference, and received encouragement, books, and pamphlets from them, they were always independently organized. They, too, adopted a congregational form of church government.

The individuals that were drawn to Swedenborgianism were artists, artisans, educators, entrepreneurs, merchants, and traders. They lived in old seaboard states and new states formed out of the Old Northwest Territory. Baltimore, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati were cities with large Swedenborgian congregations. They came from a variety of religious backgrounds: Episcopalians, German Free-will Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Quakers, as well as others. Although initially Swedenborg's books came from England, the Philadelphia printer Francis Bailey (1744–1817) soon began to publish them himself, underwriting the expense by subscription. Benjamin Franklin, friend and neighbor to Bailey, was one of the subscribers. Convention prospered during the nineteenth century. At the high point of its membership in 1890, it had 154 societies, 119 ministers, and 7,095 members. A schism occurred in 1890 over the question of the authority of Swedenborg's writings and church government. Convention was not only congregationally organized, but decidedly anticlerical and open-minded. They read the writings for instruction, not for their "divine" authority.

The faction that broke away believed that Swedenborg's writings were divine, not just inspired by the Lord. Thus, the status of the writings was equal to the Old and New Testaments. They also believed that church government ought to be episcopal in nature, rather than congregational. They maintained that the writings themselves endorsed hierarchical church government. The open-mindedness of Convention led to the formation of a loosely organized structure of state associations. These associations were able to coexist, despite such fundamental differences, until the Pennsylvania Association under the leadership of General Pastor William Henry Benade (1816-1905) ordained a second bishop. This challenge to the rules of Convention pushed the two sides to the brink. Benade refused to back down, and three-quarters of the members of the Pennsylvania Association in support of him voted to withdraw from Convention. The schism affected membership not just because several hundred members withdrew, but now Convention was forced to compete for members with another Swedenborgian organization.

Changes in American culture also affected this organization. Swedenborg's teachings have a marked psychological element, which perhaps added to their attraction in the nineteenth century, particularly among cultural innovators. In the twentieth century, when psychology became a powerful secular movement, it was no longer

necessary for cultural innovators to embrace religion in order to have access to psychology.

In addition, Swedenborgianism, in the nineteenth century, may have benefited by the broad public discussion of religion that existed prior to the Civil War. In postbellum America, religion quietly became a matter of personal faith, and other issues dominated public space.

In the nineteenth century, Swedenborgianism attracted people from all walks of life. John Chapman (1774–1844), better know as "Johnny Appleseed," distributed pages of Swedenborg's writings along with the seedlings he sold to Ohio's pioneers. He loved to share what he called "good news straight from heaven." In 1893 Swedenborgians were key organizers for the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. The idea of a Parliament in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair originated with Charles Bonney (1831–1903), a Swedenborgian and a prominent attorney. Bonney joined the New Church as a teenager. Later he stated that it was his exposure to the teachings of the Swedenborgianism that "made a World's Parliament of Religions possible."[41] A teaching that possibly encouraged Bonney is an idea expressed in *Secrets of Heaven* that suggests a common religious culture may emerge despite a variety of doctrines, "if people acknowledge thoughtfulness toward others to be the essence of such a culture."[42] Bonney joined with other Swedenborgian and Christian leaders in Chicago in the organization of the Parliament. He delivered the opening and concluding addresses of the 17-day Parliament.

Today The General Convention is known as the Swedenborgian Church of North America. In 2000 Church total membership stood at 2,104 with 1,543 active members in approximately 40 congregations in the United States and Canada. The Swedenborgian Church of North America is known as the "liberal" branch of the New Church in North America. They have ordained women since 1970, and in 1997 they made the decision that sexual orientation should not be an impediment to ordination. Their vision of Swedenborgianism unites Swedenborg's emphasis on the importance of the beauty of variety and American individualism. They focus on Swedenborg's teachings about the marriage of good and truth within each individual and deemphasize his teaching on the institution of marriage.

In 2000 they relocated their theological school from the East to the West Coast. And from being a self-standing institution, they have become incorporated as the Swedenborg House of Studies at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkley, California, known as one of the most liberal theological schools in the United States. Obviously, the hope is that these changes will stimulate growth. Nonetheless, it is too early to assess the outcome.

THE GENERAL CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

In 1897 a second American New Church organization was formed. Called the General Church of the New Jerusalem, it was founded by the group that broke with Convention in 1890. Differences with the autocratic style of the founder William H. Benade led to the incorporation of the church under the leadership of Bishop

Williams F. Pendleton (1845–1927) in 1897. The doctrinal positions remained the same. In addition, they were also strongly committed to developing a comprehensive educational system for the children of members. The emphasis on education also inspired the development of residential communities for members wherever possible. This inward turning pattern of development was similar to other late nineteenth century religious groups interested in protecting their heritage and providing for the future.

The ideational roots of its establishment attracted members from both the British Conference and Convention, creating an international organization from its inception. At the time of its incorporation, General Church congregations were established in Australia, Canada, and England, as well as in the United States. In 1900, three years after incorporation, the General Church had 560 members. The Pennsylvania community of Bryn Athyn became the Episcopal seat of the Church and the home of an academy that included a theological school, college, and high school.

Slow growth throughout the twentieth century increased membership to 4,585 in 2000. In 2005 that number stands just shy of 5,000 at 4,972 members. Although growth remains slow in most regions of the world, there are some notable exceptions, particularly in Africa, where church growth is much more rapid. Growth, nonetheless is a reality, and the total size of the international General Church community is 15,790 with over 70 congregations in over 16 countries in North America, Europe, South America, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

Several factors may account for the growth of the Church in Africa. The doctrine of one God, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the teachings about the nature of spiritual reality are particularly attractive to Africans. Another factor may be Swedenborg's teachings about the celestial genius of Africans. In the eighteenth century when many scientists, including Swedenborg's countryman, the botanist Carl von Linnaeus (1707–1778), believed that Africans were the link between Homo sapiens and the great apes, Swedenborg wrote that they had a higher spiritual genius than Europeans. Africans certainly would find this teaching a refreshing contrast to the unflattering bias about them held by many westerners.

Organizationally, the Church in Africa resembles the American model, but there are clearly cultural differences. As the Church grows, it is not unreasonable to assume that it will become more particularly African in its forms.

The General Church is more conservative than either of the other New Church organizations. Not only is it centralized and hierarchical, but it does not ordain women. This is a point of contention for some members of the Church. In 1988 an office of outreach was established, and the Church has strengthened this work since then. Currently, the director has established the goal of growth rate of 10 percent a year within ten years. Obviously, it is too early to make an assessment.

WORSHIP AND RITUALS

All three of these organizations have traditional patterns of worship and rituals that are Protestant in origin. Worship includes prayer, readings, singing, and a

sermon. A copy of the Bible or the Word is placed on the altar, and it is opened at the beginning of the service. Lessons are read, and a sermon is preached. While the two congregational organizations may or may not use Swedenborg's writings in their services, the General Church always reads from the "writings" and refers to them in sermons. Often in small congregations, talks for children are included in the service, after which the children leave for Sunday school.

Recently, the two American organizations have developed participatory services, recognizing the importance of an involved laity for the life of the congregation.

Baptism and communion are celebrated as sacraments, and marriages, ordinations, and funerals are celebrated as rites. Funeral services are viewed by outsiders as uplifting, focusing, as they do, on the resurrection of the individual into spiritual life, not their death.

Because Swedenborgian doctrine focuses on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not the crucifixion, the cross is not a dominant symbol in New Church iconography.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS

In addition to these groups, another internationally organized group was founded in 1937, called The Lord's New Church. It was established by former members of the General Church, who came from the United States, the Netherlands, and South Africa. In contrast to other Swedenborgian organizations, they believe that the writings of Swedenborg are not only divine, but they also have an internal or spiritual sense. As they interpret Swedenborg's writings, this sense becomes more and more apparent to an individual as he or she progresses in the process of regeneration. Until quite recently this group was organizationally unstable. Today it has about 1,000 members, primarily in Southern Africa, although the headquarters is in Pennsylvania.

The largest of the independently organized national New Church associations is the New Church of Southern Africa. Established in 1911, by a black South African, David Mooki (1876–1927), who had found a copy of *True Christianity* in a second-hand bookstore, it came under the umbrella of British Conference for almost 50 years. In 1970 it separated from Conference, and for 20 years was under the strong leadership of the founder's son, Obed S.D. Mooki (1919–1990). When he died in 1990, there were approximately 25,000 members. A schism occurred during the transition from a family dynasty to a more impersonal and democratic structure. Today the main group has approximately 15,000 members in 90 congregations, and the splinter group has approximately 5,000 members. Despite the problems this group suffered, they remain the largest single New Church organization in the world.

Four factors may account for the preeminence of the New Church of Southern Africa among Swedenborgian organizations: first, it is African; second, it was established almost 100 years ago by an indigenous African, with energy, vision, and an abiding commitment to the teaching of the New Church; third, at its inception it had a strong organization with a day school and its own theological school, a school

that still exists; fourth, this organization had the good fortune to be the dominant partner in a merger with another religious body in South Africa, the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion in 1961. As a result of that merger a church with 5,000 adult members suddenly became a church with 25,000 members.

Independent Swedenborgian New Church organizations exist in the Czech Republic, Kenya, Korea, the Philippines, Russia, and Sri Lanka. The total affiliation of New Church organizations worldwide is approximately 50,000.

The relatively small size of this religion, when compared to other NRMs that survived their eighteenth century origins, may be attributed to the role played by the charisma of the book rather than charisma embodied in a person. Another factor may be the nondogmatic nature of the message. Swedenborg's teachings clearly argue that a person's salvation is not dependant upon the acceptance of his doctrines. This may affect both the zeal of the recruiter and the individuals being recruited. In any case, the number of people affected by his religious writings since 1749 and the publication of the first volume of *Secrets of Heaven* is incalculable.

THE SWEDENBORGIAN MOVEMENT'S CULTURAL IMPACT

The Swedenborgian Movement had a considerable impact on the world beyond the organizational context. The primary focus of this chapter has been an examination of the man, his message, and the institutional response to his work. But the noninstitutional response was considerable. The writers and artists who engaged Swedenborg's new spirituality were among the most creative and revolutionary makers of the modern era. Perhaps they were already pioneers; nonetheless, when they read Swedenborg, his appreciation of the spiritual either opened their eyes or opened them more widely, and they saw the world in a new and deeper way.

The English painter-poet William Blake (1757–1827) drew inspiration from Swedenborg's spiritual visions to create his own—from his *Songs of Innocence and Experience,* to his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* and *Jerusalem.* Blake was an artist who drew his audience inward to a world fashioned by mind and spirit. He crafted a world from the mind's eye, not from the natural world.[43] The American short story writer Edgar A. Poe (1809–1849) fashioned his famous tale "The Fall of the House of Usher" from a passage in Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell,* number 528. In a discussion of the false idea that nurturing spirituality requires the renunciation of the world, Swedenborg writes, "This is because living an inner life and not an outer life at the same time is like living in a house without a foundation, that gradually either settles or develops gaping cracks or totters until it collapses."[44] Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814–1873) the Irish sensational fiction writer did likewise in his work *Wylder's Hand* in which he used a discussion by Swedenborg concerning the fate of murderers in the afterlife to construct the plot.[45] The study of the religious works of Swedenborg was part of the intellectual development of the American poet Walt Whitman (1819–1892), the American landscape artist George Inness (1825–1894), the developer of European experimental psychology Gustav T. Fechner (1801–1887), and the father of American psychology William James (1842–1910).

All of these men used the spiritual insights and psychological truths found in Swedenborg's writings to present alternative views of the human mind and reality in their works. Their efforts and those of others transformed the understanding of history; external events were no longer believed to be as powerful in shaping human events as the world of motive and intention living within.

CONTROVERSIES AND ISSUES

Swedenborg's religious teachings challenge both traditional Christianity and radical empiricism. Therefore, it is not surprising that almost as soon as his works began to be published they became controversial. Many who read them were uncertain how to judge his experiences and his message. Some who read them found genuine truth and a vision of the Lord within, others were certain that these writings were the product of a deranged mind. Today, the same divergent responses occur. It is almost impossible to resolve such differences, because what is considered evidence from one perspective is dismissed from the other.

Swedenborg was clearly aware that such controversies would arise from his claims. He wrote in the first volume of *Secrets of Heavens:*

> Many will claim, I realize, that no one can talk to spirits and angels as long as bodily life continues, or that I am hallucinating, or that I circulate such stories in order to play on people's credulity, but none of this worries me, I have seen, I have heard, I have felt.[46]

The first world-historic figure to engage Swedenborg's vision was none other than the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). His published a response to his reading *Secrets of Heaven* in 1766, called *Dreams of a Spirit Seer.* Published anonymously, it directly challenged Swedenborg's claim to have seen, heard, and felt spiritual or metaphysical reality. Kant wrote that Swedenborg's complete works were "nonsense" and that he should be sent to a madhouse.[47] This accusation impacted Swedenborg's reputation for almost 240 years.

An article by John Johnson published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* in 1994 reopened the discussion of Swedenborg's psychosis. Thus, it is clear that this issue is as alive today as it was 200 years ago. The problem is a question of what is accepted as evidence. The gulf between those who are willing to entertain Swedenborg's claims and those who are not is extremely broad. Huston Smith, a noted scholar of religion, attempted to narrow the divide in a 2001 Ingersoll Lecture at Harvard. Smith's lecture was titled "Intimations of Immortality."[48] Smith's acceptance of the reality of Swedenborg's clairvoyant experiences was an attempt to bolster Swedenborg's claims.

Interestingly enough, Swedenborg, himself, argued that the controversy was insoluble. His explanation is grounded on the necessity to preserve human freedom with regard to spiritual things. He writes in Divine Providence that "it is a law of divine providence that a person should act in freedom according to reason.… The Lord therefore guards human freedom as a person does the apple of his eye."[49]

Needless to say, today, human freedom is as suspect as the idea of immortality. Nonetheless, religion continues to thrive in the postmodern world of the third millennium.

THE FUTURE

There is no question about it, religion thrives in the world, but it does not thrive equally everywhere. The same is true for Swedenborgianism. While the focus of this chapter is on the history of the different long-standing New Church organizations, future growth of the New Church appears to be in developing nations around the world. Two Swedenborgian organizations, the General Church and The Lord's New Church, have expanded their efforts in this area. Both organizations are international in scope, and the General Church has demonstrated an overall pattern of slow growth since its founding. Recently the Lord's New Church had opportunities for growth in Eastern Europe, particularly in the Ukraine, while sustaining congregations in the United States and South Africa.

Over the past 20 years the General Church assisted the development of Swedenborgianism in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and South America. Some of this work involved the expansion of activities in locations where the Church was already in existence. In other areas those who found Swedenborg's religious writings independently of one another made contact with the Church, and a relationship developed. As a result of this work, congregations developed in Brazil, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, the Philippines, Togo, and Sri Lanka. Within the last year Swedenborgian organizations made contacts with individuals in China interested in developing Swedenborgianism there. The story of the development of the New Church in each of these localities has its own particularities. Nonetheless, each of them represents opportunities for church growth for the future.

CONCLUSION

Swedenborgianism did not begin like most founded religions with a charismatic leader; it began instead with the *charisma of the book,* offering human beings the opportunity to freely and rationally know a loving and visible God. Its foundation seems secure, but the process of growth has been slow. This is because the unfolding of a religion of the charisma of the book requires rational reflection. If after such reflection assent is given to the vision of the New Church, it has an enduring strength, because what is loved is sustained not by mysteries but by rationally understood truths. Such a faith is well suited to the needs of the modern world.

While Swedenborg's vision will not appeal to or persuade convinced naturalists or atheists, or those content with their faith, it does appeal to seekers, both in the West and in developing nations. Swedenborg himself did not have much hope for the development of the New Church in Europe, where scientific materialism, even in his day, had taken root. Today, it is even stronger. But he did have faith that the New Church would develop among what he called the Gentiles, or people who in his day were not part of the Christian world. In *Divine Providence,* number 322, Swedenborg writes, "I make these statements about Christians because non-Christians pay more attention to God than Christians do, because their religion is in their life."[50] It is not surprising, therefore, that when Swedenborg's religious writings are

discovered by Christians or Gentiles who pay attention to God, their message is often welcomed and embraced.

Current demographic trends in the world seem to be favoring the growth of what Swedenborg called the Gentile nations, in contrast to the former Christian nations in Europe where populations are in decline. If birth rates are any indication, many European countries appear not to have faith in the future. Religious people, however, have a faith in the future, because they have a vision of eternal life. Swedenborg's religious writings offer a clear and detailed vision of eternal life, as well as a straightforward message about how to get there.

NOTES

1. Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1996), number 508. Note that all references in Swedenborg's works refer to paragraph numbers and not page numbers. Thus, they are the same in every edition.

2. Many Swedenborgians prefer to refer to their church and their religion as the New Church, because Swedenborg refers to the Church of the New Jerusalem, as mentioned in Revelation, as the symbolic embodiment of the New Christianity.

3. Listed in Jonathan S. Rose et al., eds., *Emanuel Swedenborg: Essays for the New Century Edition of His Life, Work, and Impact* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2005), 402–505.

4. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia* [New title: *Secrets of Heaven* forthcoming in Swedenborg Foundation's New Century Edition] (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1997), number 68. Note all references in Swedenborg's works refer to paragraph numbers and not page numbers. Thus they are the same in every edition. Note that the Swedenborg Foundation has undertaken a New Century Edition with new translations, introductions, and some new titles. New titles will also be given in this chapter.)

5. Those interested could explore some of the following biographies: George Trobridge, *A Life of Emanuel Swedenborg: With a Popular Exposition of His Philosophical and Theological Teachings* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 1920); Signe Toksvig, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Scientist and Mystic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948); Cyriel O. Sigstedt, *The Swedenborg Epic: The Life and Works of Emanuel Swedenborg* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1952); Ernst Benz, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Visionary Savant in the Age of Reason* (1948), trans. Nicolas Goodrick-Clarke (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2002); Rose et al., eds., *Emanuel Swedenborg: Essays for the New Century;* Lars Bergquist, *Swedenborg's Secret,* (1999), trans. Kurt P. Nemitz (London: Swedenborg Society, 2005).

6. This was not at all unusual and was one of the primary means of publication in the eighteenth century. Another method was to gather funds from subscribers, who then received the published copies.

7. Included among his inventions were a submarine and an airplane.

8. In his outline Swedenborg indicated this was to be a 17-part work, but in the end he published studies of only four of the bodies' systems and studies of the organs of taste, smell, and touch. Studies of the remaining senses, the reproductive system, and discussions of "The Fiber," as well as something called "Rational Psychology," were left in manuscript form.

9. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Journal of Dreams,* trans. J.J. Garth Wilkinson (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1977), number 54.

10. Ibid., number 19.
11. Ibid., number 180.
12. Alfred Acton, *Introduction to the Word Explained* (Bryn Athyn, PA: Academy of the New Church, 1927), 126.
13. Swedenborg by this time was a well-known author in Sweden and in Europe. His works were reviewed in internationally respected journals. At the time of his retirement from the Board of Mines, he was one of very few intellectual Swedes with an international reputation.
14. The original note appears on the first page of Swedenborg's handwritten manuscript of his Bible index of Isaiah and Genesis. See Acton, *Introduction to the Word Explained,* 127, n. 3.
15. Ibid., 128. The fact that he began a new Bible index with the spiritual sense included is cited as evidence. An explanation of the spiritual sense will be taken up in the section on Doctrine.
16. Jonathan S. Rose, "Swedenborg's Garden of Theology," in *Emanuel Swedenborg: Essays,* 61, n. 20.
17. The relationship between Immanuel Kant and Emanuel Swedenborg is intriguing and complex. It would appear that Kant felt compelled to ridicule Swedenborg and his metaphysics, in order to ensure a place for his own philosophical enterprise. He wrote a book about Swedenborg and metaphysics in 1766 entitled *Dreams of a Spirit Seer.* See the attempt of Gregory Johnson to clarify it.
18. See the title page of *Delitiae Sapientiae de Amore Conjugiali* … Amsterdam, 1768.
19. For details of these clairvoyant experiences see any of the biographies listed above. One involves Swedenborg seeing Stockholm while he was on the west coast of Sweden 400 miles away as discussed above. Another involves Swedenborg telling the Queen of Sweden something that only her deceased brother knew, and another describes how Swedenborg helped a widow find a receipt hidden by her husband. It was Frülein von Knobloch who asked Kant to comment on them. Although he gave a favorable account of Swedenborg to her, later he wrote a satire of Swedenborg entitled, *Dreams of a Spirit Seer.* A discussion of this small work is found in some biographies of Swedenborg and in Jane Williams-Hogan, "Emanuel Swedenborg," in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism,* ed. Wouter Hanegraaff et al. (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2005), 1096–1105.
20. See the title page of *Vera Christiana Religio* I & II (Amsterdam, 1771).
21. Sigstedt, *Swedenborg Epic,* 431, 432.
22. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2002), number 1.
23. Ibid., number 1.
24. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Wisdom* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2003), number 4.
25. Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion* [*True Christianity*] (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1996), number 163 (2).
26. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Other Planets,* in *Miscellaneous Theological Works* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1996). See this work for a discussion of the human inhabitants of other planets in this and other solar systems.
27. Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion* [*True Christianity*], number 71:2.
28. Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Wisdom,* number 1.
29. Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion* [*True Christianity*], number 247.
30. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Divine Providence* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2003), number 254.

31. Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, number 304.
32. Ibid., number 445.
33. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Conjugial Love* [*Marriage Love*] (London: Swedenborg Society, 1989), number 457. The General Convention, which ordains homosexuals into their ministry, interprets Swedenborg's teachings on marriage to apply to the marriage of good and truth within an individual.
34. Ibid., number 68.
35. Rose, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Essays,* 66.
36. Swedenborg uses the term *ecclesiae* to refer to the different religions with their different revelations that have played a central role in the salvation history of humankind, even though the term as commonly used has a Christian connotation.
37. It should be pointed out that the judgments of all of the churches mentioned in the Word have been spiritual in nature.
38. Efforts to organize and publish his works were made by readers of Swedenborg's writings in Sweden during the 1770s and 1780s. They were harassed by officials and ridiculed by the press. The absence of religious freedom in Sweden led these efforts to go "underground" where they remained until 1874 when the State officially permitted Swedenborgians and other minority religions the right to organize. They did so immediately. Today there are two different Swedenborgian organizations in Sweden with four congregations.
39. This idea was first developed by the author in a 1997 paper presented at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in San Francisco, CA, entitled: "Moving Beyond Weber: The Role of Written Texts in the Founding of the Swedenborgian Church."
40. Recent concerns about church growth have led the organization to implement the centralization of some church functions.
41. Quote taken from an article by Jane Williams-Hogan and David B. Eller, "Swedenborgian Churches and Related Institutions in Great Britain, the United States, and Canada," in *Emanuel Swedenborg: Essays,* ed. Rose et al., 304.
42. Quote taken from note 102 on page 304 in *Emanuel Swedenborg: Essays,* 205.
43. William Blake and his wife, Catherine, signed the roll at the First General Conference in London in 1789.
44. Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell,* 528.
45. Ibid., 462:b[6].
46. Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia* [*Secrets of Heaven*], number 68.
47. Immanuel Kant, *Dreams of a Spirit Seer Illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics,* trans. E.F. Goerwitz, ed. Frank Sewall (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1900).
48. Huston Smith, "Intimations of Immortality: Three Case Studies" (*Harvard Divinity School Bulletin, The Ingersoll Lecture for 2001–02*: 12–16.
49. Swedenborg, *Divine Providence,* number 97.
50. Ibid., number 322.

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Spiritualism

Robert S. Cox

In 1848, a new and quintessentially American system of beliefs began to spread from the heart of the Burned-Over District of New York State, the region that for a generation witnessed scorching religious revivals. At a time when the constant pressure of racial, class, and sectional strife, social and geographic flux, and the rise of industrialization left many Americans wondering whether the seams of their nation were coming unstitched, Modern Spiritualism offered a satisfying alternative to the evangelical settlement. While the revivals attracted millions and spawned innumerable groups devoted to social, political, and religious reform, many Americans were left in their wake dismayed, uncertain as to which way to turn, unable or unwilling to settle into any denominational conformity. "To join the Congregational Church," wrote one such man, "was saying, I am one of the 'elect.' To join the Universalists, was saying, God will take care of his offspring. Joining either of the others, was saying, we will try."[1] Exhausted by the "war of words" waged by competing revivalists, some turned inward to ask "who of all these parties are right, or, are they all wrong together?"[2]

For the writer and reformer William Denton, the answer was clear: "these churches of the living God, so called, are shams every one." Far from signifying the unification of the Christian body, the many churches were seen by individuals like Denton as signs of utter and irreparable rupture. Far from addressing the fraying of the union, evangelical competition and the "antagonism of sects and creeds" seemed signs of the sort of social division and moral decay that threatened to leave families, communities, and even entire nations, as the Tennessean Jesse B. Ferguson wrote, "severed in their aims, in devotion to false views of man's Spiritual interests," severed by the strivings of "men aiming professedly, at the same ends, while industriously engaged in each others injury or destruction."[3]

In the 1850s, Denton and Ferguson joined a growing number of Americans who rejected the sectarian impulse in favor of the more radical, Spiritualist approach to restoring unity in the spiritual body. Rooted in the belief that the dead had reestablished communication with the living, Spiritualism was a "perfectly democratic

religion" for its believers, an "emphatically … American religion" that reflected the progressive genius of the new nation.[4] Less hierarchical than Mormonism and Seventh-day Adventism, the other major religions to originate in the Burned-Over District, Spiritualism emphasized the authority of individual conscience, as opposed to the authority of the Bible and clergy, and it promised healing for the divisions tearing through the American body politic and hope that an age of harmony and unity had arrived. Balancing sensational performance against a penetrating philosophy, Spiritualism was like a pop-cultural amoeba, distilling a mixture of high culture and low, absorbing the language of scientific empiricism, occultism, and social reform in the course of emerging as the fastest growing religion in mid-nineteenth century America.

MULTIPLE ORIGINS

Placed into a magnetic trance by an itinerant phrenologist in December 1843, a young shoemaker's assistant from Poughkeepsie, New York, looked out over the audience before him and peered through their bodies as if they were sheets of glass. Inside, their organs shone in distinctive hues, every tissue glowing, every muscle, tendon, and vein illuminated. Their very thoughts were visible to his exalted vision, licking like flames at their heads, bright "like the breath of diamonds." This shoemaker, Andrew Jackson Davis, saw not only the anatomical structures of bodies, but "their indwelling essences and vitalic elements," their personalities, pathologies, and pasts. He saw disease and illness, and divined how to cure it, and, more importantly, he saw the anatomy of the soul as well as the body. In rapport with nature, Davis grasped the innermost secrets of life, the hidden virtues of plants, the physical structures of the earth buried beneath strata and time.[5]

The world that opened to Davis that day simultaneously marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. Davis's experiences and his newly discovered ability to cure the ill were a late instance in a century-long history of remarkable physical and mental manifestations associated with the sleeping body. In both the popular press and medical literature, somnambulists (sleepwalkers and mesmeric subjects) had frequently been noted for their preternatural abilities to diagnose and cure diseases by sight or touch, for their hypersensibility or insensibility, for their abilities to see through solid objects, read minds, travel mentally outside the body, and deliver fluent lectures on esoteric subjects, and, on rare occasions, for their capacity to see and converse with the dead. Davis's experiences as a magnetic subject would have been broadly familiar to Americans in the 1840s, but as he began not only to describe what he saw, but to write in his flowing prose about what his visions meant, Davis took the first tentative steps to creating what many would call a new era, the new dispensation of Modern Spiritualism. As a clairvoyant physician, mental explorer, and visionary, Davis learned that he too could see and converse with the invisible hosts of the dead and that behind our daily lives lay a deeper reality, a cosmic infrastructure uniting all creation.[6]

Four years later, while Davis was occupied in healing, writing, and lecturing on this new cosmology, the home of John D. Fox in Hydesville, New York, became the scene of equally startling revelations. Throughout the winter of 1847–1848, the spartan home had been afflicted by showers of disembodied raps sounding forth from the walls and floorboards and occasionally from thin air, often centered on Fox's teenaged daughters, Margaret and Kate. The nights were punctuated by unseen hands brushing past in the darkness and tables bustling about on their own, as mysterious in their intentions as the raps. Unable to determine the cause of these phenomena and unable to deter them, John and his wife slid gradually toward despair, praying that "if this thing was of the devil, that it might be removed from them."[7]

But Kate and Margaret remained unfazed, perhaps even amused by the noises and attention they attracted from their neighbors. Rather than recoil in fear or modesty, the girls delighted in the raps, until one night Kate took the bold step of addressing them directly. Following a particularly loud series of raps on March 31, 1848, she cried out "Here Mr. Split-foot," snapping her fingers, "do as I do!" and snap for snap, the thin air rapped back. Witnesses to this scene were stunned, surmising immediately that some intelligence must lay behind the knockings, an intelligence that could hear, understand, and respond to the spoken word. By posing a series of simple questions, responded to with an equally simple telegraphic code of raps signifying yes or no, the girls soon deduced that the source of the commotion was not some holy angel or fearful demon, but the spirit of a murdered man with an uncanny knack for clairvoyantly determining the number of Fox children (dead as well as living) and for revealing the names and dates of demise of their neighbors' relatives. Proof that the raps were from the dead came, as it would for years, through recitation of the drab details of family names and private histories, the spirit rapping out what could be known only to the most intimate or omniscient friends. It was as if a "spiritual telegraph line" had been strung between this world and the next, and under certain conditions "impossible for mortals yet to comprehend," the immortal spirits of the immaterial world had begun to use the "forces of spiritual and human magnetism, in chemical affinity" to commune with the living and divulge the secrets of the life beyond. In this bridge between natural and supernatural, material and immaterial, the barrier of death at last was breached.[8]

When Leah, the eldest Fox daughter, discovered that she too could elicit raps, the family followed the spirits' advice and moved to the nearest big city, Rochester, to take their spiritual demonstrations to the wider public. From almost the first rap, the Foxes met resistance from the orthodox and skeptical. Although the reality of spirits was widely accepted in popular culture, the claim of direct communication with them smacked of the sort of "enthusiasm" associated with religious charlatans and evoked fears of social and political disorder. In Rochester, a skeptical, even hostile crowd confronted the Foxes, and to prove themselves, the girls agreed to perform a public "test." In an exercise that was repeated often for public mediums (those who communed with spirits for members of the public, usually for pay), a committee of respectable citizens gathered at Corinthian Hall—the site of many antislavery and women's rights meetings—to determine once and for all if the young Foxes were

telling the truth. Prodding, probing, scrutinizing the girls from all angles and in all positions, inspecting their clothing, "even their shoes, stockings, and under-garments," forcing them to stand on insulating pillows in case some electrical means were employed to produce the raps, the committee (actually three successive committees) finally pronounced themselves perplexed, unable to determine how the sounds were made. The Foxes were vindicated, at least for those who would believe.[9]

Like a chemical reaction in which a tiny seed introduced into a saturated solution triggers a rapid crystallization, Spiritualism took shape. In Rochester, where the fires of evangelical fervor had repeatedly flared, crowds thronged to the Foxes' demonstrations, coming for entertainment or enlightenment, out of curiosity, scorn, hope, or fear. Throughout the region where Davis first saw his visions and the Foxes first heard the raps, an intense interest in the afterlife materialized, shaped by theories of somnambulism, animal magnetism, phrenology, and clairvoyance, primed by the years of spiritual threshing and revival. As the Foxes toured cities such as Auburn, Buffalo, and New York City, they earned national attention, and their longer tour of the Midwest spread Spiritualist flames across the heartland.

Perhaps more importantly, as the Foxes toured and a nascent spiritual lecture circuit began to spread word through a network of lecturers, people not only tested the spirits, they tested mediumship itself. New mediums sprang up spontaneously in many parts of the nation, and a corresponding spirit of innovation animated the search for more efficient, or more dramatic, means of communicating with the dead. The yes and no rapping code gave way to more expressive alphabetic codes, to table tilting, to automatic writing, to spirit drawing, to spirit music, to slate writing, to full body materialization, to direct impressions scratched onto the body, to photographs, and to a variety of ingenious mechanical devices for receiving spirit impressions, including the planchette and spiritoscope. At one end of the spectrum were mediums who could easily be confused with stage magicians, performing rope escapes for paying audiences with "spirit" assistance, while other mediums were difficult to distinguish from animal magnetists, clairvoyant physicians, or phrenologists were it not for their references to spirit communion. In a few cases, mediums like William Denton occasionally dispensed with references to the spirits altogether. The situation was further complicated by an unknown, but probably larger, number of private mediums, who communicated with spirits for friends and family and whose methods we still know very little about. While public mediums garnered attention on stage, it seems likely that as many or more individuals gained exposure to Spiritualist practice through the private séance, gathering around a medium in small "circles" to receive messages from the departed.

The proliferation in the technology of spirit communication is just one indication of how significant communication was for Spiritualists. The phenomenal growth of the movement, they noted, was attributable to the unique mixture of the philosophical speculations of visionaries like Davis combined with the phenomena produced by mediums like the Foxes. Although admitting that their ranks included a few "enthusiasts, fanatics and impostors," Spiritualists insisted that theirs was a decidedly rational faith and that they took a radically empirical approach to spiritual

knowledge.[10] While "mainstream" religions relied solely on faith in the written word of the Bible or church authority, spirit phenomena provided tangible evidence of all that was outlined in their philosophy. Simply put, they argued, "Spiritualism *works*."[11] Mediums could see disease directly and cure it. "Ours, too, is a generation seeking after signs," the New England Spiritualists Association claimed, "and we have them in the movements of tables and chairs by invisible power—in the music from pianoes, drums and trumpets, where no visible performer is near—in audible voices—in distinct vision of the departed, and in many other ways." The physical phenomena, in other words, were nothing less than "the foundation of the whole philosophy," and without such empirical proofs, the Association wrote, "we *sink* back on *faith alone,* deprived of a *tangible basis.*" Offering the surety that for many was lacking in the evangelical conversion experience, Spiritualists therefore urged the skeptical public to set aside their orthodox preconceptions and "come try" the spirits for themselves, to make their own decisions about the reality of what they heard and saw.[12]

And try they did. The Spiritualist movement grew, even though it had no formal structure, no agreed upon rituals, few leaders, and precious little agreement on whether it was a religious movement. By 1857, the former Universalist minister Uriah Clark estimated that there were nearly 1,000,000 Spiritualists in the United States—3,000,000 if one included inquirers—while other estimates, surely too optimistic, ran as high as 11,000,000. Within three years of the first raps at Hydesville, Spiritualism had spread to England and France, and within a decade, as far as Russia, Italy, and the Caribbean.[13]

SPIRITUALISM AND REFORM

Historians often explain the common threads running through an otherwise diverse religious and social movement by citing a deep and abiding predilection among the spirits (and Spiritualists) for social reform. Indeed, social reform and Spiritualism were often linked, and many of the most prominent white antislavery agitators were Spiritualists, including William Lloyd Garrison, Sarah and Angelina Grimke, and Gerrit Smith. The long-time abolitionists and feminists Isaac and Amy Post, for example, were among the earliest and most avid supporters of the Fox sisters, and Isaac Post soon experimented with his own mediumistic potential, publishing an important collection of spirit messages that bore a strident reformist stamp. In conversations with the spirits of public figures such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Elias Hicks, Post's reformist beliefs were confirmed by these great figures of American history, perched in their heavenly home. A repentant John C. Calhoun, for example, bitterly lamented his role in bolstering the slave power, while Washington regretted his militarism, and many others condemned sectarianism and the spirit of division that stalked the land. A small cadre of reform-minded ministers also took up mediumship, particularly Universalists, Quakers, and Unitarians, with a smattering of Presbyterians and Methodists, and antisectarian reformers like William Denton were also numerous.[14]

To explain why spirit communication and social reform might be linked, historians adapted the work of anthropologist I.M. Lewis, who theorized that spirit possession functions as an instrument for subordinate and oppressed members of society, particularly women, to challenge the normal relations of social power. Through possession, Lewis argued, women especially claim the attention and care of their husbands and other authority figures, and they sometimes can inflict financial damage, if nothing else, upon their oppressors. Furthermore, in receiving treatment for their illnesses, women forge a sense of community with fellow female members of healing cults, and such communities often survive for years, as exorcisms or healing rituals are repeated. Because the spirits speak through them, but are not of them, women give voice to views that would otherwise be socially forbidden. Spirit communication thus becomes a flexible instrument for resisting social oppression in a patriarchal society, an historically sensitive mode of "cultural resistance" that is "an embodied critique of colonial, national, or global hegemonies whose abrasions are deeply, but not exclusively felt by women."[15]

Building upon Lewis's insights, historian Ann Braude explored how the spirits spoke to gender relations in the nineteenth century United States. While noting the ties that Spiritualism had to antislavery, dietary and dress reform, temperance, and medical reforms, it was Braude's insight to call attention to the particularly strong relationship between Spiritualism and early feminism. Early in the Spiritualist movement, women played prominent roles as mediums, lecturers, and writers. Many of them confirmed that the dead believed heartily in gender equity for the living. Braude noted that not all feminists were Spiritualists, but she asserted that all Spiritualists were feminists, and like Lewis, she argued that this was because Spiritualism permitted the expression of radical critiques of gender inequality while adhering, at least on the surface, to Victorian gender norms.[16]

Victorian Americans typically imagined mediums as pious, highly sensitive, and highly strung—all traits then associated with women—and antebellum Spiritualists frequently stated that they waited passively for spirits to speak through them rather than actively calling them forth. At a time when it was controversial for women to address "promiscuous" (mixed sex) crowds, women outnumbered men in the ranks of trance lecturers. These lecturers typically claimed that they did not remember their lectures when they returned to their "normal" state, and sometimes they asserted that they disagreed with the sentiments expressed. In effect, female trance lecturers exploited existing ideologies of femininity (passivity, domesticity) and female capacity (piety, spirituality) to contest women's subordinate status and help shape a new, transformed vision of gender relations. In analogous fashion, Logie Barrow argued that the English working class used spirit communication to further workers' ends in subverting capitalist domination of their lives, while David Hess's studies of Spiritualism in modern Brazil suggest that possession and mediumship can subvert the ordinary relations of power within the patriarchy of the individual family. The spirits thus advocate for the weak, oppressed, and disadvantaged.[17]

However, the notion that mediumship was an instrument for resisting social oppression is complicated by the recognition that many Spiritualist feminists, such

as the Grimke sisters, were public figures and controversialists long before they discovered Spiritualism. They confronted gender norms without help from beyond the grave. More subtly, as historian Alex Owen argues, whatever power or authority women gained through mediumship came in a highly circumscribed space—the séance room—and even at that, it was power only over that limited portion of the population who accepted the reality of spirit phenomena. For the rest, it was a source of contempt. As an instrument for advancing their cause, then, mediumship was unnecessary and unnecessarily limiting. Vieda Skultans has gone further, arguing that among Welsh Spiritualists in the 1960s, mediumship may have helped women feel better about their subordinate social position, but did not challenge it. Skultans's work echoes the suspicions of other researchers that a focus on the afterlife among Spiritualists might actually have diverted social action in this life.[18]

It should not be surprising that the range of political and social expression in Spiritualism was as broad as it was in American society at large. Though never as vocal or numerous as the social progressives represented by Post, Denton, or the Grimkes, a distinctively conservative vein can be found coursing through American Spiritualism, and this vein apparently grew in the years after the Civil War. Several antebellum southern Spiritualists, for example, claimed that the spirits supported slavery. Yet the northerner Robert Hare, a chemist and controversialist from Philadelphia, argued that a proper understanding of relations in the spirit world would support his reactionary political, economic, and social agendas. These voices were never as numerous as the progressive voices, but they were not isolated either, and we cannot dismiss them as mere aberrations.[19]

It is important to emphasize that the average Spiritualist seeker and average medium heard little or nothing about politics or social reform. Without wishing to dismiss the significance of reform in Spiritualism entirely, the content of spirit messages soon reveals just how exceptional figures like Post and Hare were. Spiritualists often voiced their suspicions about mediums who spouted the names of the famous or who transmitted messages that too conveniently aligned with their own perspectives, rejecting the messages along with the medium. The vast majority of messages transmitted by mediums were of a purely personal nature and appeared to most observers at the time—and since—as banal, insipid, or as the writer and reformer Lydia Maria Child suggested, "more disappointing than the golden key which unlocked *nothing;* for they are the merest mass of old rags, saw-dust, and clam-shells."[20] The content of the message, then, was evidently less important than the fact of communication.

SPIRITUALIST FAITH

Called at various times a movement, a philosophy, or a religion; Christian, non-Christian, or anti-Christian; reformist or conservative; occult, scientific, or antiscientific, Spiritualism was all of the above. Rather than defining their faith with respect to any prescribed set of ceremonies or specific creeds that "coerce or cramp the conscience," Uriah Clark suggested, Spiritualists followed "the doctrine of individual

liberty and responsibility," living out the "right and duty of every man to seek all the light he needs as his guide, and settle for himself all matters between his own conscience and God."[21]

The "individual liberty" of conscience, of course, meant that Spiritualism would voice competing, confusing, and all too often contradictory claims about the nature of this world and the next. Neither spirits nor mediums were always reliable, as Spiritualists admitted, nor did they always agree, and at times it seemed that the "democratic" assertion that anyone was capable of mediumship meant only that every Spiritualist stuck to their own individual belief. Even prolific Spiritualist writers like Hudson Tuttle and James M. Peebles found it "exceedingly difficult" to characterize their faith. In its "narrowest sense," they concluded, Spiritualism entailed little more than a belief in the ability of the dead to communicate with the living and, by corollary, a belief in the "immortality" of the soul. "They who adopt this," they stated simply, "are Spiritualists." Beyond this basic precept, Spiritualism seemed easier to Tuttle and Peebles to identify by its aims and effects than its ideas, and, even at that, it had many sides. "Considered from its philosophical side," they wrote, Spiritualism "is rationalism; from its scientific side, naturalism; and from its religious side, the embodiment of love to God and man; inciting to purity of intention, holiness of heart, and the highest religious culture. It underlies all genuine reform movements, physiological, educational, social, philanthropic, religious; and, spanning all human interests with holy aim, it seeks to reconstruct society upon the principles of eternal justice,—the principles of equality, charity, and a universal brotherhood."[22]

To take Tuttle and Peebles at their word and discern how Spiritualism could be considered the source of all reform movements, we must move beyond seeing mediumship as an instrument to be wielded by the oppressed and examine in greater detail the points of faith upon which Spiritualists agreed. The multitude of divergent spirit voices still produced a degree of harmony. While no beliefs truly characterized all Spiritualists, most adherents agreed on a few fundamental principles, including the existence of a Divine Spirit, the "universal brotherhood" of mankind, the unceasing progression of the soul after death, and a belief that Hell was a condition of mind, rather than a physical place.[23] Fleshing out the implications of these concepts preoccupied Spiritualist writers and lecturers from the beginning, and these concerns were the subjects of dozens of thick descriptions of the afterlife in books, pamphlets, and articles, as well as the topic of endless discussions of the relationship between living and dead.

The pioneer of thick description was the visionary Andrew Jackson Davis. Based upon his psychic visions of the Summerland (heaven, the afterlife), Davis developed a "Harmonial philosophy" with which he contended that the "spiritual aspirations" of men and women would bring them "into harmonial relations with each other," and would result in the establishment of "one common brotherhood, where angelic wisdom and order can be freely unfolded." For Davis and many of his readers, this meant that they must reject sectarian Christianity as practiced by the established Protestant churches and also reject "every thing which is uselessly mysterious and supernatural." To replace all of this, Davis offered a vaguely Christian rationality that

addressed "the cultivated heart through the expanded understanding" and that drew rhetorically upon modern natural science. While Davis argued that Jesus appealed to the "goodness" in civilized minds, he believed that in order to bring about an "era of Love," the modern "age of impulse" now demanded "an age of Reason" and "a 'Philosophy' which Jesus *did not* furnish … a 'revelation' to the faculty of REASON, which the Bible *does not* contain." Reason and emotion, rationality and intuition were integral parts of Harmonialism, while blind faith and orthodoxy were not.[24]

The clearest expression of Harmonialism came in Spiritualist discussions of the progression of the soul after death and accounts of the geography of the Summerland. Recalling the visions of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, but differing in critical details, Davis described the Summerland as a series of concentric "spheres" within which numerous circles of spirits were drawn together by "affinity," or commonalty of interest, emotional connection, or moral condition. In the earliest Spiritualist accounts of the afterlife, the spheres were undifferentiated, populated by every deceased individual who shared a more or less equal level of spiritual development. Spiritualist visionaries differed on the number of spheres—few were permitted to glimpse them all—however, they agreed that the mortal world represented the lowest of these spheres and that death freed the soul to progress from this sphere to the next higher one. Rejecting Swedenborg's contention that mortals were the degraded remnants of a golden age, Harmonialists maintained that after the spirit was liberated from its body and its senses were unshackled, it embarked upon an irresistible upward progression, acquiring spiritual knowledge and wisdom. As they grew and perfected themselves, spirits ascended through the successive spheres to approach ever nearer to the Deity, spatially and spiritually.

In Harmonial philosophy (and again echoing Swedenborg), the mortal world was more than simply the lowest rung of spiritual development. It was a "type" of the spiritual, with every feature having "correspondence" with deeper realities in the eternal and spiritual spheres above. The "spirit land is but a counterpart of earth," a spirit in Baltimore informed the Presbyterian minister-turned-medium, Francis H. Smith, and "there is no condition natural, that there is not a corresponding spiritual and mental." Another spirit informed Abraham Pierce in Maine that the "physical body is but a fac-simile of the spiritual body, with all its senses and constituted parts... ordained and fitted to work in a physical or outward form." Nothing took place in the mortal world without ramifications beyond, and, conversely, events in the spirit spheres invariably echoed in the mortal, even in the individual body. Spirits from higher spheres communed with beings lower down, showering them with a steady influx of wisdom gained through their expanded spiritual sight. Several mediums reported that Benjamin Franklin and other great scientists of the past were actively engaged in devising new inventions and technologies to impart spiritual, and sometimes material, comfort to mortals. The afterlife was a dynamic and evolving place, and spirits engaged daily and hourly with the mortal world.[25]

There was, to be sure, continuity between the material and spiritual worlds. Despite their contempt for the physical body, Spiritualists did not reject mortal life. They insisted, in fact, that personal identity was maintained absolutely throughout

the spheres, that personal tastes, memories, and attainments acquired in mortal life continued beyond the grave. Spirits were not (w)holy angelic presences so much as friends, neighbors, and relatives who had evolved incrementally in their spiritual consciousness.

In many ways, the spheres in which these liberated souls resided resembled nothing more than airy versions of Victorian American communities, reflecting middle-class tastes and ideals. Spirit homes and institutions were counterparts, and perhaps models, for those on earth. Spirits attended lyceums where they heard lectures from the better minds of the higher spheres, visited galleries to view the greatest works of art, attended concerts of the best musicians, took part in organizations for spiritual uplift and moral reform, and engaged in trades, not for wages as in life, but for the moral benefit that accrued from productive labor. Emphatically, Spiritualists insisted that the nuclear family would be reconstituted in the higher spheres, husband and wife, parent and child drawn together by their mutual "affinities" to live in homes that were counterparts of their tidy mortal homes, and, even more exciting, spirits would consort with those with whom they shared intellectual interests or other concerns while alive, regardless of parentage. Spiritualists even debated, vigorously, whether pets might be found in the afterlife, usually answering in the affirmative that this member of the family circle would also find its place at the heavenly hearth.

Affinity, so powerful a force in the afterlife, had a rich philosophical basis, drawing upon one of the key concepts of the early Spiritualist movement: sympathy. Since antiquity, sympathy had referred to the condition in which two or more individuals shared an emotional state or feeling, a complete sharing of pleasure or pain, but for the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment, the seemingly simple connection of feeling took on a new importance. More than just an emotional bond between two individuals, sympathy became the "universal bond of union." For these philosophers, sympathy suggested that the various parts of the world—natural, social, and divine—were enmeshed in reciprocal sets of causal relationships, ensuring that influences upon one part of the natural world would affect other parts, perhaps even all other parts.[26]

Just as Davis began his Spiritualist career by explaining disease and healing, so too did sympathy. Physicians were among the first to employ the concept of sympathy extensively, using it to explain the obscure physiological relationships that seemed to characterize the human body. Before modern theories of infection or nervous action, physicians invoked sympathy to explain how a cut on the hand produced a high fever and how an injury to one part of the body caused pain elsewhere. Although the head and stomach were only indirectly connected, for example, physicians noted that violent pains in the skull produced nausea in the stomach. They were not entirely sure how sympathies worked, but they were certain that sympathies were essential to understanding health and healing. Similarly, sympathy could explain the vexing problem of how an idea conceived in the brain could produce tears, pain, or pleasure. The same force explained how an animal magnetist influenced his subject, how medicines cured ailments, or how an injury sustained by one person could be felt by another: any time two bodies could be seen sharing the

same state of feeling, sympathy was involved. Sympathy similarly explained attractions in the inanimate world, describing the relationship between two bodies such as the magnet and the loadstone, and it shaded easily into occult reasoning, providing a ready theoretical basis for astrologers to explain how the planets could influence the body or how lines in the palm could reflect a person's character.

In a key development for Spiritualists, Enlightenment philosophers speculated that sympathy extended beyond the world of physiology and the occult to society, in this world and the next. It was Adam Smith's trenchant analysis of the origins and limits of social bonds that stood as the most influential description of sympathy for antebellum Americans. In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* Smith constructed the philosophical scaffolding for a secure and stable social order, arguing that sympathy would be that scaffolding. To sympathize was a natural human tendency, he suggested: we tend naturally to share in the joys of others and to experience the pleasures of friends as if they were our own; when witnessing scenes of grief and distress, our emotions tend naturally to align with those of the sufferer, as when (in his most famous example) the crowd at an execution finds itself swaying to and fro while "gazing at a dancer on the slack rope."[27]

The problem, Smith argued, was that we do not experience sympathetic feelings with the same intensity as the person causing them, nor can we ever truly know another's motives or thoughts. At some level, other people remain inscrutable despite our sympathetic tendencies, and they often act in their own self-interest to the detriment of others, their behavior checked only by an inherent dread of social isolation should their actions be discovered. For sympathy to function in regulating moral behavior, Smith theorized that it required a conscious act to imagine the position of the other, or better yet, to imagine the position of an impartial spectator imaging both self and other. In this act of self-reflection, Smith argued that a lack of "immediate experience" with what others felt forced one to imagine "what we ourselves should feel in the like situation," but imagining what others felt involved turning scrutiny on one's own behavior: one imagined the feelings of others within the social context of oneself. The ultimate check on antisocial behavior was death or, as Smith called it, "the great poison to the happiness, but the great restraint upon the injustice of mankind, which, while it afflicts and mortifies the individual, guards and protects the society."[28]

Critical to Smith's moral sentiments was the concept of circulation. Financial circulation brought individuals together into networks of debts, obligation, and expectation. These networks blocked selfish behavior and forged reciprocal social bonds, while the circulation of sympathies and emotion ensured unity in the community. Yet sympathy had its limits. It was at its most powerful when linking people in close contact, such as families, but the more distant people were from one another, the less effective sympathy would be. Sympathy unified neighborhoods and communities, but the less frequently individuals encountered one another, the less likely they were to develop sympathetic ties. For Smith, the nation was the practical boundary of a sympathetic community, but other writers suggested very different boundaries. For

all of these writers, however, the conclusion was straightforward: one must cultivate sympathy to permit society to exist at all.

For antebellum Spiritualists, sympathy held the same hope as it had for Smith, a means for uniting what seemed to be a fragmenting country, of overcoming what seemed to be a proliferation of social chasms between the races, creeds, genders, regions, and classes. While the language of sympathetic union was widespread in the United States, Spiritualists were particularly interested in it, and attempted to foster its circulation. "Oh, the power of sympathy!" one spirit exclaimed, "Mortals, you understand it not! When truly expressed, it flows toward the soul of its recipient in waves of light, which become tangible to the suffering one, and form a bridge over which he may pass to a condition of happiness and peace."[29] The spirits, who sounded utopian, assured mortal listeners that a new dispensation, a new era of happiness and peace would follow. But the surest evidence of the power of sympathy to bind and heal was found in the very visitations of spirits themselves: properly enacted, sympathy was so powerful that it overcame all barriers up to and including the greatest barrier of all, as Adam Smith insisted, the barrier of death.

Feeling keenly the separations of life, Spiritualists offered one means of reasserting the integrity of the body politic, of crafting a stable community in a shifting world. They articulated a theory of community predicated upon the social practice of sympathetic communion, a transcendent nexus of emotion that connected and coordinated all of life and death, but that required concerted effort. "Spiritualism," as one circle of radical Spiritualists determined, "is that which makes you feel that there are others in the great brotherhood of men, whose hearts beat in unison with your own"—that produces the emotion binding members of a community.[30] The spirits who assisted a person were those with whom he or she had powerful bonds in this life, usually family members, close relatives, and intimate friends. They were most tightly connected to the living, and the proof of an intimate connection became the surest test of a medium's authenticity: producing some innocuous sign such as a name or date of birth that verified the identity of the spirit was demonstration that the spirit belonged to the living sitter's sympathetic orbit.

If Spiritualists seemed to be reformers, it was because, like reformers, they felt the divisions and inequities of society and, like reformers, they felt compelled to address them. As a voluntary act, sympathy was something to be taken up, exploited, extended, and used to forge connections, and consequently a belief in the spirits propelled social engagement. Abolitionists, feminists, dress reformers, and temperance advocates found in Spiritualism a set of beliefs that was compelling because it offered a vision of society already in the process of being united.

This utopian formulation of Spiritualist sympathy provided a coherent structure to a stunning diversity of practice, however, but it did not persuade everyone, and it barely survived the Civil War. We do not know for certain why sympathetic reasoning declined—the half a million bodies lying dead on Civil War battlefields may have testified to its limitations as a social corrective—but it is noteworthy that with only a few exceptions, African Americans seldom became committed

Spiritualists. Sojourner Truth was a devoted believer and the quixotic Paschal Beverly Randolph ephemerally so, but they were exceptions. Far more typical was Frederick Douglass, who retained a respectful doubt in Spiritualism despite the fervor of so many of his white colleagues. The staunchest community of antebellum Spiritualists of color may have been the resilient circle of French-speaking residents of New Orleans. But in New Orleans the community was based in the free Creole (mixed race) population, a community that enjoyed a marginally higher status in antebellum New Orleans than the "pure African" population, and certainly higher than the most oppressed residents of the state, the enslaved.[31]

The reasons for the reticence of African Americans to take up Spiritualism are complex, but the brutality and corrosion of American race relations surely played a role. The prospect of universal sympathy may have seemed increasingly out of touch for whites after the war, but for African Americans, sympathetic union with whites seldom seemed possible in this life. The Creole spirit circle in New Orleans provides a gauge of what must have been a common experience among African American believers. When the postwar political order in the South was still being contested in the early years of Reconstruction, the circle received a number of optimistic messages from the spirits of their dead comrades, often veterans of "Colored" Civil War regiments, who announced that the day of sympathetic racial equality was dawning and that racial union might even be at hand. But as white counterresistance in the South and white northern indifference to African Americans became increasingly clear, the spirit messages turned away from change in this life to the prospect of recompense in the next. Harmony and equality would be postponed to a distant, spiritual future. Racial realities, in other words, trumped the hopes of spirit life.[32]

Therefore, in the years following the Civil War, the boundaries that Adam Smith foresaw as restrictive of sympathy became increasingly prevalent in American society. As relations between white and black deteriorated, and white Americans turned their attention to healing the scars of their divided white nation, white Spiritualists turned increasingly to refining the definition of their sympathetic community, imagining a new community based on the barriers of race. Beginning in the late 1850s, Spiritualist heaven became increasingly differentiated along racial lines, and race distinguished not only the body, but also the soul. The medium S.G. Horn insisted that "everywhere" in the afterlife, "the peculiarities of race still exist," with the races drawing together into their own racial zones, "the Hindoos and Turks each retaining their peculiar marks of character, colour, and development."[33] The Indian "Happy Hunting Ground" became an essential element of heaven, an utterly separate region in which Indians continued to live in their traditional ways, riding spirit horses and hunting spirit bison. The prominent Christian Spiritualist Eugene Crowell concluded that national distinctions and boundaries continued in the afterlife, just as personal identity did. In their own "divisions, or territories" in the afterlife, the "American, English, French, German, etc." continued to bear the distinctive "characteristics" they had on earth. From language to dress and decorum, "an American there is still an American," Crowell wrote, "an Englishman an Englishman, a German a German, an Indian an Indian, and a Negro is there still a Negro."[34] In psychic

travels, the political radical and former abolitionist William Denton discovered that racial distinctions were on other planets, and there, too, darker races were inferior to lighter ones.[35] In redrawing the lines of the sympathetic community, Spiritualists mirrored trends in American society more generally, elevating race into an eternal and unchangeable marker of difference.

SPIRITUALISM SINCE THE 1880S

As the coordinating power of sympathy diminished, the Spiritualist movement lost the momentum and verve it enjoyed during its first quarter century. Sympathetic language continues to color Spiritualist discourse, and the tendency to view the world as an organic, interconnected whole remains common, but sympathy no longer plays the central conceptual role that it once did. As a result, with some notable exceptions, Spiritualist philosophy in the twentieth century usually lacked the reach and coherence of earlier years, and discussions of the phenomena tended to predominate. The spirits always had dramatic overtones, but the drama of mediumistic performances escalated between the 1870s and 1930s, with mediums materializing Indian spirits in full body form from dark cabinets to perform dances around the spirit circle, unseen hands whisking about the room, touching the communicants and moving objects through the air, unseen spirit musicians playing ethereal instruments, or the appearance of amorphous "ectoplasmic" projections that formed spirit hands or faces. Enlightenment and entertainment were intermixed.

The waning of Spiritualism during the last decades of the nineteenth century is usually attributed to the effects of personal scandals involving mediums and the widespread and recurrent evidence of fraud. That some Spiritualists espoused free love (finding one's spirit mate), divorce, and other radical political and social positions clearly hindered its popularity in "respectable" society, but the organized efforts to discredit Spiritualism had an even greater impact. The negative verdicts rendered by a series of high profile commissions to investigate Spiritualism were particularly significant, particularly the judgment of the commission convened at the University of Pennsylvania in 1886, funded by a bequest from the philanthropist Henry Seybert. Led by a group of socially prominent Philadelphians and noted scientists, the Seybert Commission stands out for the number and prominence of mediums it claimed to expose, as well as for the breadth of the methods of spirit communication it examined. Leaving few stones unturned in its devastating report, writing in a restrained style punctuated by a piercing wit, the Commissioners took apart some of America's best known public mediums, including Margaret Fox, James V. Mansfield, and the slate writer Henry Slade, leaving the impression of a tawdry and dishonest bunch, even when concrete proof of their misdeeds was not forthcoming. The debunking efforts of the magician Harry Houdini in the 1920s, and many other magicians in more recent years, were no less effective at swaying public opinion, casting mediumship into disrepute. Houdini's dramatic interventions during séances and his ability to identify the means by which mediumistic fraud was perpetrated played well in the popular press. Various combinations of academic respectability, celebrity,

showmanship, and sensationalism, have kept debunking efforts and the fraud they uncover steadily in the public eye.[36]

More damaging than the external assaults upon the integrity of mediumship, however, were a spate of revelations from within the fold. Between the end of the Civil War and World War II, many mediums took to the lecture circuit to confess that they had cheated the gullible and bereaved. Typically their public lectures included demonstrations showing how they simulated spirit appearances. Margaret Fox herself became a publicly repentant medium in the 1880s, admitting that she produced the rapping sounds by cracking the joints of her toes and ankles, an allegation first made by a group of physicians in 1851. Although she later recanted her recantation, the admission by one of the movement's first and best known mediums had a significant impact on Spiritualism's reputation.[37]

Paradoxically, other critics leveled damaging allegations against Spiritualism from the opposite perspective. Members of "mainstream" denominations often complained that the problem with spirit phenomena was not that they were fraudulent, but that they were real, but diabolical in origin. More secular critics agreed that the phenomena were real, but insisted that they were of natural, not supernatural origin. Mediumistic deceit might still be involved, but the "electro-psychologist," John Bovee Dods concluded that the "involuntary powers and instincts" of the human mind were capable of producing all of the phenomena attributed to the spirits. Until late in the nineteenth century, the well known "facts" of clairvoyance, electricity, and animal magnetism were often invoked. Spiritualism, in other words, was natural and had no need of spirits at all.[38]

There was no single Spiritualist response to these critiques, but a number of different responses that resulted in a more fragmented "movement," if it could be called a movement at all. Some Spiritualists responded to the torrents of criticism by rejecting their critics out of hand, their will to believe prevailing over their critical concerns. All the commissions and investigations, Spiritualists claimed, were carried out under less than ideal conditions, were unfairly conducted, or were ill equipped to record spirit phenomena, but even more basic denials were not uncommon. When the French photographer Edouard Isidore Buguet admitted in court to using trickery to produce images of spirits, one of his clients blurted out that even if Buguet had faked some images, he had not faked his.[39] More sophisticated arguments suggested that both mediums and spirits were imperfect beings and were sometimes tempted to fake spirit phenomena to please the public, or, alternatively, they were sometimes mistaken in their understanding of the spirit world. After all, the spirits most likely to commune with the living were those who were closest to us sympathetically, lowest in the progression of spheres, and therefore least advanced in spiritual knowledge.

A longer lasting influence, however, was exerted by Spiritualists who wanted to purify their movement from within, distancing themselves from the supposed excesses of their peers and policing the boundaries of acceptable practice. Christian Spiritualists such as Eugene Crowell blended Spiritualism with liberal Christianity, arguing that their beliefs were fully consistent with scripture and properly understood, never conflicted. Christian Spiritualists, Crowell insisted, read the Bible as

divinely inspired, but retained the right to use reason to judge what they read and reject whatever they found inconsistent with modern mores. Not only were Spiritualists good Christians, they were more like the primitive Christians of the early church than any of the modern sects.[40]

Other Spiritualists were more direct in their attempts to marginalize or silence alternative spiritual perspectives. Emma Hardinge Britten, an important medium and early historian of the movement, was a significant moderating figure, a sort of antiradical who attacked a broad range of free love advocates, communitarians, and infidels, whom, she complained, claimed direct divine inspiration and assumed "supreme and unquestionable authority in all matters, whether social, religious, temporal, eternal or financial."[41]

The net effect of such responses was that Spiritualist practice became increasingly circumscribed, homogenized, and less antagonistic to the established churches, or at least to the liberal wing of Protestantism. This trend was nursed by the separation of groups whose beliefs did not conform. Certainly, a hardy subculture of Spiritualism flourished among the lower classes, abjuring social respectability and maintaining tenuous connections to the likes of Crowell and Britten, but at least two New Religious Movements (NRMs) that emerged in the 1870s bore close relations with mainstream Spiritualism. Founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Olcott in 1875, the Theosophical Society had broadly similar goals to mainstream Spiritualism—to promote universal brotherhood among humanity—but distinguished itself by emphasizing the esoteric and occult aspects of its knowledge and by blending in "eastern" beliefs in reincarnation and karma with spirit communion. Similarly Mary Baker Eddy elaborated upon Spiritualist and "mind cure" healing practices in establishing Christian Science in 1879, though she, like most Theosophists, was adamant that her beliefs were distinct from and superior to run-of-the-mill Spiritualism. In recent years, some trance channelers and psychics make similar claims to distinguish themselves from regular Spiritualist mediums, asserting that they communicate with higher and purer intelligences, not only with the spirits of deceased mortals.[42]

Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, another offshoot of Spiritualism appeared in cities throughout the south and in major urban centers in the north, attracting a predominantly lower-class African American flock to services that drew syncretically on white Spiritualism, Catholicism, Hoodoo, and Voudon. Although their precise origins are unknown, these Black Spiritual Churches, according to the sociologist Hans Baer, represent one form of religious response to racism and social stratification, allowing believers to manipulate their own social position through magico-religious rituals and the acquisition of esoteric knowledge. Baer notes that the altars in many Black Spiritual Churches include statues not only of Jesus and the Holy Family, but of the Sauk Indian resistance leader, Black Hawk. As the central spirit in the pantheon of these churches, Black Hawk is both a symbol of, and encouragement to, resistance to white domination. Spiritualism also produced movements in the opposite political direction, becoming a focus during the 1930s for a fascist paramilitary organization led by William Dudley Pelley known as the Silver Shirts.[43]

Adaptable to a range of national and cultural contexts, Spiritualism was introduced into Brazil in the early twentieth century through the writings of the French theorist Alain Kardec. Spiritualism blended with a number of African and new world religious traditions and gained considerable popularity, with Spiritualists in Latin America far outnumbering Spiritualists in the United States. In Iceland it was instituted as a viable, formal option in the state church, the only place in the world where it enjoys state recognition.[44]

From the end of the Civil War to the end of the twentieth century, the evolution of mainstream Spiritualism was marked by a distinct tendency to organize and regularize practice, resulting in the formation of both a new field of scientific inquiry and the organization of the formal Spiritualist church. The affinity of Spiritualism with science and technology, of course, grew out of the rising authority of scientific reason and the optimistic and characteristically American fascination with the products of scientific research. For decades Spiritualists integrated new technologies into their descriptions of how spirits communicated, but not just any technology: they focused on those technologies that, like sympathy, promised to unite a distant and fractured nation. Telegraphy was one of the first metaphors for spirit communication, but spirits were equally attracted to the railroad, photography, telephone, and eventually television—any technology that allowed individuals to communicate with other individuals.

Beginning in the 1870s, Spiritualists built upon this rhetorical relationship with scientific methods and products to reemphasize the empirical character of their beliefs. Pioneered by figures such as the writer Epes Sargent, psychic scientists (not all of whom were Spiritualists) sought to use rigorous, objective methods to test theories of spirit action. The Society for Psychical Research in Great Britain, founded in 1882, and its counterpart in the United States founded three years later, helped define a field that attracted prominent members such as evolutionist Alfred Russel Wallace, physicists William Crookes and Oliver Lodge, physiologist Charles Richet, and psychologist William James. Psychical research earned a degree of academic respectability in the twentieth century, capped in 1935, by the establishment of a research institute at Duke University under the direction of J.B. Rhine.[45]

Other organizations nurtured the creation of a formal Spiritualist church. Early efforts to organize Spiritualists were often resisted by those who objected to anything that might "cramp the conscience." Several regional associations appeared in the 1850s, but generally disappeared within a few years, and while the first National Convention of Spiritualists was planned for August 1859, it was not actually held until 1864. Other conventions followed, but were generally unsuccessful in generating a national movement. Instead, borrowing a page from the evangelical sects, regional organizations like the New England Spiritualist Camp Meeting Association (founded in 1874) established a series of communities where Spiritualists could spend their summer holidays, communing with one another and the spirits. Lake Pleasant, Massachusetts (1876), Lily Dale, New York (1879), Camp Etna, Pennsylvania (1877), Cassadaga, Florida (1894), and Harmony Grove, California (1896)

were among a score of such communities that became centers of Spiritualist practice.[46]

Spiritualist temples and Sunday Schools hastened the process, and by the 1880s, Christian Spiritualism emerged as the dominant paradigm within the Modern Spiritualist movement, blossoming in the formation of the first successful national organizations. Britten's National Federation of Spiritual Churches (now the Spiritualists' National Union) was founded in Great Britain in 1891, followed in 1893 by the National Spiritualist Association of Churches (NSAC), which remains the primary body in the United States for overseeing the ordination of ministers and certifying lecturers, mediums, and healers. In 1913, a somewhat smaller, but no less successful organization, the National Spiritual Alliance (TNSA), separated from the NSAC, primarily over the refusal of the former to accept the possibility of reincarnation. The NSAC is centered today at Lily Dale, and the TNSA at Lake Pleasant.

The churches associated with these organizations typically hold to some version of Britten's Seven Principles, a statement of the essentials of Christian Spiritualist faith familiar to the first generation of Spiritualist seekers: the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of humanity, the communion of spirits and ministry of angels, the continuous existence of the human soul, personal responsibility, compensation or retribution in the afterlife for activities in this life, and the eternal progression of the soul. In practice, a Spiritualist service often resembles a generalized, noneucharistic Protestant service, including an opening hymn, usually with words rewritten to reflect Spiritualist beliefs, followed by a topical sermon. The sermon, however, may be delivered by the minister in trance, and messages from the spirits may be delivered. Healing is often singled out as a central function of Spiritualist ministries, providing physical, emotional, and spiritual aid to the afflicted.[47]

In this Christianized form, the Spiritualist movement enjoyed several periods of resurgence, when large numbers of individuals once again entered into conversation with the spirits. During the 1920s and 1930s, Spiritualism gained immense popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. Houdini, always the antagonist, attributed the rise of the movement to mediums taking advantage of widespread grief over the loss of life in the trenches during World War I, and to be sure, numerous books were published containing posthumous letters of soldiers killed in action. Spiritualism waxed again among the counterculture of the 1960s and New Age of the 1970s, tapping into a desire for the spiritually authentic and a turn away from mainstream churches. In this most recent formulation, Spiritualism often bears the traces of "Native American" religion, Goddess religion, Earth religion, and other NRMs. An "Indian" dream catcher is as common in a Spiritualist's window as the Seven Principles.[48]

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, Spiritualism and related beliefs are once again enjoying a surge of popularity, in part because of the dominant medium of the day, the television. Although estimates suggest that no more than about 115,000 people maintained formal membership in Spiritualist churches in 2001, the number of believers worldwide may approach 15,000,000, depending upon the definition of Spiritualism. Even as the formal Spiritualist churches remain small, however, variations on Spiritualist beliefs have spread throughout a vibrant popular

culture that largely accepts the reality of the spirit world, appearing on television in the form of a variety of ghost whisperers and hunters and mediums such as John Edward. The spirits will continue to converse, it appears, and Spiritualism to progress.

NOTES

1. Thomas Richmond, *God Dealing with Slavery: God's Instrumentalities in Liberating the African Slave in America* (Chicago: Religio-Philosophical Publishing House, 1870), 41.

2. Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 34; Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints,* vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1963), 4.

3. William Denton, *Radical Discourses on Religious Subjects* (Boston: Denton, 1872), 176–77; J.B. Ferguson, *Spirit Communion: A Record of Communications from the Spirit-Spheres* (Nashville: Union & American Steam Press, 1854), 191.

4. Hudson Tuttle, *Arcana of Spiritualism: A Manual of Spiritual Science and Philosophy* (London: James Burns, 1876), 428.

5. Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Magic Staff, An Autobiography* (New York: J.S. Brown, 1857), 216, 217. Phrenology was the science of the study of the organs of the human mind, and in the United States during the 1840s, it frequently merged with the mind-influencing science of Mesmerism, a precursor to hypnotism.

6. "Modern Spiritualism" was the term used to distinguish the newly discovered means of communicating with spirits of the dead from historical and biblical accounts. Although Spiritualists argued that there was a continuity with ancient times, Modern Spiritualism was an historically specific emergence, tied to particular forms of spirit communication and, according to some believers, specific events in the spiritual world.

7. Emma Hardinge Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism: A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion Between Earth and the World of Spirits* (New York: the author, 1870), 556. See also Barbara Weisberg, *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 2004); Nancy Rubin-Stuart, *The Reluctant Spiritualist: The Life of Maggie Fox* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2004); David Chapin, *Exploring Other Worlds: Margaret Fox, Elisha Kent Kane, and the Antebellum Culture of Curiosity* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2004).

8. Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism,* 39.

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10. Francis H. Smith, *My Experience, or Foot-Prints of a Presbyterian to Spiritualism* (Baltimore: the author, 1860), 39.

11. New England Spiritualists Association, *Constitution and By-Laws, List of Officers, and Address to the Public* (Boston: George K. Snow, 1854), 11.

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13. Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism,* 45; Eliab W. Capron, *Modern Spiritualism: Its Facts and Fantacisms, Its Consistencies and Contradictions* (Boston: Colby and Rich, 1855); Henry Spicer, *Sights and Sounds: The Mystery of the Day, Comprising an Entire History of the American "Spirit" Manifestations* (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1853); Uriah Clark, *The Spiritualist Register, With a Counting House and Speakers' Almanac Containing Facts and Statistics of Spiritualism* (Auburn, NY: U. Clark, 1857). Estimates on the number of Spiritualists are

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The Theosophical Society

Robert Ellwood

INTRODUCTION

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875, principally by Helena P. Blavatsky (1831–1891) and Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907). Their intention was to study the "ancient wisdom" believed still preserved within the symbolism and outer teachings of the world's religions and philosophies, and by various esoteric organizations, ranging from Freemasonry to the Druze of the Near East and the monasteries of Tibet. Theosophy's immediate ideological and experiential context was Spiritualism, in which both Blavatsky and Olcott had been active, eighteenth century occultism, including its popular expression in movements like Mesmerism and Freemasonry, and the nineteenth century occult revival associated with names like Eliphas Lévi and Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Although never large in numbers, Theosophy has had a significant role in disseminating Eastern religious concepts, such as karma and reincarnation, in the West, in the spiritual revitalization of then-oppressed nations like Ireland and India, and in modernist cultural movements such as nonrepresentational art.

BACKGROUND

Modern Theosophy must further be viewed not only in light of romanticism and the Victorian "war" between science and religion. In his inaugural speech as first president of the Society, Olcott portrayed science and religion as both locked into narrow dogmatisms, and also argued (in a manner that caused offence among Spiritualists) that the popular Spiritualism of the day was but a shallow, unreliable, and often fraudulent response to this crisis. Then, evoking the romantic appeal of the distant and the past, and the century's stunning advances in the recovery of ancient civilizations, he pointed to the possibility of a deeper and older wisdom that could transcend this split and form the foundation of a better human future:

> If I rightly apprehend our work, it is to aid in freeing the public mind of theological superstition and a tame subservience to the arrogance of science.… Our society is, I may say, without precedent. From the days when the Neoplatonists and the last theurgists of Alexandria were scattered by the murderous hand of Christianity, until now, the revival of a study of Theosophy has not been attempted.[1]

Olcott added that such an attempt could not have been until conditions of "perfect political and religious liberty" were obtained, that is, in the United States of 1875. Thus the foundation of the Theosophical Society in America was of profound significance both for its own work and for its place in American history. Both temperamentally and ideologically, nineteenth and twentieth century Theosophists have tended to be social idealists, utopians, or reformers who fitted well into the mood of the "progressivist" era, favoring causes like labor reform, women's rights, animal welfare, and "progressive" education.

Olcott's idea that it was in the United States his new movement for the constructive recovery of ancient wisdom had to be first planted has a long lineage and large context, contributing to an image of the United States that Theosophy and its New Age progeny only enhanced. The New World as New Eden is a much reiterated theme, going back to Christopher Columbus's public relations efforts to picture the islands he had visited as paradises inhabited by innocent natives naked as Adam and Eve, despite his simultaneous labors of transporting, enslaving, and massacring those same primitives.

Calvinists and other serious believers, of course, could not overpraise the western paradise so long as its inhabitants, however noble in their savagery, were unbaptized. But Christian or visionary settlers seldom considered that if the America of the heathen was less than as idealized, here was a place where the European utopia could be built. Past history could be abolished, and humanity returned to the garden to start over again. We need only mention John Winthrop's "City Upon a Hill," or R.W.B. Lewis's classic study, *The American Adam.*[2] Lewis speaks of the "American myth" which "saw life and history as just beginning" on these virgin shores anew, "starting up again under fresh initiative, a divinely granted second chance for the human race, after the first chance had been so disastrously fumbled in the darkening Old World." This hope crested in the nineteenth century in such writers as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and William Ellery Channing. It also found expression, according to Lewis, in the gnostic visions of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, though in a darker and more complex way that explored the perils as well as the splendors of American Adamic innocence.

Both visions came together in Theosophy, which managed to embrace progressivism and gnosticism alike, for it entered the late nineteenth century with an eye toward both the distant past and the future, hoping thereby to get beyond the schizophrenias of modernism. Evolution, extrapolated from Darwinism into vast cosmic-scale visions of spiritual as well as physical upward cycles, of whose movement one could now be an agent, was as much a part of its picture as the "ancient wisdom." So was attention to spiritual traditions both Eastern and Western; within them the ancient wisdom was believed to be housed, if often in camouflage. In general, the

Theosophical agenda sought the reconciliation of the modern world created by science and liberal political credos with global spiritual perspectives, and the ancient traditions underlying them. All this was an ambitious undertaking, almost too ambitious, for such a small and recently formed organization. Yet Theosophy found a niche in the world of the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century.

ROMANTICISM

In particular, Theosophy, like so many nineteenth century religious and spiritual movements, was a late heir of romanticism, though one very different from the feeling-tinged but theologically narrow romanticized evangelicalism or Catholicism of the era. Yet like those and other romantics, Theosophists tended to live in either an idealized past or a golden visionary future, but were bored or disillusioned with the present. That attitude of disillusionment focused on science as often as it made science the foundation of its radiant future. Not a few romantics shared Edger Allan Poe's deep disquiet (in his "Sonnet—To Science") as he addressed the scientific critic "Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes."

One way to revive romantic ethos was to return in spirit to the age when deity reigned in sacred grove and mysterious night sky. The intellectual nineteenth century was rich in classical learning, and not a few dreamers wished to get behind Swinburne's "pale Galilean," Jesus, and his joyless churchmen, or formal Christian traditions, to enter a time when divine wonder dwelt in rosy-fingered dawn and the wine-dark sea, something also animating that side of modern Theosophy, which has talked of clairvoyantly seeing the "devas" and "elementals" of nature. The Victorian age was also fascinated by the lost cities, even lost civilizations, its burgeoning archaeology had uncovered. They were not only in classical lands like Schliemann's Troy, but also in Asia, Africa, the New World, and the Pacific islands. Olcott tells us that, on an evening when a master (an advanced being) allegedly appeared to him as he was absorbed in reading, the book was Stephens's *Travels in Yucatan,* an early classic on Mayan ruins.[3]

Also in the Theosophical background was the romanticism-tinged nineteenth century occult revival, including such writers well known to Blavatsky and Olcott as Eliphas Lévi, pen-name of the French esotericist Benjamin Constant, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton. (The latter's occult novels, such as *Zanoni* and *The Coming Race,* had a discernible effect on Blavatsky's esoteric creativity, and by a strange coincidence or karmic connection, when she and Olcott made their journey to India in 1880, the Viceroy was none other than the novelist's son, the poet and romantic imperialist Lord Robert Lytton.) Even before their century lay the occultism of the eighteenth century, when persons like Cagliostro, Swedenborg, Mesmer, the half-legendary comte de Saint Germain, and the founders of modern Freemasonry created a sort of undertow to the Age of Reason that also advanced its agenda in significant ways.

Theosophy found ready resources for structuring itself in the two centuries' fascination with secret, initiatory degree lodges, Masonic or Rosicrucian, which characteristically laid claim to ancient confidential wisdom transmitted through its

formulas to the worthy. Sometimes that assertion was not taken too seriously, and the lodges were more social than anything else, but the notion was nonetheless there that definite stages in the spiritual life existed, which could be mounted through a series of initiations, together with the particular training and knowledge imparted through each.

But Blavatsky insisted there was more: as Olcott put it, "the Spiritualism she was sent to America to profess and ultimately bring to replace the cruder Western mediumism, was Eastern Spiritualism, or Brahma Vidya."[4] Recognizing that most of the spirits evoked by the western mediums were tricksters or "shells," and laying hold of the ancient wisdom of the East as well as the West, Blavatsky and her circle harbored no doubt that Brahma Vidya was incomparably higher than the bumptious spirit faith of the New World.

THEOSOPHY AND THE SPIRITUAL EAST

That observation suggests a final source of Theosophy: the fresh discovery of the spiritual East by the West in the nineteenth century. The process had been cumulative in impact, a backwash from Europe and America's worldwide commercial enterprises, and in particular the colonial adventures of England in India. First came translations of the Upanishads and other Hindu sacred texts early in the century, those works of wisdom that so influenced sages like Emerson, Thoreau, and Schopenhauer, who in turn influenced Blavatsky. (It is interesting to note that, in *Isis Unveiled,* Blavatsky cites Schopenhauer with particular appreciation, while dismissing the metaphysical systems of Hegel and Schelling as "gigantic failures" unable to stem the rising tide of materialism.[5])

As for the Transcendentalists, Thoreau remarked that as he read the "stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy" of the Bhagavad-Gita (another great Hindu text), "the pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges."[6] Walt Whitman's 1871 poem "Passage to India" seems virtually to encapsulate the spirit of the two Theosophical founders' migration to the subcontinent a few years later. The poet sang not only of "Passage O soul to India!" but also of "Passage to more than India!" The India then enjoying the high noon of the British Raj was not the India Theosophy sought: it was less India as a place than as an idea, a spiritual treasure-house of wonder and wisdom older and stronger than anything the West could offer, of Brahma Vidya rather than parlor-séance Spiritualism.

The Western discovery of Buddhism, and the sorting out of its various forms, was a longer process, but by the 1860s the scholarly foundations of modern Buddhist studies had been laid. Sir Edwin Arnold's immensely popular poem about the life of the Buddha, "The Light of Asia" (1879), did much to stimulate the religion's popular appeal. Indeed, the urbane Bostonian and Episcopal clergyman, Phillips Brooks, commented sardonically in 1883 that in the poem's wake "a large part of Boston prefers to consider itself Buddhist rather than Christian."[7] Olcott, in a role adjunct to his Theosophical labors, devoted much energy to the modernization of Buddhism in Asia and presented its case to the West, as a sort of "missionary in reverse."[8]

Theosophy both rode a rising wave of interest in oriental religion and enhanced its wide dissemination, especially on the popular level, along with the no less important Theosophical task of reviving the "ancient wisdom" of the West, storehoused among such as the Gnostics, Kabbalists, and Renaissance Platonists and Hermeticists.

BACKGROUND SUMMATION

The complex conditions for Theosophy's emergence as a spiritual movement and social force in the last quarter of the nineteenth century then included a new revival of the perennial "ancient wisdom" that had appeared before in the Renaissance, abetted by the Enlightenment's reason and science—and its occult underbelly—together with the Romantic's love of ancient mysteries and sense that the knowing power of imagination can exceed that of reason or science.

To this was added the ceremonial magician's feel for the reality of the transhuman spiritual realm, as represented by, say, the Masters or Secret Chiefs of Rosicrucianism, plus the Spiritualist's belief that these mysteries could be brought down to an almost everyday experiential level, and that the revealing of their arcana heralded not mere nostalgia for the past, but the beginning of a new era marked by radical progress and reform in all areas of human life.

Spiritualism, of course, was associated with such liberal causes as abolition of slavery, prison and educational reform, and the rights of women. Blavatsky, politically more European than American in orientation, was a passionate anticlerical in the Voltairean style and an admirer of such radicals of her day as the Italians Guiseppe Mazzini and Guiseppe Garibaldi. [She claimed to have fought and been wounded with the latter in the anti-Papal States battle of Mentana (1867), even though such sentiments somehow coexisted with warm feelings of loyalty toward the czar of Russia, and Eastern Orthodox Christians never shared her animus against Papists and Protestants.]

Freemasonry contributed the idea that one could inwardly prepare to receive the mystic light by a formal, degree-like system of initiations. Finally, Asia added its own versions of the primal lore, plus knowledge that both the ancient wisdom and the new movement were universal, not just Western. The new movement's nativity in the United States, land of religious and intellectual freedom, was, as we have seen, a necessary condition of its existence for Olcott and his associates.

THE FOUNDING AND THE FOUNDERS

The backgrounds and characters of the two principal founders of the Theosophical Society in 1875, Blavatsky and Olcott, were strikingly dissimilar. Blavatsky was born Helena de Hahn in czarist Russia to a family of high aristocratic connections. Her father was an officer in the army of the czar, and her mother a popular novelist whose stories inevitably involved women suffering at the hands of callous men. Even as a child Helena was willful and headstrong, though possessing great imagination, intelligence, and fascination for occult lore. At 18 she impulsively married N.V.

Blavatsky, a widower and provincial vice-governor more than twice her age. She soon left him, to spend most of the next 25 years wandering the world, by her account in search of esoteric wisdom, a quest culminating with mysterious initiations in Tibet in the late 1860s. In 1873 she came to New York, seeking, she said, to study Spiritualism in its homeland. There she encountered many Spiritualists, vehemently entered into their controversies, and also met Henry Steel Olcott.

Olcott, sprung from the solid American middle class, worked variously as an agricultural scientist, journalist, and lawyer. During the Civil War he served the Union as an investigator of fraudulent military suppliers, receiving the rank of colonel; he was also part of a team investigating the assassination of Lincoln. At the same time, Olcott had long had an interest in Spiritualism. In 1874 he was at the home of the Eddy brothers in Chittenden, Vermont, where nightly Spiritualist phenomena were reported. He was, in his reportorial capacity, preparing a series of newspaper articles on the otherworldly happenings.[9] By late 1874 Helena Blavatsky had also arrived at the mysterious farmstead. The convergence of the exotic immigrant and the Yankee journalist was an immediate success.

They kept in touch back in New York City, Olcott clearly fascinated by the unusual woman's volatile personality, remarkable psychic phenomena, and accented talk of faraway mysteries. Above all she spoke to him of the Masters of the Wisdom, adepts or mahatmas, who though still living in this world have attained high initiations. They inwardly governed the course of world affairs and were prepared to accept serious students. In time Olcott began his training under certain of them. Before long, for the further benefit of their esoteric studies, the two shared a series of apartments (though not, Olcott makes clear, the bedroom). The best known, dubbed the Lamasery, became a magnet for the city's coterie of seekers, esotericists, and bohemians, as well as Spiritualists. In his later reminiscences, *Old Diary Leaves,* Olcott well evoked the fascinating conversations, uproarious parties, and intriguing lectures for which the residence was famous.[10]

In 1875 the Lamasery crowd determined to form an organization for the study of the sort of borderline knowledge in which they were interested, which was so exceptionally manifested in Blavatsky and her lore. The group named itself the Theosophical Society; Olcott was elected first president, delivering the inaugural address already cited on November 17, 1875. The organization prospered in its original form for only a few months. During that time the group's members mostly listened to lectures on topics related to comparative religions, the occult, and western esotericism. Olcott and Blavatsky soon enough turned their attention to another project, the compilation of a massive book. This work, published by Blavatsky in 1877 as *Isis Unveiled,* was the first large-scale presentation of the wisdom she believed her long search had garnered.[11]

ISIS UNVEILED

This sprawling two-volume work may appear at first glance to be mainly a disorganized collage of accounts of travel to out-of-the-way places, including narrations

of encounters with shamans and sorcerers, together with discourses on Masonic symbolism, Pythagoreanism, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and Eastern texts, interspersed with roundhouse assaults on conventional science and religion. But gradually certain overriding themes, emerge: nineteenth century science and religion alike were sterile and dogmatic, but if one paid attention to clues found in the "forbidden" lore to which the author pointed, to the experience of shamans and magicians, to the secrets of obscure initiatory orders and ancient texts, one would find hints of a primordial wisdom that could unify the worlds of science and religion.

This alternative world view showed life actually to be an initiatory journey, for those able to receive it as such, into the intricate splendor that lay behind the world as we ordinarily know it. Nature, including human nature, is a subtle and complex mixture of spirit and matter; the highest interaction of the two produces consciousness; masters or adepts exist here and there who can detach and direct potent energies of the spiritual side, roughly the "animal magnetism" of Mesmer, the *Vril* of Bulwer-Lytton, or the *prana* of yoga, to induce seemingly magical effects—though, of course, these are actually natural, but beyond our ordinary understanding of nature. Knowledge of this sort is the beginning, though far from the end, of the unveiled Ancient Wisdom.

THE JOURNEY TO THE EAST

After the successful publication of *Isis Unveiled,* the interests of Blavatsky and Olcott moved more and more in the direction of India, believed to be a mighty reservoir of those forgotten secrets. The inner turn toward India on the part of the founders appears to have commenced in an interest in Swami Dayananda Sarasvati and his Arya Samaj. The Arya Samaj was a Hindu movement advocating what appeared to be liberal religion, calling for simple worship and the elimination of elaborate and "superstitious" temple culti. It supported such progressive measures as modern education, abolition of caste based on birth, and the rights of women.

The relation with the Arya Samaj had begun in 1870, when Olcott had met Mooljji Thackersey of Bombay on a ship to England. Corresponding with him again in 1878, the American invited the Indian to join the Theosophical Society. Thackersey, in turn, told Olcott in enthusiastic terms of the allegedly parallel work of the Arya Samaj. In 1878 the Society united at a distance with Swami Dayananda Sarasvati's organization, naming itself "The Theosophical Society of the Arya Samaj." Olcott felt at the time that the Arya Samaj's reconstructed Vedism was one with the spiritual universalism he identified with Theosophy. However, the Theosophists did not at first realize that Dayananda's positions were actually based on a sort of Hindu fundamentalism; he believed that the Vedas alone were revealed truth, and all later Hindu sources, not to mention all other scriptures, spurious. Vast was Olcott's disillusionment, confirmed later in India, when further information revealed that the Arya Samaj, for all its virtues, intended only conservative, integralist reforms within Hindu India, and so was of little interest to Western universalists.

Nonetheless, this relationship was an important factor in Blavatsky and Olcott's plan to journey to India in 1878–1879, a momentous move for the future of Theosophy. Blavatsky still felt that Dayananda was a master calling her. The subcontinent came more and more into their conversations, and the supernormal masters whom Madame Blavatsky was able to introduce to Olcott increasingly wore turbans.

Another reason for the Indian pilgrimage was the founding of the London branch of the Society that year, 1878, which the two wanted to visit en route. Moreover, the same year Blavatsky acquired U.S. citizenship; she was said to be the first Russian woman immigrant to do so. That would make travel in India somewhat easier, given the British Raj's almost paranoid suspicions of Russian designs on that land, even though the Yankee passport did not relieve her of a discreet police "tail" during some of her stay, and her adversaries often accused her, among other things, of being a spy for the czar. However, the mistrust of India's alien rulers made all the greater the enthusiasm of India's rising nationalists for the pair and for Theosophy.

Early in 1878 the "Theosophical Twins," as Olcott liked to call himself and Blavatsky, arrived in India, the land of their dreams. The two impressed some and aroused skepticism in others of the British community. But they were generally well received by Indians, being among the few Europeans in the heyday of imperialism to show much sympathy for Hindu religion and culture, or to stand, as Olcott did, with Hindus and Buddhists against aggressive missionaries and colonial overlords. Branches of the Theosophical Society were soon formed, and publications issued. An international headquarters was first established in Bombay, then moved in December 1882 to an estate at Adyar, near Madras (now Chennai) in south India.

Among the English converts was A.P. Sinnett (d. 1921), a newspaper editor. He was the recipient of the remarkable and controversial series of documents now called *The Mahatma Letters,* instructions from the masters, which often appeared in extraordinary ways. Their published collection is now one of the basic Theosophical texts.[12] These and later such letters, however, led to the Society's first and greatest crisis: the investigation by Richard Hodgson, of the Society for Psychical Research, into them and related alleged supernormal phenomena. The 1885 report, adverse to Blavatsky, did the nascent movement much harm, accusing the Theosophists of falsifying paranormal events to deceive the gullible.

At the same time, the relative success of Theosophy in India owes much to the movement's enthusiastic embrace of native culture and religion, and its implied critique of the Eurocentric mentality behind colonialism. Liberal-minded Europeans as well as Indians could appreciate this tack. Sometime Theosophists such as the British liberal Octavian Hume and Motilal Nehru, an important Indian nationalist in his own right as well as father of Jawaharlal Nehru, first prime minister of independent India, were among the founders of the Indian National Congress, with which Annie Besant (1847–1933) and M.K. Gandhi (also a sometime Theosophist) were later associated.

It is perhaps no accident that 1884, the year Theosophy was shaken by scandal concerning the alleged forging of letters from Mahatmas, was also the year India was riven by the Ilbert Bill crisis. This was an act proposed in the Viceroy's council

that would have reformed India's judiciary in such a way that Europeans could in some cases be tried before native judges. It was violently opposed by most Europeans in India, and as strongly supported by Indians. In the wake of this upheaval between ruler and ruled, the scandal against Theosophy, known for its sympathy to "natives," was provoked by European investigators and missionaries, and in the upshot Blavatsky and other Theosophists were wildly cheered on the streets by Indian students.[13] Blavatsky returned to Europe in 1885, where despite failing health she completed her greatest work, *The Secret Doctrine,* published in 1888.[14]

THE SECRET DOCTRINE

This massive and remarkable tome is basically an account of the genesis of the solar system by emanation from the One, in accordance with tremendous cosmic cycles of divine activity and rest, and of the evolution of humanity through several worlds and races. Its first section, "Cosmogenesis," portrays the emergence of the differentiated cosmos from the stillness of pralaya, the rest between manifestations; the important theme is that, in those mysterious and remote workings, as in *Isis Unveiled,* consciousness and matter always coexist, though, of course, in very different ways in star and seed.

The second part, "Anthropogenesis," describes the human lineage on planet Earth. Fundamentally it is composed of a series of seven "root races," of which we are now in the fifth. These are regarded as overlapping and, though originally identified with various extant "races," may be thought of as much as stages in the evolution of consciousness as races in the biological sense. The concept has sometimes been labeled racist, but it should be recalled that in the nineteenth century the word "race" was often used where we might speak of nationality or even culture, and that the grand scheme relativized the whole matter by portraying the inevitable rise and fall of all races, nations, and empires—and for this Theosophists were also criticized by those who thought the British Empire, for example, ought to last forever.

The first two root races were primordial and "etheric" rather than fully physical. The third, the Lemurian, and the fourth, the Atlantean, have overtones of Paleolithic and Neolithic cultures, respectively. The book ends with an elaborate demonstration of the cryptic expression of this "ancient wisdom" in the arcane symbolism of numerous faiths and "mystery schools."

THE "SECOND GENERATION"

Blavatsky died in London in 1891. Although Olcott continued as president until his death in 1907, the Society was soon dominated by two "second generation" figures, Besant and Charles Webster Leadbeater (1854–1934). Leadbeater, a former Anglican priest, controversial because of alleged homosexuality and closely associated with Besant, represented the occult side of the "second generation." He produced a widely read series of books based on his "clairvoyant" investigations of the inner planes of reality, past and future lives, and the meaning of ritual.[15] Among the most

representative of his works, largely based on lectures, are *The Astral Plane* (1895), *The Christian Creed* (1899), *The Devanchanic Plane* (1896), *The Hidden Side of Christian Festivals* (1920), *The Hidden Side of Things* (1913), *How Theosophy Came to Me* (1930), *Man Visible and Invisible* (1902), *The Masters and the Path* (1925), *The Other Side of Death* (1903), *An Outline of Theosophy* (1902), and *The Science of the Sacraments* (1920).

Two significant themes are evident from these and other titles. First, Leadbeater's fascination with aspects of reality concealed from ordinary sight, the "hidden side" of human nature and the life after death, led him, with the aid of clairvoyance, into vivid and detailed descriptions of those mysteries. Second, he was, like Annie Besant and others of his generation, profoundly concerned with reconciling Christianity with Theosophy, which for Leadbeater took the form of finding occult forces at work in such traditional Christian rites as baptism and the Eucharist. This quest eventually led to the formation of the Liberal Catholic Church in 1916, of which Leadbeater was a founding bishop. This small denomination uses ritual of the medieval Catholic sort, interpreting it in a Theosophical light.

In the first year of the new century, 1901, Leadbeater together with Annie Besant published a fascinating little book, still in print, called *Thought-Forms,* which seemed prophetic of the direction the avant-garde in the arts was headed in that brave new era. This book was full of illustrations and description, based on Leadbeater's clairvoyance, of colorful but abstract forms seen in the auras or over the heads of persons in various states of consciousness, from spiritual exaltation to anger and depression. Similar vibrant images were also associated with music of diverse sorts. Reportedly, this book and similar Theosophical works, including *The Secret Doctrine* and Leadbeater's richly illustrated *Man Visible and Invisible,* had a definite impact on the artistic development of several painters, most notably Piet Mondrian and Wassily Kandinsky, who were pioneers in cubism and other twentieth century forms of abstraction that sought to portray, by nonrealist means, the inner states of feeling and consciousness animating their subjects.[16]

ANNIE BESANT

Besant (International President of the Society after Olcott's death in 1907), tireless social reformer, activist in many causes, and freethinker (partly in reaction to her failed marriage to an Anglican clergyman), was converted to Theosophy after reviewing *The Secret Doctrine* and soon poured all her formidable energies into this movement.

Before becoming a Theosophist and student of Blavatsky just before the latter's death in 1891, Besant was an active and controversial socialist and union organizer, associated with the freethinking politician Charles Bradlaugh. She labored famously on behalf of birth control education, led a strike by the exploited girls who sold matches on street corners, and was a member of the London School Board. As the 1937 *Theosophical Year Book* put it,

> In 1889 [when she joined the Theosophical Society], there was scarcely any modern reform for which she had not worked, written, spoken and suffered: women's suffrage and equal rights, better housing, school meals, abolition of sweated wages, penal reforms, Empire Federation, antivivisection … reform of land laws, the right to freedom of thought and speech, a reformed system of electorates, the rights of subject peoples.[17]

Besant was a paragon of the 1890s progressivist spirit, and that spirit though redirected was scarcely dimmed by her transfer from free thought to Theosophy, and from England to India. As President she founded the Theosophical Order of Service, which has ever since actively supported causes in line with Theosophical principles. In India she established schools and labored on behalf of the abolition of child marriage and reform of the caste system, while her unabashed sympathy with Indian religions won her support from even the most orthodox brahmins, or upper caste Hindus.

Most significantly of all, her founding in 1916 of the Home Rule League, designed to make India a self-governing member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, put her in the center of India's political crucible, where nationalism and British resistance struggled against each other with increasing passion. Despite her insistence on nonviolence and constitutional procedure, she was interned by her own countrymen for three months in 1917, but then released to tumultuous enthusiasm. She was elected president of the Indian National Congress, the major indigenous independence organization, but soon lost support there to M.K. Gandhi, whose identification with the Indian masses she could not match and whose advocacy of complete separation from Britain and the West she did not share.

At the same time, Besant did not hesitate to support the British cause with all the passion of which she was capable in World War I, seeing it as a struggle between the forces of dharma (cosmic justice and order) and adharma, or even more broadly, between the Great Souls or Masters who labored on behalf of the Allied cause, the cause leading to human freedom, as over against the powers of darkness behind the other side, unholy powers who delighted in strife and slavery. (Her successor as International President, George Arundale, revived the same rhetoric in World War II.)

It was Besant more than any other single individual who made Theosophy a vehicle for what Catherine Wessinger has called "progressive messianism."[18] This viewpoint embraced, Wessinger believed, a millennialist belief in coming world perfection attained with superhuman help, in the persons of Masters and particularly the World Teacher, but achieved gradually rather than with apocalyptic suddenness. In Besant's vision, the messianic process would bring to fruition all the worthy causes for which she had labored with somewhat less hope, at least on the spiritual side, in her pre-Theosophical days.

It is worth noting how Theosophy attracted persons like Besant, or Blavatsky herself, intelligent and capable, painfully aware of injustice, given to idealism, and at the same time were what sociologists might call "status inconsistent"—because of gender, class, education, race, or other stigmata were unable to find a place equal to their abilities and dreams in the established churches or political world. They often drew

fire from those worlds, yet gave as good as they got, and continued to present an alternative view of the world and its lines of authority.

Often these were examples of the so-called "New Woman" of the 1890s, the product of newly established colleges and graduate schools for women that were now producing an educated elite of women trying to enter the professional worlds of medicine, social work, and other fields. On another level, middle-class women were joining women's clubs where they were able to discuss intellectual topics and issues of the day—and Theosophical meetings could serve the same function—even as younger women engaged in bicycling, camping, and sports, all to the delight of some and the scandal of others. This expansion of female horizons clearly dovetailed with the progressivist political agenda. Numerous Theosophical women of the time, including Besant herself, fit the model well, as pioneer women lecturers and reformers; other Theosophical women were among the first physicians and college professors of their sex. It is easy to understand that a spiritual home in the Theosophical Society, with its evolutionary universe and tradition of gender equality, offered them—and men sympathetic to them—a way to deal with the "status inconsistency" they may still have felt against the male-dominated mainline ecclesiastical, educational, and political worlds.

KRISHNAMURTI AND THE ORDER OF THE STAR

The progressivist vision was greatly enhanced and popularized by the Krishnamurti enthusiasm of the 1910s and 1920s. In 1909, at Adyar in India, Leadbeater declared Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), the slight and unprepossessing son of a dedicated Theosophist and retired civil servant, to be the Vehicle of the Lord Maitreya (the future Buddha, also identified with Christ), or World Teacher, and said he must be trained for that purpose. To this end, Leadbeater and Besant undertook his education, first at Adyar, then in England, and finally in Ojai, California. Although the education results were mixed—Krishnamurti was unsuccessful in gaining admission to a British university—the once-unpromising youth grew into a handsome and pleasing man, who satisfied his mentors with simple yet cogent talks and writings on spiritual matters. Indeed, he attracted attention far beyond Theosophical circles. Mass media articles appeared with titles like "Messiah in Tennis Shoes," and none other than George Bernard Shaw once went so far as to call Krishnamurti "the most beautiful human being he ever saw."[19]

In 1911 the Order of the Star in the East was formed to prepare for the coming; this organization spread excitement through the Theosophical world by means of its publications and conventions that tingled with anticipation. The order produced a magazine, *The Herald of the Star,* a publishing house, Lotus Press, and a youth organization, the Servants of the Star.

The early twentieth century's extraordinary interest in Krishnamurti messianism seems to say something significant about those tumultuous times. Against a wildly erratic backdrop of progressivist optimism, the horror and despair of the Great War, and the giddy mix of futurist dreams and anxious sense of the world's

foundations shaking of the 1920s, Krishnamurti and his cause projected a tangible eschatological hope, one that was truly universal, mingling East and West in the groundwork it was laying for a new age. For example, the Anglican clergyman and Krishnamurti devotee C.W. Scott-Moncrief, in an address, later published, entitled, "The Coming Christ and the Order of the Star of the East," made the program of the new messiah sound like no more than a natural extension of ultraliberal Christianity.

Christianity may triumph, he said, but in a new form to which all world religions will contribute. East and West are no longer watertight because races and religions interact. There is a new universalism: the priest cited such international activities as the labor movement, the women's movement, the Esperanto movement, "science itself," and groups like the Theosophical Society and Baha'i. The coming faith will, furthermore, be a "scientific religion," to which not only the natural sciences, but also such "sciences" as sociology, education, socialism, and eugenics will be reconciled. For all this, the mighty vision of a new world teacher, to appear in the East, will be requisite.[20] These are by and large causes with which, as we have seen, Theosophists of the progressive era were already involved.

However, in 1929, on the eve of the 1930s and of the Great Depression, when so many hopes were dashed and others born, the star suddenly set. At a camp of the Order of the Star in Ommen, Netherlands, before an audience of some 3,000, including Besant, Krishnamurti dramatically dissolved the Order and rejected for himself all organizations. In his famous speech, he proclaimed: "I maintain that truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect." Henceforth, until his death in 1986, the one-time "Vehicle" pursued an independent vocation as a distinguished lecturer and teacher of pathless truth and "choiceless awareness."[21] Many Theosophists, however, were devastated. Although the Theosophical Society carried on, doing useful work on perhaps a more stable and mature basis than in those halcyon years, it never again recovered the spirit, publicity, or numbers of its "golden age," the years roughly 1900–1930, when it was most closely associated with the progressivist spirit.

The major Theosophical organizations have continued, however, to present their teaching and life, mostly through lectures and publications, but increasingly through tapes and videos as well. By and large a liberalizing trend can be discerned, as Theosophists seem less concerned with the letter of the classic texts than with extracting major themes, such as the universal conjunction of consciousness and matter, and the ideas of evolution and cycles on all planes of reality, showing their compatibility with current science and philosophy.

OTHER THEOSOPHICAL GROUPS

Not all Theosophists were pleased by these developments. In the United States, the American section, under the presidency of William Q. Judge (1851–1896), an original founder of the Society, separated from Adyar as early as 1895. Judge, however, died only the next year, and was succeeded by Katherine Tingley (1847–1929), an American woman who, like Besant, had been a dynamic social reformer,

and who was to lead her society into a remarkable communal venture. Hardly had she taken office when, in 1897, she closed almost all lodges of the American section and called the membership to take up residence in a utopian settlement she was establishing on some 350 acres at Point Loma, in San Diego.

That same year Besant launched a counteroffensive on behalf of the Adyar society, winning back to its allegiance most of the 50 lodges and 1,000 or so American Theosophists who did not feel led to move to Point Loma. For a time, however, all eyes were on that site by the blue Pacific. Initially enjoying generous financial support, the new planned community soon displayed two neoclassical buildings with aquamarine and amethyst glass domes illumined at night, residences, paradisal gardens and orchards, and the first open-air Greek theatre in America, where spectacular dramatic performances were enacted. A refectory served common meals to the citizens of "Lomaland" (some 500 at its height), and children were raised in a communal nursery and boarding school under an educational system called "Raja Yoga," said to develop young physical, mental, and spiritual faculties in perfect harmony. Lomaland took pride in remarkable achievements in several fields, including education, drama, art, and agriculture, including in the last the development of commercial avocado production.

Unfortunately, utopia could not last. After the death of Katherine Tingley in an automobile accident in 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression almost immediately after, the community fell into serious financial difficulties, and membership declined. Point Loma was finally closed in 1942 because of increased military activity in the area with the commencement of World War II. Initially, the dwindling and aging community moved to Covina, California, then, in 1950, transferred its headquarters to Pasadena, and later Altadena where, no longer a formal community, it maintains a Theosophical library and publication program.[22]

The third major Theosophical Society is the United Lodge of Theosophists (ULT), founded in 1909 by Robert Crosbie (1848–1919) as an "unsectarian" third force intended to reconcile the differences between the increasingly antagonistic Adyar and Point Loma groups. The ULT has become known as a conservative Theosophical presence, presenting only the "traditional teachings" of Blavatsky and Judge. It is also known for its policy of endeavoring to avoid "personality cults" by declining to announce or introduce speakers by name.

Also worthy of mention is the Temple of the People in Halcyon, California, founded in 1898 and moved to this site in 1904, as a community alternative to Point Loma, and with its own somewhat distinctive interpretation of Theosophy. Several other groups may be considered devolutions of Theosophy. Anthroposophy, founded by Rudolf Steiner, sometime leader of German Theosophists, separated from the international Society in 1912 as a result of Steiner's growing dissatisfaction with Besant, the Krishnamurti movement, and the "Eastern" tendencies of Adyar. This group, noted for the "eurhythmic" dance exercises and highly regarded Waldorf schools, and now spread worldwide, emphasizes Western and Christian mysticism. Groups following the books delivered through Alice Bailey, such as the Arcane School and the School for Esoteric Studies, and the "I Am" movement of the Saint

Germain Foundation, present later teachings believed to have been transmitted from Theosophical masters.

MAJOR THEOSOPHICAL IDEAS

A summary of major Theosophical ideas begins with the three "Declared Objects" of the Society. No formal affirmation is expected of Theosophists except one of sympathy with these objectives. They are, in brief and in current wording,

To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity;
To encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science;
To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humanity.

These offer a short summation of the essential foundations of a positive pluralism: acknowledgment of universal kinship; openness to learning and borrowing from all cultures; recognition that human nature and the universe bear many mysteries and hidden interconnections, which ought to keep one wary toward claims of final and exclusivist truth and able to rejoice in the presence of many perspectives.

The deeper, or at least more esoteric-seeming, concepts associated with Theosophy (though not regarded as mandatory dogmas) can be considered in light of these principles. *The Secret Doctrine* and other basic texts tell us, first, that the ultimate basis of brotherhood is one infinite and incomprehensible reality that underlies and unites all that is or can ever be. It expresses itself through both consciousness and matter, so that all phenomena represent the complex interaction of these two. Out of this oneness, many universes, solar systems, and worlds develop through immense cycles in accordance with the dynamics of the interaction of spirit and matter. The inhabitants of those spheres, called humans on earth, sometimes called the "pilgrims," move through these universes and worlds lifetime after lifetime in response to karma and the necessity of experiencing many modes of being, before returning to the Source, the One.

Finally, Theosophy affirms there is a reservoir of wisdom in our world, known to those well advanced on the path but accessible to all earnest seekers, that can help one to understand and grow in these truths. This is the wisdom first glimpsed in the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science, the truth that is treasured by some esoteric orders and that is alive to those masters of the wisdom, also called elder brothers, mahatmas, or adepts, whose existence Theosophy has generally maintained. While they can occasionally be met in the midst of the modern city, by and large adepts dwell in quieter parts of the planet for the sake of their own spiritual peace, but by inner means they influence for good the evolution of earth, and teach those who are ready.

For Theosophy growth is not only a matter of intellectual learning. Progress also involves initiation or inward transformation—opening powers latent in humanity—and living in accordance with a spirit of openness toward unexplained laws of nature, and toward kinship with the divine in all life. For some Theosophists this entails living a relatively simple and natural life, vegetarian and free from the use of alcohol or tobacco, but these points are not mandated.

In general, in fact, the practice-oriented side of Theosophy is individualistic. The Society insists that it is not a religion or a church, Lodge meetings typically consist only of a lecture or discussion, and the only spiritual practice likely to be inculcated is meditation. There is a Theosophical group called the Esoteric School, composed of some though not all highly committed members, whose adherents promise to follow the above lifestyle rules and to study and meditate on a regular basis. Some Theosophists who desire spiritual or religious practice of a more ritualistic or public sort are also members of ritual groups traditionally associated with Theosophy, though institutionally separate, such as the Liberal Catholic Church, already mentioned, or the Co-Masonic Order, a Masonic group with many Theosophical initiates that admits both men and women. Others also belong to "mainline" churches. Lately many Theosophists have gravitated to Unitarian-Universalist churches.

CONCLUSION AND THE FUTURE OF THEOSOPHY

Theosophy entered the late nineteenth century with an eye toward both distant past and future, hoping to go beyond the wastelands of the day. Evolution, now read as vast cosmic-scale visions of spiritual as well as physical upward cycles, of whose movement one could now be an agent, was as much a part of its picture as the "ancient wisdom." The tensions between backward looking and forward moving were not entirely reconciled, but sometimes showed how ideological disequilibrium can be dynamic. Tension-based energy is, in fact, as Olcott intuited, a principle of America's novel historical role.

Catherine Albanese has spoken of the "kinetic revolution" behind the Transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau, certainly a background influence on Theosophy. The Concord sages' glorification of movement and change obviously reflected the era of the frontier and the clipper ships, but motion became for those New England thinkers a universal absolute. Emerson repeatedly spoke of rest as decay, of motion as a form of perfection, of challenges to leave the shore and plunge into the Unlimited and the Immensities. But if change is a universal perfection, then disequilibrium must be a good, for it is the "kinetic" inciter of change.[23]

Theosophy offers models for reconciling differences inherent in the universal kinetic through a kind of "triangulation" appeal to a higher, and older, common ground. Thus, Olcott sought to find the common ground of science and religion by appealing to ancient wisdom. The Theosophical spirit enables one to be both liberal and conservative, in the deepest philosophical meaning of these often-abused terms, on social and political issues. It likewise presents a model for constructive social change which, because of "triangulation," if the word may be used in this context, with large-scale patterns of evolution, including evolution of consciousness, comes closer to progressive eschatology than to revolutionary apocalyptic.

Has this outlook any social significance? Theosophy later influenced individuals of the New Deal era, like Vice President Henry Wallace (1836–1916), a sometime member of the Society, who combined deep-seated idealism with commitment to democratic political process in a pluralistic society. It was Wallace who persuaded

Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morganthau, to place the reverse of the Great Seal of the United States, with its arcane Masonic symbolism involving the topless pyramid, the eye in the triangle, and the words *Novus ordo seclorum,* on the dollar bill; he persuaded Morganthau that *Novus ordo* was Latin for New Deal.

Something of the Theosophical legacy in American life is suggested: the combining of occult wisdom from a distant past with pragmatic reform. That heritage carried its own legacy of the divinity and infinite potential of human life into present need. As Olcott understood, this could happen only on America's sacred ground, where the unity of diversity, *E pluribus unum,* for which Wallace and others yearned, could be realized, and the pluralism and the dynamic were also parts of Transcendentalist and Theosophical perfection in motion. Within the unlikely setting of Washington's corridors of power, Wallace was well known for his interest in "mysticism" and "occultism," particularly when they afforded a vision of the unity out of diversity for which he pined. Arthur Schlesinger, in *The Coming of the New Deal,* provides an insightful overview of this side of the New Deal Secretary of Agriculture and later Vice President. Schlesinger suggests that what particularly appealed to Wallace "was the hope that the vision of spiritual unity might enable him to join together the two halves of his own personality. For as both scientist and mystic, both politician and prophet, both opportunist and idealist, Wallace was split down the middle."[24]

Many other moderns were likewise divided, and for some of them, as for Wallace, the Theosophical vision was able, at least at times, to raise the split between inspiring past and evolutionary future to the level of creative tension or kinetic perfection, making the changes and chances of this world a progressive highway to a better world.

But in the early years of the twenty-first century, most Theosophical groups seem to be declining in membership. Perhaps, on the one hand, they have become hidebound, and, on the other, in some subtle way Theosophy's lore and particular style of spiritual energy is less attuned to the current generation than it was to the world of a century earlier. Or it may be a result of the "bowling alone" phenomenon: the tendency of postmoderns not to want to join organizations, and even less to go out to meetings. Increasingly, persons on the rolls of Theosophical organizations are members at large rather than attenders of lodge or study group meetings, finding the sustenance they require from books and the Internet rather than face to face. Yet to some the vision of Theosophy has never seemed more relevant to a troubled world.

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3. Henry Steel Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, First Series, America 1874–78* (Adyar, Madras, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1941), 377. The book is John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (New York: Harper, 1843, and subsequent editions).

4. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, First Series,* 14–15.
5. H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled,* 2 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1972; facsimile of first edition, New York: J. W. Bouton, 1877), 2:369.
6. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: New American Library, 1942), 198–99.
7. Cited in Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought: Nineteenth Century Explorations* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 141.
8. See Stephen Prothero, *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
9. Published as Henry S. Olcott, *People from the Other World* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Co.,1875; reprint Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1972).
10. Henry S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, Series I, 1878–83* (Adyar, Madras, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1900, 1928, 1954).
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14. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine,* 3 vols. (Adyar, Madras, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1993; facsimile of 1888 edition)
15. See Gregory Tillett, *The Elder Brother: A Biography of Charles Webster Leadbeater* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).
16. Maurice Tuchman et al., *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), especially 94–95, 134–39.
17. *The International Theosophical Year Book 1937* (Adyar, Madras, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1936), 181.
18. Catherine Lowman Wessinger, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (1847–1933)* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988.
19. Cited in Mary Lutyens, *Krishnamurti: The Years of Fulfillment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983), 27–28.
20. The Reverend C.W. Scott-Moncrief, "The Coming Christ and the Order of the Star in the East" (paper read in London November 27, 1911; published Auckland, New Zealand: Lotus Press, n.d.).
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22. Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 135–37. See also Emmett A. Greenwalt, *California Utopia: Point Loma, 1897–1942* (San Diego, CA: Point Loma Publication, 1978); W. Michael Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle: Point Loma Theosophists and American Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002).
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The American New Thought Movement

Dell deChant

New Thought is a global New Religious Movement (NRM) that began in the United States in the late nineteenth century as a popular religious expression of idealism, a philosophic tradition whose deep taproots can be traced to Plato (428–348 BCE). As a distinct religious tradition, New Thought and its early communities emerged out of Christian Science and the nineteenth century mental healing movement. In its earliest manifestation, it caught the attention of William James, who gave it considerable attention in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), referring to it as "the Mind-cure movement" and "the religion of healthy mindedness."[1] The movement itself has its clearest origins in the writings, teachings, and organizational strategies of Emma Curtis Hopkins (1849–1925), an independent Christian Scientist and former student of the founder of Christian Science, or the Church of Christ, Scientist, Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910). By the early twentieth century, New Thought was well established in the United States and a number of distinct subgroups emerged, most notably Unity and Divine Science. The movement grew steadily throughout the twentieth century, and today comprises several major denominations and many smaller groups, with representative communities in over 60 countries and perhaps as many as 500,000 members—making it the largest movement in what is called the "metaphysical" tradition.[2]

This essay is divided into four sections. The first section offers an overview and periodization of the history of the movement followed by a detailed study of its origins and early development. The second section focuses on the major New Thought denominations and significant figures in the movement's history. Section three outlines New Thought's primary beliefs and practices. The final section considers the future of the movement and the issues that confront it. The term "New Thought" refers to the movement as a whole, recognizing that in some cases individual denominations may differ from the characterization of the movement and other denominations.

ORIGINS AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

New Thought's historical divisions vary, as do the choices and evaluations of major facts, key leaders, and significant dates. Relatively few academic studies of New Thought history exist, and no comprehensive critical histories. This is not the only area where scholarship on New Thought is underdeveloped, but it is an especially critical one. This essay offers a broad introductory sketch of New Thought for general readers as well as specialists. For purposes of this introduction, New Thought history can be divided into four major periods: (1) Prehistory (until 1888); (2) Early (1888–1927); (3) Classical (1927–1960); and (4) Modern (1954–present).

(1) Prehistory (until 1888): As noted earlier, the philosophical roots of New Thought go back through the Western Idealist tradition, originating with Plato. The line from Plato to the emergence of New Thought, however, follows a somewhat circuitous route. In its earliest manifestation, New Thought was a mental healing movement with clear affinities to Christian Science. From the many names of reference used before "New Thought" became standard in the 1890s,[3] "Mind Cure" (or Mind-cure) was probably the best known and most accurate. The year 1888 is cited as the end of New Thought's "prehistory" since it is the date traditionally accepted as the "mythic" founding of Divine Science, the first religious group in what would come to be called New Thought.[4]

(2) Early (1888–1927): New Thought's early period begins with the founding of Divine Science (1888) and concludes with the founding of the last major New Thought denomination of the early period, Religious Science (1927). The year after Divine Science began, New Thought's largest denomination, Unity, was founded. These three groups are notable because they are the only ones established in the early period of the movement that survived into the twenty-first century. Each of them was established by persons either directly taught by Emma Curtis Hopkins or indirectly influenced by her work. Unity was founded by the Fillmores, Myrtle (1845–1931) and Charles (1854–1948); Divine Science by Malinda Cramer (1844-1906) and Nona Brooks (1861-1945); and Religious Science by Ernest Holmes (1887–1960). The Fillmores and Holmes personally studied with Hopkins, and Brooks's affiliation was mediated by Hopkins's student, Kate Bingham. Only Cramer did not have an affiliation with Hopkins, although she began Divine Science in San Francisco a year after she attended Hopkins's class in that city.[5] It is of note that in this period the International New Thought Alliance (INTA) was founded (1914).

(3) Classical (1927–1960): New Thought's classical period begins with the founding of the youngest major New Thought group (Religious Science) and ends with the death of its founder, Holmes. During these years the three groups (now properly termed denominations) grew in size and influence, and numerous independent New Thought communities emerged. Among the three major groups, growth was constant, if not always rapid. In all of the groups, mental healing remained the focus. Periodicals, pamphlets, and books were published in abundance. Teachers and ministers spread the message of New Thought across the United States; churches (often called "societies" and "centers") were founded and congregations grew. As the

number of churches increased, the movements developed institutional structures to help promote growth, maintain continuity in teachings, and facilitate communication. The international scope of New Thought also became evident in this period as the denominations and independent groups established communities throughout the world—especially in English-speaking countries and in sub-Saharan Africa. A related movement, influenced by the teachings of Religious Science, Seicho-no-Ie ("Home of Infinite Life" or "House of Blessing"), was founded by Masaharu Taniguchi (1893-1985) in Japan in 1930.

(4) Modern (1954–present): By 1960, all of the major New Thought groups were led by persons other than their founders. New Thought's Modern period does not begin in 1960, however. It begins six years earlier, in 1954, when the first major internal division occurred within a New Thought group. In that year the Religious Science movement split into two groups, Religious Science International and the United Church of Religious Science. The division resulted in a significant expansion of the number of churches, members, and ministers committed to the teachings of Religious Science. During the Modern period, Unity and INTA also grew considerably. Divine Science, however, experienced slow and steady decline. Also during this period, the youngest major New Thought denomination was established: the Universal Foundation for Better Living, founded Chicago, Illinois, in 1974 by Johnnie Colemon (Johnnie May Colemon Nedd).

New Thought is a decidedly American NRM. A product of turn-of-the-century America (late 1800s, early 1900s), New Thought developed in the context of and was enriched by the secularization process. Although the roots of New Thought are in Christian Science and the earlier Mind Cure movement, from the outset New Thought offered believers an integrated world view and a comprehensive interpretation of individual existence and human life as a whole that distinguished it from both Christian Science and Mind Cure. This interpretation, which was based on a popularized version of philosophic idealism, was decidedly "optimistic," but it was an optimism grounded in the understanding that life's ultimate Truth is the omnipotence of good.

As New Thought grew out of the shadow of Christian Science and Mind Cure, mental healing continued to be a major component in the movement's teachings, but its implications expanded to include all areas of life. New Thought was comfortable with secularization, increasing urbanization, rapid industrialization, and commodity capitalism; and it brought a new gospel of happiness and prosperity to a young but developing American culture that was seeking both. In the period of New Thought's early development, American society was becoming increasingly secular; science, technology, personal wealth, and individual freedom were glamorized. During this era, and probably for the first time in world history, a large middle class, located on the socioeconomic scale between rich and poor, came into existence in the United States.

From this class New Thought drew (and has continued to draw) its greatest numbers of members. The three most important theoretical features in New Thought's successful evangelism of the middle class were originally (1) idealism, (2) optimism,

and (3) scientific method. As America entered the twentieth century, many in its burgeoning middle class found themselves attracted to this new faith that proclaimed that God was wholly good, evil was only error, ultimate reality was mind, and one's life and world were predicated on one's thought. This was religious idealism designed for popular consumption by an optimistic, self-confident, self-made society in the making—a popular idealism for the masses.

New Thought was something more than popular philosophical idealism, however. It was also a pragmatic mysticism based on popular understandings of scientific method—a religious technology for the masses. In terms of its own rhetoric, this was a religion that persons could use, not a religion that used persons. In fact, as often as not, the early leaders of New Thought denied the religious character of their undertakings—choosing instead to refer to their organizations as schools, institutes, and societies.

From a practical standpoint, New Thought's early success is owed to four major factors: (1) the confidence of its leaders, (2) the professional empowerment of women, (3) the skillful use of mass media, and (4) criticism of existing religions. The first two factors are considered in detail here. Like zealous converts of any age, the confidence of the early New Thought leaders was total. They believed in their message with an intense conviction, and they taught with zeal, enthusiasm, and consummate commitment. Although seldom dogmatic (largely to avoid too close a connection with their perceived understanding of Christian Science), early leaders held to lofty ideals, articulated best by Hopkins, that a new era was dawning when the transformation of consciousness would herald a transformation of individuals and humanity as a whole.

New Thought was truly gender blind, and this proved to be a tremendous boon to the movement's evangelistic efforts. From the outset, with the ministry of Hopkins, New Thought ordained women, thus giving them professional status in an American society dominated by men. As a consequence, New Thought attracted talented women with professional aspirations. These women, who today might be attorneys, university educators, and public officials, became leaders in New Thought, since those other professions were closed to them. Women did not even receive the right to vote until 1920—more than 30 years after the first women were ordained by Hopkins. To this day, the majority of New Thought ministers are women, accounting for slightly over 60 percent of the nearly 1,600 ministers in the three largest New Thought groups: Unity, United Church of Religious Science, and Religious Science International.

Scholars and New Thought adherents alike debate the immediate background of New Thought: who should be cited as legitimate precursors, who is properly cited as its founder, and who should be cited among its early leaders. Although Hopkins seems most appropriately recognized as New Thought's founder, preinstitutional influences include nineteenth century Hegelianism, New England Transcendentalism, Swedenborgianism, Spiritualism, the mental healing practice and private instruction sessions of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802–1866) and, of course, Christian Science and Eddy (herself a student of Quimby).

What is known as New Thought came into existence because of Hopkins's work. This understanding is relatively new, replacing the older position that recognized Quimby as the founder.[6] Quimby was a pioneer in mental healing. Originally attracted to mesmerism (hypnotism), he became an itinerant "mesmerist healer," using an assistant who in an hypnotic state would diagnose health challenges and prescribe material cures for clients. By 1847 (possibly earlier) he abandoned mesmerism and his assistant in favor of a new healing method. This method was a precursor to mental healing and Mind Cure, although it was based on a materialist premise, which was later rejected by both Christian Science and New Thought.

From 1847 to 1859, Quimby traveled alone, setting up temporary clinics where he would heal persons. His method was to sit down with people and "tell them their feelings and what they think is their disease." He would then correct their error in thinking, thus changing the "fluids of the system" and establishing "truth or health."[7] After 1859 Quimby settled in Portland, Maine, where he continued to practice his healing method. From 1859 until his death he instructed an inner circle of followers and outlined his method in writing. Selections from his work first appeared in 1921 in *The Quimby Manuscripts* and *The Complete Writings* in 1988.[8] Although Quimby's work laid the foundation for New Thought, he cannot be properly citied as its founder, mainly because of his rejection of religion and the materialist bent of his healing method.

Detailed study of the historical process through which Quimby-as-founder belief developed in New Thought is offered by J. Gordon Melton in "New Thought's Hidden History" and "The Case of Edward J. Arens and the Distortion of the History of New Thought."[9] A robust defense of the Quimby-as-founder belief can be found in two works by C. Alan Anderson, "Quimby As Founder of New Thought" and "Emma Curtis Hopkins: Organizational Founder and Metaphysical Confounder of New Thought."[10] The strongest versions of the argument against Quimby being cited as founder are those developed in support of Hopkins by Melton and Gail Harley.[11]

Aside from Quimby, the other major precursor of the movement is Eddy, whose contributions are usually depreciated in favor of Quimby's. This is unfortunate since Hopkins clearly understood her own work to be within the Christian Science tradition, and since she was certainly influenced by Eddy, with whom she studied. In this regard, Eddy's relationship to New Thought should be reconsidered.

Eddy experienced a healing as a result of Quimby's treatment in 1862. She studied informally with him for some time after the healing. In 1866, a few weeks after Quimby's death, Eddy had a serious accident—"pronounced fatal by physicians." Three days later, during a study of the Bible, she experienced a sudden healing predicated on the realization that: "Life is in and of Spirit; this Life being the sole reality of existence." In 1870 she offered her first class on mental healing, using a manuscript on which she had been working for some time. In 1875 the manuscript was published as *Science and Health.* More than all of Quimby's teachings and writings, this text helped lay the groundwork for the mental healing movement and its successor, New Thought.

In 1879, Eddy took another step that would prove to be of vast importance to the emergence of New Thought; she founded a religious institution. Chartered in Massachusetts, "The Church of Christ, Scientist" was the first religious group based on the principles of mental healing. The 1883 edition of *Science and Health* was revised; added to the text and the title was "*Key to the Scriptures.*" Eddy's addition of scriptural interpretation is the beginning of the modern allegorical (or "metaphysical") interpretation of the Bible. To maintain uniformity in teaching, in 1895, Eddy "ordained" the Bible and *Science and Health* as the only pastors in Christian Science, thus eliminating the possibility of individual sermons.

Eddy made notable contributions to the subsequent development of New Thought. She established a popular religion based on the principles of idealism. Significantly, she included the word "Christian" in the title of her movement—thus signaling its religious nature. She also created the first education program for persons desiring to serve as "mental healers," and the official institutional certification of these workers as "practitioners." She also published a serious and systematic exposition of her movement's teachings and utilized modern publication methods to propagate these teachings. But New Thought also differs from Christian Science. The most fundamental differences pertain to dogma, matter, and medicine. Unlike Christian Science, New Thought is nondogmatic. It does not see matter or the material world as an error or an illusion, and it is not opposed to the medical resolution of physical ills (the symptoms of mental error).

The distinction between Christian Science and New Thought and the birth of the younger movement both resulted from the work of Hopkins. She is properly credited as the founder of New Thought. In her lifetime she was called "Teacher of Teachers,"[12] meaning that she directly or indirectly taught and inspired the first generation of New Thought leaders.

Hopkins began her religious career as a Christian Scientist, becoming a student of Eddy in the early 1880s. She rose rapidly in the ranks and in 1884 was given the prestigious office of editor for the *Christian Science Journal.* For reasons still unclear, she was dismissed as editor in 1885. It is fair to believe that the dismissal was a result of the conflict between two extremely talented and religiously zealous individuals. The reason usually given is that Hopkins began to study spiritual teachings other than those of Eddy. Historian J. Gordon Melton suggests that the two may also have disagreed over Hopkins's remuneration.[13]

In 1886 Hopkins moved to Chicago, then a hotbed of independent forms of Christian Science. In Chicago, Hopkins and another Christian Science dissident, Mary Plunkett, began an independent Christian Science ministry and school. During her first years in Chicago, Hopkins cooperated closely with other Christian Scientists who had separated from Eddy. Also in 1886 she founded an educational institution, the Emma Hopkins College of Christian Science. The first class had at least 37 students, among them Katie Bingham, the practitioner who participated in the healing of Nona Brooks (a cofounder of Divine Science).[14] In a short time, students from around the country began traveling to study with Hopkins in Chicago, which led to the formation of the Hopkins Metaphysical Association in 1887 and

Hopkins's travels to San Francisco and New York City to teach classes. The Association claimed 21 member groups by the end of 1887, and a convention of the group in Boston, Massachusetts, attracted over 1,000 persons. The Association spanned the continent, with groups in San Francisco, Denver, Chicago, New York City, Boston, Maine, and other locations. Until her split with Hopkins, Plunkett served as president of the Association.

By late 1887, Plunkett left the organization, and in early 1888 she started her own organization in New York City. With her went the periodical for the emerging Hopkins Metaphysical Association, *Truth,* and, perhaps more importantly, its mailing list. In a short time, enrollment at the Seminary declined and groups began to leave the Association.

That the decline precipitated by Plunkett's departure lasted less than a year is yet another powerful testimony to Hopkins's leadership skills. To her remaining students, many of whom were outraged at Plunkett's actions, she declared:

> You are greater than disappointment.… Take the anger that shakes you like a reed in the wind. In the heat of your anger, treat some sluggish paralytic.… You soon forget the anger you felt at the friend in your strength of silent treatment.[15]

Hopkins quickly reorganized the Association, firmly establishing it as an ecclesiastical institution. As she affirmed: "[This] is not a business or a profession, it is a ministry."[16] In 1888 what had been the Emma Curtis Hopkins College of Christian Science became The Christian Science Theological Seminary, and in 1889 members of the first class of graduates were ordained—20 women and 2 men.[17] Hopkins's ordination of women marked the first time in American history (and possibly Western Christian history) that a woman ordained women. Although these new ministers were technically "Christian Science" ministers, they were functionally the first New Thought ministers. By 1893 Hopkins had ordained 111 persons and the Seminary had an enrollment of 350 students.[18]

The establishment of the seminary and the ordination of ministers confirmed the religious character of Hopkins's work while also giving greater cultural legitimacy to the work of the Association and its educational enterprise. No one else in the Mind Cure movement had gone this far—including Eddy.

Until this time, Mind Cure (both Christian Science and independent mental healing groups) was a lay movement. Although Eddy sanctioned teachers and practitioners, and ministers from other traditions were involved in the mental healing movement, Eddy's resistance to the ordination of ministers (except for the Bible and *Science and Health*) seems to have influenced the Mind Cure movement as a whole. With Hopkins's novel move, however, the developing New Thought movement suddenly ceased to be a lay movement of quasi-professional teachers and practitioners. Now it was a religious organization, ordaining ministers and sending them forth to preach and teach the new gospel of idealism, optimism, and self-improvement through mental healing.

As noted above, Hopkins, the "teacher of teachers," instructed and inspired nearly all of New Thought's early leaders. These include the Fillmores (cofounders of

Unity); Bingham, the teacher of Brooks (a founder of Divine Science); Annie Rix Militz (founder of Homes of Truth); Frances Lord (who established New Thought in England); H. Emilie Cady (author of Unity's most popular instructional text, *Lessons in Truth*); Ella Wheeler Wilcox (New Thought poet with wide cultural popularity); and Elizabeth Towne [publisher of the influential periodical, *Nautilus* (1898–1954)]. Near the end of her life, Hopkins tutored Ernest Holmes, founder of Religious Science.

Hopkins's students took her teachings to all parts of the United States. In the early years most churches were independent, and denominational structures were loose. Some of Hopkins's students opened their own training centers and sent forth their own ministers and teachers. This was the case with Unity and Divine Science. Hopkins's public ministry ended in 1895 when she closed the seminary and moved to New York City. Until her death in 1925 she continued to lecture, meet privately with students and clients, and write. Her two most notable books are *High Mysticism* (1920) and *Scientific Mental Practice* (n.d.).

Hopkins's impact cannot be overstated. Her major contributions were (1) the establishment of a seminary, ordination of ministers, and "sending" of ministers to all parts of the United States; (2) creation of a nationwide movement; (3) separation from Eddy's movement; (4) development of a primary organizational structure for others to follow; and (5) teaching nearly all the major first-generation leaders in New Thought.

MAJOR GROUPS AND SIGNIFICANT FIGURES

Even a modest historical survey of New Thought groups and leaders would be much too exhaustive for a survey of this kind. As a result, note will be made only of the major groups and certain important leaders. Charles Braden's *Spirits in Rebellion* gives additional details on major leaders of the movement from its formative period until the 1950s.

Hopkins Again

Until the emergence of Hopkins and her ministry, the independent (non-Eddy) Mind Cure movement was a loose association of healers, nearly all of whom understood themselves as private practitioners specializing in the use of mental healing techniques to cure the physical maladies of individual clients. The individualized dimension of mental healing is not absent in Hopkins, but in her work it becomes part of a far wider and deeper cultural enterprise. One cannot read Hopkins's work, review the history of her activities, and trace the careers of her students and not come to the conclusion that she sought a rather drastic transformation of the social order of her day. She couched the transformation in feminist and rather dramatic terms. "[A]ll things are becoming new," she wrote. "[S]ee how woman, the silent sufferer and meek yoke-bearer of the world is stepping quite out of her old character

or role, and with a startling rebound from her long passivity is hurling herself against the age with such force and bold decision as to make even her friends stand aghast!"[19]

Hopkins's mission was not restricted to individual healing and counseling. These elements were not rejected, but her larger mission was the transformation of consciousness and culture. As she said to the 1891 graduates of her seminary:

> We ask the world, which is to be our church, to turn and listen to our preaching, for it is the quickening message from the Supreme of the universe announcing the second coming long expected, when every mountain of trouble shall be removed, every hill of difficulty obliterated.… [W]e thus set forth upon this ministry with the deliberate intention of converting the world to Christian Science.[20]

With this vision, New Thought was born, and Hopkins's students apparently accepted their teacher's direction. The most fertile ground for New Thought's early development was the regions of the Midwest and Far West. This is certainly due in part to Hopkins's evangelical tours of these regions but also to some degree a consequence of American westward expansion at the turn of the twentieth century and Christian Science's strength on the eastern seaboard. To this day, New Thought remains under developed in New England and on the East Coast as a whole—with the notable exceptions of New York City, Atlanta, Georgia, and Florida.

Early East Coast Developments

Perhaps the most significant East Coast figure was Warren Felt Evans (1817–1889), who is best understood as a precursor of New Thought. Evans was a Methodist minister, a devout Swedenborgian, and (like Eddy) a client of Quimby. Although largely forgotten by New Thought today, during his lifetime and shortly thereafter, Evans was a respected teacher, mental healer, and author. His most important contribution to later New Thought was his establishment of a philosophic basis in German Idealism for mental healing beliefs. For the bulk of his public life he resided in Boston, and, although his greatest influence was on the development of New Thought in the eastern United States, he is referred to in works by Hopkins and her students.[21]

Besides Evans, and more properly cited as New Thought leaders, early East Coast activists include Lord, whose *Christian Science Healing* (1887) was among the first works to introduce prosperity as a New Thought theme; Henry Wood (1834–1908), whose *The New Old Healing* (1908) and *The New Thought Simplified* (1908) helped introduce New Thought in East Coast intellectual circles; and Ralph Waldo Trine (1866–1958), the author of *In Tune with the Infinite* (1897), and many other books that popularized New Thought beliefs but had little official connection with the movement.[22]

Distinct religious communities with New Thought affinities also developed in the East. In 1894, Helen Van-Anderson established the Church of the Higher Life in Boston and in 1895 the Metaphysical Club of Boston was founded.[23] Other institutional expressions of New Thought in the East include the International Metaphysical League (1899), the New Thought Federation (1904), and the New Thought

Metaphysical Alliance (1906). Finally, Hopkins's work was continued, albeit in reduced form, by her sister Estelle Carpenter, Eleanor Mel, and others. Their community, Joy Farm, located in Connecticut, promoted Hopkins's teachings and its publishing arm, "The Ministry of the High Watch," published Hopkins's works after her death.[24]

Midwest and Far West

As important as these East Coast leaders and communities were to the prehistory and early development of New Thought, their impact on the movement was largely eclipsed by leaders and groups in the Middle and Far West. As New Thought grew, its greatest cultural impact was in the emerging urban centers of the American "frontier," cities like Chicago, San Francisco, Denver, Kansas City, Missouri, Seattle, Washington, and later Los Angeles, California. New Thought communities in these cities quickly became religious movements, as their leaders (following the Hopkins model) developed schools, publications, and organizations with loose institutional structures. Also, and again following Hopkins, they ordained ministers. To get an idea of how these movements emerged, it is helpful to review the development of the four groups that are the largest and oldest in New Thought. As a technical note, these groups are probably best termed "denominations" in the New Thought "family," as Methodism would be a "denomination" in the Protestant "family."

Divine Science

Although Divine Science recognizes two founders, Nona Brooks and Melinda Cramer, Brooks is of primary importance. Three other women can arguably be included as cofounders: Alethea Brooks Small (1848-1906), Fannie Brooks James (1854-1914), and Kate Bingham.

Each of the Brooks sisters played an important role in the emergence of the movement but the organizational impetus came from Cramer, who established a mental healing group in San Francisco in 1888. Cramer was a talented organizer, and, through communication with James, James was inspired to link her work in Denver with Cramer's group in San Francisco. Sometime later (and certainly by 1892), the Denver ministry adopted the name of Cramer's group, Divine Science.[25]

In 1896 Brooks quit teaching school and committed herself fully to the Divine Science ministry. Through her efforts and those of her sisters, the Denver ministry grew. In 1898 the Brooks' ministry was incorporated as the Divine Science College, and Nona was selected to be the minister. She was at first reluctant to accept the calling, but later relented, apparently due to the insistence of James. She was ordained by Cramer and conducted her first Sunday morning service on January 1, 1899.

Although Nona was apparently quite reserved, even timid, by nature, she served as the minister of the Denver church and the leader of the Divine Science movement for 30 years. She was the first female minister to perform a wedding in Denver. For this she was ridiculed in the Denver press. Although the Denver church grew and

prospered during her tenure, and numerous students studied at the Divine Science College, Brooks was not strongly committed to institutional development, and the movement remained small.

Upon her resignation from leadership of the Denver church in 1929, Brooks spent time in Australia, accepted speaking invitations from numerous churches and INTA, and finally settled in Chicago where she concluded her ministerial career as leader of a small Divine Science church. In 1938 she returned to Denver to serve as president of the Divine Science College.

Besides Divine Science, Brooks had a major impact on the development of the greater New Thought movement. She served in leadership positions in the INTA, helped popularize New Thought in the Denver area and the West as a whole, and directly influenced Holmes, the great popularizer of New Thought, Emmet Fox, and numerous less significant leaders of the movement. Brooks never married, although she had a long-term relationship and profound friendship with Florence Hoyt.[26]

Divine Science is historically notable for its being the most loosely organized of all New Thought groups. Today Divine Science has less than 30 affiliated churches, most likely has "less than 5,000 members worldwide," and is represented by two small organizations, Divine Science Federation International (the older group) and United Divine Science Ministries (established in the 1990s).[27]

Unity

Unity began in Kansas City in 1889, when cofounders, Myrtle and Charles Fillmore, dedicated their lives to teaching and promoting what they termed "practical Christianity." Myrtle Fillmore's use of mental healing techniques to achieve a healing from tuberculosis was evidently the precipitating event. Traditionally Charles is given credit for organizing and managing the movement and Myrtle is presented as working behind the scenes to nurture and support Unity's followers.[28]

In its initial form, Unity was a publisher of periodicals and a prayer ministry—The Society for Silent Help, later renamed Silent Unity. Today Silent Unity is the largest and most well-known prayer ministry in the New Thought movement. By the early twentieth century, Unity functioned like a traditional Protestant denomination. The first step toward institutionalization occurred in 1903 with the incorporation of the Unity Society of Practical Christianity. Unity Society evolved into the Unity School of Christianity, which is today the Unity (and New Thought) organization most recognized by the general public. The development of affiliated ministries and its successful periodical outreach in the early twentieth century accelerated the movement's growth. This was enhanced by Unity's break with the INTA in 1922 and its initiation of annual conferences.

During the second half of the twentieth century, Unity gradually reduced its publication enterprise, with the pocket-sized, daily devotional magazine, *The Daily Word,* remaining its most representative periodical today. Notably, in the 1990s Unity discontinued *Wee Wisdom* (begun in 1893), which was the longest continually

published children's magazine in the world. The movement remains committed to book publishing, with the works of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore among others continuing to be produced and distributed.

Unity's second major branch is the Association of Unity Churches (AUC), founded in 1966. The AUC is independent of Unity School and serves as the ecclesiastical arm of the movement. AUC ordains and supervises ministers, sanctions churches, and coordinates expansion activities. Members of the board of trustees are elected by representatives from member churches at annual conferences. Membership statistics are not available but an increase in the number of ministries in recent years suggests steady growth. As of 2001, there were 648 active ministers and 1023 licensed teachers serving in 936 ministries and 57 affiliated study groups in 64 countries. Outside of the United States, Unity's greatest concentration is in Africa, especially Nigeria, where there are 50 affiliated groups.[29]

In the 1990s two splinter groups formed, Unity-Progressive Council and the Federation of Independent Unity Churches, but neither have attracted a large following. The AUC is located near Unity Village in Lee's Summit, Missouri. Church membership statistics are not published but increases in the number of churches indicates steady growth over the past several decades. Total church membership is probably around 100,000, although the number of participants is probably considerably higher.

Unity is New Thought's largest denomination and is significant among New Thought groups for its strong Christian self-affirmation. The Bible is recognized as a primary text that "bears witness" to the word of God. Unity was once the trendsetter in the revitalization of the allegorical interpretation of the Bible, but has done little to advance this type of study since the 1960s. The allegorical method, called "metaphysical" interpretation in Christian Science and New Thought, treats the text as a symbolic document, with persons, places, and things standing for elements in consciousness. Charles Fillmore's *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary* (1931), is the fullest expression of this distinctive New Thought method of exegesis. In addition to the Bible, Unity's other primary religious text is Cady's *Lessons In Truth,* first published in 1894.

Like other nineteenth century New Thought groups, Unity emerged in the context of Christian Science, through the work of Hopkins. The Fillmores were students of Hopkins, receiving ordination from her in 1891, and Unity's theology reflects her influence. Mental healing (or "prayer treatment"), once a prominent feature of Unity, seems to be less of a focus in the movement today, with mainstream pastoral counseling and alternative healing methods having equal or greater popularity in many churches.

Religious Science

Religious Science recognizes Ernest Shurtleff Holmes as its founder. Before Religious Science was formally organized, Ernest was assisted by his brother, Fenwicke, a Congregationalist minister.

The turning point in Holmes's life came in 1907 when he read American Transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Essays.* After reading the work and accepting it as a guide for his own life, Holmes experienced healing of a throat ailment that had afflicted him for a long time. He also began attending the Christian Science "Mother Church" (Boston), and performed his first mental healings of others. Holmes did not take formal courses in Christian Science, although his healing system is similar to that used in Christian Science.

In 1915 Holmes gave his first lecture on mental healing. In 1916 the Holmes brothers started a mental healing periodical, *Uplift,* and Holmes immediately began to attract clients. He was ordained a Divine Science minister in 1917.

The brothers began Sunday morning lectures at the Strand Theater in Los Angeles in 1918 and, beginning in the early 1920s, they made lecture tours of East Coast cities. In 1924 Holmes studied privately with Hopkins in New York City. The brothers parted on friendly terms in 1925. Fenwicke returned to the East and enjoyed success as a lecturer and writer.

In 1926 Ernest's major work, *The Science of Mind,* was published. This book is probably the most thorough and comprehensive text on New Thought healing ever produced. In 1927 the Religious Science movement was born when Holmes founded the Institute of Religious Science and Philosophy and began a periodical, *Religious Science Monthly,* later renamed *Science of Mind* (1929). In 1929 he married Hazel Gillen.

Holmes began his movement and periodical after his studies with Hopkins. Like Brooks and the Fillmores, Holmes supposedly resisted establishing a religious institution, yet due to the influence of supporters, he relented and reluctantly did so.[30]

The Institute began ordaining ministers in 1939, and sometime in the early 1940s (the date is not certain) Carmelita Trowbridge founded the first Church of Religious Science in Alhambra, CA. Importantly, Trowbridge resisted efforts of the Institute to prevent her use of "church" in connection with Religious Science.

In 1949 the International Association of Religious Science Churches was established independent of the Institute. In 1953 the Institute established an ecclesiastical institution, The Church of Religious Science, to exercise control over the churches, and in 1954 nineteen churches affiliated with the International Association refused to join the new organization. Forty-six churches joined the Institute's Church. Since 1954 Religious Science has been represented by two different groups. Today these groups bear the names: United Church of Religious Science (successor of the Institute's organization), and Religious Science International (successor of the International Association).

Recent data indicate that today the United Church is the largest with 160 churches and 56 study groups, while Religious Science International has 107 religious churches and 27 "societies." Total membership for both groups is about 55,000.[31] Both groups developed representative democratic structures, ministerial education programs, and an international presence. A related movement, Seicho-no-Ie (noted earlier), was founded in Japan in 1930 by Msaharu Taniguchi, who was influenced in part by Holmes's writings.[32]

The International New Thought Alliance

The origin of the International New Thought Alliance (INTA) can be traced to 1914 and a New Thought conference in London, England. The Association's first annual congress was in 1915 in San Francisco. It was incorporated in 1917 in Washington, D.C. Precursors of INTA include the National New Thought Alliance (1907), the New Thought Federation (1904), and arguably the International Divine Science Association (1892). The general goal of these earlier groups was the unification of various individuals and organizations practicing mental healing, but none had any enduring success. Only with the establishment of INTA was this goal realized.

INTA has no single founder and its emergence as a distinct organization was the result of the efforts of a number of talented leaders, all of whom committed themselves, and in some cases their religious communities, to the INTA project. Early supporters included such notables as Militz, the Fillmores, Brooks, A.C. Grier, Thomas Troward, Horatio Dresser, Elizabeth Towne, and Ella Wheeler Wilcox. Although these influential leaders played a major role in publicizing and legitimating INTA as an umbrella organization, the person most responsible for the Alliance's success is James A. Edgerton (1869–1938). A lay person and former United States Post Office employee, Edgerton was the first president of the organization, holding that office from 1915 to 1923 and then again from 1934 to 1937.

Edgerton excelled at both diplomacy and organizational management, and the Alliance still follows the same basic organizational structures he established. Under his leadership, by 1920, the Alliance counted among its members New Thought's major denominations: Divine Science, the Homes of Truth, Unity, and the Church of Truth.

INTA's success as an umbrella organization for the New Thought movement is largely the result of the leadership of its presidents, the most important of whom were Raymond Charles Barker, Ervin Seal, Robert H. Bitzer, and the current president, Blaine C. Mays. Bitzer and Mays are notable for their success in expanding INTA internationally as well as within the United States. Together with Edgerton, they are the longest serving presidents of the Alliance, with Mays having served the longest of all: 1974–1996 and 1997–present.

Like other "big tent" organizations, INTA experienced its share of controversies, the two most notable ones occurring in 1922 and 1996. Both events apparently were caused by disagreements pertaining to leadership and mission. The 1922 event resulted in Unity School leaving the Alliance and the end of Edgerton's presidency the following year. The 1996 controversy led to the withdrawal of the leaders of a number of large churches and Mays' defeat in an election by Marguerite Goodall. Like Edgerton, Mays returned to the presidency, but in both cases the Alliance lost membership and support.

INTA is still recovering from the aftermath of the 1996 controversy and adapting to the continuing development of denominational forms of New Thought. Today, membership is increasing, with notable institutional members including the AUC,

United Church of Religious Science, Religious Science International, Divine Science Federation International, and United Divine Science Ministries, International.

PRIMARY BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

As noted previously, New Thought is a popular manifestation of religious idealism, a system whose most distant forebear was Plato. His philosophy in general and his idealism in particular had considerable influence on the development of Christian theology, especially through a religious system developed on the basis of his philosophy—Neoplatonism. By the later Middle Ages, this influence began to weaken, largely due to the rise of empirical methods of inquiry and analysis. After the Reformation in the sixteenth century, idealism entered a period of dormancy in Christianity and in Western thought as a whole.

Idealism refers to any system of thought that recognizes that the highest reality is mental. From among the numerous religious and philosophical figures who could be cited as distant precursors of New Thought, major thinkers include Origen (185–254), Augustine (354–430), John Scotus Erigena (810–877), and Anselm (1033–1109). In modern times, Rationalists like René Descartes (1596–1650) and Bendict de Spinoza (1632–1677) might be cited as philosophical forebears of New Thought. Finally, and just prior to the emergence of New Thought, the work of G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831), stands as a major reaffirmation of the idealist tradition. In formal philosophy, Hegel's idealism was a brilliant but short-lived phenomenon. In terms of popular culture, however, it laid the groundwork for the Mind Cure movement, Christian Science, and shortly thereafter, New Thought.

As suggested by its origins, preinstitutional influences, and its relationship with Christian Science, New Thought's primary beliefs are idealistic in character, and its primary religious practices are informed by principles of mental healing. New Thought recognizes that its unique prayer technique is scientific in character.

New Thought's foundational world view and basis for its various ritual practices is the idealistic premise that a correlation exists between a person's consciousness (thoughts and mental states) and a person's physical-material experiences. Thus the root causes of physical-material limitations (for example, sickness, poverty, aging, death) are thoughts of limitation or a general state of consciousness that accepts the reality of such limitations. The source of these "error thoughts" or limited consciousness is "mortal mind." On the other hand, constructive and healthy thoughts, or a positive consciousness, establish positive conditions. The ultimate source of good thoughts or a positive consciousness is God, which is understood as Divine Mind. In short, mind is primary and causative; negative (mortal) thoughts create negative conditions and positive (spiritual) thoughts create positive conditions. The precise nature of this causative process is understood to be as exact as any natural law and mastery of the process a scientific undertaking.

Over time the various New Thought groups developed their own distinct teachings, religious terminology, and prayer or treatment rituals, but all maintain a

primary focus on mental healing and the general principles described above. A simplified version of the basis for mental healing is the assertion that "Life is Consciousness," a concept popularized by Divine Scientist, Emmet Fox (1886–1951). This motto offers the best brief summary of New Thought's popular religious idealism and the principle upon which the movement bases its beliefs and practices—most centrally its prayer rituals.

By affirming that life is consciousness, New Thought declares that all material-physical phenomena result from one's mental states. The universe is mental, or, as most New Thoughters would say, God is Mind. God (Divine Mind) is also omnipresent and exists as both omnipotent good and absolute perfection: *good* in an Augustinian sense, in that evil has no actual existence, and *perfection* in a Platonic sense, in that it is the realm of pure incorruptible ideas (Platonic forms). Aside from God, common synonyms for Divine Mind are Truth, Principle, and Law. By "Truth" it is meant that Divine Mind is the Reality that eliminates all error (or "seeming evil") and frees one from material-physical limitations. In earlier times, Truth also functioned as a synonym for the New Thought religion; so one was a Truth student or attended a Truth center (church). "Principle" refers to the function of Divine Mind as the universal cause of all creation, specifically the plan or pattern through which Mind expresses itself. "Law" means that Divine Mind is characterized by a Divine Order that is as systematic and precise in its functioning as the laws of nature. Study and application of this Law by mental healers is just as scientific as the study and application of physical laws by empirical scientists. Familial terms, such as Father, Mother, Father-Mother, or Mother-Father, are also used in New Thought, but the primary understanding of God is decidedly nonanthropomorphic.

Humans are fundamentally spiritual in nature and linked to Divine Mind through their minds. The highest state of human consciousness is the point of contact between humans and divinity. When persons experience the reality of this connection, they participate in the perfection of Divine Mind and have access to Divine Ideas, and, as a consequence, the material-physical conditions in their lives reveal Divine Perfection. To the degree that people fall short of this realization, they likewise fall short of the manifestation of Perfection. This failure is an error in consciousness, "missing the mark," a mistake, a belief in "mortal mind" rather than Truth; but neither is a sin nor a manifestation of evil in the traditional Christian sense of those two terms. The result of such errors, nonetheless, is pain, illness, poverty, sickness, aging, and death.

Mental healing rituals such as prayer treatments, affirmations, decreeing, visualizations, and "treasure mapping," eliminate the mental errors and reestablish the right relationship with Divine Mind, the source of all good. When this is done, undesired conditions are eliminated and desired ones established. In New Thought, mental healing rituals are never conceived as changing or in any manner affecting God (Divine Mind). They are always an inner psychospiritual activity in the consciousness of the individual; her or his realization of the presence of God, which is Good and Perfect, Truth, Principle, and Law. In this realization lies the key to the effectiveness of all New Thought ritual practices.

In various ways, all New Thought rituals seek this realization, usually in the context of some specific healing exigency, typically called a "challenge." Once realized, the Divine Reality replaces the flawed condition, error is removed, Truth restored, and healing occurs. Classically, this is called a "demonstration."

In a certain sense, all rituals in New Thought are healing rituals, but the New Thought concept of healing extends to all areas of life, not simply to remedies for specific physical ailments. While ritual treatments for healing of specific physical ailments are still common in New Thought, the movement and its individual groups are always keenly aware that spiritual healing encompasses all areas of a person's life. As a result, New Thought rituals routinely focus on treatments for prosperity, peace of mind, harmonious relationships, love, joy, success, justice, and order. They can be as broad and general as treatments for world peace and harmony among nations or as specific as treatments for a new car and a passing grade on an exam.

Considerable differences (even disagreements) within the movement abound regarding mental healing techniques, technical terminology, distinctions between specific ritual activities (such as prayer, mental treatment, and meditation), and the degree of specificity in treatment rituals. Nonetheless, all consent to general agreement on the basic idealist principle (that life is consciousness), the fundamental belief that Divine Mind is Perfect and accessible by human beings, and that the properly administered mental healing treatment results in the realization of Divine Mind. This brings the reality of Divine Mind into physical-material expression, resulting in the elimination of the undesired condition and/or the manifestation of that which is desired—the demonstration. Believers engage in treatment rituals with a positive expectancy, typically recognizing that the desired outcome is already achieved and giving thanks in advance for the demonstration that they seek.

As noted above, ritual practice varies considerably in New Thought, with different groups using different techniques and terminology or emphasizing some concepts more than others: Unity's classical concept of the Silence and the process of Denial and Affirmation, Religious Science's emphasis on Law and Affirmative Prayer, and Divine Science's stress on Omnipresence. Broadly speaking, the rituals in the movement fall into three general categories: (a) public-congregational rituals, (b) private-personal rituals, and (c) professional rituals.

Public-congregational rituals in New Thought look and sound like congregational prayers in other religious traditions, with statements and requests being spoken aloud in religious environments by those attending services. A New Thought version of the Lord's Prayer is often part of the services in New Thought churches and frequently sung by the congregation. Churches may have standard opening prayers or affirmations, prayers in conjunction with offering collections, formal prayers for persons desiring healing, and closing benedictions. Specialized treatments may be offered at services for specific desires such as world peace, environmental healing, prosperity for the religious community, and harmonious weather conditions. In addition, most New Thought services also feature a period of meditation, which usually is directed by a speaker who affirms statements of religious significance to congregants and seeks to create a serene mental state. Meditations may involve group responses,

visualizations, and gentle mental journeys to peaceful realms of thought. Public prayers, treatments, and meditations may be based on printed texts found in books, or periodicals published by the respective denominations.

In the category of private-personal ritual, New Thought communities show the same degree (and range) of dedication to prayer as other religious communities in which personal ritual practice is a vital part of life. New Thought is nondoctrinal and generally presents its teachings as conditional statements; for example: If one desires to live a full and meaningful life, then spiritual practices are necessary; if one seeks a healing, then a certain mental process should be followed; and so on. Thus, although ritual treatment is a central element in New Thought belief systems, the denominations themselves do not make this (or any other) religious practice obligatory; and in the absence of any survey data on the beliefs and practices of individuals in the movement, it is difficult to speak with assurance about how pervasive routine prayer activity is among members. Despite this qualification, those who are especially devout are most likely quite engaged with mental healing work on a routine basis, while those with less religious commitment are probably less engaged.

The personal rituals of the more dedicated members most likely featured at least one and possibly several daily treatment sessions. Depending on the particular group or personal background of the participant, such experiences might involve (or even be considered) meditations. Daily religious activities vary widely from person to person, although some common practices include a personal prayer or cycle of prayers spoken aloud or affirmed silently, reading of and reflection on a daily lesson and prayer or treatment found in a New Thought periodical, a systematic process involving different steps leading to a specific spiritual state (the Secret Place of the Most High, Oneness, the Christ Consciousness the Silence), visualization exercises, and a period of silence. These and other practices can be done individually or combined during a treatment session. The general aim of such sessions, however they are understood, is the recognition and affirmation of the reality of Divine Mind (Truth, Principle, Law) in the life of the participant.

In addition to daily rituals, from time to time most New Thoughters engage in personal treatment activities to resolve specific challenges or achieve specific desires. As noted above, rituals to eliminate physical ailments are common, but such ailments hardly exhaust the range of challenges dealt with through mental healing treatment. Others include financial limitation, inferior social or professional status, difficulties in relationships, aging, heartache, and guilt.

Increasingly in New Thought, rituals are focused on achieving personal goals or manifesting specific conditions or objects, even though their absence may not be particularly challenging. Thus, one may be quite successful at one's job, but greater success may be desired; one may have a nice home, but a better home is desired; a new car may be desired rather than an older one; and so on. In any of these situations, New Thought offers individuals mental healing exercises specific to the situation. Such exercises can be discovered through reading and study of texts dealing with

prayer and treatment, courses taken at religious centers, or one-to-one work with a religious professional.

Typically, these exercises involve the following steps: realization of Divine Mind and affirmation of the reality of that which is desired in Divine Mind; recognition and affirmation of the individual's oneness with Divine Mind and the causative nature of consciousness; and thanksgiving (in advance) for the manifestation of that which is desired. In some instances, such as those in which an undesired condition must be eliminated, the reality of that condition (or the thought of it) is denied prior to the affirmation of the reality of the desired condition. Individuals practice these exercises until their demonstration occurs or they receive inner spiritual guidance otherwise. Regardless of the specific aim of prayer and treatment exercises and regardless of their outcomes, the mainstream of the movement asserts that the greater purpose of all such undertakings is a higher consciousness and a clearer realization of Divine Mind and the individual's oneness with It.

The category of professional rituals covers treatment work done by sanctioned religious professionals with or for another person. The office of the professional mental healer predates the New Thought movement itself and can be traced back to the Practitioner office in Christian Science and the independent mental healers of the nineteenth century. Today, professional mental healing treatment is done by ministers, practitioners (in some traditions), and, in the unique case of Unity School's Silent Unity ministry, individuals who have received special training.

In its purest form, professional prayer treatment is a psychospiritual exercise engaged in by a religious professional, within her or his consciousness. In this regard, religious professionals essentially treat themselves, following the same steps described earlier, seeking to realize Divine Mind in the context of the specific request brought to them by another. They are not really working on behalf of the person who contacted them; rather they are working for their own realization of the Truth in the context of that person's challenge or desire. To the degree that practitioners realize the Truth, and due to the Omnipresence of Divine Mind, their realization results in the elimination of the challenge or the manifestation of the desire about which they were contacted. As practitioners increase their own awareness, in so doing the improved awareness ultimately affects the well-being of the person who contacted them.

Without discounting this traditional form of professional treatment, most New Thought religious professionals have no difficulty with the rhetorical concept of praying for others, even though in practice they may follow the classical method of self-treatment. More notable is the fact that, in many New Thought communities today, prayers for others are offered by religious professionals, and from every indication (of language and tone) the prayers are actually being offered on behalf of the other person.

In summary, ritual practice in New Thought is as diverse as the movement itself. Different communities have different techniques and stress different concepts. Nonetheless, and despite the many differences in terminology and actual practice,

the aim of prayer throughout the movement is essentially the same: to experience the reality of Divine Mind and bring that reality into manifestation, thus eliminating undesired conditions, manifesting desired ones, demonstrating or reestablishing Truth, and ultimately uplifting the world.

NEW THOUGHT'S FUTURE: ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

This final section examines some of the issues and questions that present themselves to New Thought and its denominations as the movement enters its second century. Topics surveyed here can be grouped into three general categories: Doctrine and Tradition, Education, and Cultural Communication. These serve as organizational headings for various secondary issues and questions related to the future of the movement.

The categories and their related issues and questions are linked at both the practical theoretical levels. As such, they are relevant to participants in New Thought and to scholars seeking to understand the movement. For the most part, New Thought has not given much attention to the topics covered here, and scholarship on the movement has largely ignored them.

Doctrine and Tradition

Broadly speaking, New Thought is a nondoctrinal movement that has been hesitant to articulate its teachings in a systematic manner. When formal statements have been made, they usually occur after the fact, as policy decisions made relative to teachings deemed contrary to those of the movement. These decisions often come about as the result of the appearance of new teachings or internal political tensions. Early in its history, New Thought wrestled with encroachment on its religious territory by Spiritualism, mesmerism, and various syncretistic teachings that blended Asian religious ideas with Theosophy and physical healing systems. This continues today with the presence of New Age teachings in the majority of New Thought churches. Without an established body of recognized teachings, nondoctrinal movements such as New Thought often have difficulty specifying their beliefs. While not necessarily a problem, this may lead to misunderstandings on the part of participants and outsiders trying to understand the movement.

In addition to its nondoctrinal character, New Thought has been oblivious to its own history and its place in the larger sweep of Western religious and cultural history. Most New Thought participants know little of the history of their own tradition and even less about its relationship to the religious and cultural history of the West. An example of this is the distorted history of the movement that venerates Quimby as the founder of New Thought and relegates the work of Hopkins to the margins of the tradition. Whether or not historical and cultural self-consciousness is necessary for a movement to succeed and thrive is not entirely clear; however, the lack of such

an awareness on a wide scale seems relatively rare in movements well into their second century of existence.

Education

The primary category of "Education" introduces issues concerning how a religion teaches its lay participants and clerics. Clearly these issues have a direct relationship to issues found in the category of Doctrine and Tradition.

New Thought has always placed great value on the idea of education, and history reveals that the movement has seen education as one of its primary aims from Hopkins onward. From its earliest decades, New Thought has abounded with colleges, seminaries, and institutes. In name at least, the early New Thought groups understood themselves as institutions of religious education. Curiously, however, professional education in New Thought was something less than that suggested by the august titles of its schools.

This is not to say that New Thought failed in its educational aims, but the aims have not been fully realized. Beginning with Hopkins's College and her Seminary, New Thought endeavored to educate its participants and its leaders, and, for the most part, it has succeeded in doing so—up to a point. Within the context of its educational systems, New Thought has trained teachers, practitioners, and ministers, but that context has lacked certain elements commonly found in comprehensive religious educational systems, including: (1) systematic lay education programs, (2) accredited schools of higher learning, (3) support of scholarly endeavors and professional scholars within the movement, and (4) familiarity with theology in a general sense.

Perhaps the most important reasons that New Thought has not yet developed these elements are related to issues related to doctrine. In the absence of an accepted body of normative teachings, a movement finds it difficult to develop a comprehensive education program. In the absence of an historical awareness of the religious, intellectual, and cultural context of the movement, the movement does not possess a sensitivity to the necessity of a fully developed educational system, to say nothing about the development of a scholarly community and the theological enterprise as a whole. If a religion understands itself as ahistorical, it will have no reason to study its own history and the relationship of this history to the culture in which it and its members participate. It may even find such inquires threatening and move to trivialize them. This posture towards the study of history will be even more pronounced when the prospect of inquiry into a religion's teachings is presented, and the development of theological educational systems suggested.

As New Thought and its denominations enter their second century, issues related to formal education will doubtless grow. Unity and the Universal Foundation for Better Living are taking preliminary steps towards establishing schools based on norms of universally recognized accrediting institutions. These initiatives warrant attention by scholars, although important questions remain, given the movement's historical resistance to formal education.

Cultural Communication

The category of "Cultural Communication" introduces issues related to how a religion expresses itself in the public spaces of our common culture. This category is one in which New Thought has always been active.

Today, however, New Thought is confronted with important and pressing issues related to its communication with and within contemporary culture. For the most part, and again due to underdeveloped educational systems, New Thought is less than culturally sophisticated. It has sent forth ministers who are not conversant with the issues and demands of the culture in which they preach and teach. This, coupled with their less than complete theological and academic education, leads to the marginalization of their message.

Many New Thought leaders continue to reject the designation of their movement as a religion, yet they speak in churches and use religious language. Many who hold professional ecclesiastical titles have little understanding of religious history, theological specializations, or even the foundational teachings of the movement. Few can offer a systematic exposition of their faith or utilize a basic theological vocabulary. Some think that they are part of the New Age, and most place themselves in the ambiguous "metaphysical" movement even though the term has been appropriated by groups that are decidedly different from New Thought.

Most religions are not "normal" in the context of contemporary secular culture. The doctrines of most religions are at odds with the common sense beliefs of most people, even people who claim to be religious. Religions gain cultural normalcy not by becoming part of secular culture but by learning how to speak to its residents while managing to stand apart from the culture itself. Early New Thought leaders (Hopkins, Brooks, the Fillmores, and Holmes) were very good at this kind of speaking, yet subsequent generations of leaders have had difficulty articulating distinctly New Thought positions in the context of the larger culture.

All religions wrestle with the paradox of articulating a message that is seemingly denied by the culture that surrounds and sustains them. Theologians, perhaps beginning with liberal theology's Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), tried to resolve this paradox. It is a paradox that remains merely speculative and theoretical—until individual believers are faced with challenges to their faith. Then the paradox may prove problematic to the participant's faith, although not necessarily to the participant's involvement with the religion. And so the issue: How does a religion and its leaders assist in the cultivation of faith, a faith that is, at least in principle, predicated on idealist beliefs that are contrary to the cultural ideals of contemporary materialist culture? How is this done in the context of any religion? How is it done when many persons who are participants in a religion are heavily invested in a cultural system with a plausibility structure that is markedly different from, if not contrary to, their religious system? Moreover, how is this done in the context of a religion that is unsure of its own teachings, its own history, its very identity as a religion, to say nothing of its identity as an idealistic religion in the midst of a profoundly materialistic culture? Finally, how is this done in the context of a religion that puts such a high

premium on individuality and the responsibility individuals have for both their challenges and their healings?

To consider the questions posed in the three categories of this last section, gives one a sense of the curious situation in which New Thought finds itself as it enters its second century. Whether or not New Thought is capable of engaging these questions remains to be seen. That it has not done so very well in the past and yet succeeded by any reasonable measure of success adds even greater curiosity to its current situation and the future of this, the American people's "only decidedly original contribution to the systematic philosophy of life."[33]

NOTES

1. See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: New American Library, 1958), "Lectures IV and V."

2. For the use of "metaphysical" as a covering term for New Thought and various other nineteenth century new religions, see J. Stillson Judah, *The History and Philosophy of The Metaphysical Movements in America* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), especially 11–19. Estimates on membership and global distribution from author and entries on New Thought groups in J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann, eds., *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO, 2002).

3. See Judah, *History and Philosophy,* 172–173. He notes, "The name 'New Thought' designating the movement gradually displaced other terms during the 1890's."

4. See Robert Winterhalter, "Divine Science Federation/United Divine Science Ministries, International," in *Encyclopedia,* ed. Melton and Baumann, 400. This study follows the traditional, "mythic" history of Divine Science in its use of the 1888 date. Recent scholarship, however, has corrected the "oft-repeated statement in Divine Science literature" that Malinda Cramer (a founder of Divine Science) established the "Home College of Divine Science" in 1888. Cramer did establish a college in that year, but she called it the "Home College of Spiritual Science." See J. Gordon Melton, "How Divine Science Got to Denver," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Metaphysical Religion* 7, no. 2 (2001): 108–109. Only later is Cramer's work called Divine Science. Another reasonable date would be 1889, the founding of the Unity movement, although "Unity" was not used by the movement until sometime later.

5. Melton, "Divine Science," 107.

6. For support of Quimby as founder, see, for example, Charles S. Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion: The Rise and Development of New Thought* (Dallas: SMU Press, 1963), 47–88; C. Alan Anderson, "Quimby as Founder of New Thought," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Metaphysical Religion* 3, no. 1 (1997): 5–22. For Hopkins as founder, see, for example, Gail M. Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins: Forgotten Founder of New Thought* (Syracuse: SU Press, 2002), especially 48–55; J. Gordon Melton, "New Thought's Hidden History: Emma Curtis Hopkins, Forgotten Founder," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Metaphysical Religion* 1, no. 1 (1995): 5–39.

7. Phineas P. Quimby, "The Truth Is The Cure" (circular), as quoted in Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion,* 62.

8. See Horatio W. Dresser, ed., *The Quimby Manuscripts* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1921); Ervin Seale, ed., *Phineas Parkhurst Quimby: The Complete Writings* (Marina Del Rey, CA: DeVorss & Co., 1988).

9. J. Gordon Melton, "The Case of Edwards J. Arens and The Distortion of The History of New Thought," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Metaphysical Religion* 2, no. 1 (1996): 13–29. See n. 6 for "Hidden History."

10. For "Quimby As Founder of New Thought," see n. 6. For "Emma Curtis Hopkins: Organizational Founder and Metaphysical Confounder of New Thought," see *Journal of the Society for the Study of Metaphysical Religion* 8, no. 2 (2002): 107–119.

11. See Melton, "New Thought's Hidden History"; Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins: Forgotten Founder of New Thought.* See also J. Gordon Melton, *New Thought: A Reader* (Santa Barbara, CA: Institute for the Study of American Religion, 1990), 17.

12. For use of this title and its implications, see Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins: Forgotten Founder of New Thought,* 40. For a list of persons she taught, see Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion,* 143.

13. Melton, "New Thought's Hidden History," 11.

14. For other members of the class and further details on the College, see Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins: Forgotten Founder of New Thought,* 38–40.

15. Melton, "New Thought's Hidden History," 18.

16. Ibid.

17. Beryl Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom: American Women, Sexual Purity, and the New Thought Movement, 1875–1920* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 84.

18. See Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion,* 146.

19. *Christian Science* 1 (January, 1889): 111, as cited by Melton in *Journal of the Society for the Study of Metaphysical Religion* 1, no. 1 (1995): 24.

20. Emma Curtis Hopkins, "Baccalaureate Address [1891]," in Melton, *New Thought: A Reader,* 94.

21. The best study of Evans is in Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion,* chap. 4, 89–128. See also Judah, *History and Philosophy,* 160–168.

22. For additional details and a fuller treatment of these and other New Thought leaders in the East, see Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion,* 154–158, 164–169.

23. Ibid., 153.

24. Ibid., 147–149. See also Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins: Forgotten Founder of New Thought,* 130–131.

25. For an excellent critical history of the early years of Divine Science and its establishment in Denver, see J. Gordon Melton, "How Divine Science Got to Denver," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Metaphysical Religion* 7, no. 2 (2001): 103–122. Melton clarifies historical excesses in the movement's mythic history. See especially 108–109 for issues on the use of Divine Science by Cramer and the 1888 date of founding.

26. Hazel Deane, *Powerful is the Light* (Denver: Divine Science College, 1945), 124–126.

27. For membership and organization, see Winterhalter, "Divine Science Federation/United Divine Science Ministries, International," in *Encyclopedia,* ed. Melton and Baumann, 2:400–401.

28. As noted and further detailed by Dell deChant, "Myrtle Fillmore and Her Daughters," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions,* ed. Catherine Wessinger (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 109–111.

29. Dell deChant, "Unity School of Christianity/Association of Unity Churches," in *Encyclopedia,* ed. Melton and Baumann, 4:1377.
30. Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion,* 294–295.
31. deChant, "Religious Science," in *Encyclopedia,* ed. Melton and Baumann, 3:1079. Data from 2001.
32. For a good brief study of Seicho-no-Ie and its affinities with New Thought, see Paul Alan Laughlin, "Seicho-no-Ie," in *Encyclopedia,* ed. Melton and Baumann, 4:1145–1146.
33. James, *Varieties,* 88–89.

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North American Esotericism

Arthur Versluis

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS ESOTERICISM?

The word "esoteric" refers to knowledge reserved for a few; it derives from the Greek word *esotero,* meaning "within," or "inner." Here, the word "esoteric" implies inner or spiritual knowledge held by a limited circle, rather than "exoteric," publicly known or "outer" knowledge. The term "Western esotericism" refers to inner or hidden spiritual knowledge transmitted through Western European historical currents that in turn feed into North American and other non-European settings. Esoteric knowledge ran throughout Western history from antiquity to the present, ranging from the mysteries of ancient Greece and Rome to Gnostics to hermetic and alchemical practitioners, all the way to modern esoteric groups.[1] Specific currents under the category of Western esotericism include alchemy, astrology, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Kabbalah, magic, mysticism, and various secret or semisecret societies.

One definitive characteristic of esotericism is "gnosis" (from the Greek for "knowledge") or direct spiritual insight. This characteristic has the advantage of being broad enough to include the full range of esoteric traditions, but narrow enough to exclude exoteric figures or movements. Gnosis typically refers to two broad types of knowledge: cosmological and metaphysical. Cosmological traditions or currents include alchemists, who search for direct spiritual insight into nature and seek to alter certain substances thereby; astrologers, who seek direct insight into the cosmos and use it to analyze events; and magicians, who seek direct insight into the cosmos and attempt to use it to affect the course of events. Metaphysical currents include mystics or theosophers, who seek transcendent insight into the divine. Broadly speaking, in Western esotericism seekers want direct spiritual insight into the hidden nature of the cosmos and of themselves—they strive for gnosis, either cosmological or wholly transcendent. While these categories may seem mutually exclusive, in practice, they blur together.

In other words, Western esoteric traditions contain secret or semisecret knowledge about humanity, the cosmos, and the divine. While North American currents tend more toward pragmatism and practice than speculation, American esotericisms includes the full range of these currents.

EUROPE AND EARLY AMERICA

European and North American currents are complex and deeply intermingled. To study North American forms of esotericism, one must also study not only their European origins or antecedents, but also their complicated trans-Atlantic relationships and successors. This complexity is evident almost from the onset of English and European colonization of North America, in the export of folk magic, astrology, and alchemy, in the founding of the American republic (for instance, with the prevalence of Masonry among the Founding Fathers), and in so many subsequent important figures and movements, from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Paschal Beverly Randolph to the Blavatskyan Theosophical Society.

In eighteenth century Europe, the cultural landscape was filled with esoteric secret or semisecret societies. For example, Rosicrucianism evolved from a series of enigmatic treatises published at the beginning of the seventeenth century to a wide array of actual initiatory organizations. By the late eighteenth century and the founding of the United States, many European initiatory groups took the name Rosicrucian, or a similar one, like the Gold-und Rosenkreutz (Gold and Rosy-Cross) Order that emerged during the 1770s in Germany, as well as numerous lodges under the name "Golden Rosy-Cross of the Ancient System" in 1777.[2] Rosicrucian groups or individuals in general embraced an alchemical view of the cosmos as a system of correspondences to be decoded and believed in social development toward a harmonious and fraternal future that joined together elements of what we would today term religion and science.

Speculative Freemasonry emerged from a Rosicrucian environment in the early eighteenth century. Like Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry is an ethical tradition that conveys cosmological knowledge, evidenced by its emphasis on building and architecture. Originally, masonry was "operative," meaning that it belonged among the medieval trade guilds, but in the early eighteenth century in England, "speculative" Freemasonry emerged, and this type of Freemasonry quickly permeated the American colonies.

As is well known, many signers of the Declaration of Independence were Masons. George Washington became a Mason on November 4, 1752, and strongly encouraged his generals, officers, and soldiers in the Continental Army to join Masonry. Washington even appeared in full Masonic regalia before the troops while celebrating the retaking of Philadelphia in 1778.[3] Boston's St. Andrew Lodge was led by Dr. Joseph Warren and included among its members Paul Revere, who was later to become Grand Master of Massachusetts.[4] This lodge met at "The Green Dragon, or the Arms of Freemasonry," a Mason-owned tavern near the Boston Harbor, the

site of the Boston Tea Party of 1773. In part, out of these origins emerged the American Declaration of Independence in 1776.

By the early nineteenth century, Masonry was so widespread in the United States that it was regarded by many evangelical Christians as well as many non-Mason citizens as dangerous to civic well-being. Popular resentment of the Masons' purported political and social power via their Masonic connections emerged after the notorious disappearance of William Morgan on September 14, 1826. Morgan was a stonemason living in western New York state who intended to publish a book in which he unveiled the secrets of Masonry. A group of Masons set fire to the printer's shop where the book was being printed, and when the fire was subsequently put out, the Masons had Morgan and his printer, David Miller, arrested. When Mrs. Morgan went to the jail to find her husband, he was gone and was never seen again. Out of people's anger at the presumed kidnapping and murder of Morgan emerged the Antimasonic party, the first third party in American history. In New England, the Antimasonic party[5] rivalled and in some instances surpassed mainstream political parties in votes.[6]

Opposition to Masons in the United States did not end with creation of a political party, the Antimasonic Party—there was also violence. In March 1830, Antimasons forced their way into a Boston lodge, expecting to find an arsenal, but instead discovered 43 ritual swords and some spittoons. Masonic buildings were defaced. Angry Masons in turn shouted down and drove away Antimasonic speakers. Although Masonry did recover from this period of attack in the early nineteenth century, the hostility toward Masonry did not vanish, but remained an undercurrent in American society, as well as a spur toward the creation of competing quasi-Masonic fellowships like the Grange association for farmers, the Odd Fellows, the Elks, and other lodges. Widespread fear of Masonry as a secret organization with hidden political power helps explain why, although Masonry was immensely important in the founding of the United States and its ideals were influential in the writings of many of the first great American literary-political figures, Masonry never regained its earlier sociopolitical authority.

FOLK MAGIC AND COSMOLOGICAL CURRENTS

Many European esoteric cosmological traditions came to the New World through popular or folk currents by the nineteenth century. Elsewhere I categorize these currents, roughly, as (1) astrology; (2) sympathetic magic; (3) dowsing; (4) spiritualism; and (5) mesmerism. These five primary currents were widespread in American popular culture during this period and, as John Richards shows, were still represented in Appalachian culture of the early twenty-first century.[7]

Whereas in the eighteenth century, astrological manuals and almanacs were fairly widely distributed, a significant portion of the astrological material published in the United States during the nineteenth century was in the native languages of specific ethnic groups rather than in English for a mainstream audience—in particular, one finds a number of books published in German in Pennsylvania. A more widely

distributed book, published in Boston by the author in 1854, was Dr. C.W. Roback's *The Mysteries of Astrology and the Wonders of Magic, including A History of the Rise and Progress of Astrology and the Various Branches of Necromancy. The Mysteries of Astrology* is an astrological primer and, like the farmer's almanacs and lunar planting schedules that continued through the entire period, helps demonstrate the underground continuity of astrology.

During the nineteenth century, herbals were popular. They classified plants on the basis of their astrological characteristics. Some plants are solar, some lunar, some Venusian, some Martial, and so forth. By applying the proper balance of herbs to the patient, a healer could adjust astrological imbalances in the patient and cure the illness—this is the theory behind a tradition of astrological or sympathetic medicine seen in books from around the time of Shakespeare onward, like Nicholas Culpeper's famous herbal.[8] These traditions of sympathetic magic or astrological medicine continued as mostly hidden currents throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

Three folk traditions are particularly important: Native American herbal traditions; slave and ex-slave magical traditions; and Pennsylvania German traditions of *hexenmedizin* or "powwow."[9] In North America folk magical traditions from Africa, England, Ireland, Scotland, and Germany often combined with local or regional Native American traditions to form modified or hybrid folk magical traditions. Jon Butler's observation remains valid—that we have insufficient research on the nature of these magical traditions during this period.[10] But these three, sometimes overlapping groups or communities, represent only the most visible forms of what remained often largely invisible and unexamined in communities across the United States right into the twentieth century.

For example, dowsing was a practical American skill throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The dowser walks over the land holding a forked wooden or metal divining rod that dips downward over the place where water is found. Broadly speaking, dowsing (and sometimes other forms of divination too) is not generally frowned upon in the way that other forms of magic often are, and it remains a widespread phenomenon in the American hinterlands to this day.

Better documented is the phenomenon of Spiritualism. Conventionally, most historians maintain that Spiritualism began in the United States with the Fox sisters in 1848. However, such phenomena have a long history in both Europe and North America. English author John Aubrey published his *Miscellanies* in 1696, and it included sections on apparitions, voices, impulses, omens, knockings, and invisible blows. And after all, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's influential *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* included sections on how spirits may be called up, on prophetic dreams, and so forth.[11] Throughout early modern history, many examples exist showing that people believed in connections between the invisible or spiritual and visible worlds.

Still, earlier esoteric forms of Spiritualism or necromancy differ from the form that swept the United States in the nineteenth century because European precedents tended to belong to secretive groups or individuals. In the United States, spirit rapping and similar "occult" phenomena assured people that invisible beings were real

and that personalities survived death, something that was important in the wake of the American Civil War. Spiritualism became a widespread phenomenon, involving even promoters like P.T. Barnum. Although Spiritualism had predecessors in European esoteric lodges, in the United States it was not very esoteric at all.

"Animal magnetism," or Mesmerism, was also important. This phenomenon is now known chiefly as hypnotism, although Mesmerism included other dimensions than hypnotism, including hidden energy currents in the body. Friedrich Mesmer (1734–1815), an Austrian physician and astrologer, became well known in Paris for the miraculous healings and weird psychic phenomena that accompanied his stage shows. With the infallible instinct of the showman, Mesmer turned animal magnetism or hypnosis into a stage event. Animal magnetism was supposedly a universal fluid that could be manipulated by a practitioner to effect healing.

Mesmerism spread quite widely when in the American colonies it linked with the "New Church" of the followers of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). Andrew Jackson Davis (1826–1910) was also important in the history of American Mesmerism. He was known as the "seer from Poughkeepsie, New York." Davis believed that he was not indebted to any other writer, but one finds in Davis's work an unmistakable indebtedness to the socialism of Charles Fourier, to European folk medicine, to Mesmerism, and to Swedenborg. Davis and most of the Spiritualists rejected conventional forms of Christianity, but they often called themselves Christian, widening their audience and thus, in a characteristically American way, making what was esoteric, exoteric.

ESOTERIC SEXUALITY AND AMERICAN UTOPIANISM

The United States has been the site of a number of fairly successful utopian communities, among them such groups as Ephrata, which flourished not far from Philadelphia in the eighteenth century, the Harmony Society of Johann Georg Rapp (1757–1847) and his adopted son, Frederick Rapp (1775–1834), the ill-fated Fruitlands community founded by Amos Bronson Alcott (1799–1888), the Oneida community of John Humphrey Noyes (1811–1886), and the Brethren of the New Life, founded by Thomas Lake Harris (1823–1906). All of these utopian groups derive their philosophy either directly or indirectly from Christian theosophic mysticism in the tradition of Jacob Böhme (1575–1624). Those communities that developed esoteric sexual theories and practices (notably Noyes and Harris) were drawing in part on a preexisting tradition of the androgynous angelic spiritual unity that is found in the works of Emanuel Swedenborg as well as in earlier alchemical works. John Humphrey Noyes, founder of the well known Oneida community in western New York state, was from a merchant family and graduated from Dartmouth College. Noyes was converted in the great revival of 1831 and went to divinity school at Yale, where he supported radical causes. Noyes opposed the institution of marriage as commonly understood, and after he gathered a perfectionist community in Putney, Vermont, he began to publish his views, which scandalized his neighbors and ultimately caused his community to flee to Oneida in 1848.

The Oneida community pursued an interesting and relatively well-organized kind of socialism in which matters of procreation and sexual intercourse as well as most other decisions were subject to community judgment. Oneida, which by 1851 numbered 205 members, was controversial for its sexual views, but, in fact, was fairly conservative in many respects. The community was industrious and, in addition to farming and logging, saw to the production of dinner silverware. Indeed, when the community disbanded in 1881, it did so by forming the Oneida Corporation, which today still is responsible for manufacturing Oneida silverware.

Noyes's particular version of male continence was the centerpiece of Oneida's unique sexuality. As practiced at Oneida, it consisted of sexual intercourse without male ejaculation, which Noyes believed transformed intercourse from an animalistic rutting into, at least potentially, a vehicle of spiritual experience. This view has parallels in both Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism, but Noyes almost certainly did not get his approach to sexuality from Asian traditions. Instead, there are European precedents for such a view, both medieval, as in the Cathars, and more modern, in particular among the Christian theosophers.[12] It is entirely possible that at Yale, Noyes read works that inspired his later views of sexuality and religion, but precisely which works remains uncertain.

Thomas Lake Harris was born in England, and came to the United States in 1828. In 1845, he became a Universalist minister, a career that served him for less than two years, for in 1847 he joined Andrew Jackson Davis and the Spiritualists. Harris soon left Davis's group, eventually announcing his own esoteric millennialist group called the "Brotherhood of the New Life," which was intended for the "reorganization of the industrial world."[13] Harris established his group at Brocton, Salem-on-Erie, New York, and finally in California. He taught a complex mysticism with some sexual dimensions, the underlying idea being that through spiritual practices it is possible to restore human beings and nature to an original paradisal state.

Harris was a prolific author and also wrote and published a number of hymns and songs. Among his many books are *Arcana of Christianity: An Unfolding of the Celestial Sense of the Divine Word* (1858–1867), *The Millennial Age: Twelve Discourses on the Spiritual and Social Aspects of the Times* (1860), *The Breath of God with Man* (1867), and *The Golden Child* (1878), the daily chronicle of life in the California community Harris founded. In essence, Harris joined together Christian millennialism with Swedenborgian thought, but also drew on a range of other esoteric traditions.[14] Harris's esotericism was thoroughly European in origin, emerging almost totally out of Swedenborgianism, and it was quite sophisticated.[15]

While Noyes and Harris were more widely influential—both because of their writings and because of the utopian communities that each led, yet a third figure was influential in this American esoteric pragmatism: the remarkable Alice Bunker Stockham (1833–1912). Stockham founded no utopian community and, like Harris, was overlooked by scholars, but she was a significant author whose work continues and develops the Noyesian tradition of *coitus reservatus* (or males not ejaculating during sexual intercourse) in marriage. One of the first female M.D.s in the United States, trained as an obstetrician/gynecologist whose practice was based in Chicago,

Stockham's work reflects her medical training and perspective. In it, Swedenborgian or Böhmean mysticism is missing, but she advocated what we might call a more secular sexual mysticism of human creativity.

Stockham's work is unique, particularly her book *Karezza.* Harris's teachings were truly esoteric, and even Noyes's teachings were primarily for the benefits of his followers, but Stockham disseminated the idea of *coitus reservatus* as widely as possible. Her books, especially *Karezza,* are filled with the spirit of proselytization for what she clearly saw as a possible, indeed, a necessary sociosexual revolution. The relations between the sexes could be entirely transformed, if only husband and wife would begin to practice the ascetic discipline of occasional intercourse without ejaculation.

Yet she went further, arguing that just as ordinary sexual intercourse led to procreation, so spiritual intercourse conducted without ejaculation would lead to what she calls "procreation of thought," and to a higher union of male and female. While Stockham is exoteric in her desire to convey her sexual theory as widely as possible, she relied on a long and rich Western esoteric tradition, as, for example, when she said that "in every soul there is a duality, the male and female principle," and that "though but one in spirit, in spiritual expression soul in every person is twofold, a blended male and female."[16] Thus, she continues, "as sex is in the soul[,] it is not impossible, as spiritual unity is developed, that a procreation of thought may be accomplished—that is, a procreation on the spiritual plane, not of individuals, but of principles and theories that can be practically developed for the good of the world."[17] Hence, even the more classically esoteric dimensions of Stockham's thought—like the aspiration to nonduality or androgyny—ultimately is legitimated for her only by its practical exoteric consequences "practically developed for the good of the world."

Stockham's work stands in the long American tradition of universalism and pragmatism whose greatest representative is Ralph Waldo Emerson, a tradition with no lack of representatives proceeding into the twentieth century with figures like Alan Watts, as well as groups like the human potential movements, and philosophies and ideologies like East-West syncretism. New Age figures and sects should also be included in this heritage. Nearly every one of the utopian figures and groups mentioned here were exemplars in the long tradition of American pragmatist esotericism, or esoteric pragmatism.

LITERARY "OCCULTISM" IN THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

The emergence of an industrial American society in the nineteenth century meant that, at least for a time, alchemy, astrology, and other esoteric traditions of intellectuals or the upper class were by and large not only discarded, but also denigrated because they were not conducive to industrialization. The same was true for the folk magic traditions from Native American, African American, Pennsylvania German, and utopian origins. But at least some of the early industrial processes, chiefly concerned with soap, wax, metallurgy, and medicine, emerged from the efforts of alchemists. The American alchemist George Starkey was still widely known some

time after his death because of the continuing sale of what had become known as "Starkey's Pill."[18] However, these innovations occurred during the period of transition to modern scientific industrialism during the early to mid-nineteenth century. In general, modern scientific rationalism and earlier Western esoteric traditions appeared incompatible with one another, and during the nineteenth century, scientific rationalism won what seemed a convincing victory, suppressing or marginalizing esoteric traditions.

But this suppression was not nearly as complete as it might initially seem. Certainly, if we look at the decline in publication of many astrological almanacs or the decline in the number of practicing alchemists, "occultism" or esotericism seems to have significantly diminished in American society by the mid-nineteenth century. But esoteric themes were used by major American authors of the American Renaissance during the mid-nineteenth century in New England. Indeed, these authors worked with esoteric themes and traditions that had preoccupied many of their ancestors, so that the American Renaissance may well be seen from this angle as the transference of esoteric traditions into literary consciousness.

The presence of esotericism in the works of most of the major American authors of this era, from Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville to Emerson, Emily Dickinson, Amos Bronson Alcott, and Margaret Fuller, is undeniable. These authors relied on different currents, but the importance of prior esoteric traditions for the American Renaissance is undeniable. By drawing upon alchemy, astrology, theosophy, Swedenborgianism, Mesmerism, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, and many other esoteric movements and ideas, these authors expressed in their published work basic themes that had enormous resonance in the popular mind and remained as living forces in the American imagination.

Perhaps surprisingly, it is in the poetry of the time that we find the most traces of intellectualized esotericism. Melville voiced views in his poetry that he did not express quite as openly in his fiction. We see this in poems like his "Fragments of a Lost Gnostic Poem," "The New Rosicrucians," or "Clarel." "Fragments of a Lost Gnostic Poem" ends this way:

> Indolence is heaven's ally here,
> And energy the child of hell:
> The Good Man pouring from his pitcher clear,
> But brims the poisoned well.

It is not surprising that some of Melville's many voices are decidedly esoteric in nature, even if his own views were probably most clearly set forth in that sardonic riddle of a book, *The Confidence Man.* Fuller also wrote poems that are indisputably esoteric, perhaps most notably "Winged Sphynx," "My Seal Ring," "Sub Rosa-Crux," and above all "Double Triangle," probably the best of her poems, whose accompaniment is the esoteric illustration that originally appeared at the beginning of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century.* Here are a few lines from the poem:

When the perfect two embrace,
Male and Female, black & white,
  Soul is justified in space,
Dark made fruitful by the light;
  And, centred in the diamond Sun,
    Time & Eternity are one.[19]

Some of the most experiential esoteric poems were written by Dickinson, who like Melville was very much influenced by that entertaining author on all manner of esoteric lore, Sir Thomas Browne. Dickinson was not inclined toward scholarly inquiry into hermeticism or theosophy, but she was interested in such topics as witchcraft and posthumous existence, and if her life was outwardly stationary, inwardly she journeyed on a spiritual and psychological path that resembles at times a kind of Christian shamanism.[20]

MAGICAL CURRENTS

The end of the nineteenth century represents a burgeoning of various Western magical groups as well as of syncretic movements like the Theosophical Society of Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891) or the Anthroposophical Society of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), both of which themselves included magical elements and even, in the case of the Theosophical Society, a special magical wing called the "Esoteric Section" and headed by William Q. Judge (1851–1896) and later his successors. This semisecret magical group within the Theosophical Society undoubtedly arose as a reaction to the growing recruitment power of the Order of the Golden Dawn, founded in 1888 by William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925) and Samuel Liddle MacGregor Mathers (1854–1918), both already members of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, a secret Rosicrucian group. The Order of the Golden Dawn supposedly began when a hidden and encoded manuscript bearing the keys to the work of the Abbott Trithemius was found; but the Golden Dawn practiced ceremonial magic with a pronounced Masonic ritual flavor, drawing also upon Christian Kabbalah and a number of preexisting magical or "occultist" traditions.[21] Arguably the most important contribution of the Golden Dawn was its systematization of magic in a series of Masonic grades. All of these groups represent very complicated interrelationships between American, English, and European figures, and all had American dimensions.

Thus, the Golden Dawn's systematization of ritual magic owed at least something to its predecessors, among these the African American magician Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825–1875) and the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor. Randolph was born in New York and learned various occupations before, in the early 1850s, taking up a Spiritualist vocation, eventually serving as an on-stage trance medium and then as a psychic and healer. Randolph's various books and treatises—in which he also claimed himself as heir to the secrets of Rosicrucianism while later acknowledging that his Rosicrucianism came out of his own head—were chiefly about sexuality. In such

works as *The Ansairetic Mystery, Eulis,* and *The Golden Secret,* Randolph outlined his perspective on the mysteries of sexuality, which included sexual magic. Randolph insisted on the importance of women's sexual satisfaction and included in some of his works directions for sexual magical practices that attracted the attention of local New England legal authorities at least once. Randolph was an advisor to and laborer for Abraham Lincoln, and after the Civil War was for a short time the principal of Lloyd Garrison Grammar School in New Orleans. Within the history of American esotericism, he is most important for establishing the general outlines of sexual magical practices to be followed and developed by subsequent groups both European and American.

One of the most complicated avenues of Randolph's influences has been to a considerable degree unraveled by Joscelyn Godwin, Christian Chanel, and John Deveney in their collection of documents entitled *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor* (1995). In this work, the authors show how Randolph's cosmological and sexual teachings made their way to England, to a small group of occultists who drew upon them and even plagiarized them in creating their own system of magical practice and an esoteric order. It is by no means clear when Randolph conceived his own cosmology regarding the individual "monad's" evolution toward immortality—he claimed that he learned it during his travels in the Mideast in 1861.[22] The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor disseminated Randolph's ideas much more widely in Europe and North America.[23]

In his turn, Aleister Crowley (1875–1947)—who joined the Order of the Golden Dawn in 1898, and who went on to found his own order, the Astrum Argentinum [incorporated into the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO), founded by Carl Kellner (1850–1905) and Theodor Reuss (1855–1923)]—continued the emphasis on sexuality in magical ritual. Crowley's OTO developed a luciferian tendency that manifested not only in his writings, but also in the incorporation of rituals like the Gnostic Mass, the ritual consumption of wafers consisting in part of semen and menstrual fluid. Crowley enjoyed negative publicity, calling himself "the Great Beast," and was a favorite subject for tabloid journalism. But his voluminous writings remain an important part of the history of twentieth century magical esotericism, and the OTO continues to the present day.

The late twentieth century saw the emergence of various other neo-Gnostic groups not to mention the development in the late twentieth century of Wicca or witchcraft, neopaganism, and various magical groups, all of which draw on sexuality as a primary basis for magical power. Many of these groups share certain tendencies: (1) to assert their superiority over conventional forms of morality; (2) to hold sexual rites for purposes of magical power; and (3) to react explicitly against conventional forms of organized Christianity, even if insisting upon the necessity of attaining some kind of gnosis. One also can discern an increasing tendency away from the eighteenth century Masonically inspired hierarchic orders that persisted throughout the twentieth century, and toward an eclectic individualism. Perhaps nowhere is that individualism more apparent than in Chaos magic.

Just as the turn of the nineteenth century saw dramatic growth of various magical orders that were both innovative and dependent on earlier tradition, so the turn of the twentieth century once again saw the emergence of a bewildering variety of new groups and orders. One of the most important was Chaos magic, which spawned several orders, among them the order of the Illuminates of Thanateros. In the introduction to his book *Liber Null and Psychonaut,* one of the defining works of this movement, Peter Carroll writes that "The Illuminates of Thanateros are the magical heirs to the Zos Kia Cultus [of Austin Osman Spare] and the A.'. A.'…"[24] But whereas the Golden Dawn drew upon Renaissance white magic and Jewish Kabbalism, Chaos magic reflects a distinctly darker nature, sometimes referring to itself as "grey magic."

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Chaos magic is its approach to initiations, central to Western esoteric traditions like Freemasonry or Masonically influenced ceremonial magical orders. Whereas some in magical orders, like the Golden Dawn, integrated magical practices with, for instance, Roman Catholicism, the Chaos magicians of the early twenty-first century scorned traditional religions. Individualism is the hallmark of Chaos magic. In this movement, the term "initiation" takes on the neoshamanic meaning of a period of trial and growth rather than an institutionalized series of hierarchic degrees. Chaos magic represents an anarchic and radical individualist movement that is by self-definition antitraditional.[25]

LITERARY ESOTERICISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In twentieth century American literature, among the important and indicative figures are the modernist poet H.D. (1886–1961), the Beat novelist William S. Burroughs (1914–1997), and the science fiction writer Philip K. Dick (1928–1982). H.D.'s work contains many traditional Western esoteric currents, including alchemy, astrology, and sexual mysticism, while Burroughs's later work contains more contemporary magical currents, and Dick's work has modernized projected Gnosticism.

Of these three, the most thoroughly permeated with Western esoteric currents was H.D. That H.D.—born Hilda Doolittle—was fascinated with esoterica is well known. Susan Friedman outlines the intertwining of H.D.'s biography and her fascination with mysticism, the Tarot, numerology, astrology, magic, psychic insights or visions, various heresies of antiquity including the Ophites and other Gnostic groups, Rosicrucianism, and the Christian theosophy of Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf (1700–1760) and the Moravians.[26] H.D. is a twentieth century representative of an American feminine literary lineage that harks back to nineteenth century American Renaissance authors Emily Dickinson and Margaret Fuller. Fuller, like H.D., was fascinated with numerology, astrology, and what we might term esoteric correspondences or patterns in life. She created a hermetic emblem for herself and was very interested in doctrines of occult or hidden sympathies between humanity and nature. Likewise, H.D. was fascinated by esoteric correspondences in her life, was a reasonably accomplished astrological interpreter, and by 1911 saw the emblem

of the thistle and serpent as her own. Works by H.D. that give evidence of esotericism include her poems in *Trilogy* and *Vale Ave* as well as her novel *The Gift,* but the much earlier work *Notes on Thought and Vision* help to make clear H.D.'s gnostic perspective in relation to literature. *Notes* is a very unusual work; written in July 1919 in the Scilly Islands, it argues for the characteristically Emersonian idea of an "overmind" as a model of higher consciousness.

During the London blitz in World War II, H.D. wrote the collection of three long poems later published as *Trilogy.* These three poems were "The Walls Do Not Fall," "Tribute to the Angels," and "The Flowering of the Rod." In "The Walls Do Not Fall," H.D. develops many of the themes that were initially sketched in *Notes on Thought and Vision.* These themes are clearly esoteric: she writes of her experience of "nameless initiates" as her "companions," of the "alchemist's secret," of "the most profound philosophy," of the stars as beings who can be invoked by spells, and much else. It is obvious from "The Walls Do Not Fall" that although H.D.'s outward circumstances were the terrors of war, the poem is at heart profoundly esoteric in its unified vision of reality amid the shards of bomb-shattered modernity.

The most important of her esoteric works was the novel *The Gift,* which was not published in a full version that included H.D.'s complex mysticism drawn from her family's Moravian tradition. H.D. was herself a baptized Moravian, but the Moravian Church of the twentieth century was vastly different from the Herrnhuters of Count von Zinzendorf who settled in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in the middle of the eighteenth century. Zinzendorf and his group were far more esoteric in their interests than those who followed them. Rimius's works, cited by H.D. in her notes, make clear this distinction. Rimius, Zinzendorf's most effective detractor, accused the early Moravians of "gross and scandalous … Mysticism," of the "*Arcana,* or Secret Counsels of their Leaders," as well as of "Secrets probably known by the adepts alone."[27] H.D. avidly read the works of Rimius and much else in order to fashion an extraordinary novel that embodies many currents of Western esotericism, most notably those of Christian theosophic mysticism. In H.D.'s work, we see nearly all the major currents of Western esotericism.

By contrast, the later works of Burroughs show that the author incorporating magical and alchemical elements, as well as some aspects of Egyptian religious tradition. He is best known for his earlier writing, like his novel *Naked Lunch.* But in *The Western Lands* (1987) and *The Place of Dead Roads* (1984) Burroughs explores a surreal, nightmarish world populated by demons, a world he describes in part by way of a magical interpretation of ancient Egyptian religion. There is, of course, a long-standing Western esoteric tradition based on Egyptian religion and magic, of which Burroughs is only one exemplar. His work was popularized not only through film versions of his novels, but also through his spoken word appearances on musical works. Bill Laswell's band *Material* produced an album featuring as lyrics Burroughs reading from *The Western Lands,* all of which served to disseminate his more occult works.

As for Dick, a science fiction writer, his primary connection to Western esotericism also becomes most evident in his later work, which he saw not as science fiction,

but as secret Gnostic truth. He believed that he was like a Gnostic in the period of the Roman Empire millennia before. Dick claimed that he encountered the Vast Active Living Intelligence System, or VALIS, about which encounters and insights he wrote at great length not only in such published works as *Valis* (1981), but also in voluminous journals. Dick inspired a kind of posthumous cult following whose interest turns especially on the Gnostic themes of his later works.[28]

SYNCRETISM AND UNIVERSALISM

One of the more noteworthy aspects of modern intellectual history is the tendency toward syncretism and universalism as manifested in movements as diverse as the New Age movement and perennialism or Traditionalism. Traditionalism as a movement appeared with the singular voice of the French author René Guénon (1886–1951), whose books and articles all bear the stamp of a man utterly convinced that his work was absolutely true. Guénon was highly critical of the modern industrialized world, which he saw as emerging from the destruction of the orthodox world religious traditions and traditional cultures of the past. The intellectual esotericism that Guénon initiated was espoused by Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998), whose severe and abstract works are seen by some Traditionalists as the culmination of the movement.

Schuon was born in Basle, Switzerland, and trained as a textile designer. He worked in Paris, where he corresponded with Guénon, and later met Guénon in Egypt. He evidently had some contact with Sufis or Muslim mystics, and his many books are infused with an abstractness that owes a great deal to the aniconic Islamic tradition. Among his books are *Understanding Islam* (1963), *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy* (1976), *Christianity/Islam: Essays on Ecumenic Esotericism* (1985), as well as *In the Tracks of Buddhism* (1969), *The Feathered Sun: Plains Indians in Art and Philosophy* (1990), and *Light on the Ancient Worlds* (1966). Only in the early 1990s, late in his life, did the public learn that Schuon was the center of a *tariqah,* or esoteric group based in Bloomington, Indiana. Schuon wrote from a universalist or transcendent position, as more or less pure intellect removed from the modern world, and he lived much of his life in reclusion as the leader of a Sufi or quasi-Sufi universalist initiatic group. Schuon and a number of other European and British Traditionalists who chose to live in North America reveal just how complexly intermingled are Western esoteric currents across continents in the modern era.[29]

NEW AGE UNIVERSALISM

Another instance of globalist universalism is the New Age movement. Wouter Hanegraaff surveys the entire New Age movement in detail, and comes to the general conclusion that

> All New Age religion is characterized by the fact that it expresses its criticism of modern western culture by presenting alternatives derived from a secularized esotericism. It

> adopts from traditional esotericism an emphasis on the primacy of personal religious experience and on this-worldly types of holism … but generally reinterprets esoteric tenets from secularized perspectives. Since the new elements of "causality," the study of religions, evolutionism, and psychology are fundamental components, New Age religion cannot be characterized as a return to pre-Enlightenment worldviews, but is to be seen as a qualitatively new syncretism of esoteric and secular elements. Paradoxically, New Age criticism of modern western culture is expressed to a considerable extent on the premises of that same culture.[30]

In sum, writes Hanegraaff, "The New Age movement is characterized by a popular western culture criticism expressed in terms of a secularized esotericism." If Hanegraaff is right in his conclusions, then the New Age movement is a secularizing current of thought that nonetheless shares common origins with Traditionalism itself.

Both Traditionalism and the New Age movement have common antecedents in the nineteenth century. Probably the most important antecedents are in German *Naturphilosophie* and European Romanticism, in the late nineteenth century "New Thought" movement, in the various syncretizing "occult" or esoteric figures and lodges of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as in pivotal figures like Swedenborg, William Blake, and above all, Emerson. All of these various currents of thought elevate individual syncretism and synthesis, joining together apparently disparate perspectives in a more general overview that takes on a universalist flavor. This syncretic universalism emerges throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in figures as diverse as Steiner, Schuon, and Ken Wilber (b. 1949), each of whom presented himself as a surveyor of the entire human religiocultural inheritance. They differ from one another chiefly in their degree of incorporation or rejection of scientific-evolutionist premises.

The New Thought movement, with its pastiche of influences from Spiritualism, Mesmeric healing, Western esoteric traditions like Hermeticism and Böhmean theosophy, Asian religious traditions, and evolutionist science, represents the late nineteenth century predecessor and counterpart to the late twentieth century's "New Age" movement. Many of the themes of both movements go directly back to Emerson, including (1) That direct spiritual experience of the individual is more important than adherence to organized religious traditions. (2) That behind or within all traditions is a "perennial philosophy" or esoteric center, which the individual can realize for him or herself. (3) That we are moving toward a new era in human understanding, an era that unites science and spirituality. (4) That suffering does not have any ultimate reality and that we can choose to overcome or transcend it. (5) That we can derive from Asian religious traditions such concepts as *karma* or enlightenment and place them in an individualistic modern context. These are only a handful of such themes, but they show what constitutes, as Harold Bloom has argued, an "American religion."[31]

Numerous such strands link earlier esoteric traditions, the nineteenth century American New Thought movement, and the late twentieth century American New Age movement. Hanegraaff suggests links between such figures as Friederike

Hauffe (1801–1829)—known as the "Seeress of Prevorst," who was a medium and "channel" for "higher beings" after she was magnetized by the German doctor and poet Justinius Kerner—and much later figures like Jane Roberts (1929–1984), who became well-known as the channel for the "spiritual teachings" of a discarnate spirit named "Seth."[32] Between these two figures stands the nineteenth century work and life of Andrew Jackson Davis, also a medium or channel who became a widely known author and public figure of his time, and who claimed to have spoken with none other than Swedenborg himself in the afterlife. Clearly there is a series of linked figures who represent common tendencies, not just through their identities as famous "spirit mediums" or "channels," but through their works as emerging from and reflecting the fundamental premise that the individual, without the intermediary of the church, can contact higher beings and reveal spiritual truths.

The New Age movement is noteworthy for its syncretism, perennialism, radical spiritual individualism, and above all, its cosmic optimism, as well as its grafting of various elements of Asian religious traditions (using concepts like karma or reincarnation, for instance) into what remains a fundamentally Western millennialist outlook. This millennialism is basic to the writing of authors like David Spangler, who wrote that "The New Age is a concept that proclaims a new opportunity, a new level of growth attained, a new power released and at work in human affairs, a new manifestation of that evolutionary tide of events which, taken at the flood, does indeed lead on to greater things, in this case to a new heaven, a new earth and a new humanity."[33] And one sees a similar if perhaps less extreme millennialism in such various late-twentieth century New Age authors as Shakti Gawain, Shirley MacLaine, and George Trevelyan.

But as Christoph Bochinger argues, the term New Age is actually at least as much a marketing category as it is a school of thought.[34] He is certainly correct that the term New Age did become a category for a whole potpourri of merchandising possibilities. The river of this merchandise might look fairly wide. It carries along in its current crystals and scented candles, quasi-scientific tomes by figures like Fritjof Capra, various forms of Chinese herbalism or acupuncture, "channeled" books dictated by various discarnate entities claiming great antiquity and wisdom, and cultish Western figures claiming themselves to be representatives of Hindu or Native American or other traditions. But this river is also fairly shallow. It has been harnessed more than once as a means of making money, and sometimes observers wonder if that is not, in the end, its primary function.

For this reason, it is unjust to place too much emphasis on the origins of the New Age movement in the thought of an Emerson or, for that matter, in Western esotericism as a whole. There is a naiveté, a crassness, and a superficiality in the New Age movement missing in earlier Western esoteric traditions or in the works of Emerson. Hanegraaff is correct that the New Age movement owes much to earlier Western esotericism. But he is also convincing in arguing that the New Age movement is fundamentally a secularization of preexisting Western esoteric currents.

INDEPENDENT SPIRITS

If the most visible twentieth century religious phenomena from a sociological perspective are the New Age movement on the one hand and the emergence of fundamentalist religious movements on the other, other figures remain stubbornly independent from these various social movements and follow their own paths toward transcendence. Some of these esoteric authors or figures emphasize cosmological mysteries, while others represent what is often called the via negativa (or "negative way") of transcendent mysticism that goes beyond all images or forms and that has exemplars in the past like the great medieval Christian mystic Meister Eckhart. This, too, is an esoteric tradition, perhaps the most esoteric of all.

In his *The Book of Enlightened Masters: Western Teachers in Eastern Traditions* (1997), Andrew Rawlinson includes entries on hundreds of Westerners who assumed the role of spiritual teacher, often within various Asian religious traditions. Many independent spiritual teachers in the West were strongly influenced by Asian religious traditions, but they remain largely or totally independent of formal affiliation, and often these independent spirits are more accurately identified as part of a larger Western esoteric current.

A good example is G. Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866–1949), a controversial figure who may have spent several years (perhaps 1905–1907) studying in a Sufi monastery or, by another account, with a secret group called the Sarmoun[g] Brotherhood somewhere in central Asia.[35] Whatever the truth about his contacts with hidden Asian spiritual traditions, Gurdjieff came to live in Western Europe and established there a center for spiritual training. He also wrote a number of long and, for the most part, seemingly impenetrable books, which attracted a number of prominent disciples. These included J.G. Bennett (1897–1974), Jeanne de Salzmann (1889–1990), and P.D. Ouspensky (1878–1947), each of whom established his or her own spiritual centers and traditions. Gurdjieff and his main disciples tended to focus their works on what we might term cosmological mysteries as well as on the hidden dimensions of human potential.

It is rather difficult to outline Gurdjieff's teachings, because he himself was not exactly systematic as a teacher, and he was also a trickster and raconteur. Yet central to his teaching is the idea, common to many esoteric traditions, that humanity is "asleep" and needs to be awakened. This awakening is best accomplished by someone who is himself "awake," and Gurdjieff and his disciples certainly saw him as awake. He was notorious for his confrontational style, for ordering his disciples to do humiliating or painful work, and for his erratic behavior—in short, for playing the role of the peremptory and all-knowing guru. He left a real legacy in the West, one with a powerful impact on the arts, not only in the dances supervised by de Salzmann, his official successor, but also in popular music and the other fine arts. Yet Gurdjieff's influence often remains hidden, because the groups that he inspired do not operate publicly—they remain, in the strictest sense of the word, "esoteric."

If Gurdjieff represents one extreme among this group of independent spirits, that of independent guru figures with an enduring social and cultural influence, at the

other extreme are figures represented by Franklin Merrell-Wolff (1887–1985)—an American who, although he chronicled his own awakening experience at great length, never established any school or sociocultural forms at all—and Bernadette Roberts (b. 1931), a surprisingly little-known American Christian gnostic. Merrell-Wolff and Roberts each underwent profound spiritual awakenings. They represent the austere and individual path toward spiritual awakening or transcendence, a path without flamboyant teachers like Gurdjieff, without institutional support of any kind, a straight and steep path toward sheer self-transcendence.

Merrell-Wolff's primary account of his spiritual awakening is in his book *Pathways Through to Space,* which he describes as "a record of transformation in consciousness written down during the actual process itself."[36] Merrell-Wolff had been reading Paul Deussen's *The System of the Vedanta,* an exposition of Shankaracarya's metaphysics, while prospecting for gold in California. Then, sitting on a porch swing, he had what he called a "Recognition," after which, he wrote, "I have been repeatedly in the Current of Ambrosia. Often I turn to It with the ease of a subtle movement of thought. Sometimes it breaks out spontaneously."[37] He discovered subsequently that his wife and other people perceived this "Current." The essence of the Current was the realization of transcendence of self, and Merrell-Wolff describes it in traditional alchemical terms: "Emptiness is thus the real Philosopher's Stone which transfers all things to new richnesses; It is the Alkahest that transmutes the base metal of inferior consciousness into the Gold of Higher Consciousness."[38]

Merrell-Wolff's work is esoteric in the strict sense of the word, although he is a somewhat accessible author. Merrell-Wolff relied upon the language and symbolism of alchemy, but he also represents the influx of Asian religious thought into American intellectual life in the twentieth century. His writing conjoins the American philosophical current of William James with Buddhist and Hindu perspectives. In sum, Merrell-Wolff is an extension of the Emersonian tradition of the independent sage, one who does not seek to ascend by degrees, but who leaps at once into the throne, as Emerson put it in his first book, *Nature.*

Quite a different character is Bernadette Roberts, a Christian contemplative in the lineage of Dionysius the Areopagite, Meister Eckhart, and the author of *Cloud of Unknowing.* She does not see herself as having these direct antecedents. She describes herself as "outside the traditional frame of reference—or the beaten path of mystical theology so well travelled by Christian contemplatives."[39] And a close examination of her work shows that its central theme is realizing the absence of any substantive self, which is Buddhist, and, indeed, she spent at least a week with Zen Buddhist contemplatives.[40] But unlike Merrell-Wolff, she insists that Buddhism and Vedanta are not central influences for her; she is a Christian contemplative. What she does not acknowledge as readily is that her antecedents in the Christian tradition are figures like Dionysius, Eckhart, and the author of the *Cloud,* or that she belongs to the long-standing tradition of the *via negativa.* She even writes early in her career that "In the Christian tradition, the falling away of self (not the ego) has never been addressed!"[41] Still, late in her book *The Experience of No-Self,* she recognizes her deep affinity with Eckhart as "one who has made the

journey [to no-self] and crossed over," and it is to his tradition that she certainly belongs.[42]

The heart of Roberts's work lies in her journey to and progressive realization of what she calls no-self. She outlines this journey in her book *The Experience of No-Self,* and its culmination in her subsequent book *The Path to No-Self.* No personal self, no personal God—by the strictest definition, Roberts's work belongs to the via negativa. In both the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite and of Roberts there is sheer transcendence. The difference is that Roberts's work is strikingly autobiographical in nature; she takes us along with her on her journey to no-self. And this, too, she shares with Merrell-Wolff, who also offers us the kind of contemplation he undertakes and a detailed account of his experiences along the way. Roberts is not interested in her antecedents and even says that to read the works of prior mystics is misguided, whereas Merrell-Wolff was exceedingly interested in them.

But both Roberts and Merrell-Wolff offer extended, multivolume commentaries on their spiritual experiences, and both of them see themselves as pioneers and their books as chronicles of their inner experiences. It is, I think, no accident that both are American and both lived in California. They represent very American tendencies—above all, the willingness to strike out on one's own, the refusal to accept received ways of thinking, and the insistence on one's own direct experience as the arbiter of what is true. All of these are Emersonian characteristics that remain deeply ingrained in the American character. And both figures represent the very American notion of an individualized esotericism.

CONCLUSION

Until relatively recently, the field of "esotericism" or "esoteric studies" remained more or less ignored in academia. Francis Yates and Antoine Faivre were exceptions among scholars interested in this field. But throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, few scholars admitted that esotericism or "Western esoteric traditions" were worthwhile areas of study, or that such diverse traditions or movements as alchemy, astrology, magic, Rosicrucianism, and theosophy all bear certain defining elements in common. This situation, however, most emphatically has changed, and by the early twenty-first century, there were many new publications and scholarly organizations devoted to the study of Western esotericism.

With the wild success of potboiler novels like *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown, with "New Age" distribution networks and stores across the United States, with the unprecedented availability of esoteric source works in alchemy, astrology, and magic, with the proliferation of magical groups and other esoteric movements too numerous and complexly related to detail here—not to mention the development of Western esotericism as a widely recognized area of academic study—it becomes clear that the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries represent one of those relatively rare interludes in history like the Silver Age in early twentieth century Russia or second century Alexandria, Egypt, when what previously was esoteric becomes more widely accessible. It is perhaps too early to definitively outline every aspect of

American esotericism, but there can be no doubt that here is found one of the most vital areas of contemporary American alternative religious life.

NOTES

1. See Arthur Versluis, *Magic and Mysticism: An Introduction to Western Esotericism* (Lanham: Rowman Littlefield, forthcoming), Introduction. The group of scholars who founded the North American-based Association for the Study of Esotericism (ASE) defined the terms "esoteric" and "esotericism" in the following way:

> The word "esoteric" derives from the Greek *esoterikos,* and is a comparative form of *eso,* meaning "within." Its first known mention in Greek is in Lucian's ascription to Aristotle of having "esoteric" [inner] and "exoteric" [outer] teachings. The word later came to designate the secret doctrines said to have been taught by Pythagoras to a select group of disciples, and, in general, to any teachings designed for or appropriate to an inner circle of disciples or initiates. In this sense, the word was brought into English in 1655 by Stanley in his *History of Philosophy.* Esotericism, as an academic field, refers to the study of alternative, marginalized, or dissident religious movements or philosophies whose proponents in general distinguish their own beliefs, practices, and experiences from public, institutionalized religious traditions. Among areas of investigation included in the field of esotericism are alchemy, astrology, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Kabbalah, magic, mysticism, Neoplatonism, new religious movements connected with these currents, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century occult movements, Rosicrucianism, secret societies, and theosophy.
>
> See the Association for the Study of Esotericism Web site, http://www.aseweb.org.

2. Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 79.

3. See Bobby Demott, *Freemasonry in American Culture and Society* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986), 17.

4. Ibid., 238*ff.*

5. See Paul Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic: Antimasonry and the Great Transition in New England, 1826–1836* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3*ff.*

6. See Arthur Versluis, "The Occult in Nineteenth-Century America," in *The Occult in Nineteenth-Century America,* ed. Cathy Gutierrez (Denver: Davis, 2005). Paul Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic,* 3*ff.*

7. See John Richards, "Folk Magic and Protestant Christianity in Appalachia," *Esoterica* VIII (2006), www.esoteric.msu.edu.

8. Culpeper's herbal was reprinted and available in the nineteenth century both in England and in the United States. See, for an American herbal of the period, Samuel Stearns, *The American Herbal, or Materia Medica* (Walpole, NH: D. Carlisle, 1801); Samuel Henry, *A New and Complete American Medical Family Herbal* (New York: Samuel Henry, 1814).

9. See, in this regard, David Kriebel, "Powwowing: A Consistent American Esoteric Tradition," *Esoterica* IV (2002): 16–28.

10. See Jon Butler, "The Dark Ages of American Occultism," in *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives,* ed. H. Kerr and C. Crow (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

11. John Aubrey, *Miscellanies upon the Following Subjects* (London: E. Castle, 1696); H.C. Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* trans. James Freake (London: Gregory Moule, 1651).

12. See Arthur Versluis, *The Mysteries of Love: Eros and Spirituality* (St. Paul: Grail, 1996), 115*ff.*
13. James Webb, *The Occult Underground* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1974), 125.
14. See Hannah Whitall Smith, *Religious Fanaticism* (London: Faber, 1928).
15. See Thomas Lake Harris, *The Arcana of Christianity,* 2 vols. (New York: Brotherhood of the New Life, 1867); Thomas Lake Harris, *The Breath of God With Man* (New York: Brotherhood, 1867).
16. Alice B. Stockham, *Karezza* (Chicago: Stockham, 1896), 94.
17. Ibid., 95.
18. See William R. Newman, *Gehennical Fire: The Lives of George Starkey, an American Alchemist in the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).
19. Ibid., 233.
20. The esoteric aspects of all these authors' works (and a number of others' are discussed in Versluis's *The Esoteric Origins of the American Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Dickinson's autobiographical record in her poems is comparable to the spiritual autobiographies of women like the seventeenth century Ann Bathurst, part of whose spiritual diary is to be found in Arthur Versluis, ed., *Wisdom's Book: The Sophia Anthology* (St. Paul: Paragon House, 2000).
21. See, for some background on the tangled skein of the Golden Dawn's contemporary and predecessor groups, Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany: SUNY, 1994), especially Chap. 11: "From the Orphic Circle to the Golden Dawn."
22. See J. Godwin, C. Chanel, and P. Deveney, eds., "The Practical Magic of the H.B. of L.," *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor* (York Beach: Weiser, 1995), 68–77, chiefly based on sexuality and including the development of clairvoyance.
23. A major subsequent figure in the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor was none other than Thomas Johnson (1851–1919), the American Platonist, who was, in fact, president of the American Central Council of the H.B. of L. See on this point for documentation, Godwin, Chanel, and Deveney, eds., *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor,* 380.
24. Peter J. Carroll, *Liber Null and Psychonaut* (York Beach: Weiser, 1987), 7.
25. See, for instance, Carroll, *Liber Null and Psychonaut;* also Phil Hine, *Condensed Chaos: An Introduction to Chaos Magic* (Tempe: New Falcon, 1995).
26. Susan Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 157–206.
27. Rimius, *A Candid Narrative* (London: A. Linde, 1753), 70, 9, 19.
28. See Lawrence Sutin, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2005), as well as various Web sites. Good collections of links can be found via the "Scriptorium" on www.modernword.com or via www.philipkdick.com.
29. For contrasting views of the history of Traditionalism, see Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Kenneth Oldmeadow, *Traditionalism: Religion in the Light of the Perennial Philosophy* (Colombo: Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies, 2000).
30. Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1996; Albany: SUNY, 1998), 521.
31. See Harold Bloom, *The American Religion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).
32. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion*, 437.

33. See David Spangler, *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age* (Findhorn, Scotland: Findhorn, 1977), 91.
34. Christoph Bochinger, *"New Age" und moderne Religion: Religionwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 1994).
35. See G. Ivanovich Gurdjieff, *Meetings With Remarkable Men* (New York: Dutton, 1963), 161; G. Ivanovich Gurdjieff, *Herald of Coming Good* (Paris: La Société Anonyme, 1933), 19; Andrew Rawlinson, *The Book of Enlightened Masters* (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), 282–291.
36. Franklin Merrell-Wolff, *Experience and Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY, 1994), x.
37. Ibid., 7.
38. Ibid., 15.
39. See Bernadette Roberts, *The Experience of No-Self: A Contemplative Journey* (Boston: Shambhala, 1982), 114.
40. Ibid., 108.
41. Bernadette Roberts, *The Path to No-Self: Life at the Center* (Albany: SUNY, 1991), xv.
42. Ibid., 199.

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Eckankar

David Christopher Lane

One of the great difficulties in understanding the origins of ancient religions is the lack of information. Imagine going back in time some 2000 years and being able to witness the evolution of Christianity from its founder's ministry and death to the rise of Paul's missionary work. It would, unquestionably, radically alter the histories we have today of what happened then. The study of New Religious Movements (NRMs), especially those founded during our lifetime, offers unique and valuable insights into how religions in the past formed. Indeed, one can argue that putting a microscope to today's emerging religions offers us a refined telescope into the birth pangs of ancient traditions.

Eckankar, as founded by Paul Twitchell (d. 1971) in the mid-1960s is a remarkably rich example of how a new religion evolves in much quicker spurts than might be imagined. Yet, because Eckankar is still in its infancy, we can actually delineate varying stages of its growth with documented detail that is sorely lacking in studies of religions hundreds or thousands of years old. What this suggests, of course, is that an understanding of what occurs in religion today may provide us with a window to better appreciate what might have transpired in faiths eons ago.

THE FOUNDING OF ECKANKAR

The very first issue that confronts both the believer and the outsider is pinpointing the exact date when Eckankar was founded. If we merely rely on Eckankar's official literature, supplied originally by Twitchell and his eventual successors, Darwin Gross (b. 1928) and Harold Klemp (b. 1942), the date is unambiguous: October 22, 1965. Klemp, the current leader of Eckankar, points out that on this date Twitchell received "the Mahantaship," one of the key features in God-Realization that distinguishes Eckankar from other teachings. As Klemp explains in *A Cosmic Sea of Words: The Eckankar Lexicon* (1988): "Mahanta, mah-HAHN-tah The INITIATE of the Fourteenth Circle; the Mahanta, the Living ECK Master; the full force of the Rod of ECK Power and the Mantle of the Mahanta are embodied directly in him; all those

who come to him in the present age have been with him since their advent into the world; the body of the Mahanta is the ECK, which is the ESSENCE of God flowing out from the OCEAN OF LOVE AND MERCY, sustaining all life and tying together all life forms; an expression of the Spirit of God that is always with you; the LIVING WORD; the VI-GURU, the LIGHT GIVER; a state of GOD CONSCIOUSNESS which is beyond the titles given in religions which designate states of CONSCIOUSNESS; the sublime ECK in expression at the highest level. This special incarnation of the SUGMAD makes an appearance but once every five to a thousand or more years, depending upon the part he is to play in a major upliftment of consciousness on every plane."[1]

It may be more than just an interesting coincidence that October 22 also happens to be Twitchell's birthday, since scholars such as the late John Sutphin argue that Eckankar was more or less created by Twitchell and reflects many aspects of his own biography, real and fictional.[2] Along these lines, considerable evidence suggests that Eckankar was formed several years before the fall of 1965. Indeed, "Paul Twitchell, Man of Parts," an interview by Jack Jarvis of the *Seattle Post Intelligencer,* appears to be the first article written about Twitchell and his new group, Eckankar. The interview was conducted on July 9, 1963. Twitchell's later article, "The Square Peg," was written in response to Jarvis's interview. Twitchell claimed that he was besieged with telephone calls and mail asking, "What in heaven's name is a Cliff-Hanger?" In the "Square Peg," Twitchell responded: "The Cliff-Hanger is a one-man cult. I am the original Cliff-Hanger and its sole disciple. This zany character is called the vanguard of a new religion, entitled 'Eckankar,' a Hindu word meaning union with God. This unorthodox philosophy received a wide welcome among the European intellectuals and college circles following the publishing of my works in European Magazines. The Cliff-Hanger seeks solace in meditation and bi-location experiences common in the lives of the Old Christian Savants."[3]

"Eckankar, The Bilocation Philosophy," published by *Orion Magazine* in January 1964, seems to be Twitchell's first public article entirely devoted to his new movement. In it Twitchell writes: "Eckankar, the philosophy of out of body experience, is that understanding which I have gained from bi-location excursions similar to those in the lives of saints of all faiths. Eckankar is the study of bi-location experience." In the same article, Twitchell explains the difference between Eckankar and the various Eastern philosophies: "The orthodox Eastern Philosophies teach that man must become one with God, but I cannot hold to this concept. The individual self of man becomes a coworker of God, not a part of the unity of Him, in the sense of being one with the divine source, anyways, for we are dwelling in the body of God…"[4]

Although Eckankar, according to Twitchell, was not "officially" founded until October 22, 1965, it did, nevertheless, have several years of preparation behind it. The *Psychic Observer* published several of Twitchell's articles prior to 1965. "The Cliff-Hanger," printed in July 1964, expounds Twitchell's definition of the "enigmatic one" and of the Cliff-Hanger's philosophy—Eckankar: "Eckankar, which I

formed out of my own experience, is the term used for the philosophy I have developed for the Cliff Hanger. It is based on Shabd yoga, a way out form of yoga. The word is the Hindu locution for the cosmic sound current which is known in our vernacular as the cosmic river of God."[5]

In a later article, "The God Eaters," dated November 1964, for *Psychic Observer,* Twitchell elaborates on the impetus behind Eckankar: "Eckankar is the philosophy of phardar pax Latehue walae, or what you know as the Cliff Hangers. This grew out of my visits to Agam Des, the land of the God Eaters. The basic axiom of this philosophy is: Power is the only force generated by Occult knowledge."[6]

It was thus by a series of articles on the philosophy of Eckankar and on the eccentric personality of the "Cliff Hanger" that Twitchell laid down the public groundwork for Eckankar. Brad Steiger, in his biography of Twitchell, *In My Soul I Am Free,* asked Twitchell when he really began to formulate how to spread the message of Eckankar. Twitchell replied, "probably when my sister Kay Dee died in 1959." In response to Steiger's question on when he changed from being a "Cliff-Hanger" to a spiritual adept, Twitchell replied: "The switchover from the Cliff Hanger to Eck began taking place after I met my present wife, Gail. She insisted that I do something with my knowledge and abilities."[7]

As for the reasons why Twitchell founded Eckankar, the conventional view is that he felt prompted by his previous spiritual masters to reintroduce the ancient path that was introduced to him by such luminaries as Sudar Singh and Rebazar Tarzs, both of whom he claims to have met while traveling in the East. This lineage, known as the Vairagi masters in Eckankar, allegedly traces its genealogy back through some 970 Living Eck Masters to Rama, an avatar of Vishnu in Hinduism. In other versions, the teachings go even further back to Gakko, a spiritual essence that traveled from the city of Retz on the planet Venus to Earth six million years ago. A closer review of Twitchell's actual biography reveals some startling discrepancies, not the least of which is that Twitchell apparently never visited India or Tibet when he claimed. In addition, Sudar Singh and Rebazar Tarzs are not genuine historical personages but literary inventions developed by Twitchell to conceal his past associations. What we do know from historical records and documentation is that Twitchell's spiritual biography is quite different than the mythologized versions he later tried to pass off as factual. This is especially interesting for scholars of religion, ancient or new, because it shows that hagiography can happen even *during* the lifetime of a religious leader and does not necessarily have to wait for his or her death. And such hagiography does not have to be due to the overzealousness of a guru's followers, but can instead originate fully blown from the leader himself.[8]

Twitchell apparently had a long history of embellishing his resume. Even the current head of Eckankar, Klemp, called Twitchell a "yarn" teller who was not shy in padding a story to promote his career or his ideas.[9] How much of a yarn Twitchell weaved in developing Eckankar is the subject of wide debate among current and former followers. The debate begins, appropriately enough, with Twitchell's birth date. Five contrasting accounts exist of the birth date of John Paul, the second and last son

of Jacob and Dorothy (Effie) Troutman Twitchell: 1908, 1909, 1910, 1912, and 1922. The date now most widely accepted is 1909, primarily because it is listed in the Thirteenth Census of the United States, done in 1910, where Paul is cited as being six months old at the time. This date is also supported by the published volume, *Genealogy of the Twitchell Family: Record of the Descendants of the Puritan—Benjamin* which was privately published by Herbert K. Twitchell in 1929. The two most questionable dates are 1912 and 1922, which appear, respectively, on Twitchell's first and second marriage certificates. The 1922 date is also listed by Twitchell's widow, Gail Atkinson, on his death certificate in 1971. Why Twitchell apparently shaved some 13 years off his age is open to speculation, but it should be noted that Paul met his second wife in Seattle, Washington, in the early 1960s when she was barely twenty years old and when he was (according to the 1909 birth date) in his early fifties. Twitchell's birth place is less controversial, even if his official biographer claimed it was China Point, it is generally agreed even in Eckankar circles that Paul was born in Paducah, Kentucky.[10]

While Twitchell's biography gives us a clue into some of the formative influences on his thinking and his eventual movement, it is also important to note that Twitchell himself acknowledges Gail as instrumental in encouraging him to do something with his talents, and that the switchover from his more bohemian days to Eckankar were attributable, at least in part, to her. It is also worth noting that in this interim period between 1962 and 1965, Paul was financially strapped and temporarily borrowed several hundred dollars from Gail. This prompts a larger, perhaps unanswerable question, of whether or not economic conditions can be a motivating factor for some spiritually inclined individuals to test out their wares in the religious marketplace. And if so, to what extent do these financial considerations impact on the varying products that eventually get produced? This is clearly a debatable issue and is often viewed by devotees as a cheap form of reductionism. However, clearly Twitchell's own pen indicates that he created Eckankar to make a profit. As he himself said in response to a question placed by Steiger, "I do not run Eckankar as a non-profit organization. Most people in this line of work do indeed use the religious non-profit organization provision as an escape clause on their taxes. Eckankar is licensed in the state of Nevada as a business organization."[11]

Twitchell's first wife, Camille Ballowe, recalled that he was always a religious seeker and that he searched out gurus, mystics, and spiritual paths throughout their time together. Of the spiritual groups and masters Twitchell encountered, four had a definable impact on him and his teachings: the Self-Realization Fellowship (particularly the Self Revelation Church of Absolute Monism), Theosophy, Scientology, and Sant Mat (specifically through the Ruhani Satsang branch). These four groups, along with Twitchell's wide reading and varied involvements, contributed to his unique religious vision.[12]

How much these prior associations contributed to Eckankar is disputed, since many of Twitchell's ideas seem to be directly lifted, sometimes verbatim, from several key books published by Radha Soami Satsang Beas. We know that Twitchell was

personally associated with three spiritual teachers in the 1950s, Swami Premananda (1903–1995) of the Self-Revelation Church of Absolute Monism, Kirpal Singh (1894–1974) of Ruhani Satsang, and L. Ron Hubbard (1911–1986) of Scientology.

Twitchell and his first wife joined the Self-Revelation Church of Absolute Monism around 1950. Swami Premananda, the founder of the Church, was closely associated with Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952) of the Self-Realization Fellowship (known as Yogoda Satsanga Society in India). It was from Swami Premananda that Twitchell learned Kriya yoga, a psychophysical discipline for mastering the pranic life current. In 1950, Twitchell and Camille moved to the Church compounds in California. During much of this time he edited the Church publication, *The Mystic Cross.* In 1955, Swami Premananda asked Twitchell to leave the Church for personal misconduct. In that same year, Twitchell and Camille were separated. Five years later, Camille sued him for divorce on grounds of desertion.[13]

After leaving the Self-Revelation Church in Washington, D.C., Twitchell met Kirpal Singh, the founder of Ruhani Satsang. It was Kirpal Singh who, arguably, had the greatest impact on Twitchell and the theology behind Eckankar. Kirpal Singh was a disciple of the Radha Soami Satsang Beas master, Sawan Singh (1858–1948). He was initiated in 1924 and served his guru for over 24 years. In 1948, after Sawan Singh died and bequeathed his spiritual ministry to Jagat Singh, Kirpal Singh claimed that he was the true heir to his guru's mission. Subsequently, he founded a new movement named Ruhani Satsang, which was a center "for imparting purely spiritual teachings and training for mankind, irrespective of class barriers, such as caste, colour, creed, sect, age, education or advocation."[14]

In 1955 Kirpal Singh made his first tour of the United States. In that same year, Twitchell was initiated and became a follower of Kirpal Singh and his Satsang. Around this time (1956–1957) Twitchell told Betty Shifflet and Wave Sanderson (both initiates of Kirpal Singh) that Kirpal Singh appeared in his Nuri Sarup (light body) over the weekend and dictated some of a book to him. In this regard, Kirpal Singh comments: "Paul Twitchell used to write to me every week, 'Master came and sat down on the chair and dictated his teachings to me. He published them in the Tiger's Fang.'" Writes Twitchell: "I have talked with and taken down the words of Kirpal Singh who appeared in my apartment in Nauri-raup [sic], his light body, although his physical body was six-thousand miles away in India."[15]

These two quotations are significant because years later, after Eckankar was founded, Twitchell, in his book, *The Tiger's Fang,* changed Kirpal Singh's name, depending on the context, to Sudar Singh and Rebazar Tarzs. Apparently, there was a split of some sort between Twitchell and Kirpal Singh in the mid-1960s. Why this was so has been the basis of an ongoing controversy among critics of Eckankar. Reno H. Sirrine in a personal letter to the author, dated February 22, 1977, says: "Master Kirpal Singh told me that he did not return the manuscript, The Tiger's Fang, because many of the inner experiences he described were not complete or accurate."[16]

About this episode, Kirpal Singh comments: "I tell you one American was initiated by me—I've got the initiation report in his own handwriting. Then he wrote

to me, 'The Master's Form appears to me inside.' That form used to speak to him, dictate to him, inside. And all that dictation was put into a book and the manuscript was sent to me in 1963. Later he sent me another letter, "Return my book, The Tiger's Fang." I returned his book. That was dictated by me on the inner planes, and that's all right. He changed that book before printing; where he mentioned my name, he changed it to another guru's name.…"[17]

Eckankar, however, had a series of different reactions to Kirpal Singh's allegations. On one extreme, they denied that Twitchell was ever associated with Kirpal Singh. Indeed, Twitchell himself intimated as much in a personal letter to Kirpal Singh where he threatened his "former" master with a lawsuit for defamation. Twitchell writes, "I have never recognized you as a master, or that you give initiations, and that your work is not in the best interest of spirituality. Your teachings are orthodox, and as a preacher you are not capable of assisting anyone spiritually."[18]

Later after Twitchell's death, Gross, his successor and eventual husband of Twitchell's widow, Gail, argued vehemently that Twitchell was never initiated by Kirpal Singh. Writes Gross, "I know for my own self, the corporation used to have a letter that Paul wrote to Kirpal Singh: (a) telling him to leave him alone; (b) that he never was initiated by Kirpal Singh; and (c) he was never a student."[19]

Darwin's former secretary when he was head of Eckankar elaborates, "Sri Darwin Gross, the Living Eck Master of Eckankar has stated that he knows for a fact that Paul Twitchell only had two Eck Masters during his earthly stay here; the Tibetan Rebazar Tarzs and Sudar Singh, and no one else. They were the only Masters to initiate Paul Twitchell Kirpal Singh and the Radha Swoami [sic] tried to 'claim' Paul Twitchell and use him for their own purposes, as have other groups from the East and West. Paul mentioned this several times and at one point wrote a letter to Kirpal Singh and his associates stating that he, Paul, would take Singh and his associates to court if necessary. Due to the threats and harassment and material Kirpal Singh and Mr. Khanna tried to use against Paul Twitchell by faking Paul's signature on many papers. Paul wrote that letter that his widow, Gail Twitchell, gave me permission to read.…"[20]

This is an important controversy because many of Eckankar's ideas stem from Kirpal Singh's teachings, directly and indirectly. Why Twitchell would go to such lengths to deny what he himself already admitted in print prior to Eckankar's founding is not so much troublesome as revealing. More precisely, why would Twitchell change the names of genuine historical characters in his books and replace them with mythological figures that have apparently no historical basis?

One argument has it that the key to understanding Eckankar's early evolution hinges on understanding why Twitchell chose to change significant features of his autobiography for public consumption. In other words, what Twitchell chose to edit out of his life story is just as illuminating as what he left in. Twitchell's editing of names reached a pinnacle when he decided to publish in book form *The Flute of God.* The work was originally printed in installments in *Orion Magazine,* from 1965 to 1967. The first six chapters of the text profusely mention the names

of Kirpal Singh, Sawan Singh, and Jesus Christ. When Twitchell had the book republished, however, he redacted every single mention of Kirpal Singh, Sawan Singh, and Swami Premananda. In some cases, he even edited out the name Jesus and replaced it with "Gopal Das" or other Eckankar Masters. And, although he quotes from the Bible, he even changes the name of his source (to that of the *Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad*) while retaining the same biblical quotation. Below is a comparison study of the two versions. Remember that the *Orion* version is the earliest and that Twitchell's editing is primarily "name replacements."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in *Orion Magazine.* Chapter I—"In The Beginning" (March–April, 1966): Par. 3: "I remember very well when Swami Premananda, of India, who has a Yoga church in Washington, D.C., said, 'When someone asked Bertrand Russell what his philosophy of Life was, he wrote several volumes of books on the subject.'"

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter I—"In The Beginning": Par. 3: "I remember very well when Sudar Singh, the great Eck Master said, 'When someone asked Bertrand Russell what his philosophy of Life was, he wrote several volumes of books on the subject.'"

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in Orion Magazine. Chapter I—"In The Beginning" (March–April, 1966): Par. 15: "I have studied under many teacher [sic], and may yet have to study under more. Like Meher Baba, the Indian saint, who was said to have 19 teachers to help him gain his place in the universe, I have so far had seven, some outstanding ones, including Sri Kirpal Singh, of Delhi, India."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter I—"In The Beginning": Par. 16: "I have studied under many ECK Masters only they have led me to the highest truth. Like Fubbi Quantz, the ECK saint, who was said to have nineteen teachers to help him gain his place in the universe, I have also had several, each outstanding, one being Sudar Singh of India."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in *Orion Magazine.* Chapter I - "In The Beginning" (March-April, 1966): Par. 16: "Each has had a place in my growth toward the spiritual goal; each are equally great in their work for mankind. However, I have felt a closer kinship and friendliness to Kirpal Singh, who has shown me a lot of the other work during my first year or so under him. Since we have parted he keeps an impartial view toward me and my research. Therefore, if I quote him in these pages it is because I feel that he is sympathetic and interested in my work."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter I—"In The Beginning": Par. 17: "Each has had a place in my growth toward the spiritual goal; each is equally great in his work for mankind. However, I have felt a closer kinship and friendliness to Sudar Singh, who showed me a lot of the other work, during my first year or so under him. Since we have parted he has retained an impartial view toward me and my research. If I quote him in these pages it is because I feel that he is sympathetic and interested in my work and led me to Rebazar Tarzs."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in *Orion Magazine.* Chapter I—"In The Beginning" (March–April, 1966): Par. 32: "Life fascinates me. Certain details of life to be worked out are strange. Lying on the bed late at night I watch the pattern of shadows weaving about the room. In the presence of familiar night visitors like Kirpal Singh, or Rebazar Tarzs, a Tibetan Lama, who come often in their Nuri-Sarup, or others, some strangers, some friends, I wonder about life."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter I—"In The Beginning": Par. 34: "Life fascinates me. Certain details of life that have to be worked out are strange. Lying on the bed late at night I watch the pattern of shadows weaving about the room. In the presence of familiar night visitors like Sudar Singh, or Rebazar Tarzs, the ECK Masters who come often in their Nuri-Sarup bodies, or others, some strangers, some friends, I wonder about life."

What all these comparative redactions show is that Twitchell replaced historical figures (even ones that he had direct associations with in his past) with a bevy of Eck Masters, a large number of whom have names and lives that cannot be historically documented. To skeptics, this demonstrates that much of Eckankar's history is made up by its founder in order to conceal his genuine spiritual roots. A number of competing theories advocate why Twitchell wanted to do this, ranging from the purely economic (Kirpal Singh's group did not charge money, whereas Twitchell's group does) to the benevolent (Twitchell respected that his former teachers may not have wanted to be associated with his newly minted spiritual path).

Doug Marman, a respected apologist for early Eckankar history, contends that Twitchell's redaction stems from a pivotal incident when Kirpal Singh did not approve Twitchell's written work, particularly his book *The Tiger's Fang.* Writes Marman: "In other words, this incident must have made it abundantly clear to Paul that the teachings of ECKANKAR should not be based on an association with other teachings from Paul's past. Using the names of these teachers, if they were not sympathetic to his teachings, was not fair, and more importantly, referring to them was distracting from the vision of the ECK teachings that Paul was bringing out. While Paul started out talking openly about his previous teachers, he suddenly realized that although they had contributed to his education—they were not to be a part of the real lineage of the spiritual teachings that Paul was trying to teach."[21]

Of course, Kirpal Singh's followers have a different interpretation. Writes Stuart Judd, "One of His oldest Western disciples [Paul Twitchell] had published a series of books, without getting Master's permission, in which he recounted his inner experiences in great detail. According to the books, he had in fact reached Sach Khand. These books, with accompanying letters, arrived in India one by one while I was there, and Master spoke about them at great length to a few of us. In fact, He spoke with us for five successive days for an hour at a time (sometimes I was alone with Him, but usually one or two others were also present) and made it plain that He was thoroughly displeased with the books and also the correspondence. It was evident that the disciple was maintaining that he had permission from the Master

within to publish the books, and that (according to him) the Master within had withstood the repetition of the five charged names. But Master made it very clear that there was some deep and serious error here: not only had He not given permission for the books to be published, but the disciple was most decidedly not in Sach Khand. This was puzzling to us. We asked Him how it could be. He said, "I quite fully admit that the Master did take him in His lap and showed him some of the inner treasures, that's right; but he misused what he had been given, and it turned sour." Then one of us asked why the Master would show some of the inner treasures to someone who would misuse them. Master leaned forward, His eyes blazing: "Look here! Who crucified Christ? Tell me that! Who crucified Him? Was it not Judas? One of His own!" And then He spoke about Paul Twitchell … we saw that Masters give to disciples out of their love for them; that the disciples may use or misuse what they are given."[22]

I think this is a very significant chapter in the ongoing evolution in Eckankar because it reveals in a nutshell how two completely divergent interpretations can arise from one incident, and how, in turn, each side can reinterpret the opposing camp along theological lines. One thing is certain in this episode between Kirpal Singh and Twitchell (besides the acrimony): Twitchell genealogically dissociated himself and his group from key anchors in his past and in so doing assured that Eckankar would be autonomous. If he had not severed his ties to his former teachers, Twitchell might be viewed as merely an offshoot (of which there are many) from more orthodox Sant Mat lineages. As it stands, most Eckists do not know about Twitchell's former spiritual teachers, and Eckankar literature purged most of their names from the official records as well.

Twitchell joined Scientology around 1958. Apparently he was a staff member of the group and attained the much sought after status of "Clear." Twitchell was highly influenced by Hubbard and Scientology. Recently, a number of important documents surfaced that shed more light on Twitchell's involvement with the group. A former Scientologist and friend of Twitchell in the 1950s recalls: "Paul Twitchell was a writer hired by L. Ron Hubbard to be in charge of selecting articles on Scientology submitted by parishioners to be published in either Scientology publications or elsewhere as a testimony to the worth of Scientology. When Paul Twitchell found out about the inner workings of Scientology, I remember him saying, "Boy, there is a lot of money in religion."[23]

Twitchell regularly wrote for a Scientologist magazine entitled *Ability.* For instance, Twitchell wrote two articles, "The Psychology of Slavery" and "Outsight." In both he speaks very highly of Hubbard. Below are two pertinent excerpts that exemplify Twitchell's keen regard for the founder of Scientology. The first puts Hubbard in the vanguard of contemporary teachers: "To build an attitude of defeat into the minds of the enemy is the constant goal of the dictators. Fortunately for the human race there are capable individuals who, like L. Ron Hubbard, founder of Scientology, leader of one of the many groups, are working to help man free himself from such ruthless control. Freedom from artificial conditioning of ingrained

reflexes against enslavement of the reactive mind makes such individuals dangerous to the totalitarians. Scientology can undo, fortunately, the poison of psychology the mass-mind has been fed."[24]

The second passage praises Hubbard's teaching about self-reliance: "Some religious teachings, especially the Hindu practices, affirm that one needs a Guru, or Teacher, for guidance even though the pupil can exteriorize at will. The difference between Scientology and these religious practices is that Ron Hubbard shows us what to do before and after exteriorization. Then following exteriorization we can have use of this ability of OUTSIGHT at its maximum level. In other words, Ron teaches us to stand upon our own feet as thetans and not depend upon a Guru to be at our side at all moments instructing us what to do, as the Hindus teach. However, a thetan must be granted beingness in order to gain experience in the handling of his capabilities, and without interference from another. That is why Ron never dictates or interferes with our beingness or personal lives, for he realizes that as long as a Scientologist depends upon another to help him he is still effect, not working from cause point, and his self-determinism is low."[25]

What is most controversial about Twitchell's involvement with Scientology, though, is the allegation that he appropriated verbatim excerpts from Hubbard's works. A classic example of this comes from *Letters to Gail* where Twitchell copies Hubbard's "The Axioms of Scientology" without mentioning his source. The implication is that Twitchell invented the axioms. The following is a comparison study of Paul Twitchell's plagiarism:

THE AXIOMS OF SCIENTOLOGY
By L. Ron Hubbard

Axiom 1. LIFE IS BASICALLY STATIC. Definition: a Life Static has no mass, no motion, no wave-length, no location in space or in time. It has the ability to postulate and to perceive.
Axiom 2. THE STATIC IS CAPABLE OF CONSIDERATIONS, POSTULATES, AND OPINIONS.
Axiom 3. SPACE, ENERGY, OBJECTS, FORM, AND TIME ARE THE RESULT OF CONSIDERATIONS MADE AND/OR AGREED UPON OR NOT BY THE STATIC, AND ARE PERCEIVED SOLELY BECAUSE THE STATIC CONSIDERS THAT IT CAN PERCEIVE THEM.
Axiom 4. SPACE IS A VIEWPOINT OF DIMENSION.
Axiom 5. ENERGY CONSISTS OF POSTULATED PARTICLES AND SOLIDS.
Axiom 6. OBJECTS CONSIST OF GROUPED PARTICLES AND SOLIDS.
Axiom 7. TIME IS BASICALLY A POSTULATE THAT SPACE AND PARTICLES WILL PERSIST.
Axiom 8. THE APPARENCY OF TIME IS THE CHANGE OF POSITION OF PARTICLES IN SPACE.
Axiom 9. CHANGE IS THE PRIMARY MANIFESTATION OF TIME.

Axiom 10. THE HIGHEST PURPOSE IN THIS UNIVERSE IS THE CREATION OF AN EFFECT.

LETTERS TO GAIL [FEBRUARY 22, 1963]
By Paul Twitchell

1] Life is basically a divine spark. Therefore, this life spark has no mass, no motion, no wavelength, no location in space or in time. It has the ability to postulate and to perceive.

2] …It is capable of postulates and powers.

3] …Space, energy, objects, form, and time are the results of the powers or agreements by the Soul, they are perceived solely because Soul realizes that It can perceive them.

4] SPACE is a viewpoint of dimension.

5] ENERGY consists of postulated particles in spaces.

6] OBJECTS consist of grouped particles.

7] TIME is basically a postulate that space and particles will persist.

8] The APPARENCY OF TIME is the change of position of particles in space.

9] CHANGE is the primary manifestation of time.

10] …That the highest purpose in the universe is the creation of an effect.

The issue of plagiarism haunted Twitchell from the latter part of the 1960s. In many of his books he apparently borrowed passages without proper attribution from several occult and mystical works. Most striking, however, is Twitchell's use of hundreds, if not thousands, of passages from the writings of Julian Johnson, a former surgeon and an initiate of Kirpal Singh's guru, Sawan Singh. Johnson, a native Kentuckian, was initiated into Radha Soami on March 1, 1931. The next year Johnson left his medical practice in California and traveled to Beas, India, in order to serve his guru, Sawan Singh. From 1933 to 1939, Johnson devoted much of his time to writing about his master and his experiences in the Radha Soami path.[26]

He first helped Sewa Singh in translating the Hindi book *Sar Bachan* (authored by the founder of Radha Soami, Shiv Dayal Singh, and regarded as the central text to the group's theology) into English. Later, he authored four of his own books on Radha Soami. Johnson's first work, *With a Great Master in India,* was a compilation of letters he wrote to Americans about his first 18 months in India studying under the master. His next two books, *Call of the East* and *The Unquenchable Flame* were semi-autobiographical accounts of himself and his future wife, Elizabeth Bruce. Yet, it was not until 1939 that Johnson's most famous work, *The Path of the Masters,* was published. The English book was the first of its kind; it described in detail the history and practice of Santon-Ki-Shiska (Sant Mat).

By 1955, the year Twitchell received initiation from Kirpal Singh, several books had been published in English about Sant Mat and Radha Soami. However, it was Johnson's climatic text, *The Path of the Masters,* which remained the most popular explication. This book served as a beacon for attracting seekers to either Charan Singh of Radha Soami Satsang Beas (who was Jagat Singh's successor) or Kirpal Singh of Ruhani Satsang. Twitchell, arguably, first came into contact with the work in the mid-1950s, if not earlier. Although Twitchell does not cite *The Path of the Masters* by name or refer to Johnson in his writings, he has, nevertheless, cited another key Radha Soami text—*Sar Bachan*—which Johnson edited.[27]

The overall influence that Johnson's books—*The Path of the Masters* and *With a Great Master in India,* in particular—had on Twitchell's own spiritual writings is truly remarkable. Twitchell not only borrowed and learned from the book, he also copied it … word for word.

The striking similarities between Twitchell's work and Johnson's earlier writings are astounding. Three of Twitchell's books, *The Tiger's Fang, Letters to Gail* (both volumes), and *Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad,* appear to contain almost verbatim excerpts from Johnson's 1939 work, *The Path of the Masters.*

Yet, it is Twitchell's 1966 book, *The Far Country,* that raises the serious question of his originality. This work contains well over 400 paragraphs from Johnson's two books, *The Path of the Masters* and *With a Great Master in India,* without so much as a single reference to them. Realizing that Twitchell was intimately acquainted with Johnson's books (even Eckankar's former President, Dr. Louis Bluth, admits that he loaned his Radha Soami books to Paul Twitchell), the real question that arises is, "Did Twitchell knowingly plagiarize from them?" Although there are two contrasting viewpoints on this question, the inevitable answer is, "Yes, he did—unmistakably so." However, Eckankar strongly disclaims that their founder plagiarized from anybody. In a personal letter to the author, dated July 5, 1977, Eckankar's attorney, Alan H. Nichols, elaborates: "With a wide background of study you will find many similarities both approximate and exact in many religious statements, history, and mythology. Whether one is a student of Zoroaster, Mohammed, Buddha, Jesus, or Tao, many of the same things are said and (when translated) in the same way.… How did you know Johnson didn't obtain his information from Twitchell or Rebazar Tarzs [sic] or some other common source? Don't be surprised that many people find the same truths and even in the same words, commandments, etc., whether they are concepts, stories of events, or levels of God Worlds or consciousness."[28]

Johnson had a unique style of writing, as can easily be noticed by reading his books. Indeed, this very point has caused some criticism of him. Thus, when one notices the coincidences between Johnson's and Twitchell's writings, it is not a question of "truth" being expressed but of style being copied.

To understand Twitchell's literary indebtedness to Johnson better, consider the following facts: (1) Johnson wrote all of his books on Radha Soami in India during the 1930s. Twitchell authored all of his works on Eckankar in the United States during the 1960s and the early 1970s. (2) Twitchell stated in at least two published pieces

that he considers *Sar Bachan* to be his "Bible." The book was edited by Johnson in the early 1930s.

Perhaps Twitchell's most revealing plagiarism, and one that cuts at the very root of Eckankar's claim for originality, occurs in *The Far Country.* Not only does Twitchell appropriate Johnson's words in *The Path of the Masters,* but he also plagiarizes Johnson's quotation of Swami Vivekananda—forgetting in the process that two different people are speaking. The following is a comparison of Johnson's 1939 writing and Twitchell's 1966 writing.

Julian P. Johnson, *The Path of the Masters* [1939] [Johnson is quoting Swami Vivekananda in the following passage; Johnson, by the way, properly references his quotation.]

> Something behind this world of sense, world of eternal eating and drinking and talking nonsense, this world of false shadows and selfishness, there is that beyond all books, beyond all creeds, beyond the vanities of this world—and that is the realization of God within oneself. A man may believe in all the churches in the world; he may carry on his head all the sacred books ever written; he may baptize himself in all the rivers of earth—still if he has no perception of God, I would class him with the rankest atheist. And a man may have never entered a Church or a mosque, nor performed any ceremony; but if he realizes God within himself, and is thereby lifted above the vanities of the world, that man is a holy man, a saint, call him what you will.

[The following passage is directly from Julian Johnson.]

> First of all, it is not a feeling. Secondly it is not a metaphysical speculation nor a logical syllogism. It is neither a conclusion based upon reasoning nor upon the evidence of books or persons. The basic idea is that God must become real to the individual, not a mental concept, but a living reality. And that can never be so until the individual sees Him. Personal sight and hearing are necessary before anything or anybody becomes real to us.…
>
> Paul Twitchell
> *The Far Country* [1966]

> Sugmad is beyond this world of senses, this world of eternal eating and drinking and talking nonsense, this world of false shadows and selfishness. It is beyond all books, beyond all creeds, beyond the vanities of the world. It is the realization of the Sugmad within oneself.… A man may believe in all the churches in the world; he may carry in his head all the sacred books ever written; he may baptize himself in all the rivers of the earth—still if he has not perception of the Sugmad, I would class him with the rankest atheist. And a man may never enter a church or a mosque, nor perform any ceremony; but if he realizes the Sugmad within himself, and is thereby lifted above the vanities of the world, that man is a holy man, saint; call him what you will.
>
> First of all, it is not a feeling. Secondly, it is not a metaphysical speculation, nor a logical syllogism. It is not a conclusion based upon reasoning, nor upon the evidence of books or persons. The basic idea is that the Sugmad must become real to the…

The preceding comparisons reveal two things: (1) Twitchell incorporated Johnson's quotations (in this case, Swami Vivekananda's elucidation) without giving any reference note to him or the Swami. Instead, Twitchell claims that the Eck Master, Rebazar Tarzs, was speaking directly to him. And (2) in *The Far Country,* Twitchell not only exposes his outright plagiarism of *The Path of the Masters* but reveals that almost all of Rebazar Tarzs' dialogue is taken surreptitiously from Johnson's writings. Naturally, the authenticity of Twitchell's account of Rebazar Tarzs raises some serious questions about the historicity of the Tibetan master.

However, though there are many instances of Twitchell's almost verbatim copying of previously published words that were not his own, he placed them in differing contexts and occasionally altered their meanings. Thus, it would be inaccurate to merely say that Eckankar is a plagiarized version of Radha Soami or Scientology. No, Eckankar is a unique reworking of these influences into a mosaic that distinguishes itself from other like-minded groups.

Thus, Eckankar is nothing more than the sum total of Twitchell's experiences, or, if not entirely his own "personal" observations, at least his own unique choice of differing spiritual and occult teachings. As Twitchell himself wrote, "Eckankar, which I formed out of my own experience is the term used for the philosophy I have developed for the Cliff Hanger."[29]

Some of what Twitchell teaches is garnered from Ruhani Satsang. The differences, however, between the two movements are not only distinctive but fundamental. The variances, which in part can be traced to Twitchell's inclusion of alternative spiritual concepts (from "Tone Scales" to "Golden Temples"), reveal some crucial points of departure for Eckankar from the ethical and practical foundation of Ruhani Satsang.

One significant change that Twitchell brought about in Eckankar was his restructuring of the traditional Sant Mat "eight plane" cosmology. Twitchell did this, though, only after having used the original Sant Mat cosmology in several of his earlier books—most notably in *The Tiger's Fang* and *The Far Country.* The intriguing aspect is that Twitchell's revised and copyrighted "twelve plane" cosmology (which is given in the *Spiritual Notebook* and was standard in Eckankar by 1971) contradicts his previous "eight plane" one. The following is a comparison chart of the two cosmologies.

Original (based upon the Sant tradition; depicted in Twitchell's first books on Eckankar):

1. Sahasra dal Kanwal; sounds—bell and conch
2. Brahm Lok (Trikuti); sounds—big drum (thunder)
3. Daswan Dwar; sounds—violins (sarangi)
4. Bhanwar Gupha; sounds—flute
5. Sach Khand; sounds—vina (bagpipe)
6. Alakh Lok*

7. Agam Lok*
8. Anami Lok (Sugmad)*

Revised (as given in the *Spiritual Notebook* and standard by 1970):

1. Elam (Physical); sounds—thunder
2. Sat Kanwal Anda (Astral); sounds—roar of the sea
3. Maha-Kal/Par Brahm (Causal); sounds—tinkle of bells
4. Brahmanda Brahm (Mental); sounds—running water
5. Sat Nam (Soul); sounds—single note of flute
6. Alakh Lok; sounds—heavy wind
7. Alaya Lok; sounds—deep humming
8. Hukikat Lok; sounds—thousand violins
9. Agam Lok; sounds—music of woodwinds
10. Anami Lok; sounds—whirlpool
11. Sugmad Lok; sounds—music of universe
12. Sugmad/Living Reality; sounds—music of God

The most noticeable difference in the two cosmologies is in the location of the various sounds (known in Radha Soami as shabd dhuns). Note that in the first "eight plane" cosmology the sound of the flute is heard on the "fourth" plane (Bhanwar gupha), one region below Sach Khand (the eternal "soul" realm), whereas in the "twelve plane" chart, the sound of the flute is now heard on the "fifth" plane (Sat Nam; the "soul" region). This contradiction, while perhaps not noteworthy in any other spiritual tradition, is crucial in Shabd yoga, where the whole essence of the path is based upon the internal hearing of the "sound current" or "audible life stream." The knowledge of which sounds to listen to and which to discard is an extremely important part of the teachings. Other variances in the cosmologies include: (1) The sound of the thunder that was heard in Trikuti (causal realm) in the original Sant Mat cosmology is now according to the "twelve plane" chart heard in the physical region (Elam). (2) The tinkle of bells that was originally heard up to and through the first plane (Sahasra dal Kanwal) is now heard in the third region (MahaKal-Par-Brahm). (3) Par Brahm that used to be in Daswan Dwar (i.e., beyond mind and matter) is now in the causal realm—a region that was previously in Trikuti (the home of the mind).

The preceding comparisons are important in understanding that, although Twitchell employed basic Sant Mat concepts in the beginning of his group, the teachings themselves have undergone an evolution in Eckankar. This not only signals Twitchell breaking off from Ruhani Satsang doctrines but also indicates an evolving (and not a stationary) superstructure within Eckankar. More precisely, what

Twitchell may have taught in Eckankar in 1965 and 1966 may not have been disseminated near the end of his life.

DARWIN GROSS AND HAROLD KLEMP

When Gross appointed Klemp as the "Living Eck Master" in 1981 he had no idea that two years later his successor would excommunicate him from Eckankar, ban his books from sale, and instigate a lawsuit against him for business impropriety and copyright infringement. But that is exactly what happened. In a "Personal and Confidential" letter dated January 4, 1984, Klemp informed Gross of his removal from Eckankar:

> Dear Darwin:
>
> The Order of the Vairagi ECK Masters no longer recognizes you as an ECK Master. As the agent of the ECK, I have removed all of your initiations in ECK as well as terminated your membership in ECKANKAR. You are not capable or authorized to act or speak for or about the Vairagi ECK Masters, ECKANKAR or the ECK teachings, nor are you to hold yourself out as an ECK Master or ECK member. Do not directly or indirectly associate yourself or your activities with the sacred teachings of ECK or ECKANKAR in any way.

Naturally, Gross did not accept Klemp's excommunication, since it was Gross himself who appointed Klemp as the Living Eck Master. In a letter, dated February 1984, and widely distributed amongst interested Eck chelas, Gross presented his own version of the breach between Klemp and himself.

> Dear One:
>
> Many individuals who are spiritually awake are concerned about the misguided information coming out of Menlo Park. The Vairagi Masters do recognize me as a Vairagi Master. My initiations cannot be removed by Harold or anyone else. Harold Klemp does not have that authority. He was given a spiritual responsibility, which he has lost. He no longer holds the Rod of Eck Power.
>
> It is my duty and responsibility as a Vairagi Master to inform you that there have been many severe charges and false accusations made against me by ECKANKAR, the Corporation, Harold Klemp and others, at the World Wide of Eck, 1983, and on the tape of the 1983 World Higher Initiates Meeting. I was removed from the World Wide program, for it would have upset their plans. The schism that has come out of ECKANKAR was started by the ECKANKAR board, for I did not start this rift in ECKANKAR.

According to court documents filed in the United States District Court for the District of Oregon by Eckankar's attorneys Esler & Schneider, Gross breached his contract as President of Eckankar (and his lifetime employment agreement which gave him $65,000 a year for the rest of his life) by the following "material" respects:

A. Diverting corporate opportunities to his own private benefit and profit;
B. Using corporate assets for his own private benefit without any legitimate or reasonable benefit to defendant [Eckankar] or its corporate purposes;

C. Regularly and habitually failing to perform his duties as an officer of defendant [Eckankar];

D. Failing to live up to the high moral image expected of an officer and Trustee of a religious corporation;

E. Failing to support and assist the Living ECK Master [Harold Klemp] in spreading the message of ECKANKAR;

F. Failing to show reasonable respect and courtesy to the Living ECK Master [Harold Klemp];

G. Converting and attempting to convert property of ECKANKAR to plaintiff's [Darwin Gross's] advantage;

H. Transferring and attempting to transfer property of and rights outside the direct control of defendant in contravention of the direct instructions of the Living ECK Master and defendant's Board of Trustees;

I. Teaching and spreading doctrines which, in the opinion of the Living ECK Master, are not consistent with the teachings of ECKANKAR;

J. Failing to retire when requested to do so; and

K. Failing to retire from public activities upon his termination as defendant's president and when requested to do so by the Living ECK Master.[30]

Gross's followers do not see any impropriety in their teacher's actions. Rather, they see him in a dual function where his spiritual power is not stripped or questioned by his human wants and desires. Most of Gross's work, these chelas contend, is done on the inner planes in his "other," higher spiritual bodies. What Gross presents on the outer is not what he is on the inner.

One of the major disputes between Eckankar and Gross was over the latter's lifetime contract. Before Gross resigned as "Living Eck Master" in 1981 he signed an agreement with Eckankar, which would pay him $65,000 for life, plus other perks such as use of a company automobile (and insurance), complete medical and dental coverage, entertainment expenses, and other assorted business expenses. Unquestionably, the contract is a lucrative one that is beneficial to Gross both before and after retirement. In August 1983, however, Gross's contract with Eckankar was terminated. Today, Gross has no official connection with the movement he once led for ten years.[31]

Under Klemp's leadership, Eckankar expanded its core audience worldwide with an estimated paid membership of between 40,000 to 100,000 members yearly. (Eckankar does not provide exact numbers of their membership.) Klemp also produced a wide ranging series of books and discourses and moved Eckankar's former center of operation from Menlo Park, California, to Chanhassen, Minnesota (a suburb of Minneapolis) where he established "The Temple of Eck." According to their own accounting, Eckankar has members from over 100 countries around the world.

During Klemp's tenure, Eckankar also systematized its teaching and made it more accessible to the general reading public by lessening its emphasis on Twitchell's extensive use of Indian (particularly Hindi/Punjabi) influenced terminology. Eckankar's

official Web site presents a codified version of its belief system: "Soul is eternal and is the individual's true identity. Soul exists because God loves it. Soul is on a journey to Self- and God-Realization. Spiritual unfoldment can be accelerated through conscious contact with the ECK, Divine Spirit. This contact can be made via the Spiritual Exercises of ECK and the guidance of the Living ECK Master. The Mahanta, the Living ECK Master is the spiritual leader of Eckankar. Spiritual experience and liberation in this lifetime are available to all. You can actively explore the spiritual worlds through Soul Travel, dreams, and other spiritual techniques."[32]

While Eckankar was directly influenced by Sant Mat and other religions, it has, in turn, influenced a number of NRM offshoots, including the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness (MSIA), founded by John-Roger Hinkins; Masterpath, founded by Gary Olsen; The Ancient Teachings of the Masters (ATOM), founded by Darwin Gross; The Divine Science of Light and Sound, founded by Jerry Mulvin; the Sonic Spectrum founded by Michael Turner; and the recently formed Higher Consciousness Society, founded by Ford Johnson. Each of the founders of these groups was at one time a member of Eckankar, and they have incorporated many of the Eck terms and ideas into their respective organizations.[33]

NOTES

1. Harold Klemp, *A Cosmic Sea of Words: The Eckankar Lexicon* (Chanhassen, MN: Eckankar Organization, 1988). See "Mahanta" under the letter "M" in the dictionary.
2. See http://elearn.mtsac.edu/dlane/ekdocuments.html, which has Sutphin's letters on this subject.
3. See David Christopher Lane, *The Making of a Spiritual Movement: the Untold Story of Paul Twitchell and Eckankar* (Del Mar: Del Mar Press, 1983), Chap. 3.
4. Paul Twitchell, "Eckankar: The Bilocation Philosophy," *Orion Magazine* (January 1964).
5. Paul Twitchell, "The Cliff Hanger," *Psychic Observer* (July 1964).
6. Paul Twitchell, "The God Eaters," *Psychic Observer* (November 1964).
7. Brad Steiger, *In My Soul I Am Free* (San Diego: Illuminated Way Press, 1974), 64.
8. See David C. Lane, *Radhasoami Tradition: A Critical History of Guru Succession* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1992).
9. See Eckankar's official Web site, http://www.eckankar.org/Masters/Peddar/hisStory.html.
10. See Doug Marman, *Dialogue in an Age of Criticism,* http://www.littleknownpubs.com/Dialog_Coins.htm.
11. Steiger, *In My Soul I Am Free,* 69.
12. See Lane, *The Making of a Spiritual Movement.*
13. See Ford Johnson, *Confessions of a God Seeker* (Silver Spring, MD: One Publishing Inc., 2004).
14. Kirpal Singh, *Ruhani Satsang: Science of Spirituality* (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1970), 1.
15. Paul Twitchell, "Eckankar: The Bilocation Philosophy," *Orion Magazine* (January 1964).
16. Reno H. Sirrine in a personal letter to the author, dated February 22, 1977.
17. Kirpal Singh, *Heart to Heart Talks, Volume One* (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1975), 53.
18. Dorothe Ross, "All That Glistens is Not Gold," *Leadership in Eck* (July-August-September, 1976).

19. Internet transcription published on alt.religion.eckankar (accessed November 20, 2005).
20. Bernadine Burlin, personal letter to the author, dated April 5, 1977.
21. Doug Marman, online book, *Dialogue in an Age of Criticism,* http://www.littleknownpubs.com/Dialogue_TOC.htm.
22. Internet transcription published on alt.religion.eckankar (accessed November 20, 2005).
23. Ex-Scientologist member, personal letter, June 23, 1987. See also Lane, *The Making of a Spiritual Movement,* Appendix Two.
24. Paul Twitchell, "The Psychology of Slavery," *Ability* 61 (1957): 6.
25. Paul Twitchell, "Outsight," *Ability* 70 (1958): 9.
26. Julian Johnson, *With a Great Master In India,* 5th ed. (Beas, India: Radha Swami Satsang, 1971, originally 1934); Julian Johnson, *Path of the Masters* (Beas, India: Radha Swami Satsang, 1985, originally 1939).
27. Paul Twitchell, *Letters to Gail, Volumes One and Two* (San Diego: Illuminated Way Press, 1977).
28. Personal letter to the author, dated July 5, 1977.
29. Paul Twitchell, "The Cliff Hanger," *Psychic Observer* (July 1964).
30. See Lane, *The Making of a Spiritual Movement,* Chap. 9.
31. Ibid.
32. See Eckankar's official Web site, http://www.eckankar.org.
33. See Andrea Grace Diem, *The Guru in America: The Influence of Radhasoami on New Religions,* http://members.tripod.com/~andrea65/gurutitle.html.

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The New Age: A Twentieth Century Movement

Susan Love Brown

INTRODUCTION

The New Age movement began in the United States in response to the cultural revolution that took place in the 1960s and coincided with the coming of age of the Baby Boomer generation. It began as a spiritual movement that embraced ideas and rituals from the East, such as Zen Buddhism and yoga, and combined them with western religious ideas and rituals, scientific language, and magical and mystical world views. In time, the New Age movement embraced many other nonwestern religious traditions, such as shamanism, Native American religions, and even witchcraft. It is distinguishable from more conventional religious groups and movements in that it is not necessarily attached to any formal institutions, has no single leader, can be practiced largely by individuals separately and together, and provides maximum freedom of interpretation.

The term "New Age" is most closely correlated with the astrological idea that we are about to enter a new age, the Age of Aquarius, which will arrive around 2012,[1] or has already arrived according to some. Each new age, arriving in 2100 year cycles, brings with it a new consciousness and, consequently, the opportunity to refine and renew values. The values being challenged are notions of progress, material wealth, unbridled technology, and the uncritical use of the environment without consideration for the negative consequences. The Age of Aquarius also brings with it the rediscovery of important old values and the wisdom of previous cultures, spiritual practices, and ways of living that complement the new consciousness. According to Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "…the 'New Age' under the sign of Aquarius will presumably exemplify everything which has been neglected or missing during the Piscean Age. The New Age emerges as the positive mirror image of the Old Age."[2] Paul Heelas, speaking primarily about the British manifestation of the New Age, refers to it as "self-spirituality," a term that clearly distinguishes it from the mainstream religions with which it competes.[3]

According to J. Gordon Melton, "The New Age movement … is a revivalist movement more analogous in form to the post-World War II healing movement in the Pentecostal churches, the Ecumenical movement among liberal Protestants in the 1960s, or the Jesus People Movement of the 1970s. Each assumed the existence of stable religious (denominational) structures from which they drew their basic ideas."[4]

Because the New Age movement is so diverse and has no single leader or manifestation, it may seem at first to lack coherence. But there are certain principles that tie together the various facets of the New Age.[5] First of all, there is the emphasis on transformation of self, society, and environment for the purpose of improvement. This element of transformation has been identified as the truly distinctive element of the New Age. In *The Aquarian Conspiracy,* Marilyn Ferguson emphasizes this transformation of self and environment as a key property of the New Age.

Second, New Age advocates emphasize experience as the source of knowledge, experience that can be repeated and verified by others. This experience is achieved through movement, ritual, and feeling as opposed to dogma and doctrine.[6] For many, this emphasis on experience as opposed to dogma represented a shift from a faith-based approach to a scientific approach.

Third is the holistic nature of the New Age, emphasizing the unity not only of mind, body, and soul, but of human beings with other animals and nature, including the universe as a whole. For many, the New Age represented an end to old and dysfunctional dichotomies that separated the mind from the body, spirituality from science, and human beings from nature.

Fourth, related to the emphasis on experience, is a renewed interest in ritual, the performance of certain sets of predetermined actions to bring about a specific set of results, usually for the purpose of change toward the better. From this interest, elements of older spiritualities often found their way into New Age religion. For example, channeling, which many people associate with New Age religion, is related to the practice of mediums, which have always been a part of the occult-metaphysical community.

Fifth is an emphasis on healing any aspect of the self, either spiritually or physically usually by some natural means, giving the New Age movement a therapeutic focus. Many of the practices and rituals of the New Age movement developed as techniques of healing, and healing itself constitutes an extension of transformation.

Finally, harmony, the sixth principle of the New Age, which consists of harmony among body, mind, and soul or any aspect of being, constitutes a further expression of the unity of holism. The emphasis on holism is a way of reaffirming the connectedness of everyone and everything in the universe—a reaction to the many dichotomies that gave rise to so many cultural and social contradictions and ambiguities following World War II.

The New Age movement was precipitated by the massive social changes that occurred in the 1960s and, as such, constitutes a revitalization movement. It occurred at a time when massive numbers of young people were moving out of established churches, or never joined them, because of general disillusionment with the

established authorities. It is largely a middle-class movement. However, the New Age movement had precedent. Its origins lay both in the upheavals of the 1960s, many of which were precipitated by post-World War II conditions, and in the spiritual nature and history of the United States itself and in what James R. Lewis and Melton called the "occult-metaphysical community" (also referred to as "esoteric Christianity"), a tradition reaching back to the 18th century.[7] But the New Age differs from historical predecessors, according to Lewis and Melton, because of its millenarian "emphasis on transformation."[8]

The New Age movement is also part of a long-standing counterreligious movement that stands in opposition to mainstream religious expression and spirituality. This counterreligious spirit has always existed in the United States, and there have been predecessors, such as the Theosophical Society, Spiritualism, and New Thought.[9] The New Age movement differs from previous versions of this independent spirituality precisely in its lack of a central organization and the multiplicity of its manifestations, as well as its transformative element. But like those previous movements and spiritualities, it was precipitated by cultural and social changes that challenged the stability of society and the psyches of its members.

The immediate origin of the New Age movement lay in the changes in the United States following World War II and the upheavals of the 1960s.

THE ORIGINS OF THE NEW AGE

Scholars disagree with one another on the precise beginning of the New Age movement. For example, Melton dates it from 1971,[10] but it had definite roots in the volatile atmosphere of the 1960s.

A specific set of circumstances gave rise to the New Age: a major shift in consciousness among the intellectuals following World War II, the increasing affluence in American society, technological innovations, the rise of the Human Potential Movement in psychology, the changes caused by a number of "rights" movements within the country resulting in "the democratization of personhood," and the coming of age of the idealistic Baby Boomer generation. Let us examine each of these factors in turn.[11]

The vanguard of the Baby Boomer generation, those born between 1946 and 1954, grew up in a post-World War II environment of increasing affluence, technological change, unprecedented social change, and spiritual uneasiness.[12] The war epitomized a human nightmare, not only with the loss of life in military engagements, but in the horror created by the Nazi concentration camps, the extermination of millions of people, and the barbarity of the doctrines associated with them and in the very existence of the atomic bomb, a weapon so powerful that it was capable of the annihilation of thousands of people. Because of these troubling events, there was an elevated consciousness following the war and a questioning of basic human values and their meaning in the face of such atrocities. This disturbance of consciousness marked a decided shift that was to become manifest as the 1960s approached.

But accompanying these doubts about the meaning of humanity in the face of so much destruction was also a set of very positive occurrences, including the rise of an unprecedented affluence that finally relieved the economic anxieties of the Great Depression. The middle class rose from a meager 13 percent of the population to an astounding 46 percent of the population, adding to the general optimism. This came about not only due to a recovering economy but because of new advantages, such as education through the G.I. Bill, home ownership made possible by loans to veterans, and the job security that came with the rise in manufacturing and large companies that offered new employment possibilities. After the war, the building of corporate America, which would ultimately lead to the United States becoming a world power, helping to consolidate the cultural view of Americans about the nature of their ideals and their place in the world, occupied much of the activity of much of the adult generation.

While men were off building corporate America, women were giving birth to unprecedented numbers of babies. Between 1946 and 1964, around 78 million new Americans were born—the biggest baby boom ever. The birth of an enormous generation led to a child-centered society with a family orientation. Through the practice of new child rearing methods and ideas, the society moved from a sociocentric society to a society in which self-fulfillment was central to the changes that would take place in the late 1960s.[13] Boomers enjoyed unprecedented childhood attention and the rise of their own subculture separate from that of adults.

One of the key factors in allowing Baby Boomers to think of themselves in a unified way was the rapid rise of television, which provided a horizontal integration of an enormous geographical area. Through the viewing of common shows, both news and entertainment, boomers shared a common American experience, or at least had the illusion of doing so. Because of the parental emphasis on the social aspects of self, boomers also experienced a sense of belonging and unity that they took for granted, but which would begin to fall apart in the 1970s after so many changes. This sense of unity was sought and restored to some degree by the tenets of New Age ideology. Major events, such as the first manned space shot and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, were shared simultaneously due to the wide coverage of the broadcast media. Thus, the same images were imprinted on the consciousnesses of Baby Boomers everywhere.

Technological innovations were unprecedented as Baby Boomers moved through childhood. Not only the bomb, which posed a threat to all societies, but the development of space exploration in competition with the Soviet Union, the invention of the transistor, and the general emphasis on using technology to create comfort and ease in the home and on the road, all lent an air of possibility and optimism that challenged the undercurrent of doom that arose along with the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States and the Cuban missile crisis. Baby boomers faced the possibilities of nuclear annihilation at the same time that they were experiencing the comforts of unprecedented affluence, one of the ironies that came to characterize this generation.

As the vanguard of the baby boom reached maturity, the "democratization of personhood," as Peter Cleçak has called it,[14] occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. First of all, the civil rights movement called attention to the plight of African Americans in the South, and their struggle to obtain the same rights as other Americans was viewed daily on television and, thus, shared by the whole nation, it became a formative part of Baby Boomer consciousness. The civil rights movement also led to disillusionment with the parental generation, whose high ideals were being preached but not lived. Churches, the supposed repository of moral values, did not live up to the ideals they preached, and this was the beginning of a drift away from establishment religion. So when the lives of male Baby Boomers themselves were threatened by the military draft during the Vietnam conflict, boomers used the precedent of civil rights protests as a model for their own antiwar protests. There was also a series of assassinations, ushering in an era of violence, beginning with the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, followed by Medgar Evers (1963), and the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator Robert Kennedy, both in 1968.

But the democratization of personhood did not stop with blacks or with male conscripts. The women's movement, launched in 1963 with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique,* became organized and vocal in the early 1970s and led to new visions of liberation and the reassertion of egalitarianism that were always a hallmark of American cultural ideals. It was followed by protests on the part of Native Americans, disabled people, elderly people, and many others until every group in the United States claimed its personhood and changed the nature of American society by doing so. There was also a general shift from seeing the United States as a nation in which all new groups assimilated into the "melting pot" to appreciating the great diversity to be found in the traditions of different ethnic and religious groups. So a positive ethnicity also emerged after the 1960s and led to changes in the educational curriculum of universities and eventually public schools and launched debates about multiculturalism and diversity that continue to this day.

All of these changes, good and bad, major and minor, led to a reevaluation of norms, accompanied by feelings of insecurity and instability in the United States. Along with the culture of protest emerged a counterculture, which became the source for an emerging new consciousness. Adding to the experience of change and offering some solution to it were transactional psychology, whose practitioners and ideas gave rise to the Human Potential Movement, which promised self-fulfillment through self-actualization, an increasing affinity for Eastern religions and practices, such as Zen Buddhism and yoga, and the altered states of consciousness induced by psychedelic drugs introduced to young people at large by Harvard professor Timothy Leary (1920–1996) and his colleague Richard Alpert (b. 1931), among others. These altered states of consciousness formed the basis of a new spirituality rooted in experience of the divine.

These remedies for coping with change also produced many of the early personalities recognized by members of the New Age movement and its historical antecedents.

PERSONALITIES OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

The older spiritual movements with which the New Age is identified with specific founders, leaders, and prophets are all in contrast to the New Age movement itself. The New Age is decidedly nonauthoritarian in nature and consists primarily of individuals seeking ways for the self to be fulfilled or healed in the form of specialist practitioners, classes, pilgrimages, and practices that are fairly specific. Its personalities are seen as teachers or specialists, whose authority is vested in their knowledge but not in their leadership. Thus, the New Age constitutes a conglomeration of individualists seeking out specialists as they need them, setting up a kind of competition among these personalities.

Heelas notes that this situation results in "…voices of authority emanating from experts, charismatic leaders and established traditions being mediated by way of inner experience."[15] New Age personalities tend to be entrepreneurs who provide learning through experience and let movement members pick and choose for themselves in a marketplace of spiritual ideas and practices. There is no single spokesperson, for the very individualistic nature of the movement militates against it. Nevertheless, certain people, some from the past and some from the present, are most associated with the New Age.

Earlier religious movements, such as Spiritualism, Theosophy, and New Thought have lent to the New Age a group of "elders" whose ideas seem similar in some respects to many of those of the New Age or have been picked up and given a renewed life and respectability by members of the New Age movement who have rediscovered them.[16] Among these would be figures such as Madam Helena P. Blavatsky (1831–1891), one of the founders in 1875 of the Theosophical Society, Alice Bailey (1880–1949), a theosophist prophet and author of *The Reappearance of the Christ,* and channeler David Spangler (b. 1945), also from the Theosophical tradition. Another person whose work was rediscovered was Edgar Cayce (1877–1945), a clairvoyant or psychic whose many readings and predictions fascinated people in the United States in the early twentieth century and whose life and readings remain the subject of study even to this day.

Eastern spirituality has always influenced religion in the United States.[17] Influences from Eastern religions include Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), who founded the Vedanta Society, and Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952), who founded the Self-Realization Fellowship and authored *Autobiography of a Yogi,* which was an early influence. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (b. 1917), who taught Transcendental Meditation (TM) and was a guru to many celebrities, including the Beatles and the Beach Boys. TM was highly influential within the New Age movement. Maharaj Ji (b. 1957), head of the Divine Light Mission originally founded by his father, Hans Ji Maharaj in 1966, also contributed to the New Age movement.

Transactional psychology and the Human Potential Movement lent many of its ideas and practices as well as language to the New Age movement and was the source of much of the emphasis on science and its compatibility with spirituality. The Human Potential Movement had three founders: Abraham Maslow (1908–1970),

Carl Rogers (1902–1987), and Rollo May (1909–1994), who were all also involved in transactional psychology, sometimes called Third Force psychology. These three psychologists came up with the theory of self-actualization with its emphasis on the ability of individuals to transform themselves, and this message carried a lot of weight with members of the Baby Boomer generation just as they were coming of age and searching for new identities. This movement coincided with changes in child rearing and American conceptions of self in a kind of social and cultural synergy. Maslow, in particular, through his writing, had a profound impact on the formation of the New Age movement in the United States. His book, *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences* (1964), pointed out the relationship between altered states of consciousness and spirituality that might constitute the basis for all religion.

A "homegrown" contingent emerged from the halls of academe in the form of university professors who were instrumental in introducing various aspects of their own research and understandings into the New Age movement. Among these were Leary and his confederate Alpert, later to become known as Baba Ram Dass (or just Ram Dass for short). These two Harvard professors and some of their colleagues introduced members of the Baby Boomer generation to the altered states of consciousness made possible by the use of psychedelic drugs, such as LSD. Discharged from the university for their careless use of these drugs, they went on to explore other ways of achieving the altered states of consciousness and stumbled upon the practice of meditation as taught by some Indian yogis. While Leary lapsed into cult fame, Ram Dass went on to become one of the best known names among the New Agers, largely through his writings and public appearances. His book, *Be Here Now,* was especially influential.

Also joining the mix from academia, Carlos Castaneda (1925–1998), an anthropologist from the University of California, Los Angeles, became known for a series of books supposedly based on his fieldwork and interviews with Don Juan Matus in Arizona, a Yaqui Indian who taught him shamanism, which Castaneda recounted in *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (1968) and a series of sequels that became influential among the Baby Boomers who joined the New Age movement. Discredited as anthropology, his work was a harbinger of an interest in shamanism that was picked up later by Michael Harner, also an anthropologist and author of a legitimate body of ethnographic work done in South America, who popularized shamanism in his 1980 book, *The Way of the Shaman.*

Many of the personalities of the New Age movement used books to spread their ideas and eventually other media as well. Marilyn Ferguson was one of the first to popularize the Age of Aquarius in her book *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980), as well as the concept of a global consciousness that was needed to transform society in the coming Aquarian age. She popularized the notion of a "paradigm shift" in human consciousness. Representatives from mainstream religious groups were not immune to the influence of the New Age. For example, Matthew Timothy Fox (b. 1940), an ordained Catholic priest, eventually left the church, founded Creation Spirituality, and in 1983 published *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality.*

Perhaps no single person popularized the New Age movement more than Shirley Maclaine (b. 1934), an actress and writer, beginning with her book, *Out on a Limb* (1983), which was made into a film, and *Dancing in the Light* (1985), followed by other books. Well known because of her stardom in some of the top musical comedies made into movies, when she wrote she raised the general level of awareness of the New Age, although some would also say that she brought much ridicule upon it as well. Although she brought about a general awareness of the New Age, the movement was well under way by the time she made her mark on the public consciousness. Still, the increased media consciousness of the New Age stimulated by Maclaine's books began to manifest itself in the New Age sections in bookstore chains and the proliferation of shops, classes, and practitioners in a vastly expanding spiritual marketplace.

The sheer number of personalities associated with the New Age movement (most of whom cannot be mentioned here) testifies to the depth, popularity, and breadth of the movement. Its beliefs and practices incorporate so many older practices and elements of older spiritualities that the New Age movement has become a great synthesizer of the esoteric, Eastern, and Native American traditions.

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

From an astrological perspective, all of the characteristics of the New Age and the principles defining it are due to the renewal of human energy and values placed into the service of all the learning and experience that has gone on since the last New Age, the Age of Pisces. But since human thought and action may not have caught up with all of the change and accumulated knowledge, the introduction of the new and necessary consciousness and values seems abrupt and even radical. However, the six principles mentioned at the beginning of this essay create the foundations for belief and action that constitute the New Age movement.

Transformation of Self, Society, and the Environment

Transformation, which many scholars identify as central to the New Age movement, takes many different forms, from personal improvement through spiritual practices and self-help programs to workshops at various institutions to direct social action on such issues as animal rights, environmental protection, and poverty. As mentioned above, the Baby Boomer generation was raised with an emphasis on self-fulfillment, which was reinforced through the self-actualization proposed by the Human Potential Movement, creating an element of New Age spirituality that focuses in part on the individual. Transformation is not merely a basic principle but the key goal of the New Age movement, bringing about change for the sake of betterment.

Individual transformation involves a thorough exploration and understanding of the self, which can be obtained through spiritual practices (see below) or through self-help books and programs that teach one the art of transformation. It is no

surprise that American bookstores abound with self-help books. Assistance might come from spirit guides of all kinds, through specific practices designed to bring enlightenment, or through cultivating a closer relationship with specific deities.

Complementary to the transformation of the individual and following from it is the transformation of society as a whole. Just as one can work specifically to transform individuals, so can one work to transform things on the social level. For example, some New Agers believe that collective meditation can actually reduce violence in specific areas if done for a long enough time under the right conditions.

Transformation of the environment is deemed by many to be imperative if individuals and societies are to survive. The New Age movement always placed importance on the nature of the physical environment but especially on bringing human beings back into harmony with nature. A distinct difference in New Age thinking, and that which seemed to be dominant in the highly industrialized environment in which it arose, was a turning away from presumed dominance over nature, which was viewed as a breach of the unity of all living things and of all entities in the universe.

Transformation depends on the acquisition of appropriate kinds of knowledge, self-understanding, and action. But the goal of transformation is the end to which all other things are the means. However, without the proper means, transformation cannot take place. Because understanding is a key to transformation, the New Age movement also puts a premium on experience as a source of knowledge.

Experience as the Source of Knowledge

One characteristic of the New Age is its affinity for experience rather than doctrine or dogma. This experience is most often found in altered states of consciousness that open up the perspective and create shifts in values and habits. The spiritual side of self-fulfillment often takes the form of religious devotions: various forms of meditation, yoga, prayer, and channeling.

Meditation, an ancient practice in both Hinduism and Buddhism, has been described by some practitioners as "listening to God" as opposed to prayer, which is "talking to God." Although the methods and purposes of meditation vary, a common effect is to place the practitioner into an altered state of consciousness. Meditation can be therapeutic; it can turn people away from drugs that induce similar states of consciousness and create a sense of calm and reexamination of one's life. The influence of Eastern religions is most often felt in this practice, with the transformation occurring as a consequence of the experience. The experience itself constitutes empirical evidence of a greater consciousness that all can tap into and become one with.

However, altered states of consciousness can be achieved in many ways, not just the stillness and contemplativeness of meditation, but through exhausting movement and through the use of certain drugs as well. Maslow believed that these experiences, what he called "peak experiences," constituted the very origin of spirituality—that they were universally the basis for all spiritualities, which differed only in particulars.

This affinity for the altered states of consciousness experience also accounts for the rise of interest in shamanism. Real shamans are men and women living in traditional tribal societies who have the ability to heal through their own transformative powers, usually associated with altered states of consciousness achieved through a variety of means. New Age Neo-Shamanism is taught in classes and workshops. In addition to Harner's work in this area, Lynn V. Andrews, who apprenticed herself to Native American shamans, has written a number of books, such as *Medicine Woman* (1981) and *Star Woman* (1986), largely appealing to women.

Often experience can be acquired by attending classes or workshops at established New Age institutions or programs. Esalen Institute, located in Big Sur, California, is one of the oldest New Age centers in the United States. It actually predates the New Age movement, having been founded in 1962. In sum, experience is emphasized over doctrine in the New Age movement.

Ritual and Practice

The experience on which this action is based is achieved through action itself. And the holism or sense of unity that is sought is necessarily related to the kinds of rituals and performances that both accomplish change and lend meaning to that change.

Channeling, or acting as a medium, is the practice of acting as a conduit for information from the spirit world, and it is the practice that most people probably associate with the New Age movement.[18] A medium and author named Jane Roberts is credited with popularizing channeling, a term associated with the New Age. She supposedly brought messages to this world from a personality named Seth in another plane of existence. But many of the practices and rituals of the New Age have been adapted from various spiritual sources that predate the movement itself. The use of mediums is at least as old as Spiritualism, which flourished in the United States in the nineteenth century, and remained a practice among certain individuals long after that movement subsided.

The practices of astrology, reading Tarot cards, numerology, and reflexology are all practices that predated the New Age, some going back centuries. But these have all been retrofitted for use in New Age spirituality, and these have often been combined with other more traditional Eastern religious practices, such as mediation, chanting, fire ceremonies, and so on.

Holism, the Emphasis on Unity

The emphasis on holism, or the unity of body, mind, and spirit, or the unity of self and God, or the unity of self and the universe, in the New Age context represents the rebirth of egalitarianism. Because of the claim that anyone can become transformed, and because this transformation and the experience upon which it is based are meant to unify, the movement may be perceived as egalitarian, creating the conditions in which all human beings are equal. The New Age "implies a rejection of the mainstream and a declaration that New Age ideas and routines are open freely to everyone for the sake of both personal and collective betterment."[19]

Members of the New Age movement, especially those who live in communities, must constantly grapple with the tension between the holistic ideal as the means to unity within the group and the autonomy of the individual. However, the need to affirm the connection to others and to the world is manifested in the creation and maintenance of New Age communities, like Findhorn Foundation in Scotland, Damanhur in Italy, or Ananda in the United States.

Healing and the Therapeutic Focus

One of the most important ways in which transformation can occur, and one of the most important and popular aspects of the New Age that has spread far beyond its own spiritual practitioners, is through healing. Spiritual healing, with roots in both the Christian Science and New Thought traditions, melds together a myriad of healing practices meant to affect both the body and soul. A strong tendency of New Age healing is based on the belief that the mind possesses the ability to heal the body or that certain substances can precipitate healing—crystals or certain metals, such as gold, silver, or copper—can have positive effects on one's spiritual and physical health.

Some healing practices are based on nonwestern healing traditions, including acupressure, acupuncture, and ayurveda. Others have their roots in homeopathic traditions of the West. Some healing practices are rooted in mystical beliefs, such as the use of crystals or certain metals, while others are based loosely on scientific approaches, such as biofeedback, biorhythms, and still others rooted in psychological and physiological approaches, such as the Alexander technique, self-hypnosis, and visualization.

The New Age movement has created and supported a growing concern with preventive medicine and natural remedies. Two popular doctors, Deepak Chopra (b. 1947) and Andrew Weil (b. 1942), represent the bursting of New Age affinity into the mainstream consciousness of the United States. Both regularly appear on television, and both are prolific writers. Chopra is known for combining Eastern and Western medical practices, having been trained in medicine in India and the United States. A student of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, he was also trained in ayurvedic medicine and Transcendental Meditation. Weil, trained at Harvard Medical School, practices integrative medicine, which emphasizes alternative practices and focuses on prevention and the use of natural remedies.

CONTROVERSIES ABOUT THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

One of the main reasons why the New Age movement is controversial is its opposition to mainstream religion. To this extent, some people wonder whether the New Age movement constitutes a legitimate religious movement at all.[20] Militating against its legitimate status is newness, its lack of distinct organization, and its tendency to draw people away from mainstream religions.

But there are also those who believe that the New Age movement is a response to the vacuousness of modernity, a product of postmodernity. For example, Carmen Kuhling noting that the New Age "is not a unified social movement or a cultural phenomenon. Rather, it can be characterised as the materialisation of various desires: for integration, for a spiritual life, for connectedness to others, for a union with nature, for health,"[21] goes on to say:

> What is most significant about the New Age is that it can be seen as a response to what people perceive as the spiritual vacuum at the heart of late capitalism. New Age spirituality, an eclectic mix of Eastern mysticism, self-help therapy, paganism, and other philosophies, is not a religious movement per se; it is a response to the secularisation of modern social life or the increasing disenchantment with the world.[22]

Kuhling sees the New Age as a collection of sometimes contradictory elements such as commodification, subversion, and a symptom of postmodernity. In short, "the New Age Movement is a complex and multifaceted movement that exhibits a variety of sometimes contradictory tendencies and agendas," which, because it results in the "proliferation of New Age commodities such as natural foods and cosmetics and spirituality books and seminars" constitute the "exploiting the spiritual vacuum in modern life."[23] Kuhling bases many of her conclusions about the New Age on two studies conducted in Toronto, Canada, and West Cork, Ireland.

The identification of the New Age with commodification or consumerism has also been mentioned by several observers. This aspect of the New Age stems from both the middle-class origins of the movement and the entrepreneurial talents of its practitioners and their prescriptions for self-help, emphasizing the very individualistic nature of the movement. Other critics have also seen the New Age as a movement that encourages narcissism and consumerism.

As Ruth Prince and David Riches note, "The New Age upholds a departure from, indeed a radical turning away from, the social values of the Western mainstream; yet in practice New Agers make the break only partially. There are two opposed senses in which this is so. Either, people entertain New Age notions in limited areas of their lives, whilst otherwise they remain engaged in the mainstream.… Or else, New Agers devote themselves to keeping the mainstream at bay, as when they locate in remote Celtic parts, or gather in communes which outsiders cannot easily penetrate.…"[24]

Olav Hammer sees in the New Age movement a vast number of contradictions, some arising from the very principles on which it rests.[25] The claims of New Agers to holism, universalism, and individualism create vague or contradictory messages. For example, while claiming to incorporate universal aspects of all religions, Hammer says, New Agers combine such diverse world views that they cannot actually point out what it is that they all have in common, and many specific beliefs surrounding such concepts as reincarnation, the veneration of the Earth, and other world views are the product of imagination rather than indigenous beliefs. Hammer also notes that many indigenous people resent the use of their religions for New Age commercial purposes, a charge that fits Kuhling's analysis. Hammer also finds contradictions in the simultaneous embrace of science and dismissal of science and in

the individualism of the New Age and its attempt to bring together large numbers of people to effect change in the world.

Others see the New Age as having failed in its mission to transform at any level. However, some New Agers would argue that the actual New Age has not yet arrived, and human beings are still involved in catching up with the lessons of the Piscean Age, so that the full effects of the impending transformations cannot yet be seen.

THE FUTURE OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

If we accept Melton's classification of the New Age movement as a "revivalist movement," then we can expect it to fade eventually—only to become another note in the history of religion rather than a permanent fixture of the religious landscape. Part of Bailey's prediction for the coming of the New Age included the "rediscovery of ancient spirituality," "a world religion uniting East and West," "the discovery of the soul by science," and "paranormal abilities, such as telepathy, becoming normal."[26]

So far, the New Age movement seems to be heading in these directions with its adoption and adaptation of shamanism and Native American spiritualities and religious practices, its combining of certain elements from Christianity with those from Hindu and Buddhist practices and beliefs, and the grappling of science and religion for a common ground. However, the paranormal is far from common, unless the presence of so many channelers is evidence that it has become normal. But neither has the New Age shown signs of subsiding.

Almost from the time of its inception, the New Age movement spread to other western countries and led to new interpretations of its basic elements in a variety of cultural milieus. In *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft* (1989), T.M. Luhrmann presented a study of rationality among contemporary young people in England who practiced magic and witchcraft in the evenings and on weekends, while holding down their day-to-day jobs. Prince and Riches studied aspects of the New Age in Glastonbury, United Kingdom, following the Harmonic Convergence in 1987. Carmen Kuhling studied New Age communities in Canada and Ireland. And the New Age literature describes communities in Italy, Japan, and elsewhere. The New Age has even manifested itself on the continent of Africa, where religious revivalism is widespread.

While the exact numbers of people adhering to some form of New Age spirituality is difficult to ascertain because of its somewhat nebulous nature, it is clear that it is now a global phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

If, indeed, the New Age movement is revivalist in nature, then it may very well fade as its carriers in the United States drift back to mainstream churches and/or simply die, giving way to the proclivities of the next generation. However, its basic principle of transformation played a part in raising a consciousness about the role of fulfillment in human life, the ways in which people should relate to one another,

and a concern for the natural environment. Self-help, human relations, and ecological sensitivity are apparently permanent concerns as we focus our attention toward the New Age.

The New Age movement has moved beyond the spirituality at its core and expanded to include aspects of culture, such as New Age music, which has become a genre of its own. It could be that the New Age will remain with us longest in a cultural rather than a spiritual form, but even this remains to be seen. The New Age is a movement whose time has come but has not yet gone. It will dissipate as a movement only if there is no longer any need for the particular kind of spirituality and opportunity it makes possible.

NOTES

1. Gerry McGuire Thompson, *The Atlas of the New Age* (Hauppage, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 1999), 7–9, approximates the date as 2010. However, Michael York, *Historical Dictionary of New Age Movements* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2004), in his chronology mentions December 21, 2012, as the date, citing José Argüelles, who organized the celebration of the Harmonic Convergence, in accordance with the Mayan calendar.

2. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 331. Hanegraaff also cites Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1980); and Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), in particular referring to the oppositional thinking about the differences in the two ages.

3. Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 18–40.

4. J. Gordon Melton, "New Thought and the New Age," *Perspectives on the New Age,* ed. James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 16.

5. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought,* sees the major trends of the New Age as four: channeling, healing and personal growth, science, and Neopaganism. Some, such as Sarah M. Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), see Neopaganism as a separate though related movement.

6. See, for example, Susan Love Brown, "God and Self: the Shaping and Sharing of Experience in a Cooperative, Religious Community," in *The Psychology of Cultural Experience,* ed. Carmella C. Moore and Holly F. Mathews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 173–195.

7. James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds., "Introduction," *Perspectives on the New Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), xi.

8. James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Perspectives on the New Age,* xi. For additional information about the roots of the New Age movement in this occult-metaphysical community, see in James R. Lewis, ed., *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of New Age Religions* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2004), articles by James A. Santucci ("Theosophy and the Theosophical Societies: An Overview," 25–49), Roger E. Olson ("Rudolf Steiner, Esoteric Christianity, and the New Age Movement," 50–62), and Gail Harley ("Paradigms of New Thought

Promote the New Age," 63–80). Also see Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America,* 39–65, for a narrative account of this same tradition. Catherine Tumber, *American Feminism and the Birth of New Age Spirituality: Searching for the Higher Self, 1875–1915* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), roots these same traditions in Gnosticism and gives a broad account of New Thought and the role of women in this community. Though Tumber is herself critical of the outcome of this kind of spirituality, her account is very engaging. In James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Perspectives on the New Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), see J. Gordon Melton, "New Thought and New Age," 15–29; Robert Ellwood, "How New is the New Age?", 59–67.

9. See Lewis, ed., *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of New Age Religions,* for articles on all of these.

10. J. Gordon Melton, "A History of the New Age Movement," in *Not Necessarily the New Age: Critical Essays,* ed. Robert Basil (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1988), 36. Also see Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America,* 67–88, for a narrative account of how the 1960s ushered in New Age ideas. Her chronology (173–176) actually begins in 1838 with Spiritualism, while York, *Historical Dictionary of New Age Movements,* xix–xxxii, goes all the way back to 2697–2597 BCE, the date of the first acupuncture manual in China. For an almost contemporary account of the development of New Age consciousness, see Robert Wuthnow, *Experimentation in American Religion: The New Mysticisms and Their Implications for the Churches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

11. J. Gordon Melton sees the New Age movement as beginning in England and being exported to the United States. See his "New Thought and the New Age," in *Perspectives on the New Age,* ed. Lewis and Melton, 20–21. Melton specifically ties the rise of New Age thought to the "light" groups of the Universal Foundation and its Universal Link network and the influx of Asian religious practitioners with the end of the Asian Exclusion Act, although two of the most important religious figures from the East, Swami Vivekanana, who attended the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 and established the Vedanta Society in 1897, and Paramahansa Yogananda, who came to the United States in 1920 to attend the International Congress of Religious Liberals and founded the Self-Realization Fellowship in 1925, had their influence much before that time. The particular events identified by Melton took place within a larger American cultural context without which the New Age movement would not have emerged with such force and may not have emerged at all.

12. See Susan Love Brown, "Baby Boomers, American Character, and the New Age: A Synthesis," in *Perspectives on the New Age,* ed. Lewis and Melton, 87–96, for a discussion of the relationship between generation and American character in the New Age in the context of a particular religious community.

13. For the study that demonstrates this shift in American concepts of self between generations see Joseph Veroff, Elizabeth Douvan, and Richard A. Kulka, *The Inner American: A Self-Portrait from 1957–1976* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

14. See Peter Cleçak, *America's Quest for the Ideal Self: Dissent and Fulfillment in the 60s and 70s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

15. Heelas, *The New Age Movement,* 21.

16. For the writings of these and other forerunners, see Lewis, *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of New Age Religions,* 443–613. These include selections written by José Argüelles, Alice Bailey, H.P. Blavatsky, Emma Curtis Hopkins, David Spangler, Rudolf Steiner, Swami Vivekananda, and others.

17. See Andrea Grace Diem and James R. Lewis, "Imagining India: the Influence of Hinduism," in *Perspectives on the New Age,* ed. Lewis and Melton, 48–58.
18. For a more detailed discussion of channeling see Elijah Siegler, "Marketing Lazarus: A Rational Choice Theory of Channeling," in *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of New Age Religions,* ed. Lewis, 174–191.
19. Ruth Prince and David Riches, *The New Age in Glastonbury: The Construction of Religious Movements* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 6.
20. For example, see D. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1986); D. Groothuis, *Confronting the New Age* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988).
21. Carmen Kuhling, *The New Age Ethic and the Spirit of Postmodernity* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2004), vii.
22. Ibid., vii.
23. Ibid., 168. Kuhling's claim that there is not much literature that deals with the New Age "in terms of the social, historical, political, and cultural context in which the movement has emerged" (25) is not the case. In the Further Reading section at the end of this essay see Brown 1992, Lewis 2004, Lewis and Melton 1992, Pike 2004, Ellwood 1994.
24. Prince and Riches, *The New Age in Glastonbury,* 5.
25. Olav Hammer, "Contradictions of the New Age," in *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of New Age Religions,*ed. Lewis, 409–424.
26. This list is taken from Belinda Whitworth, *New Age Encyclopedia: A Mind, Body, Spirit Reference Guide* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2003), 22.

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Contemporary Shamanism

Dagmar Wernitznig

Nowadays, the term *shamanism* has acquired multifaceted meaning and is utilized extensively in academic and nonacademic contexts. Increasingly, contemporary shamanism is also labeled *neo-shamanism.* Occasionally, contemporary shamanism is called "constructed" or "dislocated" shamanism, thus, juxtaposing what is usually described as "traditional" or "organic" shamanism. Without a doubt, shamanism is popular today and appropriated extensively for a diversity of disciplines and life styles. For example, the term shamanism occurs in several contexts, as diverse as advertising, philosophy, and weekend seminars.

The prevalent interest in shamanism could be largely due to its amorphous, sometimes even ambivalent, character. It is especially this heterogeneous appearance that attracts the attention to shamanism in numerous circles. Shamanism seems to signify various ideas and images to many different people, while at the same time eluding specific meaning. In order to comprehend contemporary shamanism, it is imperative to investigate briefly what is usually referred to as "traditional" or "organic" shamanism.

Generally speaking, shamanism is an ancient and intercultural phenomenon, and shamans are considered to be archetypal figures. Although academic, foremost anthropological, analyses emphasized Siberian shamanism as a paradigmatic example, the transcultural character of shamanism—with striking parallels to animism, paganism, or totemism—was never ignored. As Europeans first encountered the prototypical concept of shamanism in Siberia, the Tungus-based term *shaman* turned into an interdisciplinary trope.

Etymologically, the term *shaman* is believed to derive from the so-called Tungus (ic)—a language, culture, and tribe of Eastern Siberia. The actual origin of the term remains disputed. Theories involve the Pali *samana,* which might have developed from the Chinese *shamen,* whose Sanskrit version is *sramaṇa.* This suggests that the term *śaman* was projected onto Siberian language groups and cultures and did not originally evolve from there.

The Tungusic term can be further differentiated between the Siberian word *shaman* and the Sanskrit word *saman.* The most common translation for *shaman* is "inner heat," which usually links the shaman figure with the profession of the blacksmith, for *saman* it is "song." The prefix *sa* is usually translated as "to know," but *shaman* also denotes a person who is in a state of excitement and agitation. Comprehensive linguistic roots are

- Tungusic—*śaman*
- Pali—*samaṇa*
- Sanskrit—*sramaṇa*
- Chinese—*shamen*
- Vedic—*śram* ("to heat oneself")
- Hindu—*tapas* ("heat" or "power")
- Turkic—*kam*
- Yakuts—*oyuna*
- Samoyeds—*tadibey*
- Yukaghirs—*alma*
- Buriat—*buge*

This diverse linguistic background indicates that the practice of shamanism was very much determined by regional dialects of individual tribes as well as by geographic locations. Furthermore, the perception of shamanism was heavily influenced by outside observers—or intruders—like ethnographers. Especially with reference to shamanism in North America, the term medicine (wo)man is also frequently used. Through course of time, the terminology dealing with shamanism has experienced a vast generalization. It came to relate to concepts of witchcraft, sorcery, transvestism, and tricksterism. This terminological ambiguity offers a loophole for many contemporary practitioners and their claim to traditional variants of shamanism.

Shamans could be either male or female. The overemphasis on male, especially Siberian, shamans might be a result of predominantly male scholarship that initially dealt with shamanism. If at all, gender restrictions were primarily bound to particular geographic regions. In Korea, for example, shamans overwhelmingly, though not exclusively, were and still are women. Additionally, notions of shamanic transvestism or transgenderism defy clear-cut classifications.

Most commonly, anthropological circles refer to organic shamanism as a kind of ur religion, involving primal aspects like (re)birth, illness, and death. The contemporary sociological definition of functional differentiation, where different social functions are attached to specific professions, was not inherent in tribal shamanism. In today's vocabulary, the traditional shaman had to fulfill the role of a "multitasker": priest, medical doctor, psychoanalyst, seer, philosopher, warrior, artist, mystic, and politician. Originally, the tasks of a shaman included various secular and religious aspects. Within the tribe or clan, shamans were everything from spiritual counselor

to provider of healing remedies. The concept of the medicine (wo)man, for example, epitomizes this connotation of spiritual *and* medical practices.

The principal role of the shaman was to mediate between the natural and the supernatural worlds to the point of using strategies of deception or manipulation pertaining to shamans' interaction with their physical surroundings and their spectators. For instance, the shaman could employ the art of ventriloquism. Shamans held a pivotal position in the social order of the tribal group they belonged to, yet at the same time lived the lives of public outcasts. For example, in some societies, the shaman, while having to mystically ensure that wild game was available for tribal hunters, was—due to this special status—not entitled to join the actual hunting parties. Having both religious as well as secular influence, they were feared and respected at the same time. Their responsibility for coherence and balance in the tribal environment resulted in a more or less strong sociopolitical voice. Thus, shamans were curators of the communal infrastructure of their tribe. By negotiating between spiritual and physical worlds, they were not only figures of authority, but also trickster figures for their peers. The shaman learned to live both in a central position in clan hierarchy and on the margins of clan society. Within the tribal context, shamans fulfilled their numerous tasks by utilizing particular tools and acts of performance. The standard repertoire of shamanic talents included chanting and singing, dancing and drumming. The paraphernalia of shamans, consisting of drums, masks, rattles, bones, pipes, feathers, and mirrors, for example, had simultaneously symbolic meaning and practical purposes.

Shamanic expertise was not simply limited to curing people, but included personifying an interpreter between the (meta)physical world and mankind. This involved meteorological knowledge as well as clairvoyance, for instance. Predicting and—as a further consequence—interfering with the future were especially important in terms of hunting, weather conditions, and natural catastrophes. In nonliterate societies, shamans, treasuring their tribal cultural heritage, also personified the intellectual property and folkloristic archive of their community. As keepers of stories and narrators of myths, they were responsible for guaranteeing their group's cultural survival.

There were several ways for shamans to receive their "call." Amongst the most common conditions to determine the vocation of a shaman are listed: exceptional physical appearance like a birthmark or an extra digit, legacy (i.e., "hereditary shamanism," passed on from parent or grandparent to their offspring), and the impact of experiences like illness or visionary dreams. Most significant factors with disease and visions were "out-of-body," "near-death," and "fragmentation/dismemberment" experiences. In many cases, an essential element in visions was the process of the shaman-to-be being taken apart and put together again by spirits. Overwhelmingly, initiation to the shamanic craft could not deliberately be planned. Most shamans were reported to have initially refused the gift, because of the hazards and sacrifices involved. Shamanic power, which was usually discovered during or after puberty, additionally, was very precarious. It could be lost through careless or incorrect behavior, or it could become destructive and turn against the shaman.

The mental conditions of shamans have been subject to a lot of professional debates. Because of shamans' practices of trance and/or ecstasy—mostly based on the usage of hallucinogenic drugs—Western observers often assumed shamans to be mentally ill or emotionally unstable. Claude Lévi-Strauss is credited with redefining the discourse about shamanic mental health. Lévi-Strauss claimed that shamans, rather than being psychopathic members of the tribe, embodied the role of what—by Western standards—could be compared to a psychoanalyst in tribal societies. This assumption is mirrored by C.G. Jung's notion of shamanism as a therapeutic model in psychoanalysis. Lévi-Strauss's approach, later on, has increasingly been criticized as being too structuralist.

The shaman's counseling duties involved the physical as well as psychosomatic well-being of tribal members. A commonly described concept in Western literatures of shamanic beliefs is the so-called "loss or damage of the soul" or "possession by spirits." Thereby, the shaman could rely on ritualistic or magic antidotes, such as, for instance, séances, to instigate the patient's recovery.

One of the most prominent books about shamanism, undoubtedly, is Mircea Eliade's *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy.* The French original *Le Chamanisme et les Techniques Archaïques de l'Extase* appeared in 1951, the English translation was published in 1964. Investigating shamanism from an overwhelmingly religious point of view, Eliade, a historian of religions from Romania, provided a synopsis of shamanism in terms of its global universality, while at the same time also highlighting individual variants of local shamanisms. As the term "ecstasy" is considered to be too sensationalist in certain contexts, sometimes "trance" is chosen as an alternative in post-Eliade scholarship. "Trance," however, is not an uncomplicated choice, either, because it also implies behaviorisms of possession.

Particularly in the Western hemisphere of the 1960s and its so-called counterculture, there emerged an enormous fascination with and curiosity about anything remotely connected to shamanism. Perhaps the most notorious figure associated with Westernized or dislocated shamanism is Carlos Castaneda. Studying anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles, Castaneda claimed to have become acquainted with an enigmatic Yaqui informant, called Don Juan. According to Castaneda, Don Juan was residing in the rural areas of Mexico and Arizona. In his several best-seller books, Carlos Castaneda described his experiences as an apprentice to his sorcerer-teacher Don Juan. Castaneda's flamboyant tales about hallucinogens, visions, and paranormal encounters catered to the interests of his readers. At the same time, his fabricated, evidence-free texts triggered critical responses. Castaneda's critics, foremost among them Richard de Mille, deconstructed the Don Juan books by seriously questioning aspects of authenticity and liability. Negative criticism of Castaneda's writing particularly zeroes in on issues of postcolonial hegemony and its tendency to distribute accounts of indigenous knowledge as an undecipherable and opaque conglomerate of hearsay and fiction. According to Vine Deloria, Jr., "[t]he Don Juan books were just what young whites needed to bolster their shattering personal identities[.]"[1]

Since the 1960s, a number of writers, taking their cues from Castaneda's books, produced shamanic adventure stories as quasi-autobiographical accounts. These texts, nevertheless, were presented as fact. Perhaps the most prominent name amongst those is Lynn V. Andrews. Like Castaneda, Andrews cited shamanic teachers, called Agnes Whistling Elk and Ruby Plenty Chiefs of Manitoba, Canada. These shamans and their rather unorthodox practices, however, were unknown to the official First Nations Communities in Manitoba. As early as 1987, for example, Andrews was sarcastically declared a so-called "Plastic Medicine Woman" by the Mohawk Nation of Akwesasne. Recently, Andrews expanded her quest for shaman informants to Australia, rivaling yet another semishamanic writer, Marlo Morgan. Again, there is no evidence for Andrews's Australian encounters with local variants of shamanism, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were equally surprised and annoyed by her distorted depictions of indigenous spiritualities.

Critical debates about these writings tend to overshadow the perceptions of the reading public regarding these books. Books by chic shaman authors have prolific editions and distribution. Their readership is selective in consuming fictional stories with factual moments whenever convenient. There seems to exist a silent agreement between contemporary writers about shamanism and their audience that neoshamanic products like books or workshops, for example, can be utilized without having to tackle questions of validity. Customers particularly appreciate the "anything goes" element of neoshamanic items and services.

In most cases, contemporary shamanism—both writers and practitioners—is closely associated with the New Age. New Age is an umbrella term for a smorgasbord of various beliefs and life styles: channeling and crystals, parapsychology and alternative medicine, Wicca, and astrology. Although the New Age spread all over the United States, prototypical New Age environments are particularly concentrated on the West Coast and in the Southwest. The predominant targets for New Age products are upscale, urban, middle-class citizens. Personal growth, individual enlightenment, and spiritual self-help are the most commonly propagated New Age themes.

Self-realization is also the most popular premise in contemporary shamanism. Books and weekend seminars are the standard products to supply this demand. Michael J. Harner is closely affiliated with workshops to instruct consumers in contemporary shamanism. An anthropologist by training, Harner conducted field studies in Ecuador and Peru in the 1950s, where he was reportedly introduced to shamanism. Afterward, he studied North American shamanism. In Harner's biography, a noticeable gap exists between his final anthropological book, *Hallucinogens and Shamanism* (1973), and his first handbook on contemporary shamanism, *The Way of the Shaman: A Guide to Power and Healing* (1980). This seven-year period most likely signifies Harner's personal reinvention of himself as a coach in contemporary shamanism. In 1983, Harner opened the Center for Shamanic Studies in New York, which was moved to Mill Valley, California, and renamed The Foundation for Shamanic Studies two years later. There, the so-called Harner Method of Shamanic Counseling is taught to promote shamanism. Although the headquarters

of Harner's training academy for contemporary shamanism are in the United States, his workshops are conducted on an intercontinental basis, with Western and Central Europe as particular target zones. Workshops for all levels of shamanic disciples, ranging from beginners to advanced, are offered. Harner's methodology of so-called Core Shamanism heavily relies on Shamanic State of Consciousness (SSC). This state can supposedly be achieved through drumming, chanting rhythms, or practicing meditation techniques. Workshop participants are further advised to search for their spirit helpers or power animals via imaginative journeys. Harner's prided patent is the so-called Dream Canoe, a mixture of emotional bondage and initiation ceremonies as well as group therapy dynamics, where crowd activity and individual experience are subtly synthesized.

Naturally, contemporary shamanism is confronted with a plethora of critical responses. Native American poets and scholars, for example, oppose what they prefer to call *whiteshamanism.* The phrase *whiteshamanism,* sometimes also spelled *white shamanism,* was created by Geary Hobson (Cherokee). In addition to Hobson, other critics include Wendy Rose (Hopi-Miwok), Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), and Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux). Native critique especially emphasizes postcolonial implications of modern or synthesized shamanism, which is considered to be diametrically opposed to organic shamanism. They argue that the appropriation of indigenous spiritualities in general and of Native American religions specifically is yet another form of cultural imperialism.

Critics like those mentioned regard contemporary shamanism as the final stage of colonization—the usurpation of cultural heritage and spiritual knowledge, following territorial annexation. Moreover, they believe that non-Native interpretations of shamanism reinforce stereotypical images of Native peoples, fostering a particularly monolithic and prehistoric iconography of Native Americans and other indigenous groups around the world. The most important concept here is a dichotomy of primitive versus civilized worlds, which stigmatizes Native peoples as ancient loincloth wearers in industrialized societies. Such ethnocentrism is particularly evident in the journey from ignorance to wisdom related by white shamans, who almost always portray themselves as "out-shamaning" their Native teachers in the end. Expressively one-dimensional by supplying an all-white perspective, the overwhelming majority of shamanic products eclipse the so-called (indigenous) Other. Teachings of contemporary shamanism both recruit new disciples and generate new (white) shamans. Several former apprentices of well-known contemporary shamans have entered shamanic careers themselves. For instance, Sandra Ingermann, originally studying at Harner's Foundation for Shamanic Studies, has in turn engaged in writing about self-help shamanism and invented her technique of Soul Retrieval.

Additionally, evaluations of contemporary shamanism from a Native point of view focus on the sellout boom of indigenous cultures, with the fiercest controversies centering around sacred sites. Places like Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, for example, are commercialized by contemporary shamanism for spiritual tourism. Amongst the many negative side effects created by shamanic souvenir hunters are not only

the cultural showcasing of inhabitants of such places, but also the environmental pollution of local sceneries.

While organic shamanism is gradually disappearing on a global scale, dislocated shamanism enjoys immense popularity by copyrighting a synthetic alternative to traditional shamanic practice. The compartmentalization of religions and lifestyles is an integral ingredient of contemporary shamanism. Contemporary shamans and their disciples are very eclectic in both filtering out and amalgamating individual aspects of several belief systems. This cloning of particular types of shamanisms is customized according to personal needs and preferences. Thus, contemporary shamanism is often accused of being orchestrated and self-absorbed. Unlike organic shamanism, which is overwhelmingly directed towards a clan or tribe, contemporary shamanism is designed to be less phylogenetic. As an organized "ism" that can be purchased during a weekend seminar, contemporary shamanism is also criticized for lacking in-depth achievements. Generally, the long phases of apprenticeship and the aggravating existence of trial and error of tribal shamans is missing from contemporary shamanic practice. Indeed, contemporary shamans are sometimes associated with hedonism and simulation. Skeptics of contemporary shamans stress the artificiality of instant, effortless, and financially tailored shamanic enlightenment. They are suspicious of the simplistic formulas of contemporary shamanism and its profit-oriented priorities. Consequently, the exclusively materialistic clientele of contemporary shamans is attributed with myopia, complacency, and apolitical credos. Either believing or portraying themselves as genuinely shamanic, whiteshamans have made it a general norm to not respond to such critiques.

Although obsolete, the succeeding two Resolutions[2] capture the controversial nature of contemporary shamanism:

APPENDIX

RESOLUTIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF SHAMANISM BY NON-NATIVE PEOPLES

RESOLUTION OF THE 5TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TRADITION ELDERS CIRCLE

Northern Cheyenne Nation, Two Moons' Camp
Rosebud Creek, Montana
October 5, 1980.

It has been brought to the attention of the Elders and their representatives in Council that various individuals are moving about this Great Turtle Island and across the great waters to foreign soil, purporting to be spiritual leaders. They carry pipes and other objects sacred to the Red Nations, the indigenous people of the western hemisphere.

These individuals are gathering non-Indian people as followers who believe they are receiving instructions of the original people. We, the Elders and our representatives

sitting in Council, give warning to these non-Indian followers that it is our understanding this is not a proper process, that the authority to carry these sacred objects is given by the people, and the purpose and procedures are specific to time and the needs of the people.

The medicine people are chosen by the medicine and long instruction and discipline are necessary before ceremonies and healing can be done. These procedures are always in the Native tongue; there are no exceptions and profit is not the motivation.

There are many Nations with many and varied procedures specifically for the welfare of their people. These processes and ceremonies are of the most Sacred Nature. The Council finds the open display of these ceremonies contrary to these Sacred instructions.

Therefore, be warned that these individuals are moving about playing upon the spiritual needs and ignorance of our non-Indian brothers and sisters. The value of these instructions and ceremonies is questionable, may be meaningless, and hurtful to the individual carrying false messages. There are questions that should be asked of these individuals:

1. What nation does the person represent?
2. What is their Clan and Society?
3. Who instructed them and where did they learn?
4. What is their home address?

If no information is forthcoming, you may inquire at the address listed below, and we will try to find out about them for you. We concern ourselves only with those people who use spiritual ceremonies with non-Indian people for profit. There are many other things to be shared with the four colors of humanity in our common destiny as one with our Mother the Earth. It is this sharing that must be considered with great care by the Elders and the medicine people who carry the Sacred Trusts, so that no harm may come to people through ignorance and misuse of these powerful forces.

Signed,
Tom Yellowtail
Wyoloa, MY 59089.
Larry Anderson
Navajo Nation
PO Box 342
Fort Defiance
AZ 86504.
Izadore Thom
Beech Star Route
Bellingham
WA 98225.
Thomas Banyacya
Hopi Independent Nation
Shungopavy Pueblo
Second Mesa
via AZ 86403.
Philip Deere (deceased)

Muskogee (Creek) Nation (in tribute).
Walter Denny
Chippewa-Cree Nation
Rocky Boy Route
Box Elder
MT 59521.
Austin Two Moons
Northern Cheyenne Nation
Rosebud Creek
MT.
Tadadaho
Haudenasaunee
Onondaga Nation
via Nedrow, NY 13120.
Chief Fools Crow (deceased)
Lakota Nation (in tribute).
Frank Cardinal, Sr.
Chateh, PO Box 120
Assumption, Alberta
Canada TOM OSO.
Peter O'Chiese
Entrance Terry Ranch
Entrance, Alberta
Canada.

AIM (AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT) RESOLUTION

Sovereign Diné Nation
Window Rock, AZ
May 11, 1984.

Whereas the Spiritual wisdom which is shared by the Elders with the people has been passed on to us through the creation from time immemorial; and

Whereas the spirituality of Indian Nations is inseparable from the people themselves; and

Whereas the attempted theft of Indian ceremonies is a direct attack and theft from Indian people themselves; and

Whereas there has been a dramatic increase in the incidence of selling Sacred ceremonies, such as the sweat lodge and the vision quest, and of Sacred articles, such as religious pipes, feathers and stone; and

Whereas these practices have been and continue to be conducted by Indians and non-Indians alike, constituting not only insult and disrespect for the wisdom of the ancients, but also exposing ignorant non-Indians to potential harm and even death through the misuse of these ceremonies; and

Whereas the traditional Elders and Spiritual leaders have repeatedly warned against and condemned the commercialisation of our ceremonies; and

Whereas such commercialisation has increased dramatically in recent years, to wit:

- the representations of Cyfus McDonald, Osheana Fast Wolf, and Brooke Medicine Ego, all non-Indian women representing themselves as "Sacred Women," and who, in the case of Cyfus McDonald, have defrauded Indian people of Sacred articles;
- A non-Indian woman going by the name of "Quanda" representing herself as a "Healing Woman" and charging $20 for sweat lodges;
- Sun Bear and the so-called "Bear Tribe Medicine Society," who engage in the sale of Indian ceremonies and Sacred objects, operating out of the State of Washington, but traveling and speaking throughout the United States;
- Wallace Black Elk and Grace Spotted Eagle, Indian people operating in Denver, Colorado, charging up to $50 for so-called "Sweat Lodge Workshops;"
- A group of non-Indians working out of Boulder, Colorado, and throughout the Southwest, and audaciously calling itself "Vision Quest, Inc.," thereby stealing the name and attempting to steal the concept of one of our most spiritual ceremonies;

Therefore, let it be resolved that the Southwest AIM Leadership Conference reiterates the position articulated by our Elders at the First American Indian Tribunal held at D.Q. University, September 1982, as follows:

Now, to those who are doing these things, we send our third warning. Our Elders ask, "Are you prepared to take the consequences of your actions? You will be outcasts from your people if you continue these practices" … Now, this is another one. Our young people are getting restless. They are the ones who sought their Elders in the first place to teach them the Sacred ways. They have said that they will take care of those who are abusing our Sacred ceremonies and Sacred objects in their own way. In this way they will take care of their Elders.

We Resolve to protect our Elders and our traditions, and we condemn those who seek to profit from Indian Spirituality. We put them on notice that our patience grows thin with them and they continue their disrespect at their own risk.

NOTES

1. Vine Deloria, Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 1994), 38.
2. As these cannot be identified as official authorities, responsible for permissions pertaining to these Resolutions, the main reference source for citations are the reprints quoted in Ward Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1992), 223–28.

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The Worship of the Goddess in Feminist Spirituality in the United States

Cynthia Eller

The feminist spirituality movement emerged concurrently with the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States. It represented an attempt to create a uniquely feminist religion, one that empowered individual women and at the same time nurtured a society-wide revolution away from male dominance and the exploitation of nature. With this quest in mind, spiritually minded feminists were quickly drawn to the evolving Neopagan movement, and more narrowly to one of its subreligions: witchcraft, or Wicca. The Neopagan movement is extremely diverse, but most Neopagans worship a central Goddess, and this feature was very appealing to feminists in search of an alternative to the male monotheism of established religions, especially Judaism and Christianity, in the United States.

The feminist spirituality movement might have developed as simply another variant of Neopaganism, but it quickly distinguished itself from its Neopagan peers by its eclecticism, its zeal for independence, and, most of all, its separatism. Most feminist spirituality groups did not accept male participation in any form. They declared that they were exploring "the female mysteries" and that "male energy" would distract them from this mission. Moreover, they took the rather heterodox view—for Neopagans—that it was perfectly acceptable for them to worship female deities alone and to provide no role for male gods, not even as subordinate figures. These choices made spiritual feminists such mavericks in the world of Neopaganism that it is fair to say that the feminist spirituality movement emerged as its own religion, albeit one closely allied with Neopaganism.

The feminist spirituality movement peaked in the 1980s, when it introduced its message—that God was a woman and that all women partook of the divinity of the Goddess—to an uninitiated audience. Today, most adult women with feminist inclinations have been exposed to the basic ideas of feminist spirituality, so the movement has lost some of its revolutionary edge, though not its devoted following. Because of its loose structure and the difficulty in drawing any firm lines in the amorphous religious landscape occupied by the feminist spirituality movement, it is

impossible to say how many women today are practitioners of this new religion. In the 1970s and early 1980s, when it was a struggle for women to define themselves as both feminist and spiritual, the very difficulty of the task resulted in a vibrant and comparatively unified movement. Today, feminism is a less visible and vocal cultural force, and Neopaganism is increasingly acceptable as a viable religious alternative, so it has sometimes been the path of least resistance for spiritual feminists to accept a niche for themselves as the feminist variant of Neopaganism.

HISTORY OF THE FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY MOVEMENT

From the beginning, the feminist spirituality movement straddled different social worlds. On the one hand, it was a form of feminism, aligned with "cultural feminism"—the effort to develop new, nonpatriarchal cultural forms—as opposed to "political feminism": the effort to secure political gains and legal rights for women within current power structures. On the other hand, feminist spirituality was an alternative religion born most immediately from the ferment of the antiestablishment 1960s counterculture, and more distantly from the long history of Western occult societies and their practice of ritual, magic, and divination.

Three strands of influence affected the initial emergence of the feminist spirituality movement in the early 1970s: secular feminism, Jewish and Christian feminism, and the presence of women—particularly women with a growing feminist consciousness—within existing Neopagan religions. The principal aims of the feminist movement of the 1960s were secular and political: reproductive rights, rights for women in the workplace, and nondiscriminatory marriage and divorce laws. But as the feminist movement gathered steam, it took on a profound significance for many of its participants, and the critique they mounted of patriarchal society went ever deeper. Eventually they felt driven to ask the "big questions" about sexism: What was the cause of male dominance? Was it inevitable? Were women different from men, and if so, how? Should women merely fight for the opportunity to compete in patriarchal society, or should they use their uniquely feminine traits and experiences to create a different type of world, better for all? Big questions became religious questions: first, because feminists sought to understand the role religion played in creating and maintaining male-dominant societies; and second, because the very depth and breadth of these "why" questions, along with individuals' profound, life-transforming commitment to the feminist movement, took on a religious dimension.

Spiritual feminists often conceptualized this turning toward spirituality as a natural development in which consciousness-raising (CR) groups evolved into feminist spirituality groups. CR groups, developing first under the guise of "rap sessions" or "bitch sessions" in the late 1960s, were loosely structured gatherings in which small groups of women gathered to share their experiences, searching for common threads of sex discrimination.[1] Certainly the dynamic of a small, all-female group bent on investigating female identity was common to both CR groups and spiritual feminist gatherings, and this similarity helped to provide a bridge between the two for secular feminists who were initially uncertain about dabbling in spiritual matters.

Jewish and Christian feminists felt no such hesitancy about addressing religious questions. For them, the greater leap was from established religion into alternative religion. Already comfortable with religious language—and, depending on their specific religious background, with ritual—Jewish and Christian feminists took the sometimes difficult step of rejecting the religious certainties that they were taught and venturing into new theological and spiritual territory. Even today, there is significant shared history between the feminist spirituality movement and Jewish and Christian feminism, and also a surprising amount of shared belief and ritual. Fundamentally, what separated those Jewish and Christian feminists who remained within established religions from those who entered the realm of Neopagan religious creativity was their differing opinions about whether or not established religions could be successfully transformed. Those who became spiritual feminists finally concluded that efforts at reform from within Judaism or Christianity were either doomed to failure or not worth the effort, given the profound inadequacies of established religions, and so they searched for religious alternatives.

The most famous step out of Jewish and Christian feminism into feminist spirituality was a literal step, one taken by Mary Daly (b. 1928), a prominent Catholic theologian and author of increasingly radical feminist critiques of Christianity. Her first book, *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968), was a rather mild criticism of Christianity. But her opposition to established religion accelerated with *Beyond God the Father* (1973) and ran right off the rails of established religion with *Gyn/Ecology* (1978) and her subsequent publications. In 1971, Daly was invited to preach at The Memorial Church of Harvard University, the first woman given this honor. In her sermon, "The Women's Movement: An Exodus Community," Daly formally took leave of established religion, declaring, "We [women] cannot really belong to institutional religion as it exists. It isn't good enough to be token preachers.… Singing sexist hymns, praying to a male god breaks our spirit, makes us less than human. The crushing weight of this tradition, of this power structure, tells us that *we do not even exist.*" At the conclusion of her sermon, Daly walked out of the church in protest, inviting the other women present to depart with her.[2]

Upon abandoning male-dominant religions, some Jewish and Christian feminists joined the ranks of secular feminists, but many felt a need to replace the patriarchal religion they abandoned with one that was woman-affirming. Though Daly never became a leader in the feminist spirituality movement, as soon as she left Christianity she began speaking of witchcraft as women's proper religious heritage, motivating other women to search out avowed witches and learn more about their religious beliefs and practices. But even when Jewish and Christian feminists did not explicitly recommend witchcraft or Neopaganism to their disgruntled sisters, they implicitly did so by focusing their theological critique of western monotheistic religions on the maleness of God. If God's apparent manhood, evident in the male pronouns used to speak of him, was to be removed, only two options short of atheism remained: either speak of God in gender-neutral ways or use female images and pronouns for God at least as often as male ones, if not to the exclusion of male terms altogether. Jewish and Christian feminists often experimented with feminine terms for God

within the context of their own religious traditions, finding Bible passages that spoke of God as Mother or referred to God's wisdom, Sophia, as a divine female being. Others longed for something less apologetic and more revolutionary, resolving that only exclusively female language for God could hope to undo the damage of the unrelieved androcentrism of millennia of western religious tradition.

This they found in witchcraft, which, as fleshed out by British occultist Gerald Gardner (1884–1964), involved worship of a goddess (though usually a male god too) and central religious roles for women as her priestesses. Gardner began his public career as a witch in the 1950s. By the 1970s, when American feminists increasingly found witchcraft attractive, Gardner's movement was already splintered into several denominations centered around different leaders, liturgies, and sacred lores. Gardner's form of witchcraft, and those descended from it, typically claimed a connection with ancient British paganism. These traditions typically included elaborate initiations and other occult practices, understanding themselves as secret societies with privileged access to efficacious magic and divination.

Gardnerian witchcraft was far too stodgy and authoritarian for most feminists seeking alternatives to established religions. But it still played a role in the development of feminist spirituality, in part because individual Gardnerian witches wished to bring their Wiccan practice into line with their own developing feminist principles. These women provided an entry point for other feminists intent on exploring the spiritual possibilities of witchcraft as a gynocentric (woman-centered) religious tradition.

At least as important in the development of feminist spirituality, however, was the broader Neopagan movement. Especially in the United States, witchcraft was not limited to Gardner and his former disciples, nor was Neopaganism limited to witchcraft. Religious innovation was the order of the day for members of the Sixties counterculture, and numerous Neopagan groups claimed allegiances to any and all pagan—or even nonpagan—religions they could find, making their own eclectic assemblages of deities, rituals, and beliefs, unified around an all-embracing nature worship.[3] It was an ideal milieu for spiritually minded feminists, offering them both freedom and resources to create their own female-centered religion. Spiritual feminists found themselves up against certain orthodoxies in Wicca, such as the presence of male deities in the pantheon and men in the ritual circle, but Neopaganism was so fluid and diverse in the early 1970s that spiritual feminists were hardly alone in experimenting with new forms of magic and ritual. The female separatism of feminist spirituality was unique within the world of Neopaganism, and it attracted criticism from some Neopagans, but no one was in any position to enforce any rules that would prevent the formation of female-separatist Neopagan groups.

One of the main people who propelled the feminist spirituality movement along its way was Zsuzsanna Budapest (b. 1940), a Hungarian refugee living in Los Angeles, California, in the late 1960s. Budapest took her surname from the city she left behind. She brought with her the taste for political activism and radical social change that led to her participation in the failed Hungarian revolution of 1956, and transferred it to an enthusiasm for the women's movement. As the women's

movement quickly became Budapest's life, she saw a need for a women's religion to ground and motivate feminist politics. But unlike many of her contemporaries, she had a prior acquaintance with paganism. Budapest was a "hereditary witch," initiated into witchcraft by someone who claimed to have been similarly initiated in an unbroken line leading back to pre-Christian times in Europe. Specifically, Budapest said that she had been initiated into witchcraft by her mother, Masika Szilagyi, who in turn had been initiated by Victoria, a household servant.[4]

Whatever religious resources Budapest brought with her from Hungary, it is clear that by the time she founded the Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1 (named after American suffragist and nineteenth-century feminist leader Susan B. Anthony) in Los Angeles in 1971, she drew on other sources as well, including other forms of witchcraft and Neopaganism, and elements of the New Age movement then taking root in California. Budapest boldly declared that witchcraft was women's religion, and she, along with a small group of similarly motivated women, began to celebrate the solstices and equinoxes and initiate other women into their form of feminist witchcraft. They were tremendously successful. During the 1970s, over 700 women were initiated as witches by the Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1, and Budapest presided over large public rituals, sometimes with more than 100 participants. Budapest inspired feminists in other cities across the United States to form their own covens. The movement proliferated rapidly, partly because feminists were given tacit permission to invent their own rituals within the rather spare parameters laid down by pioneers like Budapest.[5]

The Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1 announced its religious and political intentions in the form of a manifesto that captures many of the themes that later characterized the feminist spirituality movement:

> We believe that feminist witches are wimmin who search within themselves for the female principle of the universe and who relate as daughters to the Creatrix.
>
> We believe that just as it is time to fight for the right to control our bodies, it is also time to fight for our sweet womon souls.
>
> We believe that in order to fight and win a revolution that will stretch for generations into the future, we must find reliable ways to replenish our energies. We believe that without a secure grounding in womon's spiritual strength there will be no victory for us.
>
> We believe that we are part of a changing universal consciousness that has long been feared and prophesized by the patriarchs.
>
> We believe that Goddess-consciousness gave humanity a workable, long-lasting, peaceful period during which the Earth was treated as Mother and wimmin were treated as Her priestesses. This was the mythical Golden age of Matriarchy.
>
> We believe that wimmin lost supremacy through the aggressions of males who were exiled from the matriarchies and formed the patriarchal hordes responsible for the invention of rape and the subjugation of wimmin.
>
> We believe that female control of the death (male) principle yields hummin evolution.
>
> We are committed to living life lovingly towards ourselves and our sisters. We are committed to joy, self-love, and life-affirmation.

> We are committed to winning, to surviving, to struggling against patriarchal oppression.
>
> We are committed to defending our interests and those of our sisters through the knowledge of witchcraft: to blessing, to cursing, to healing, and to binding with power rooted in womon-identified wisdom.
>
> We are opposed to attacking the innocent.
>
> We are equally committed to political, communal, and personal solutions.
>
> We are committed to teaching wimmin how to organize themselves as witches and to sharing our traditions with wimmin.
>
> We are opposed to teaching our magic and our craft to men until equality of the sexes is reality.
>
> Our immediate goal is to congregate with each other according to our ancient womon-made laws and to remember our past, renew our powers and affirm our Goddess of the Ten-thousand Names.[6]

The manifesto reflected the themes of female separatism, the worship of a single Goddess known by many names and in many guises, belief in a past era of matriarchy, and the use of magic and ritual as both a means of women's empowerment and a tool for initiating social and political change.

Though Budapest played an important role in the birth of the feminist spirituality movement, the movement was not centered around a single charismatic leader. Many influential leaders were important, and even though the rank and file admired the brightest stars in their firmament, the antiauthoritarianism of both Neopaganism and radical feminism was so prevalent that feminist spirituality could never have become a personality cult.

That having been said, one of the most significant influences on the feminist spirituality movement after Budapest was Starhawk (b. 1951), another Californian who combined interests in witchcraft and feminism. Starhawk, born Miriam Simos, was raised Jewish, but from an early age she was fascinated by magic and the occult. At the same time she hoped to find a theological grounding for her own sense that the divine inhered in the natural world. She pursued witchcraft first, finding teachers in the San Francisco Bay Area, but she yearned for a more explicitly feminist version of witchcraft. Eventually, she created one. Spurred on her journey by a chance encounter with Budapest and the Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1, Starhawk wrote an introduction to witchcraft that strongly underscored the religion's reverence for women and the female principle and the importance of women's leadership. *The Spiral Dance* (1979) sold thousands of copies and Starhawk gained fame as a spokesperson for Neopaganism in general and feminist spirituality in particular. Starhawk did not exclude men from the practice of witchcraft, as did many other spiritual feminists. However, since she asserted that female-only groups and rituals had their place, and because she regarded witchcraft's ground-level feminism as one of its most attractive aspects, she effectively became a leader in the feminist spirituality movement.[7]

Budapest and Starhawk both identified themselves as witches and, by extension, as Neopagans. But many feminists who wished to plumb the religious depths of their

feminist commitment or to find an alternative to the established religions were not willing to identify themselves as witches. They were simply women honoring the Goddess, wherever they could find her. In the 1970s and 1980s, most Neopagans were still devoted to reviving pre-Christian pagan religions that had a definite pedigree: usually British, though sometimes Norse, Greco-Roman, or Egyptian. Neopagans most often regarded themselves as reviving the religions of their (mostly white) ancestors. In contrast, spiritual feminists were, from the beginning, less geographically bound in their search for the divine feminine. To the Neopagan favorites of Diana or Cerridwen, spiritual feminists added Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist goddesses, not to mention every goddess they could find in Native American and African pantheons. Spiritual feminists were similarly prepared to adopt religious practices and preoccupations from the New Age, from channeling disembodied spirits, to observing auras, to investigating their past lives. To the extent that feminist spirituality developed from a solid core, it was that of Wicca. But spiritual feminists' voracious hunger for images and experiences of the divine feminine made the movement, from its inception, unabashedly syncretistic.

SOCIOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY MOVEMENT

As a religion committed to individual creativity and highly suspicious of any form of top-down leadership, the feminist spirituality movement never developed a central organization that monitors the activities of its constituent groups. Though people made efforts to create national-level resource agencies—most notably, the Re-formed Congregation of the Goddess—none managed to represent the plethora of feminist spirituality groups active in the United States. Indeed, many spiritual feminists choose to practice alone. They identify themselves as spiritual feminists, Neopagans, or witches, they practice magic, and they may set up altars or meditate or observe the solar and lunar holidays. Despite their solitude, they are part of a wider world of feminist spirituality, gaining legitimacy for their choices through the many books, magazines, retreats, and other gatherings that unite spiritual feminists into a modestly cohesive group.

Many spiritual feminists practice their religion with small groups of like-minded women. Even solo practitioners have often been in a group at some time if they no longer are now. The style of these groups varies enormously. Some gather to experiment with trance states and direct communion with the Goddess while others resemble a book club. Spiritual feminist groups come together and fall apart quite readily, though some maintain a steady core of members for ten or more years, supporting one another, celebrating events in each other's lives, and marking the turning of the seasons with rituals to the Goddess.

Spiritual feminists take many routes to find one another and form small groups. A woman interested in practicing in a group may advertise at a feminist bookstore, in a spiritual feminist publication, or online to find others who live in her area. Adult education programs, especially ones oriented toward New Age topics, may offer

courses in feminist spirituality that later become ritual groups when their official term has ended. Interestingly, another avenue to the formation of a feminist spirituality group is through a church or synagogue. More liberal denominations, like the United Church of Christ or Reform Judaism, may sponsor study groups exploring feminine aspects of the divine in Christianity or Judaism, and these may evolve into feminist spirituality groups, either with or without official sanction. The Unitarian Universalist Association sponsors a large and active organization, the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans, that regularly organizes workshops, study groups, and ritual circles, some of which restrict their membership to women and operate effectively as spiritual feminist groups. Especially now that feminist spirituality is no longer a brand new player on the religious scene, the line between Jewish and Christian feminism on the one hand and feminist spirituality on the other is somewhat blurred. Early on, spiritual feminists were often driven by a deep hostility toward established religions and wanted to discard anything that reminded them of western monotheistic traditions. Meanwhile, Jewish and Christian feminists who decided to stay within their traditions wished to have that choice reinforced by others who had made the same decision. Today Jewish and Christian feminists typically feel less threatened, and other spiritual feminists are more accepting and less judgmental of the multiple allegiances that such women maintain.

Like the rest of the Neopagan community, spiritual feminists also mingle at large summer festivals devoted to drumming circles, workshops on everything from reading Tarot cards to dowsing, and, of course, large public rituals. Some of these festivals are composed entirely of self-identified spiritual feminists interested in learning more about ritual, magic, and the Goddess from others further along the path than themselves. But spiritual feminists also congregate at Neopagan festivals, meeting in female-only groups, and at lesbian feminist festivals, where they take the opportunity to address spiritual topics and share sacred space with other spiritual feminists. Spiritual feminists also meet and make ritual with one another by signing up for one of the many "goddess pilgrimages" now offered by more experienced spiritual feminists. The most popular destinations for goddess pilgrimages are Great Britain or the Mediterranean, particularly Malta, Greece, and Turkey. The Neolithic town of Çatalhöyük in Turkey, currently under excavation, is one such pilgrimage site since its first excavator, James Mellaart, interpreted frescos and figurines there as evidence that the town's population practiced a goddess-based religion and reckoned kinship matrilineally. Minoan Crete is also very popular for goddess pilgrimages since its first excavator, Sir Arthur Evans, also described the culture he unearthed as goddess-worshipping and matrilineal. But spiritual feminists can also join pilgrimages to Mexico, Poland, or virtually any location where it is believed that there are sites sacred to the Goddess. And since most spiritual feminists believe that goddess religion was the universal religion of the human race for most of our history, such sites are indeed everywhere.

The feminist spirituality movement also functions as a sort of virtual community, bonded together through books, magazines, newsletters, and email lists as much as through face-to-face contact. The movement gives permission for individual women

to take their own spiritual investigations seriously and to perceive themselves as part of a legitimate feminist and spiritual enterprise.

BELIEFS OF THE FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY MOVEMENT

The feminist spirituality movement holds almost all its beliefs lightly. From the beginning, it took a very pragmatic approach to religious belief, supporting those beliefs that empower women and dismissing those that do not. Women with a wide range of religious beliefs cooperate with one another, regarding this variation in belief as mainly a personal matter. Nevertheless, feminist spirituality has a definite belief structure. Deviations from it may be accepted or dismissed as irrelevant, but a central spiritual feminist theology defines the values of feminist spirituality and distinguishes it from other religions.

The principal beliefs of the feminist spirituality movement are all contained in its vision of the Goddess, she who is the heart of the universe and exists as the divine within each woman. Spiritual feminists conceive of the Goddess in a number of ways that appear contradictory at a superficial level, but are not felt as contradiction by her worshippers. She is often referred to as the Great Goddess, the Great Mother, the Creatrix—all of which give rise to an impression of Goddess monotheism. Indeed, spiritual feminists usually speak of the Goddess in singular terms. Yet the Goddess is also worshipped—indeed is far more frequently worshipped—in her various polytheistic aspects. One prevalent version of the Goddess's aspects is Trinitarian: she is virgin (or maiden), mother, and crone, a division meant to illustrate that she is not merely a fertility goddess or a wise old woman, but a goddess who manifests characteristics of all the phases of a woman's life. (In keeping with the movement's generally very positive attitude toward sexuality, it is frequently stressed that the term "virgin" simply means unmarried, a woman who belongs to herself and no one else, rather than a woman who has not experienced sexual intercourse.)

The polytheism of the feminist spirituality movement extends further than this, however. Any female deity in any religion worldwide is considered an "aspect" or "manifestation" of *the* Goddess, and in these many guises spiritual feminists most often interact with the Goddess. A woman may choose to worship the Greek goddess Demeter to connect with the concept of motherhood or with Artemis to grow in strength and independence. She may call on Pele, the Hawaiian goddess of the volcano, or Kali, Hindu goddess of destruction, if she is working through feelings of rage. Spiritual feminists are sometimes criticized for lifting these deities out of their cultural and religious contexts. Spiritual feminists are rarely troubled by this. They tend to believe that, for example, when Tibetans developed iconography and mythology around the goddess Tara, they were expressing their experience of the Great Goddess, the original deity, in the only context they knew, that of Buddhism. For a spiritual feminist to embrace Tara, then, is not to appropriate a Buddhist goddess but to celebrate the fact that the Goddess is everywhere. If anything, when Tara becomes a spiritual feminist deity, it is felt that she is returning to her original matrix, that of the Great Goddess.[8]

The Goddess is a radically immanent deity, present in all things and accessible through all things. Spiritual feminists frequently remark that the Earth is the body of the Goddess and that women connect with the Earth through their experiences of their own bodies and their experiences of nature. The Goddess *is* nature, and nature is sacred: she celebrates her sexuality and gives birth to everything. Spiritual feminists see the Goddess as constantly changing, ever-renewed, moving endlessly through the cycles of the seasons and the ages. The quality of belief in this Goddess is thus significantly different from that of belief in the transcendent God found in most Western religious traditions. Spiritual feminists stress that one need not have faith in the Goddess because one can experience her directly. Starhawk responds to the question "do you believe in the Goddess?" as follows: "People often ask me if I *believe* in the Goddess. I reply 'Do you believe in rocks?' It is extremely difficult for most Westerners to grasp the concept of a manifest deity. The phrase 'believe *in*' itself implies that we cannot *know* the Goddess, that She is somehow intangible, incomprehensible. But we do not *believe* in rocks—we may see them, touch them, dig them out of our gardens, or stop small children from throwing them at each other. We know them; we connect with them."[9] For many spiritual feminists, however, the idea of the Goddess is enough: just to regard the divine as somehow like them, to feel that ultimate power is female, is spiritually profound.

Adding strength to this epiphany is the spiritual feminist belief that our human ancestors all recognized the Goddess as the supreme deity of the universe and that it was she who was worshipped millennia before anyone ever dreamed up the idea of a male God. Spiritual feminists conceive of this era of universal goddess worship as a golden age in which human beings lived in peace with themselves, their environment, and their neighbors. It is typically reconstructed as a time when women had access to social power (if not holding an actual monopoly on social power) and were revered as a reflection of the divine. Moreover, spiritual feminists believe that this was a time when "female" values—nurturance, cooperation—held sway. Spiritual feminists generally argue that during this long age of the Goddess writing, mathematics, and agriculture developed, and that only relatively recently has the religion and civilization of the Goddess been destroyed by male-dominant cultures.[10]

Though this era of Goddess worship and gynocentrism was supposedly universal, spiritual feminists most often tell the story with respect to the cultures of the Mediterranean. In this part of the world, beginning around 3000 BCE, patriarchal invaders imposed male dominance and a divine sanction for it in the form of an omnipotent male deity. The demise of Goddess worship was necessary for the success of the patriarchs' mission, spiritual feminists argue, because women who knew they were living reflections of a powerful Goddess would never assent to men controlling the world. Armed violence in the short run, and ideological indoctrination in the form of patriarchal religion in the long run, sealed the patriarchy's triumph and forced the Goddess religion underground.[11] However, even under the patriarchal religions of Judaism and Christianity, say spiritual feminists, Goddess worship continued as a minority religion among the peasant populations of Europe. This religion was so successful in winning the hearts and minds of the common folk that,

according to spiritual feminists, European Christianity had to take drastic measures to snuff it out. These efforts were the witch persecutions of the medieval and early modern periods. The figure typically given by spiritual feminists for the number of men, women, and children burned as witches in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is nine million, the great preponderance of these being women.[12] However, spiritual feminists are quick to add that not all of those persecuted for witchcraft were actually practitioners of paganism or Goddess worship. Most were sadly the victims of the patriarchs' need to consolidate their power. Women who did not fit neatly into the categories allotted to them under male domination were accused of witchcraft and then murdered for their supposed crimes, so that the potential revolution of women could be contained and patriarchal rule secured. Thus, the "Burning Times" stand for spiritual feminists as the single most blatant case of misogyny in Western history.

The understanding of spiritual feminists is that we continue to live in a patriarchal society today, and if women are no longer burned as witches, that is because of luck and persistent rebellion rather than reform by either the ruling patriarchs or ordinary men. However, the final installment of feminist spirituality's sacred history is not the present, but the future. Spiritual feminists hope for a time when society will return to the life-loving values of the Goddess, and just as often dread a planetary catastrophe brought on by the abuse of the environment through technology and the abuse of women, children, and minorities by ruling males. For spiritual feminists, we hover at the edge of apocalypse, and the days of the present order are numbered: either the patriarchy will destroy us all or we will at the last moment extricate ourselves from the bonds of male domination and usher in a new golden age of the Goddess.

Spiritual feminists exhibit considerable variation regarding their beliefs in the Goddess, in her many manifestations in religions around the world, and in the nature of prehistoric societies that worshipped her. Even more strikingly, spiritual feminists have a wide range of beliefs about whether they believe in the Goddess at all, or in any history of her former universality. So long as spiritual feminists affirm the basic values associated with the Goddess—principally, the value of women and nature and the importance of living in peace—this lack of unity in belief rarely creates any dissension in the movement. Spiritual feminists expect that women will bring their own beliefs and understandings about the Goddess to the ritual circle, and so long as individual spiritual feminists can commune with one another, issues of "belief" will not divide them.

PRACTICES OF THE FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY MOVEMENT

The central practices of the feminist spirituality movement involve ritual and magic or, most often, a combination of the two. Feminist witches conduct regular rituals on the solstices, equinoxes, and cross-quarter days between them, and sometimes on the new and full moons as well. Other spiritual feminists, less influenced by Wicca and Neopaganism, may meet on a biweekly or monthly basis following the Gregorian rather than the lunar calendar. For those who follow the solar cycle (the "Wheel

of the Year"), rituals differ depending on the season. Winter is a time for looking inward while summer is a time for dance and revelry. Whenever rituals are held, however, they mostly exhibit the same basic structure, beginning with the opening of the circle and ending with its closing. Often an altar is constructed in the middle of the ritual space, covered with flowers, candles, fruit, seashells, crystals, figurines of the Goddess, and any other objects that participants consider important. The ritual begins as all participants stand in a circle. The ritual leader or leaders go to each of the four compass points, beginning with the east and moving counterclockwise, holding a ritual object (usually a knife or wand). Energies and aspects of the Goddess associated with each direction are invoked and the ritual space is formally consecrated. Once the circle is formally cast, no one leaves it until it is formally closed. The ritual progresses with a series of songs, chants, readings, meditations, and dances. At some point participants usually make an effort to "raise energy" by holding hands, breathing together, and chanting or singing with increasing tempo and volume until the energy has reached its peak. The energy is then "sent" to its desired object (the end of patriarchy, the health of the earth, healing for a sick friend) and grounded (participants place their hands on the ground and gradually relax their breathing). Often participants will go around the circle, with each woman lighting a candle and announcing a wish to the group, those wishes ranging from "an end to the oppression of women" to "a new lover" and "money to pay the rent." Wishes are answered with shouts of "blessed be!" from the other participants. Some spiritual feminist groups are more psychotherapeutic in orientation and spend the majority of their ritual time going around the circle making wishes reflecting their current emotional or relational struggles and asking for the assistance of the group. The circle is closed in the opposite direction from which it was opened, and the goddesses are thanked and dismissed. After the circle is closed, participants usually share a meal, discuss the ritual, and talk companionably with one another.[13]

The raising and sending of energy in the context of a ritual circle is regarded as a form of magic within feminist spirituality, but other forms of magic are practiced as well, and most do not require group participation. Indeed, magic is often practiced alone, with the creation of protective charms or the binding of the powers of one's enemies, or in practicing forms of divination, from reading tea leaves to gazing into crystal balls. Some spiritual feminists make their living from the practice of magic, producing candles, herbs, oils, and other magical supplies and training others in their proper use.

The mechanisms of magic are explained differently by different individuals in the feminist spirituality movement. The most straightforwardly psychological interpretation of magic offered by spiritual feminists is that it works by triggering the subconscious mind. Magic, and the material devices it relies upon, focuses one's thoughts and energy on the desired event so that it will more likely come to pass. For example, a woman may sew a red heart-shaped charm, fill it with herbs, and place it under her pillow, in the belief that it will bring love into her life. When love does come into her life, she may say that it could just as well have happened had she sewn a green rectangular charm and that, if the red one was more efficacious, it was only because her

mind was trained for years to associate red with love. What really produced the desired result was her determination to have it.

Another interpretation of magic given by spiritual feminists, this one with a cosmological basis, suggests that magic works because it moves patterns of energy in accord with the practitioner's desires. According to this view, everything in the universe is connected by energy. And though it may seem to the conventional Western mind-set that someone could not protect her house from a tornado if it happens to be in the storm's path, feminist spirituality answers that the energy of the tornado and the energy of the individual mind are composed of the same substance and may therefore communicate with one another. Again, the focus is on one's mind, and not on the magical props used to trigger it, but the idea that the mind has powers to control not only one's own behavior but also other people and objects by virtue of their interconnection is superadded in this view of magic.[14]

A third understanding of magic among spiritual feminists is that actual causal connections exist between the magical props used and the ends sought. Thus, if a woman wants love, a green rectangular charm will never do, but neither will a red heart-shaped one unless it is filled with the proper herbs and oils and charged with the proper ritual actions. In this interpretation, the practitioner physically creates a charm that will bring her lover to her. For those who understand magic in this way, the magical act, not merely the intention behind it or the changes it creates in one's consciousness, effects the desired result. To illustrate, one feminist witch told me that she made a charm to keep the police away and placed it in her freezer. For over a year, the police gave her no trouble, but then one day a highway patrol officer pulled her over and gave her a speeding ticket. Puzzled and confused, she drove home, only to find that the electrical power to her house was out and everything in her freezer, including the charm, had thawed.

Whatever the immediate goal of the magic practiced by spiritual feminists, its overall importance in the feminist spirituality movement lies in the feeling of control it gives individual practitioners. Especially for women raised to believe that they have little control over their destinies, it is enormously freeing to have magical tools with which one can guide one's life. Spiritual feminists frequently comment on the difference between forms of prayer they learned in established religions, which required them to humbly request favors from a "big man in the sky," versus the practice of magic in the feminist spirituality movement, which involves women more actively taking their fate into their own hands.

FUTURE OF THE FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY MOVEMENT

The feminist spirituality movement was born out of a unique intersection of needs, interests, and available religious resources that characterized a certain group of women in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States. To the extent that those needs, interests, and religious resources remain today, the feminist spirituality movement continues to thrive. However, much has changed since the movement's

inception, and, with its trademark flexibility, the feminist spirituality movement has found ways to accommodate these changes.

The sometimes angry separatism that characterized early manifestations of feminist spirituality is less common today. This is partly because spiritual feminists have less cause to defend their choice to practice in female-only groups, now that that choice is more firmly established as a viable one. But it also reflects a mellower phase in the feminist movement as a whole. The revolutionary fires do not burn as brightly as they once did. Whether this is because the feminist movement succeeded or failed is a matter of enormous contention, but feminism simply does not grab headlines and scandalize ordinary folk the way it did at the time the feminist spirituality movement first came into being. Though individual women still come to the feminist spirituality movement in a spirit of religious rebellion, feminist spirituality is no longer the freshest face among alternative religions, or even among Neopagan ones. The feminist spirituality movement still encourages individual religious creativity, but newcomers are clearly arriving in a land where many of the customs and traditions are already set in place.

Perhaps most significant for the future of the feminist spirituality movement is the spirit of détente between it and the broader Neopagan movement. When feminist spirituality first came into being, it was decidedly at odds with much of the Neopagan mainstream: it was more free-form, less bound to occult tradition, more inclusive of a variety of religious and New Age traditions, and, of course, considerably less interested in making any space for men or maleness. Furthermore, many participants in the feminist spirituality movement never would have considered becoming involved had the movement not been a feminist religion. Women with scant interest in or attraction to alternative spiritualities sometimes found their way into feminist spirituality simply because this was where their sister feminists were active.

This is less true today. Women who have no appetite for the occult rarely become involved in feminist spirituality. As a result, the feminist spirituality movement is more unapologetically pagan than before and less hesitant to involve itself in the subculture of alternative religions on an equal footing with others. Because it does not distance itself as much from other forms of Neopaganism, the feminist spirituality movement is somewhat less distinctive. In the future it may or may not maintain a separate identity. It might gradually define itself as simply one form—though a very female-centered form—of Neopaganism.

NOTES

1. For a history of the CR movement, see Anita Shreve, *Women Together, Women Alone: The Legacy of the Consciousness-Raising Movement* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1989).

2. For details on this event, see Ursula King, *Women and Spirituality: Voices of Protest and Promise* (New York: New Amsterdam, 1989), 170; Mary Daly, "After the Death of God the Father: Women's Liberation and the Transformation of Christian Consciousness," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion,* ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 57.

3. This period of neopagan religious innovation is well documented in Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

4. Zsuzsanna Budapest, *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries: Feminist Witchcraft, Goddess Rituals, Spellcasting, and Other Womanly Arts* (Berkeley: Wingbow Press, 1989), 258–64.

5. Ibid., xi–xviii. As Budapest recounts it, she selected Susan B. Anthony's name for her coven after she learned that Anthony once answered a reporter's question about the afterlife by saying "When I die I shall go neither to heaven nor to hell, but stay right here and finish the women's revolution." Budapest reasoned that Anthony could be feminist spirituality's "guardian spirit," its "Lady of the Coven" (xviii).

6. Z. Budapest, *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries, Part One* (Oakland, CA: Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1, 1979), 9–10.

7. *The Spiral Dance* has been reissued twice, each time with extensive comments on the original text that illustrate the continued development of Starhawk's thinking about Wiccan belief and practice.

8. Cynthia Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess: The Feminist Spirituality Movement in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 67–74, 77–78, 132–34.

9. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 77.

10. Vicki Noble, *Shakti Woman: Feeling our Fire, Healing our World. The New Female Shamanism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 227–28; Marija Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 308–21.

11. Some spiritual feminists regard this story as a helpful myth; others believe it is an accurate historical account of human religion and civilization. Spiritual feminists are not alone in believing that human societies have undergone a major shift from being female-centered and goddess-worshipping to being male dominant and god-worshipping. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, many scholars put this theory forward as a scientific certainty [see Cynthia Eller, *Motherright* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming)]. Though spiritual feminists offer much evidence in support of this theory of original Goddess worship and its defeat via a patriarchal revolution, none of this evidence is convincing [see Cynthia Eller, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000)]. It is thus more accurate to regard this story as a myth or sacred history, rather than as history per se.

12. This figure is almost certainly inaccurate. It was first asserted by Matilda Joslyn Gage in *Woman, Church and State*, originally published in 1893. Historians of this era [for example, E. William Monter, *European Witchcraft* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1969), 73] offer much more modest estimates, some as low as 100,000—which is still, of course, very high.

13. Starhawk, *Spiral Dance,* 55–75; Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess,* 93–103.

14. Starhawk gives a basic introduction to this understanding of magic in *The Spiral Dance,* 18.

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Wicca, Witchcraft, and Modern Paganism

Douglas E. Cowan

INTRODUCTION

Nine men and women gather in a midtown apartment, not far from a major shopping mall. It is February 1, and, just as they have for many years, the group has come to celebrate the Wiccan sabbat known as Imbolc, the ritual bidding farewell to winter and looking forward to the return of spring. On the street below, rush hour traffic begins to wane and the noise drops away. The moon rises, its light gleaming off the polished windows of high-rise office buildings. Inside the apartment, the living room furniture has been pushed to the side and the room cleaned thoroughly. Soft music greets those who gather, and the sweet scent of incense hangs in the air. A circle has been carefully chalked on the hardwood floor, and tall candles mark the cardinal points of its compass, the four directions. They provide the only light in the room, and in their midst sits an altar, with various ritual tools arranged carefully on a deep blue altar cloth. As the moment for the ritual draws near, a feeling of expectation grips those in attendance, and two women begin to chant gently. Welcomed into the circle with a kiss, the members of the coven hold hands as their High Priestess grasps her *athame*—her ritual knife—and begins the opening invocation. "I call upon thee, O guardians of the watchtowers of the East, spirits of air and intellect, to witness our rites and to safeguard our circle." As she speaks, she draws a pentagram in the air before her, imagining as she does lines of pale blue fire.[1] As she finishes the last line of the pentagram, her coven responds as one, "So mote it be."

On that same night, in a number of different cities and towns across the continent, other Pagans gather. Unlike the midtown coven, however, these are all women, and no one in this group has ever met face-to-face. Any two of them could pass on the street and neither would be the wiser. They met through an Internet discussion forum for beginning Witches, one that advertised a safe place to identify as Witches. For several months, they have been meeting online, struggling to plan a ritual they can perform together. Tonight will be the first. One of them has written a simple ritual script and distributed it by e-mail to the others in the group. Different members

have chosen to play different roles, with no one acting as High Priestess. Some will call the quarters, others will offer the charge to the Goddess and the God, and another will lead an online visualization exercise designed to bring their disparate energies into harmony. Seated at their computers, each participant prepares a few essentials—candles to represent the Goddess and the God, incense, and bowls of earth and water. One by one, they log in to the private chat room. As they enter their usernames and passwords, a message scrolls slowly up the screen.

> *Welcome to our circle. This is a place of perfect love and perfect trust. All who live as daughters of the Goddess are welcome here. The sun has set in this ancient grove, and the shadows deepen on the edges of the firelight. Find a place and prepare yourself for what is to come.*

As each member enters, her name appears on the screen, and she is greeted by those already in the chat room/ritual grove. When it is time for the ritual to begin, the appointed leader types:

> ::Lady Onyx rises and approaches the altar. She picks up her athame and motions her circle sisters to rise. She raises her athame::
>
> <*Onyx*> In this place, we walk between the worlds, and in this time, we step outside of time… This night, we invoke the Goddesses of old: Isis the protector of visions, and Brighid, the bringer of wisdom.
> <*ALL*> SO MOTE IT BE.

No one hears the words of the others. Only the glowing text on the screen signifies their presence and participation. Like many modern Pagan rituals, theirs is less an established sacred place than a sanctuary of the imagination, a shared vision of their ritual that they are convinced connects them one to another.

Not all experiences of modern Paganism are so gratifying, so potentially fulfilling as these. Many other Wiccans, Witches, Druids, and Ásatrúer lead what amounts to double lives. Though their religions are officially recognized in the United States and Canada, the growing popularity of Wicca and Witchcraft has not completely eclipsed the stigma that remains attached to them. Many Pagans remain "in the broomcloset," afraid to reveal their religious choices to friends and family. And, when they do try to stand in the truth of their own beliefs, they are often marginalized. During one ritual celebration, for example, Pagans in Lancaster, California, were accosted by evangelical Christians who gathered around their circle praying, reading Bible verses aloud, and blaring Christian music from a SUV parked nearby. Though only three blocks away, it took local police more than four hours to respond to the Pagans' complaints of harassment.[2] At the largest military post in the United States, members of the Fort Hood Open Circle, one of the first official Wiccan groups approved by the U.S. Army, had to contend with evangelicals "calling the base and threatening to stage a march in town and disrupt the rituals,"[3] as well as threats of federal hearings from a prominent House representative.[4] Numerous Pagan students have been suspended from school or threatened with suspension for activities ranging

from wearing a pentacle to carrying books like Silver RavenWolf's popular *Teen Witch,* to simply admitting they are Wiccan.[5]

According to many of its adherents, as well as media commentators and academic analysts, modern Paganism is among the fastest growing cluster of religious traditions in North America, Great Britain and parts of Europe, and Australia.[6] Through film and television, it is prominent in popular culture. Though there is some indication that the market has flattened, for the last decade-and-a-half modern Paganism has been among the fastest growing sections in bookstores such as Borders, Barnes and Noble, and Chapters.

An introductory essay such as this cannot hope to do justice to the vast panoply of emergent religious belief and practice that constitutes modern Paganism: Witches and Wiccans, whether connected to established lineages, eclectically oriented covens, or working their magic as solitaries; non-Wiccan Goddess worshippers who follow a variety of paths ranging from Northern European paganism to the pantheons of Greece, Rome, Egypt, and Africa; New Druids and Celtic Reconstructionists—the former interested in revitalizing the spirit of what they believe was the religious practice of pre-Roman Britain, the latter only in reconstructing what can be known from the extant historical record; Ásatrúer and Odinists, followers of Norse heathenism, who are often and inaccurately painted as violent and reactionary in their beliefs; syncretistic Pagan practitioners, such as Jewish Witches and Christo-Wiccans, who are often marginalized by both constituent communities; and eclectic nature worshippers who gather under the organizational auspices of institutions like the Unitarian Universalist Association. Indeed, one of the major problems that confronts academic analysts who try to map either modern Paganism or the various phenomena of the so-called "New Age movement" is that neither displays rigid enough doctrinal, practical, ritual, historical, or sociological boundaries to allow for easy categorization.[7] While recognizing that modern Paganism encompasses far more belief systems, ritual practices, and traditional lineages than just Wicca or Witchcraft, because these are arguably the most well-known in North America, this chapter focuses primarily on these as two examples of modern Paganism.

Rather than an easily definable set of beliefs and practices, it is, perhaps, most useful to think of modern Paganism as a family of related religious traditions, some of which are more traditional in their outlook and appearance, while others are experimental, innovative, and, in the eyes of traditionalists, not a little rebellious. Many Wiccan and Witchcraft traditions, however, though they may have changed and adapted over the years, trace their origins to a retired British civil servant named Gerald Brousseau Gardner (1884–1964).

Gardner spent most of his working life in southeast Asia, working as a tea planter, on a rubber plantation, and later as a customs official for the British government. Among other things, Gardner was an ardent amateur archeologist and folklorist. He retired to England in 1936, and claims that he was initiated into a traditional Witchcraft coven in 1939, just before the start of World War II. According to Wiccan lore, during the war Gardner was an instrumental part, if not the instigator, of what is known as "Operation Cone of Power"—as many as four separate rituals that

were conducted by Witches in southern England to deter the impending invasion of Great Britain by Germany.[8] After the war, Gardner wrote about the "Old Religion," first under a pseudonym,[9] and then under his own name. In 1951, the last of the Witchcraft Acts in Britain was repealed, and Gardner came fully out of the broom-closet. Though there is considerable dispute about Gardner's sources—whether he really was initiated into the New Forest Coven or simply invented Wicca from the stock of religious knowledge he possessed[10]—there is no denying that his influence, along with that of people like Raymond Buckland, who is credited by many with bringing Gardnerian Witchcraft to the United States in the early 1960s, and Janet and Stewart Farrar, who published a recension of Gardner's principal ritual text, the *Book of Shadows,* in the mid-1980s, was instrumental in the growth of modern Witchcraft in the late twentieth century.

MODERN PAGAN BELIEFS AND RITUALS

Modern Pagan Beliefs

Two principal factors make it difficult to generalize about modern Pagan beliefs: (a the difference in groups that cluster (and are clustered) under the modern Pagan rubric; and (b) the open source character of modern Pagan belief itself, which, even within groups that are nominally similar, manifests in both experimental and traditional ways. Groups such as Gardnerian and Alexandrian witches,[11] for example, consider the balanced polarity of male and female membership in a ritual group essential to the magical success of the group. Others, such as Dianic Witches, often regard the presence of any male energy as dangerous to the safety and integrity of their ritual circle. While many modern Witches still hold fast to the maxim that "only a witch can make a witch"[12]—and, in its more restricted form, that only a male Witch can initiate a female Witch, and vice versa—others have embraced the practice of self-initiation, which has generated a thriving literature within modern Paganism.[13]

That said, however, there are certain general characteristics that set modern Paganism apart as a distinct religious family.[14] Though most Pagans live in urban and suburban settings,[15] all have a love, indeed a reverence, for nature that they believe has been either accidentally lost or actively discarded by other religions. For many modern Pagans, the natural world itself is a sentient and sacred entity, and invokes within them an imaginative, a ritual, and in many cases a political connection. Ritual practice, spellwork, and daily Pagan living are guided by belief in a spiritual immanentalism and the ethical principle of reciprocity—that the world around them is spiritually vital and active, and that they can participate in and affect that world. These effects, however, are managed within the boundaries of what many refer to as the Law of Threefold Return, that is, whatever one puts out into the world, whether positive or negative, will return threefold.

Most modern Pagans devote themselves to one or more gods or goddesses, often basing their choice on an affinity for certain pantheons—Celtic, Norse, Greek,

Egyptian, and so forth—and an intuitive sense that they have been called or chosen by particular gods or goddesses within those pantheons. Broadly speaking, and allowing for the idiosyncrasy that marks much of modern Pagan belief and practice, gods and goddesses are conceptualized in two ways. On the one hand, in a manner analogous to some Hindus' belief that all manifestations of the divine are simply emanations of the one reality or Brahman, many modern Pagans believe that the various gods and goddesses on whom they call in ritual and magic are "merely aspects of an all-pervasive divinity, and the particular god or goddess invoked represents only a facet of that divinity."[16] This explains the belief among many modern Pagans that the number of gods and goddesses with whom one can work is unlimited, or the ability to draw on the energies of disparate deities depending on the particular situation or need. On the other hand, for some Wiccans and Witches every deity from every pantheon represents a separate and distinct divine entity, existing and operating independently. "If," as I have noted elsewhere, "in the first instance, the names of gods and goddesses are facets of a single divine diamond, in the second understanding each deity represents a different, unique jewel."[17]

Though all of this may seem a bit odd to the outside observer, the Farrars point out that "witches are neither fools, escapists not superstitious."[18] Indeed, "if witchcraft did not have a coherent rationale, such people could only keep going by a kind of deliberate schizophrenia."[19] For the Farrars, as for other modern Pagans, the world as we see and experience it is only one level of reality, for many the most mundane level. This understanding is hardly limited to modern Paganism; for centuries Roman Catholicism had its various levels of existence in heaven and hell, and Buddhism and Hinduism have their multiple domains of *samsaric* existence. Unfortunately for most of the Western world, modern Pagans maintain, the scientific revolution managed to convince us that the physical plane of existence is the only level of reality—a claim many Wiccans and Witches seek actively to challenge. Some even talk about Witchcraft as an empirical science, fully aligned with the latest discoveries in physics, biology, and astronomy. "When I speak of Witchcraft as a science," writes Laurie Cabot, a well-known American Witch, who also calls herself the "Official Witch of Salem" and who has named her Witchcraft lineage the Science Tradition, "I use the word *science* in its strictest form."[20] She continues:

> Witchcraft is a system based on hypotheses that can be tested under controlled conditions. Magical spells are step-by-step experiments that produce statistical results from which we can derive our success rates. The physical sciences maintain that a 32 percent success rate establishes the validity of a hypothesis. When I teach the science of Witchcraft based on the Hermetic laws, my students' experiments show a 50 percent and often a 75 to 90 percent success rate.[21]

Since, according to modern Pagan belief, everything in the universe—visible and invisible—is intimately connected, and any appearance of separation merely the social and cultural residue of the so-called scientific revolution, it follows logically that there ought to be mechanisms by which those connections can be accessed and influenced. This is one function of modern Pagan ritual and magical practice.

Modern Pagan Ritual

Modern Pagan ritual serves a variety of purposes, both religious and psychosocial: honoring and worshipping the gods and/or goddesses to which individual Pagans or groups are dedicated; teaching and initiating in a particular tradition; raising and releasing energy that is then directed toward specific purposes; and spellworking, which is generally practiced with very specific intent. The psychosocial benefits of ritual within a group that is working well are, among others, interpersonal bonding, as well as world view maintenance and reinforcement. In modern Paganism, the ideal is that every participant will take responsibility for his or her own spiritual growth and skill development. Unlike many Christian churches, the congregants are not spectators watching a performance presented by the pastoral staff. Rather, because they tend to work in much smaller groups, in ideal circumstances the high level of commitment and participation expected of all group members strengthens the bonds between those in the circle. These positive experiences, as well as the inevitable discussion that takes place after, reinforce the modern Pagan world view.

Although different groups have subtle differences, Wiccan and Witchcraft traditions follow a liturgical year that is divided into two principal ritual patterns: the *sabbats,* four "greater" and four "lesser" festivals based on the yearly seasonal cycle and celebrated on the solstices, equinoxes, and the midpoints between, and the *esbats,* 13 ritual meetings that follow the monthly lunar cycle. A few of the sabbats coincide with well-known Christian festivals, and modern Pagans contend that the Christian church simply appropriated the festival observances of the peoples it converted and adapted old ways to a new faith. Samhain, for example, which many Wiccans regard as the Pagan new year, is celebrated on Hallowe'en, the eve of All Saints' Day. Yule, or the Midwinter festival, occurs on the winter solstice, and is, perhaps, the best known of the Pagan sabbats because of its association with Christmas.[22] Ostara, which is celebrated on or around the vernal equinox, is named for Eostre, a Teutonic fertility goddess and according to many modern Pagans the etymological source of the English word, Easter. Pagans read different theological emphases into these ritual patterns, and there is no "orthodox" interpretation of what is known as the "wheel of the year."

Some groups meet only for the sabbats, while others take every opportunity to gather for ritual and companionship. For some, every ritual celebration is a closed event; only those initiated into the tradition and a part of the group may attend. Other groups regularly invite the public to their sabbat celebrations, especially the more well-known sabbats such as Beltaine, Samhain, and Yule. This illustrates another of the tensions in modern Paganism. Though many practitioners point with pride to the growth of traditions such as Wicca and Witchcraft, and in many cases at least tacitly equate growth with legitimacy, others are troubled by a commercialization that they believe is diluting the core of Pagan belief and practice, but without which the growth they applaud would be difficult if not impossible.

One ritual practice attracts non-Pagan attention more than any other, though it is actually performed far less often than might be imagined: the Great Rite of the

Wiccan and Witchcraft traditions, the *hieros gamos,* the sacred marriage. Though it was abandoned by a number of traditions as hopelessly patriarchal and implicitly abusive,[23] the Great Rite remains a central ritual in both Gardnerian and Alexandrian Witchcraft.[24] It consists of actual or symbolic sexual union between two coven members, who embody the union of the Goddess and the God. By all accounts, performance of the actual Great Rite occurs relatively infrequently, and the chosen couple either leave the circle and return once intercourse is completed or are left together in the circle by the rest of the coven. Far more often, indeed as a fundamental element of many Wiccan and Witchcraft rituals, the Great Rite is performed symbolically, or "in token." Kneeling before the High Priestess, the High Priest elevates a ritual chalice, which symbolizes the female principle in the divine complementarity. Standing above him, the High Priestess, who functions in the coven as *prima inter pares,* the first among equals, inserts her athame (the male principle) into the chalice. As the Farrars point out: "The couple enacting the Great Rite are offering themselves, with reverence and joy, as expressions of the God and Goddess aspects of the Ultimate Source. 'As above, so below.' They are making themselves, to the best of their ability, channels for the divine polarity on *all* levels, from physical to spiritual. That is why it is called the *Great* Rite."[25]

The Open Source Character of Modern Pagan Belief and Practice

Searching for a way to conceptualize the eclectic and often confusing nature of modern Paganism, I borrowed a concept from computer programming and suggested that they are an *open source* family of religious traditions.[26] As I contend in *Cyberhenge,* "*open source traditions* are those which encourage (or at least do not discourage) theological and ritual innovation based on either individual intuition or group consensus, and which innovation is not limited to priestly classes, institutional elites, or religious *virtuosi.*"[27] Closed source traditions, on the other hand, the quintessential example of which is the Church of Scientology, do not permit any form of theological or ritual innovation on the part of practitioners.

The open source character of modern Paganism displays itself in numerous ways. Some practitioners combine deity elements from different traditional pantheons to generate their own eclectic, syncretistic family of gods and goddesses. The Temple of Sekhmet, for example, is a small, adobe shrine in the Nevada desert 60 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Designed as a temple to the Egyptian goddess, Sekhmet, the shrine has become something of a pilgrimage spot for modern Pagans, given its proximity to the sprawling Nellis Air Force Base complex and the mysterious, heavily guarded, and officially unacknowledged testing site known around the world as Area 51. Besides Sekhmet, however, there are also statues of another Egyptian goddess (and Sekhmet's sister), Bast, a Native American Earth Mother, the Buddhist goddess of compassion Kuan Yin, and a painting of Mary modeled on the Virgin of Guadalupe. Although some have questioned the ethics of this kind of appropriation of spiritual resources,[28] the modern Pagan understanding that everything in

the universe is connected means, by extension, that everything is available for use by all.

Some Wiccans not only appropriate the spiritual and ritual resources of other traditions, but invent their own as need, circumstance, and inspiration dictate. Writing about being "Web witches," for example, popular Pagan authors Patricia Telesco and Sirona Knight encourage their readers to develop not only their own relationships with various deities, but their own gods and goddesses as well. "This sounds a little silly," they write, "but given some serious thought, there's no reason why we cannot create new mythologies based on the world as it is today and the techno-tools in it."[29] They suggest that technologically inclined Pagans might "choose to venerate Snap (the God of microwaved foods), Click (the computer mouse Goddess), Popup (the Goddess of toasters and toaster ovens), Ram and Rom (the computer twin Gods), Bit and Byte (the computer twin Goddesses), or Wireless (the spirit of cell phones)."[30] In the context of the emergence and development of modern Pagan belief and practice, this kind of innovation is a question worth pondering. As G.L. Ebersole points out in his discussion of myth, history, and the various relationships between the two, mythologies "are not timeless and static structures but dynamic agents in the ongoing process of the creation and maintenance of a symbolic world of meaning."[31] And, as I have noted elsewhere:

> [Knight and Telesco] illustrate tension between two distinct innovative subcultures within modern Paganism, what I have called the research-oriented and the fantasy-oriented. Research-oriented subcultures regard some measure of historical accuracy in both Pagan belief and practice (insofar as these may be determined) as central to the reconceptual or reconstructive religious enterprise; historical accuracy in fantasy-oriented subcultures, on the other hand, is less important and, as Knight and Telesco amply demonstrate, for these the potential canon of belief and practice is expanded considerably.[32]

MODERN PAGAN ORGANIZATION AND WORKING PRACTICE

Solitaries and Working Groups

In broad terms, modern Pagan working practice occurs in two ways: as a solitary, working alone whether by chance or by choice, or in community, working as part of a more formal ritual group. The basic unit of modern Pagan social organization, ritual working groups are called by a variety of names. Following its conceptual inspiration in Robert Heinlein's science fiction novel, *A Stranger in a Strange Land,*[33] for example, for 40 years the Church of All Worlds, the oldest officially recognized modern Pagan group in North America, called its working groups "nests" and "proto-nests," a group of which may join together as a "branch." Ásatrúer gather together in "kindreds" or "hearths" for their ritual practices, which are called *blots* and *sumbels.*[34] Druids congregate in "groves" and "henges,"[35] while Wiccans and Witches, the most well-known of modern Pagans, tend to belong to "covens" or "circles."

"The coven," writes Starhawk in *The Spiral Dance,* one of the most influential modern Pagan texts of the past few decades, "is a Witch's support group,

consciousness-raising group, psychic study center, clergy-training program, College of Mysteries, surrogate clan, and religious congregation all rolled into one."[36] Usually a relatively small group, especially when compared to some of the large congregations that gather in churches, synagogues, and mosques across the United States, the members of a coven often have a much more intimate relationship than that experienced by congregants in these other religious traditions. Given the still marginalized status of modern Paganism in many parts of the country, this intimacy is hardly surprising, born as it is from the religious bond the members feel in the Craft, as well as the trust they place in one another in order to share their beliefs and rites together. Unless they are related by lineage and commitment to a particular tradition—Gardnerian, for example, or Alexandrian—each coven functions as an autonomous group, responsible only to its members and to a set of principles founded on the most basic of Wiccan precepts, the Wiccan Rede: "An it harm none, do as thou wilt."[37] Usually guided by a High Priestess (and, in some but not all cases, a High Priest), they meet to perform rituals on the sabbats and esbats, to raise and release energy for spellworking when one or more of the coven feel the need, and to study and teach, which leads to the initiation of new coven mates.

Although they may belong to the same general tradition, it is important to note that, in keeping with the open source character of modern Paganism, not all groups function in similar ways. Indeed, disagreements over the interpersonal and organizational dynamics of ritual working groups have led to the disintegration of more than one coven, grove, or circle.[38] Sometimes, those who leave covens under strained circumstances never return to ritual group work. Instead, they choose to continue their magical lives as solitaries, answering only to themselves, their personal understanding of the modern Pagan path, and the demands of the particular deities to whom they are dedicated.

Some commentators suggest that most modern Pagans will spend at least a portion of their magical careers working alone.[39] The legitimacy of solitary practice, however, especially if one has never been a member of a coven or circle, is one of the most contentious issues between solitary Pagans and Pagan working groups. As I have noted elsewhere (in the context of the benefits offered by online interaction among modern Pagans), even though a solitary may have been initiated into a variety of traditions, many "feel that coveners (or those who practice in other kinds of ritual working group) consider them 'second-class Pagans,' as though they are somehow less authentic or less committed to the modern Pagan path if they are not part of a working lineage."[40] On the other hand, according to Scott Cunningham (1956–1993), whose books are extremely influential among modern Pagan solitaries, Wiccans should never feel "second-class" because they choose to work alone.

> Never feel inferior because you're not working under the guidance of a teacher or an established coven. Don't worry that you won't be recognized as a true Wiccan. Such recognition is important only in the eyes of those giving or withholding it, otherwise it is meaningless. You need only worry about pleasing yourself and developing a rapport with the Goddess and God.[41]

Two aspects are important to point out here: (a) the personal gnosticism that is characteristic of many modern Paganisms, which is in tension with (b) an incipient orthodoxy that claims to distinguish "authentic" from "inauthentic" Paganism. There is no overarching organizational authority to impose an orthodoxy on modern Pagan belief and practice, no standardized set of sacred texts to which practitioners may turn to ground them, and no practical limit to the stock of spiritual resources available for sampling and synthesis. So many modern Pagans feel free, essentially, to make up their religion as they go along. Thus, Cunningham's concept of "you need only worry about pleasing yourself" epitomizes the tacit agreement among many (arguably most) modern Pagans that the intuitive, intentional construction of one's own religious beliefs and the feeling of personal gnosis by which that construction is authorized are the principal criteria that determine genuine Pagan practice.

Despite modern Pagan openness to creativity and experimentation, there are signs that an incipient orthodoxy emerges when practitioners either feel that other Pagans are not taking their Paganism seriously or disapprove of the particular way in which some Pagans choose to construct their religious belief and practice. Sociologically speaking, the first group would be called "free riders," or "nightstand Pagans," those who bought a few books, who decided to call themselves Wiccans or Witches, but who have not demonstrated any significant commitment to a modern Pagan practice. They choose, in effect, to be Pagan because Paganism has a certain cultural attraction at the moment. The issue of an incipient orthodoxy, on the other hand, shows up when, despite the apparent and professed openness of modern Pagans, some religious choices appear to transgress the boundary between appropriate and inappropriate Pagan belief. This is seen most clearly when some modern Pagans incorporate Christian symbols, liturgical and devotional practice, or deity figures into their Paganism. Going so far as to call themselves Christian Witches, Christo-Wiccans, or Christopagans, the problem this presents for the open source egalitarianism of modern Paganism is discussed in the last section.

Larger Organizations

Paganism has organizations larger than covens and groves. These constitute ongoing attempts to institutionalize modern Paganism. The Church of All Worlds (CAW), for example, founded by Tim Zell (b. 1942), who now goes by the name Oberon Zell-Ravenheart,[42] was incorporated in 1968 as the first official modern Pagan Church in the United States and was officially chartered with the Internal Revenue Service two years later. The CAW is based on a principal belief called "the Gaia thesis" that all life on Earth is interconnected, indeed has its origin in "a single, fertilized cell."[43] According to Zell-Ravenheart, "the Gaia thesis, which is globally unifying and comprehensive, is *the* fundamental myth in Pagan culture … the first unifying myth waiting to be universally adopted: the notion that we are all children of the same Mother."[44] Indeed, for members of the CAW, "everything that's wrong with our modern culture can be traced to our forgetting of this fundamental

notion."[45] For more than 30 years, Zell-Ravenheart and his "waterkin," the word they use to describe fellow members of the CAW, published their ideas, artwork, poetry, and rituals in *The Green Egg,* which grew from a single mimeographed sheet to a respected journal in the modern Pagan community before closing due to financial pressure in 2001. Currently, though, with about three dozen nests and protonests in the United States, and affiliates in Australia, Europe, and on the Internet, the CAW remains one of the most well-known modern Pagan organizations in North America.

On the summer solstice in 1975, a confederation of covens was organized "to increase cooperation among Witches and to secure for Witches and covens the legal protection enjoyed by members of other religions."[46] According to Margot Adler, "thirteen covens and several solitary Witches ratified the Covenant of the Goddess (COG),"[47] the name by which the organization has been known ever since. A year earlier and after lengthy discussion, a group calling itself the Council of American Witches produced "The Principles of Wiccan Belief," a document that sought to lay the foundation for a larger modern Pagan organization. Beset by the differences that almost inevitably emerge when a group of strong individualists gather, the Council of American Witches was unable to organize efficiently or successfully beyond that.[48] "The Principles of Wiccan Belief," though, remain important for the larger organization of modern Paganism. COG, on the other hand, has had considerably more impact.

From its beginning, COG was clear that it had no authority to dictate policy to modern Pagans regarding belief, ritual, practice, or organization. Rather, it works on behalf of its membership to educate the public, to issue ministerial credentials, and to facilitate communication and cooperation among modern Pagans across North America and beyond. Perhaps its most public accomplishment to date was to participate as one of more than 200 religious groups cosponsoring the 1993 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Illinois. Pagan participation at the Parliament, however, did not go unnoticed. Indeed, it was a lightning rod for the real issues of religious difference that often lay hidden beneath declarations of tolerance. First, though a full participant in the Parliament, COG was denied permission by the city of Chicago to host a large ritual, a Full Moon dance, in Grant Park, near the conference hotel. When COG sought the help of both the American Civil Liberties Union and Parliament organizers, park officials relented, apologized, and permitted the ritual to take place. Indeed, Judy Harrow, a Gardnerian Witch and former first officer of the Covenant of the Goddess, points out that the ritual took place in precisely the same location as the 1968 Chicago police riot and became thereby a healing and reclaiming act.[49] Later that week, though, COG was in the news again, when several Greek and Russian Orthodox delegates withdrew from a variety of scheduled events, "citing the 'distinctive participation of certain quasi-religious groups.'"[50] Though unnamed, the Orthodox Christians clearly meant the modern Pagans. "As a result of both those things," recalls Harrow, "instead of being lost in the shuffle of this huge multireligious event, we ended up having attention focused on us. We became the hot topic. We became what the grapevine was buzzing about."[51] Most

of COG's work is carried out through local councils, such as Northern Dawn in Minnesota, Pronghorn Moon in California, and Dogwood in Georgia. There is also an educational program dedicated to helping young people who are interested in modern Paganism, especially those who become interested through pop cultural products such as films like *The Craft* and television series such as *Charmed* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

As modern Pagans have come out of the broomcloset, both personally and culturally, many have discerned the need for a more professionalized and educated clergy to serve the growing Pagan population responsibly. Both the open source character of modern Paganism and the ready availability of mail-order (and e-mail-order) ministerial credentials have created a situation where anyone, regardless of training, skill, or even the most basic understanding of the helping professions, can become ordained and present themselves as priest or priestess, pastoral counselor, and teacher.[52] To address this, Harrow and a number of her colleagues founded Cherry Hill Seminary (CHS), which is designed not to teach the principles of magic, but the professional skills of pastoral care and counseling. That is, CHS is not a coven, and does not offer the degree of training one would receive in a coven setting. Rather, CHS is organized to respond to the needs of those who feel called to a more intentional ministry among modern Pagans, something that CHS founders regard as inevitable as modern Paganism grows in popularity. "The focus of CHS," reads the online description, "is to teach those specialized skills and knowledge necessary for serving in positions of community leadership: as a pastoral counselor, a chaplain, in public relations, as social services liaison, as a minister for public rites of passage, in interfaith work and in any other roles in which s/he will interact with governmental agencies and the non-Pagan community."[53] Though there are minimal residency requirements, in that students are expected to take part in a number of "on-campus intensives," most of the CHS curriculum is offered online. Logging in to courses such as "Human Development in a Pagan Context," "Children in Contemporary Paganism," and "Psychology of Religion Applied to Paganism," students and instructors interact via discussion forums and chat rooms, disseminate lectures and other course material electronically, and submit coursework through e-mail.

Modern Paganism on the Internet

While recognizing its undeniable advantages as well as its disadvantages, computer-mediated communication is one important way in which many modern Pagans interact both locally and globally. From a few online covens to hundreds of Yahoo! discussion forums, from relatively simple "My Wiccan Web Pages," that do little more than replicate modern Pagan material cut and pasted from other sites, to elaborate and original information spaces such as The Witches' Voice,[54] which is arguably the largest and most comprehensive Internet site devoted to modern Paganism, Wiccans, Witches, Druids, and Ásatrúer have successfully colonized their own portions of cyberspace. Though online Paganism is fraught with the same frustrations and limitations as any other computer-mediated communication—hardware

or software failure, server overload or inaccessibility, the decontextualized nature of the communication itself, which not infrequently results in misunderstanding and damaged relationships—it is also clear that for many Pagan practitioners who go online regularly, the Internet provides significant benefit, especially in (a) the potential for modern Pagan community, and (b) the performance of modern Pagan identity.[55]

Though the social and cultural profile of modern Paganism has risen substantially in recent years, those who find themselves drawn to particular Pagan paths are still likely to experience a sense of isolation and alienation if there is no Wiccan or Witch to speak with locally. The nearest coven or ritual working group may be hundreds of miles away, or the potential Pagan may live in circumstances that preclude seeking out more direct contact. In these cases, the Internet is a tremendous boon, and many who use it regularly speak eloquently about the benefits of communicating with other modern Pagans, if only through the computer. As I note elsewhere, "one very common aspect of discussion threads among modern Pagans online, especially newcomers to the various traditions, is the sense of relief they display when participants find like-minded Wiccans, Witches, Druids, or Ásatrúer with whom they can exchange information, trade gossip and opinion, or share a sense of community."[56] With nearly 1600 members, for example, from Karlsuhe to Istanbul, Ontario to Arkansas, and Jordan to Wales, participants in the Yahoo! group Beginners Wicca regularly comment on the benefit they derive from their Internet communication. Although some may regard the modern Pagan Web as little more than "a global notice board for the privileged,"[57] its value cannot be underestimated for members of a religious community that still faces occasional marginalization and to which significant social stigma is still attached.

Thus, taking into account all the caveats about cyberpredation, the Internet also becomes a relatively safe environment for potential practitioners to "try on" their Paganism, to experiment with and, in many cases, establish a modern Pagan identity. Relatively few modern Pagans disclose significant personal information online. Thus, using Pagan rather than mundane names, they carry on conversations, express (or impose) opinion, present themselves as authorities wearing only the masks that they themselves have chosen. Who is to know whether "Lady Spiritwind" is the revered Wiccan elder she claims to be or simply an interested teenager playing an online role? On the other hand, if a young person is truly interested in the Pagan path, perhaps as a result of his love for famous fantasy author J.R.R. Tolkien, entering a discussion forum as "Treebeard" allows him to test the waters, without inviting undue attention to his emerging Pagan interests. As I observed in *Cyberhenge:*

> Through interaction in discussion groups, alt-lists, and chat rooms, identity testing and the reinforcement of modern Pagan authority occurs in readily identifiable discursive loops. Participants test their modern Pagan identities online as a function of moving from internal resonance [an affinity for modern Paganism] to external performance and conformation [the demonstration of one's modern Pagan affiliation]; other participants reinforce their identity as modern Pagan authorities by answering questions, providing resources, and weighing in on any topic available.[58]

CONTROVERSIES WITHIN THE CIRCLE AND WITHOUT

The history of many religious movements can be written from the perspective of the controversies that mark their emergence, development, and, in many cases, decline and disappearance. In the case of modern Paganism, consider three such controversies that have continued, and arguably will continue, to haunt its growth in North America: (a) misperceptions arising from lingering cultural stigma, ignorance, and fear, and which are often exacerbated by irresponsible media reporting and dedicated countermovement activity; (b) the sociological problem of generations succeeding one another through the passage of time, and the inevitable effect on the growth of a religious movement; and (c) the logical problems inherent in open source religion and the surfacing of an incipient orthodoxy among modern Pagans.

Common Myths: The Problem of Misperception

The single misperception that Wiccans and Witches work most diligently to dispel is that they do not worship Satan. This, however, is also arguably the most common misperception that continues to pervade uninformed discussion about modern Paganism. On the one hand, Pagans argue that, because Satan is a Christian theological construct and they are not Christians, charges that Witches and Wiccans worship Satan are absurd. Not only do they not worship him, they do not even believe he exists. On the other hand, taking a page from the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum,* the fifteenth-century manual for prosecuting suspected witches, many Christian opponents of modern Paganism contend either that Wiccans and Witches are simply lying or that they are deluded, either they worship Satan knowingly or they do so implicitly because Satan is the architect of all "false religion."[59] Not surprisingly, this kind of misinformation and prejudice has some very real consequences for modern Pagans.

First, it forces many to remain "in the broomcloset," afraid to reveal themselves as Wiccans or Witches precisely because they do not want to be accused of being Satan worshippers. Although she lives in a rural area known for its tolerance of new and alternative lifestyles, for example, one Wiccan solitary wrote that her reading of countercult author Texe Marrs pushed "all my panic buttons." "I no longer wanted to be out of the broom closet, with the risk of meeting someone like the author of this book. Fear, anger, and anger at being afraid have invaded my life in a way I have never experienced."[60] Second, it places Pagan parents in the precarious position of losing custody or visitation during divorce proceedings, a situation C. Barner-Barry cites as "one of the primary fears of Pagans who are parents of minor children."[61] Third, numerous Pagans have experienced workplace harassment, denial or termination of employment, and physical abuse on the basis of their religious beliefs.[62]

Linked to the uninformed belief that Witches or Wiccans worship Satan is the concomitant belief that they are practitioners of black magic and that they curse or cast spells on those whom they regard as enemies. Both of these contravene the most basic tenets of Pagan ethics—the Wiccan Rede and the Law of Threefold Return. In

her excellent treatment of modern Paganism as a "minority faith in a majoritarian America," Barner-Barry chronicles a number of incidents in which schoolchildren, for example, were expelled or suspended for allegedly cursing or hexing their teachers and classmates. "The interesting thing about such cases," writes Barner-Barry, "is the readiness of school authorities to take seriously the ability of a student to cast effective spells or hex others;" teachers and principals "seemed startlingly ready to act on their personal superstitions with no real proof that an offense had been committed."[63] With the exception of television programs such as *Charmed, Bewitched, Sabrina the Teenage Witch,* and, to a lesser degree, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* the North American entertainment industry has done little to dispel the popular image of the witch as a harbinger of evil. With relatively few exceptions, Hollywood still regards the "wicked witch" as a screen staple, depicting her as capriciously dangerous (e.g., *The Craft*), homicidal (e.g., *The Blair Witch Project, Hocus Pocus*), or, in the case of any number of popular horror films, sexually predatious.

For hundreds of years, inappropriate sexual license was a common charge leveled at New Religious Movements (NRMs), and the various streams of modern Paganism are no exception. Three factors particularly contribute to the persistence of this misperception. First, dating back nearly 1000 years, a lengthy history of accusations of sexual predation against alleged Witches ensures that these charges are never far beneath the surface.[64] Second, many modern Pagans prefer to perform their rituals in the nude, or "sky-clad," and these rituals occasionally involve both sexual reference (e.g., the *hieros gamos,* or the Great Rite) and ecstatic dance, neither of which have escaped popular treatments of Wicca and Witchcraft.[65] Third, there is a tradition of sex magic in modern Paganism that derives from both its generally sex-positive attitude and the roots some Pagan groups have in ceremonial and ritual magic.[66]

Pagan Youth: The Problem of Generations

Sexuality and socialization are the lightning rods for the problem of Pagan generations. That is, how do Pagans keep their children safe from sexual predation while maintaining the generally sex- and body-positive atmosphere that characterizes modern Paganism as a whole, and how do they retain their youth as Wiccans, Witches, or Druids when these youth grow up and begin to ask their own religious questions?[67]

Before there was a discernible second-generation of modern Pagans, nudity at Pagan festivals and rituals was commonplace. Many Pagans regard clothing as both a barrier to a more intimate experience of nature and a material marker of the sex- and body-negative attitude of culturally dominant religions like Christianity. Nudity, on the other hand, whether general or ritualistic, signifies a healthy acceptance of the body as natural. As Sarah Pike notes in her work on modern Pagan festivals, quoting one Pagan: "A naked man has to be walking an inflated dinosaur to get anyone to pay attention to him."[68] With more and more children attending festivals, however, some organizers have felt the need to structure both clothing-optional portions of the event—some rituals are designated sky-clad, for example—and areas of the venue where clothing is not required. While many adult ritual groups still work sky-clad,

family-style covens and circles have largely abandoned the practice, both to protect the youth from predation and to protect themselves from the kind of persecution described above.

Whether these youth will ultimately remain on the modern Pagan path is the question of religious socialization faced by every faith and tradition. It is worth remembering that, in the early years of modern Paganism in North America, most Wiccans or Witches had made the choice to convert from some other faith. Countless testimonies both in print and online reprise the participants' discomfort and unhappiness in the religion to which they were born, which is usually Christianity, and their sense of relief, of liberation, of "coming home" to a truer self when they discovered modern Paganism. From a sociological perspective, there is no reason to believe that this process of rebellion, rejection, seekership, and eventual conversion to an alien faith would not manifest within modern Paganism as well. That is, there is always the potential that modern Pagan youth will find their religious upbringing similarly unsatisfying and choose other paths—even fundamentalist Christian—which brings us to the final tension.

Christo-Pagans: The Problem of Open Source Religion

"If someone wants to blend pantheons of a couple of trads," writes one modern Pagan to an online discussion forum, "if that's what feels right to them, then so be it."[69] Barring strict reconstructionists, whose beliefs and practices are intentionally limited to what is historically demonstrable, a significant number of modern Pagans would agree with this comment. Indeed, Pagan primers are replete with suggestions for syncretizing and synthesizing elements of different pantheons.[70] This toleration holds until modern Pagan practitioners incorporate Christian symbols, practices, or deity figures into their modern Paganism. Then modern Paganism appears decidedly less tolerant.

In a 1996 editorial in *SageWoman,* a popular Pagan magazine, the editor revealed that in the midst of her Pagan practice she occasionally "[reaches] out to an old friend"—Jesus.[71] Though she was quick to reassure her readers that "the Goddess is here with me, as She has been since I was a little girl,"[72] reactions from a number of those readers was swift and unequivocal. "How dare you?!" wrote one reader named Autumn Storm, "I can think of nothing more tastelessly bizarre or despicably inappropriate than tossing out your reconciliation with christianity to readers who have supported this MATRIFOCAL, PAGAN, GODDESS magazine for ten years!"[73] While other readers were shocked at the outpouring of anger and vitriol, a number called for the editor to step down, though she did not. Rather, a year later, she published a retrospective on the conflict and pointed out that only about ten percent of the letters contained this kind of harsh criticism. Twice as many, she noted, were from readers "who were already holding these two traditions together in [their] hearts."[74] A similar controversy erupted in 2004, when *SageWoman* published a series of articles on prayer and invocation, and included a reference to "prayer beads," something to which a former Catholic convert to Paganism took particular

exception. Though the article was entitled "Garlands for the Goddess: The Magic of Christian Prayer Beads,"[75] one reader expressed her concern "that this is Catholicism in disguise," and was "left wondering if *SageWoman* is, in fact, a *truly* Pagan magazine."[76] Comments such as these notwithstanding, there is some evidence that the synthesis of Christian and modern Pagan belief and practice appears to be growing.[77]

CONCLUSION

Whether the family of religious practitioners, groups, and movements that cluster under the rubric of modern Paganism are or remain among the fastest growing NRMs in North America is open to question. As a "minority faith in a majoritarian America" modern Pagans face an almost inevitable marginalization from elements of the dominant religion and culture. Despite this, however, Witches and Wiccans now conduct prison ministries, perform hospital chaplaincy, and serve on municipal interfaith councils. Modern Paganism is recognized as a valid religious belief by various branches of the government, including the military, and Wiccans in the armed forces are currently lobbying for permission to place pentagrams on the headstones of Pagan soldiers killed in action. It is clear, however, that for hundreds of thousands of Witches, Wiccans, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Ásatrúer, the myriad paths of pre-Christian religions exercise a powerful call.

NOTES

1. Although there are a few basic frameworks, the details of modern Pagan ritual are often as varied as the groups that practice and range from detailed liturgies that are linked to particular traditions to *laissez-faire* constructions that exemplify both the creativity and the open source character of modern Paganism. See, for example, J. Farrar and S. Farrar, *Eight Sabbats for Witches, and Rites for Birth, Marriage and Death* (Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing, 1981); J. Farrar and S. Farrar, *The Witches' Way: Principles, Rituals and Beliefs of Modern Witchcraft* (Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing, 1984); S. Farrar, *What Witches Do: A Modern Coven Revealed*, 3rd ed. (Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing, 1991).

2. City News Service, "Pagans," April 30, 2002, retrieved through LexisNexis; Reuters, "Witches say Christians Violated their Rights,"April 30, 2002; retrieved through LexisNexis.

3. H. Rosin, "An Army Controversy: Should the Witches Be Welcome? Flap over Wiccans Tests Military's Religious Tolerance," *Washington Post,* June 8, 1999, A01.

4. Ibid.

5. S. RavenWolf,*Teen Witch: Wicca for a New Generation* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1998). On instances of discrimination against Pagan students, see, for example, A. Gumbel, "Brandi the Teenage Witch—A True Story (Not that You'll Believe It)," *The Independent (London),* January 5, 2001, 1, 7; R. La Ferla, "Like Magic, Witchcraft Charms Teenagers," *The New York Times,* February 13, 2000, Sec. 9, 1; C. Rouvalis, "Witches and Wardrobes: Wicca Practitioners Support Brownsville Student in the Wearing of Symbolic Pentacle," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* September 27, 2000, D-1. For an excellent discussion of the broader spectrum of discrimination against modern Pagans, see C. Barner-Barry,

Contemporary Paganism: Minority Faith in a Majoritarian America (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

6. For at least a decade, and citing a wide variety of sources, many contemporary Pagans claim that their family of religious traditions—though most particularly Wicca—are among the fastest growing in the world; see, for example, R. Buckland, *Witchcraft from the Inside: Origins of the Fastest Growing Religious Movement in America*, 3rd ed. (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1995); P.W. Curott, *Book of Shadows: A Modern Woman's Journey into the Wisdom of Witchcraft and the Magic of the Goddess* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998); R. Grimassi, *Spirit of the Witch: Religion and Spirituality in Contemporary Witchcraft* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2003); M.M. NightMare, *Witchcraft and the Web: Weaving Pagan Traditions Online* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2001); RavenWolf, *Teen Witch;* E. Restall Orr, *Druid Priestess: An Intimate Journey through the Pagan Year* (London: Thorsons, 1998). This general claim has been picked up and repeated without question by news media ranging from the mainstream press to online news services; see, for example, K. Burke, "No Rest for the Wicca—Growing Pagan Population Shows its Political Spirit," *Sydney Morning Herald,* June 30, 2003, News and Features, 3; J. Kiddle, "Every Witch Way," *The Scotsman,* October 31, 2005, 10; P. Rice, "In October, Spotlight Focuses on Neopagan Beliefs," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* October 27, 2001, 20; K. Winston, "The Witch Next Door," Beliefnet, www.beliefnet.com/story/155/ story_15517.html (accessed January 6, 2006); S. Woodward, "Paths to Paganism," *The Sunday Oregonian,* October 27, 2002, L01. It has been deployed by evangelical Christians as yet and again another dire cultural alarm, further evidence of the spiritual decline of late modern society; see, for example, B. Alexander, *Witchcraft Goes Mainstream* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2004); T. Baker, *Dewitched: What You Need to Know about the Dangers of Witchcraft* (Nashville: Transit Books, 2004). And, finally, it has been reproduced almost without any further interrogation in recent academic publications on contemporary Paganism; see T. Foltz, "The Commodification of Witchcraft," in *Witchcraft and Magic: Contemporary North America,* ed. H.A. Berger (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); D. Waldron, "Witchcraft for Sale! Commodity vs. Community in the Neopagan Movement," *Nova Religio* 9, no. 1 (2005): 31–48. For critical evaluations of these claims, see D.E. Cowan, "Count the Candles and Divide by Two: Methodological Considerations in the Quantification of Modern Paganism" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Rochester, NY, November 2005); D.E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), especially 84–87, 193–198; D.E. Cowan, "Too Narrow and Too Close: Some Problems with Participant Observation in the Study of New Religious Movements," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 10 (1998): 391–406.

7. Though they are written from a range of perspectives and vary substantially in quality, for a variety of academic and popular explorations of modern Paganism, see, for example, M. Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in American Today,* rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986); H.A. Berger, *A Community of Witches: Contemporary Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft in the United States* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); H.A. Berger, E.A. Leach, and L.S. Shaffer, *Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and Neo-Pagans in the United States* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003); J. Blain, D. Ezzy, and G. Harvey, eds., *Researching Paganisms* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2004); C.S. Clifton, ed., *Living Between Two Worlds: Challenges of the Modern Witch* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1996); C.S. Clifton, ed., *The Modern Craft Movement: Witchcraft Today, Book One* (St. Paul, MN:

Llewellyn Publications, 1997); Cowan, *Cyberhenge;* M.D. Faber, *Modern Witchcraft and Psychoanalysis* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1993); S. Greenwood, *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld: An Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000); W J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1996); P. Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996); R. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); R. Hutton, *Witches, Druids, and King Arthur* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003); T.M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witches' Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); S. Magliocco, *Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); K. Marron, *Witches, Pagans, & Magic in the New Age* (Toronto: Seal Books, 1989); L. Orion, *Never Again the Burning Times: Paganism Revived* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1995); S.M. Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001); S.M. Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); J. Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism: The Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco* (London and New York: Routledge); G.G. Scott, *Cult and Countercult: A Study of a Spiritual Growth Group and a Witchcraft Order* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980); M. York, *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995).

8. See P. Heselton, *Wiccan Roots: Gerald Gardner and the Modern Witchcraft Revival* (Somerset, UK: Capall Bann Publishing, 2000), 226–260.

9. In 1949, Gardner published *High Magic's Aid,* an historical novel, under the pseudonym, Scire. Following the repeal of the Witchcraft Acts, he published openly *Witchcraft Today* in 1954 and *The Meaning of Witchcraft* in 1959. See G.B. Gardner, *High Magic's Aid* ([1949] Hinton, WV: Godolphin House, 1996); G.B. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* ([1954] New York: Citadel Press, 2004); G.B. Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (London: Aquarian Press, 1959).

10. On this dispute, see Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon,* 205–252; A. Kelly, *Crafting the Art of Magic: Book 1* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1991).

11. In what some modern Pagans have come to regard as British Traditional Witchcraft, though there is dispute even about this, Gardnerians are those who are initiated into and follow the Pagan path laid down by Gardner, considered by most the founder of the modern Witchcraft movement. Alexandrians, on the other hand, are adherents of the tradition established by Alex Sanders (1926–1988) and his wife and high priestess, Maxine (b. 1946), after they came into possession of a copy of Gardner's *Book of Shadows* (Farrar and Farrar, *The Witches' Way,* 245). On Gardner, see P. Crowther, *High Priestess: The Life & Times of Patricia Crowther* (Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing, 1998); Farrar and Farrar, *The Witches' Way;* Gardner, *High Magic's Aid;* Gardner, *Witchcraft Today;* Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft;* Heselton, *Wiccan Roots;* Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon.* On Sanders, see Crowther, *High Priestess;* Farrar, *What Witches Do;* J. Johns, *King of the Witches: The World of Alex Sanders* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970).

12. Farrar and Farrar, *The Witches' Way,* 244; cf. R. Buckland, *The Witch Book: The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft, Wicca, and Neo-paganism* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 2002), 254–256.

13. See, for example, S. Cunningham, *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1988); Farrar and Farrar, *The Witches' Way,* 244–250; M. Green, *A Witch Alone: Thirteen Moons to Master Natural Magic* (London: Thorsons, 1991).

14. In an effort to more carefully differentiate modern Paganism as a distinct religious culture, a few scholars have begun to consider it from a theological standpoint, rather than the historical or sociological. Though he eschews the qualifier "modern" or "contemporary," York contends that the majority of religious traditions around the world either have Pagan roots or manifest Pagan religious behavior. Paper, on the other hand, takes York to task for not following his argument through to its logical conclusion. See J.D. Paper, *The Deities Are Many: A Polytheistic Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); M. York, *Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

15. See H.A. Berger, E.A. Leach, and L.S. Schaffer, *Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and Neo-Pagans in the United States* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

16. Cowan, *Cyberhenge,* 71.

17. Ibid., 72.

18. Farrar and Farrar, *The Witches' Way,* 105.

19. Ibid., 105.

20. L. Cabot and T. Cowan, *Power of the Witch* (New York: Delta Books, 1989), 150.

21. Ibid., 150–151. For other attempts to conceptualize modern Pagan practice as an empirical science, see P.E.I. Bonewits, *Real Magic: An Introductory Treatise on the Basic Principles of Yellow Light,* rev. ed. (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 1989); W.H. Keith, *The Science of the Craft: Modern Realities in the Ancient Art of Witchcraft* (New York: Citadel Press, 2005).

22. According to the Farrars, "The Christian Nativity story is the Christian version of the theme of the Sun's rebirth, for Christ is the Sun-God of the Piscean Age. The birthday of Jesus is undated in the Gospels, and it was not till AD 273 that the Church took the symbolically sensible step of fixing it officially at midwinter, to bring him in line with the other Sun-Gods (such as the Persian Mithras, also born at the Winter Solstice" (Farrar and Farrar, *Eight Sabbats for Witches,* 137–138). See also J. Matthews, *The Winter Solstice: The Sacred Traditions of Christmas* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 1998).

23. See, for example, Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism,* 180–181.

24. See Farrar and Farrar, *Eight Sabbats for Witches,* 48–54.

25. Ibid., 49, emphases in the original.

26. See Cowan, *Cyberhenge,* 30–35. The open source revolution in computer programming, which led to the invention and ongoing development of the Linux operating system, for example, is based on the principle that the source codes, the basic building blocks of computer software, are available to everyone. This allows each user to tailor the software to his or her very specific needs. Closed source programming like Microsoft products, on the other hand, do not allow this kind of access, and the software must be used exactly as it is supplied by the manufacturer.

27. Ibid., 30.

28. See, for example, L. Aldred, "Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sundances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality," *American Indian Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2000): 329–352.

29. S. Knight and P. Telesco, *The Cyber Spellbook: Magick in the Virtual World* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2002), 48.

30. Ibid., 48).

31. G.L. Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry and Politics of Death in Early Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 6.

32. Cowan, *Cyberhenge,* 40–41.

33. R.A. Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (New York: Putnam, 1961).

34. A *blot* is a ritual exchange with the gods, usually of mead or ale. In the same way that the sharing of food and drink builds and strengthens the relationships between human beings, Ásatrúer believe that this exchange reinforces their relationship with the gods. A *sumbel,* on the other hand, is a series of ritualized toasts, often accompanied by boasts, oaths to the gods, and the reading or recitation of the *Eddas,* the sacred texts of Norse heathenry. On various aspects of northern European paganism and heathenry, see Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon,* 273–282; J. Blain, *Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic: Ecstasy and Neo-Shamanism in North European Paganism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); G. Harvey, *Contemporary Paganism: Listening People, Speaking Earth* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), especially 53–68; G. Harvey, "Heathenism: A North European Pagan Tradition," in *Paganism Today,* ed. C. Hardman and G. Harvey (London: Thorsons, 1996); J. Kaplan, "The Reconstruction of the Ásatrú and Odinist Traditions," in *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft,* ed. J.R. Lewis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

35. For a variety of perspectives on modern Druidry, see P. Carr-Gomm, *The Elements of the Druid Tradition* (Shaftesbury, UK: Element, 1991); P. Carr-Gomm, *In the Grove of the Druids: The Druid Teachings of Ross Nichols* (London: Watkins Publishing, 2002); P. Carr-Gomm, ed., *The Druid Renaissance: The Voice of Druidry Today* (London: Thorsons, 1996); Harvey, *Contemporary Paganism: Listening People, Speaking Earth,* especially 17–34; E.E. Hopman and L. Bond, *People of the Earth: The New Pagans Speak Out* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1996), especially 1–34; R. Hutton, *Witches, Druids and King Arthur* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2003), especially 239–258; P. Shallcrass, "Druidry Today," in *Paganism Today,* ed. C. Hardman and G. Harvey (London: Thorsons, 1996).

36. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 35.

37. On the Wiccan Rede and modern Pagan ethics, see C.S. Clifton, "What has Alexandria to do with Boston? Some Sources of Modern Pagan Ethics," in *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft,* ed. Lewis, 269–275; S.T. Rabinovitch and M. Macdonald, *An Ye Harm None: Magical Morality and Modern Ethics* (New York: Citadel Press, 2004).

38. See, for example, A-M. Gallagher, "Woven Apart and Weaving Together: Conflict and Mutuality in Feminist and Pagan Communities," in *Daughters of the Goddess: Studies of Healing, Identity, and Empowerment,* ed. W. Griffin (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2000), 42–58; S.L. Reid, "Witch Wars: Factors Contributing to Conflict in Canadian Neopagan Communities," *The Pomegranate* 11 (Winter 2000): 10–20.

39. Cabot and Cowan, *Power of the Witch,* 111–112; S.L. Reid, "Solitary," in *The Encyclopedia of Modern Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism*, ed. S. Rabinovitch and J. Lewis (New York: Citadel Press, 2002), 252.

40. Cowan, *Cyberhenge,* 82–83.

41. Cunningham, *Wicca,* 53–54. On Cunningham himself, see D. Harrington and D. Regula, *Whispers of the Moon: The Life and Work of Scott Cunningham, Philosopher-Magician, Modern-day Pagan* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1997). On solitary Pagan practice, see also, for example, R. Beth, *Hedge Witch: A Guide to Solitary Witchcraft* (London: Robert Hale, 1990); R. Beth, *The Wiccan Path: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1990); S. Cunningham, *Living Wicca: A Further Guide for the Solitary*

Practitioner (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1993); F. De Grandis, *Goddess Initiation: A Practical Celtic Program for Soul-Healing, Self-Fulfillment, and Wild Wisdom* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001); S. RavenWolf, *Solitary Witch: The Ultimate Book of Shadows for the New Generation* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2003).

42. See Hopman and Bond, *People of the Earth,* 217–223; V. Vale and J. Sulak, *Modern Pagans: An Investigation of Contemporary Pagan Practices* (San Francisco: Re/Search Publications, 2001), 130–153. Zell-Ravenheart's own understanding of the modern Pagan path is best exemplified in O. Zell-Ravenheart and the Grey Council, *Grimoire for the Apprentice Wizard* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2004).

43. Zell-Ravenheart, in Vale and Sulak, *Modern Pagans*, 137.

44. Ibid., 137.

45. Ibid., 137.

46. "About the Covenant of the Goddess," www.cog.org/aboutcog.html (accessed January 16, 2006). See also Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon,* 103–105; Hopman and Bond, *People of the Earth,* 249–280; Vale and Sulak, *Modern Pagans,* 94–107.

47. Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon,* 103.

48. See Ibid., 101–103

49. J. Harrow, personal communication with author, January 21, 2006.

50. D. Lattin, "World Conference of Religions Tests Tolerance for Fringe Faiths," *San Francisco Chronicle,* September 2, 1993, A1.

51. Harrow, in Hopman and Bond, *People of the Earth,* 253.

52. On the specific problems with this, especially as they relate to online ordination and the instantiation of modern Pagan identity, see Cowan, *Cyberhenge,* 88–90, 185–191.

53. "FAQ," http://cherryhillseminary.org/faq.html (accessed January 17, 2006).

54. See www.witchvox.com.

55. For a fuller discussion of modern Paganism on the Internet, see Cowan, *Cyberhenge.*

56. Ibid., 199.

57. Sant, "Paganism and the Net: Oil and Water?" *Circle Network News* 62 (Winter 1996): 18.

58. Cowan, *Cyberhenge,* 172.

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Learning about Paganism

Helen A. Berger

Neopaganism is not a religion of "the Book," but a religion of books. It is through the printed word and within the past decade through Web sites that most Neopagans learn about their religion. Since most American Neopagans are solitary practitioners,[1] books, Web sites, and public teachers are particularly important in transmitting information about the religion. Covens, groves, and groups are important as well, as they were traditionally the source of training and continue to be one of the sources for new adherents to learn about the religion. But Neopagans are readers, and even those trained in groups, nonetheless, read books about their religion, mythology related to their spiritual practice, and the spiritual practices of indigenous peoples. Through writing books, publishing magazines, maintaining Web sites, leading workshops, and organizing festivals, Neopagan elders and groups most clearly make their mark on the religion.

Neopaganism encompasses different traditions or spiritual paths. Some of these traditions are oriented toward a particular historic and geographic area. For example, Druids focus on historic Celtic practices, and Ásatrú worship the Norse pantheon. Others, such as Gardnerians or Alexandrians, perpetuate the teachings of a particular individual. Gardnerians trace their lineage back to the original coven of Gerald Gardner (1884–1964). Each Gardnerian teacher was herself or himself trained in a coven that traces back to either Gardner or someone within his original coven. Gardner is credited with creating Wicca in the 1930s in Great Britain.[2] Alexandrians trace their history back to Alex Sanders (1926–1988) who received training in Gardnerian Wicca, then created a variant. Several different forms of Wicca are practiced in the United States. When I began my research in 1986, Neopagans commonly used the terms *Witch* and *Wiccan* interchangeably. Today a distinction is usually made between Witches and Wiccans; only those trained in an initiatory tradition are considered Wiccans. Some individuals, however, are self-initiated, having learned about Wicca through books and the Internet.

It is a cliché among Neopagans and scholars of Neopaganism that an exception can be found to almost any generalization about the religion and its practitioners.

This is because Neopaganism has no central organization or dogma to determine theology, practice, or even membership. Most forms of Neopaganism are experiential; that is, they emphasize individuals' unmediated encounters with the spiritual world gained in or outside of ritual through a series of techniques, such as meditation, drumming, or dancing. Each person is considered an authority on her or his own spiritual experience and hence on her or his interpretation of and relationship with the divine, the other world, or the mystical. Douglas Cowan,[3] applying a computer term, has dubbed Neopaganism an "open source" religion. Open source programming is "software for which the basic building blocks—the source code—is freely available for modification.… Open source traditions are those which encourage (or at least do not discourage) theological and ritual innovation based on either individual intuition or group consensus, and which innovation is not limited to priestly classes, institutional elites, or religious virtuosi."[4] Because of the lack of dogma and the belief in each person having direct access to the divine, anyone can contribute to and change Neopagan practices and beliefs. However, in practice most groups and individual practitioners have many similarities.[5] These similarities often result from individuals having read the same books, attended the same festivals, and participated in the same Internet sites and chat rooms.

Traditionally Witchcraft, Wicca, and other forms of Neopaganism are taught in covens for Witches, groves for Druids, or other groups for other forms of Neopaganism. Knowledge is passed down by elders in the religion to newcomers. These groups tend to be small, easily formed, and easily terminated, although people remain within the same social circles, resulting in former coven mates sometimes continuing to work together, even forming a new coven or group after the old one disbands. Normally for Witches and Wiccans—and commonly among other forms of Neopaganism—teaching within groups is given at no charge to learners. Among Wiccans it is considered the duty of those who have been trained without cost in a coven to in turn teach others for free. Although teaching remains free within most if not all covens, some Witches are now charging for training in courses given outside the coven. In *Voices from the Pagan Census*[6] my colleagues and I found that most American Neopagans, in theory, support the concept of paid clergy. Few, however, give money to support clergy or organizations. Most of the money exchanged for learning is through courses at adult education centers, at occult bookstores, through the mail, or on the Internet. In some cases training occurs at festivals or retreats.

Coven and group learning continues today, but with the growth of solitary practitioners such learning is more and more the minority form of training. The success of publications and ultimately other forms of media in spreading information about the religion has ramifications for the methods of training among the next cohort of practitioners. As Douglas Ezzy[7] demonstrates, this has resulted, on the one hand, in the democratization of instruction. Any one with a library card, or more recently access to the Internet, can learn about most if not all Neopagan traditions. On the other hand, such learning is devoid of face-to-face relationships as exist in covens and instead becomes mediated by the market. The growth of market relationships is further evidenced by the number of teachers who charge for lessons.[8] Spiritual teachers

requiring payment is still controversial within Neopagan circles but, nonetheless, is increasingly common. Less controversial are Witches and other Neopagans writing how-to books, some of which are popular enough to generate an income. Journals and magazines, which often play an important role within the Neopagan movement, may sometimes generate money for those who produce them but at other times are subsidized by groups and have not been able to generate money.

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

Green Egg, which was published by the Church of All Worlds (CAW) from 1968 until 2001, played a central role in helping to create the nascent Neo-Pagan movement out of a set of spiritual ideas including the notions of nature as sacred, the divine as immanent, and a belief in an alternative reality. Most of these spiritual paths also invoke multiple deities, or at least the god and the goddess. *Green Egg* popularized the term "Neo-Pagan," giving the movement its name, and more importantly through its articles and its policy of publishing unedited letters gave the movement a public forum.[9] The magazine was also a recruitment tool for CAW, which takes it name from the classic science fiction novel of 1961 by Robert Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land.* CAW's form of Neopaganism combines elements of libertarianism, science fiction, and environmentalism.[10] The magazine made editor Tim Zell (b. 1942) into a major figure in the Neopagan world, who is often quoted in other Pagan's publications and is a welcome speaker at Neopagan gatherings.

Other groups subsequently began newsletters and magazines, each of which contributed to the creation of a national, and at times an international, community of Neopagans. *WomanSpirit,* which began publication in 1974, was the earliest to appeal to the growing women's spirituality movement.[11] "Put out four times a year from Oregon the writing staff consisted of changing collectives of women in different states and so reflected the ferment that women were experiencing across the county. It provided a forum for women to explore their spirituality through poetry, art, prose, discussions, and descriptions of women's rituals that were growing in popularity."[12] Other journals, for example, *SageWoman,* followed *WomanSpirit*'s lead in providing information and a forum for the women's spirituality movement. Although not all within the women's spirituality movement are Neopagans—some remaining firmly within Judaism or Christianity—an important section of this movement are Feminist Witches.[13] Zsuzsanna Budapest (b. 1940), a Hungarian immigrant who helped to create a women's only form of Wicca, in which the goddess was worshipped to the exclusion of the god force, was one of the earliest and strongest voices of Feminist or Dianic Witchcraft. Budapest gained notoriety after *Ms. Magazine* featured a story about her being arrested for reading Tarot cards, which at the time was illegal in California, the state where she lived. The article also helped to spread information about the growing feminist spirituality movement. In *The Grandmother of Time* Budapest, remembering her first goddess circle with six friends, asserted that the other women "just came to try it out, to find out if it had any validity for feminist women. We did agree that we cannot work toward liberation as long as our inner

selves remain unchanged. Liberation has to begin inside; liberation has to be getting past the fears of taking our own power."[14] For Dianic Witches, the goddess is the symbol of women's empowerment. The veneration of the goddess is intertwined with women's growing awareness of their subjugation in Western culture.

Traditionally Wicca was based on balancing male and female energies. Gardner spoke of the perfect coven being 13: the high priestess, six men and six women. Budapest not only eliminated the need for gender balance but provided a different mythology for the circle of the year—one that eliminated the need for god. In traditional Wiccan mythology the god is transformed from the goddess's son born to her at Yule (December 21), to her consort at Beltaine (May 1), her dead lover at Samhain (October 31), and ultimately in rebirth the following Yule to her son again. The changes in the relationship between the goddess and the god mirror changes in nature from the stirring of life in the midst of winter, to fertility in spring, to death in the fall, and ultimately to rebirth the following spring. Within Dianic Witchcraft the cycle of the year focuses only on the changes of the Goddess from maid, to mother, to crone. Budapest also questioned the Rule of Return. The Wiccan Rede—do as thou will as long as thou harm none—and its corollary—whatever you send out will be returned three times—are the bases of ethical behavior within the religion. Budapest argued that if a Witch cannot curse she cannot cure and that women are justified in cursing rapists and abusers.[15]

Although influenced by Wicca, women-only Witchcraft groups came into conflict with more traditional Witchcraft groups.[16] Some of the early conflict was displayed in the letters to *Green Egg*.[17] Although tensions continue to exist between women's only or feminist Witchcraft and more traditional Witchcraft, these have decreased over the years. Miriam Simos (b. 1951), who is better known by her magical name Starhawk, was an important figure in decreasing these tensions. In her first book, *The Spiral Dance*,[18] Starhawk bridged the gap between traditional Wicca and Feminist Witchcraft. Starhawk is an initiated Witch trained both in the Faery Tradition, a form of Wicca, and in Feminist Witchcraft by Budapest. Starhawk is one of the founders of the Reclaiming Tradition, which is feminist, activist, nonhierarchical, and inclusive of both men and women. In the *Spiral Dance* and in her subsequent books, *Dreaming the Dark* and *Truth and Dare,*[19] Starhawk was interested in spreading information about Witchcraft, not specifically teaching the Reclaiming Tradition. In her introduction to the *Spiral Dance* she states: "The myths, underlying philosophy and 'thealogy'[20] … in this book are based on the Faery Tradition. Other Witches may disagree with details, but the overall values and attitudes expressed are common to all of the Craft."[21]

Starhawk's presentation of Witchcraft blends the Feminist Witches' emphasis on the Goddess with Wiccan rituals, magical practices, and ethics. In describing the Goddess's meaning for men and women within Witchcraft, Starhawk writes:

> The Goddess is the "end of desire," its origin and its completion. In Witchcraft, desire is itself seen as a manifestation of the Goddess. We do not seek to conquer or escape from our desires—we seek to fulfill them.… Fulfillment becomes, not a matter of self-indulgence, but of self-awareness. For women, the Goddess is the symbol of the inmost

> self, and the beneficent nurturing, liberating power within woman.… The Goddess does not limit women to the body; She awakens the mind and spirit and emotions. Through Her, we can know the power of our anger and aggression, as well as the power of our love … for a man the Goddess as well as being the universal life force is his own hidden female self.… He may chase Her forever, and She will elude him, but through the attempt he will grow, until he too learns to find Her within.[22]

Like Feminist Witches, Starhawk views the goddess as empowering to women, putting them in touch not only with images of nurturing, loving women but also with female warriors. However, unlike Budapest's model of goddess worship, for Starhawk men too are included. According to Starhawk the goddess is not just part of women, but is part of men as well. As with all forms of Witchcraft the female aspect of the divine is referred to as the goddess. She is perceived as encompassing many different goddesses from different pantheons and cultures, or as a projection of an aspect of all women and men. Although Starhawk gives priority to the goddess, the god is not ignored. She tells us: "In the women's movement, Dianic separatist Witchcraft has become the fashion, and some women may have difficulty understanding why a feminist would bother with the Horned God at all. Yet there are few if any women whose lives are not bound up with men, if not sexually and emotionally then economically. The Horned God represents powerful, positive male qualities that derive from deeper sources than the stereotypes and violence and emotional crippling of men in our society."[23] Like the goddess, the god can encompass many different deities or symbolize manhood. The Horned God imagined by Starhawk provides a feminist image of manhood.

The Spiral Dance sold over 300,000 copies.[24] Starhawk's influence pervades the Neopagan movement, although not everyone agrees with her. For example, the image of the god provided by Starhawk is not supported by all Witches and certainly not all Neopagans. Ásatrú who worship the Norse gods do not blend them into one and are more likely to view these gods in less feminist terms, seeing them in their warrior aspect. Starhawk does not speak for all Witches. Nonetheless, her work is widely read within the Neopagan movement and permeates much of the language used, even if at times individuals may not be aware of it. In my fieldwork in the northeastern United States I often heard people use Starhawk's words as their own, either having forgotten that they had read them or having absorbed them from conversations with others.

Margot Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon* was published the same year as *Spiral Dance.* Adler (b. 1946), a reporter for National Public Radio and an initiated Witch, provided an overview of the movement in the United States. The book was important, both in giving a positive public face to the movement and for its discussion of many different forms of Neopaganism in addition to Witchcraft or Wicca. She also provided a list of resources for those interested in learning more about the religion. Unlike Starhawk, Adler did not provide rituals or magical workings as part of her book.

The Spiral Dance, like other books at the time, such as *The Feminist Book of Lights and Shadows* written by Budapest and other members of her coven, provided a

conduit for people to learn about the magical, mystical, and ritual practices of Witchcraft without receiving coven training. Starhawk included a discussion of how to run a coven, useful to both those who were coven-trained and those who were not coven-trained but wanted to start their own group. The book also discussed rituals and magical workings, which could be done by anyone even without coven training.

Starhawk, Adler, and Budapest's books were not the first on Wicca, Witchcraft, or Paganism. Gerald Gardner published books on the religion shortly after the British laws against Witchcraft were revoked in 1951.[25] Nonetheless, Starhawk, Adler, and Budapest are important because they mark the beginning of a larger process—the popularization of Witchcraft through books. Some publishing houses, such as Llewellyn have specialized in occult, New Age, and alternative books. Among those books published by Llewellyn, the work of two authors were particularly important in Witchcraft—Scott Cunningham (1956–1993) and Silver RavenWolf (b. 1956).

In *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* and *Living Wicca: A Further Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*, Cunningham forcefully advocated and provided information for individuals to practice Witchcraft alone, without coven training. His are not the only books advocating this approach. Thousands of how-to books on Witchcraft, and to a lesser degree other forms of Neopaganism, exist. Some are on specific topics, such as how to raise a Pagan child or run a coven. But many repeat in slightly different words what is often referred to as Wicca 101, involving a basic outline of the eight sabbats at the beginning and height of each season; the esbats or moon phases; and instruction on how to cast a circle, call the direction (east, south, west, and north), raise energy for magical workings, and close the circle. These books all are accused of giving individuals the illusion that they are trained Witches or Pagans without really providing the depth of training and supervision available in covens and other groups. Traditionally in Wiccan covens the High Priestess and High Priest determine when neophytes are ready to be initiated and when they are then ready to receive their second and third degrees. Within Wicca, three degrees indicate levels of spiritual attainment within a particular tradition. Solitary practitioners sometimes eschew degrees but at other times determine themselves when they are ready to go on to the next level. On the one hand, some elders are concerned that these individuals are not properly trained, but nonetheless will attempt to train others, resulting in a watering down of the religion. On the other hand, many solitary practitioners believe that they are not accorded the proper respect within Neopagan circles.[26] Because Neopaganism is a religion in which each person can create his or her own form of Paganism, and no accrediting body determines who is or is not properly trained, no one can be excluded from the religion or stopped from teaching. Each person is ultimately the authority on his or her own spiritual path and relationship with the divine. Some solitary practitioners prefer to be coven-trained but live in an area in which they are unable to find a coven or at least one that they prefer and that is willing to accept them. Other solitaries prefer working alone and developing what they feel is their own form of practice.

Silver RavenWolf's books targeted preteens and teenagers interested in Witchcraft. The books provided a basic background in Witchcraft, rituals, ritual tools, magical workings, and ethics. In *Teen Witch* RavenWolf, for example, prior to providing a love spell, enumerated how these spells could not or should not be used. She informed her reader that a Witch must never violate another's free will and hence should not do a spell to make a particular person fall in love with her or him. If the Witch does, the relationship will be doomed. A Witch must never attempt to win another person's significant other. And "you cannot own another person. A person doesn't 'belong' to you like a piece of property. Witches never give away their 'shields' to another person. You always retain your personal power."[27] RavenWolf then provided a spell for bringing love to the spell maker—that is, bringing her or him in contact with eligible people. RavenWolf's discussion of how to use love magic was consistent with Wiccan beliefs and practices. Her books contained spells, some of which were geared toward the young, like the crabby teacher or exam spell, and others that were common within the Neopagan community, like healing spells to help others or oneself recover from an illness. RavenWolf also gave advice to teens on how to live, such as the suggestion that one never give away one's personal power in a relationship or that illegal drugs and alcohol do not mix with magic.

In my recent study with Ezzy on teenage Witches in the United States, England, and Australia,[28] a number of the young Witches mentioned reading one or more of RavenWolf's books when they began exploring Witchcraft. Some were embarrassed to admit this, having come to see RavenWolf's works, as one of them phrased it "too fluffy bunny," that is, too lightweight. Others felt that she provided them with a foray into the world of Witchcraft in a language they could understand. RavenWolf is the best known, but only one of the many authors who orients their publications towards teenagers. Unlike RavenWolf, some authors write books completely of spells, particularly love spells geared toward teenage girls. Publishers code these books with pink or lavender covers to signal that they are oriented toward girls and young women.

Teenagers often do not have the option of being coven-trained. Judy Harrow[29] recommends that teachers do not permit underage individuals whose parents are not Pagans into their covens because this might make the group legally vulnerable. Amber K,[30] on the other hand, recommends that coven leaders speak to the underage seeker's parents or guardian to get their approval, which if given should be put in writing. Both Harrow and K are concerned with the legal ramifications of training underage seekers without parental consent. Teenagers who are interested Witchcraft or any other form of Paganism often have no alternative but to learn about it from books or the Internet, either alone or with a few friends.

Many in the religion are offended by the more flagrant popular books on Witchcraft, whether geared toward teenagers or to adults, which focus almost exclusively on spells. Although a minority, one-third of Neopagans in the *Pagan Census* stated that they find popularization of the religion a problem.[31] For some this problem is the diluting of the religion by books and Web sites. For others they are concerned about the public perception of their religion—fearing that the emphasis on casting

spells in some of these books will not reflect well on them or help them get their religion recognized within interfaith councils and in the law courts. Witches and other Neopagans have experienced discrimination. Recently, for example, two Witches, divorced and involved in a custody battle over their only son, were enjoined by the court not to teach the child their religion.[32] The initial court ruling was overturned on appeal, but the case indicates that Witches and other Neopagans continue to experience discrimination.[33]

Most of the books published about Neopaganism are about Wicca or Witchcraft. In part, this is because it is the most popular form of Neopaganism.[34] The current interest in Witchcraft was spurred by the popular media, for example, the feature film *The Craft* and television shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* in which one of the characters, Willow, is a Witch, and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch.* In our study of teenage Witches in the United States, England, and Australia, Ezzy and I found that although only a few said that they explored Witchcraft after seeing one of these shows, they all watched at least one episode. Televisions shows, movies, and books constitute a general background that helps to fuel the interest in Witchcraft, or at least on spell work. Most of those who begin exploring Witchcraft, and bought some books, did not become Witches or join another form of Neopaganism. The young people who do become Witches tend to graduate from spell books to more serious literature.[35]

Non-Wiccan Paganism also generated books. Isaac Bonewits (b. 1949), who is an important voice in Druidism, published his undergraduate thesis on magic in 1989. The book did not present the basic principles of Druidism, but instead focused on the practice of magic, his theory behind magic, and his critique of what he considered hubris among other Neopagan authors. Bonewits's book and his writings in *Green Egg* and other Neopagan journals made him a respected voice within Neopaganism and the founder of one branch of Druidism, ÁrnDraíocht Féin (ADF), which translates from the Gallic as our own Druidism. Bonewits broke from the New Reformed Druids of North America (NRDNA) to create the ADF, largely over the issue of clergy training. The ADF has a very well developed training program for each of its three specialists: the Druid, who is the leader; the Bard, or storyteller; and the Ovate, or soothsayer. Interestingly, one can move both up and down in accreditation, indicating an increase or perceived decrease in learning. The NRDNA continues to exist, and other splinter groups developed out of the ADF. Furthermore, other forms of Druidism exist, some of which are not Pagan.[36] Amazon.com alone lists over 800 books on Druidism, most of which, like those on Witchcraft, are how-to books. Somewhat fewer books are listed on Heathenry or Ásatrú. Nonetheless, Amazon.com lists more than 500 books on this spiritual path, most of which provide basic information on its beliefs and practices.

Books are a major form of transmission of information to neophytes of all forms of Neopaganism. But, face-to-face interactions remain important. As noted earlier, most contemporary Neopagans consider themselves solitary practitioners. In some instances, this means that the individuals practice alone—combining what they learned from books and the Internet with what they may learn from a class or by

attending a festival. But, at other times, being a solitary practitioner has another meaning. In West Chester, Pennsylvania, where I teach, there was until it disbanded about a year ago a group of solitary practitioners, led by a woman and a man who did not take the title High Priestess and High Priest. They insisted that they were not a coven but just a group of solitary practitioners. The group celebrated the sabbats, at times celebrated the esbat, and had classes to learn about techniques for entering altered states, mythology about the holidays, and various beliefs. Although the group had many of the hallmarks of a coven they did not initiate neophytes, bestow degrees, or claim to train individuals in a particular form of Witchcraft or Paganism. Similarly, in our research on teen Witches, we found that most of our respondents are solitary practitioners even though they often practice with other Witches, by attending classes and participating in student Pagan or Wiccan clubs and at times by training with particular Wiccan or Witchcraft traditions. They define themselves as solitary practitioners because they remain in control of their own spirituality and are eclectic, taking insights from different sources—including the Internet, books, teachers, and other Neopagans. This does not mean that the various traditions of Witchcraft and other forms of Neopaganism are no longer relevant. Although the majority claim to be solitaries, 48 percent report that they do work in groups.[37]

THE INTERNET

The Internet has become one of the major sources of information on Neopaganism and a venue through which Neopagans can interact. Cowan reminds us that the Internet, while permitting interaction among participants, is not open to all.[38] Computers are not equally distributed among nations or within nations. Social class, education, age, and gender all determine the likelihood of individuals having access to and using the Internet for more than just checking e-mail. M. Macha NightMare, a Reclaiming Witch and well-known Pagan author asserts:

> The web allowed community to be created where none had been. The anonymity of online communications liberated witchen folks to express their thoughts and feelings and experiences in relative safety … so in a sense the Web became our church.… It has allowed previously fragmented groups to find each other and previously isolated people to find community. It has fostered the growth of Pagan rights organizations, Pagan publishing, organizing in general, and mobilization of Pagan safety and civil rights The Net has provided us with unlimited resources to learn about our ethnic and cultural heritage, to reconstruct ancient rites, and to bond around these sharings.[39]

NightMare mentions several benefits that the Internet provides Pagans: a place to foster community, a source of information, and a network through which to organize. Erik Davis also suggested that the Internet could provide an alternative "universe" in which to do ritual.[40] Witchcraft in particular, but also most forms of Paganism, are experiential religions. The focus is more on experiencing an alternative universe than in holding a set of beliefs or participating in a set of activities. To what degree does the Internet meet all of these promises—fostering community, providing

information, being a source for organizing, and furnishing an alternative universe in which to do ritual?

In our study of teenage Witches, Ezzy and I found that most young people use the Internet as an alternative encyclopedia, although more turn first to books and then to the Internet. Few were involved in chat rooms, and those who were only occasionally participated in discourse—more often choosing to lurk than write. But those who did participate in chat rooms felt that they were part of a community. For some it was important to realize that they were not alone and to have their beliefs confirmed by others. Others established friendships on the Internet, at times meeting people in person whom they befriended in chat rooms. Still others learned of local events that were listed on electronic bulletin boards and became more involved in their local community. Cowan warns that on the Internet individuals can conceal their true identity and more easily lie than in everyday interactions. But, he suggests, the Internet affords those who are thinking about or are in the early stages of becoming a Neopagan a no-risk chance to try on the identity. The individual can remain in the "broom closet" with all those outside the Internet forever, or until she or he is comfortable with her or his new identity.[41]

The Internet also permits individuals to take on the role of teacher. This has both positive and negative effects. Positively, all participants can provide information, tell about their own spiritual quests, and hope to influence the larger religion by their writing on the Internet. Young Witches who are students in their daily lives can become or attempt to become respected teachers on the Internet.[42] Negatively, information is not vetted on the Internet; both good and bad suggestions and information are equally available. In addition, as Cowan illustrates, individuals because of either lack of time or lack of knowledge sometimes just cut and paste, often without noting that the material is not originally theirs, resulting in the same information being presented on a number of Web sites, at times out of context.[43]

The Internet does provide a community especially for solitary practitioners. For example, individuals who live in rural areas where there are no other Neopagans, or at least none whom they know, can communicate on the Internet. It is also a way to network, meeting others in your local area, and learning about festivals, open rituals, and groups. Witchvox.com is one of the largest and most respected sites on the Internet for Pagans. It provides pages for Neopagans from different nations around the world, as well as pages for adults, teens, and children. There are pages of information about different forms of Neopaganism, organizations, and local gatherings. Individuals, groups, and companies can advertise on the site. They have articles about current Neopagan issues. Thousands of sites exist for all forms of Neopaganism. Not all of them are active; more are started than are maintained.

Some groups exist only in cyberspace, but these are rare. Cowan found that many of the cyber covens were teaching covens—that is, they did not perform rituals but promised to teach neophytes about Wicca. It was unclear how successful any of these were. He found that many of these sites had not been updated in two or more years and their links were not functional. Cowan questions whether a cyber coven can survive without any face-to-face interactions. Some groups meet in cyberspace as well as

in mundane space. The Internet meetings help to create cohesion by permitting interactions in between face-to-face meetings and linking those who can only rarely attend in-person meetings, because they either have moved away or have family or work obligations that make it difficult for them to regularly attend the larger group. Some of these groups define their cyber meetings as online covens. In her dissertation on a Reclaiming coven in the northeastern United States, Pam Detrixhe documents the use of online interactions among one group that also has face-to-face meetings several times a year. Conflicts arose in this group over decisions made at the face-to-face meetings that some members were unable to attend. Some suggested that all decisions should be based on online discussions. The online aspect of the group helped to create both cohesion and tensions. But, nonetheless, the group would either have not existed or been very different without the inclusion of the online meetings.[44]

Only a few of the cyber covens that Cowan explored attempted to do the central component of coven work—rituals—online. He discovered that "in terms of their content … online rituals differ very little from their off line counterparts."[45] He notes that they follow the same basic format, of creating a sacred circle, calling the quarters, invoking the same goddesses and gods. They often use the same texts as a basis for ritual. As he argues: "with the exception of problems related specifically to Internet technology—from frozen servers, to unexpected 'fatal errors' in one's operating system, to cats who jump on the keyboard and drop the user unceremoniously from the chat room—even pre and post-ritual chatter is indistinguishable from that which occurs off-line. That is, there is nothing inherently special about online ritual, other than … it gathers together those who might not otherwise meet."[46] Cowan agrees with NightMare, Telesco and Knight, and Davis that the Internet can potentially offer an alternative format for rituals, but in his extensive research he found none that has actually met this potential. [47]

Organizing against discrimination and to fight for their civil rights is another use of the Internet mentioned by NightMare. Information about discrimination and a call to write letters are often posted on Pagan Web sites and sent out on Pagan listserves. Lady Liberty League, the legal arm of Circle Sanctuary, maintains a Web site listing current cases of discrimination again Pagans. As many studies[48] show, Neopagans as a group are well-educated and middle-class—a cross-section of American society that tends to be more likely to participate in letter-writing campaigns than lower-class and less-educated people. The Internet is well suited for instantly and inexpensively organizing these campaigns.

FESTIVALS AND WITCH CAMPS

Prior to the widespread use of the Internet, festivals and camps were the main venues that gave Neopagans opportunities to create community. Festivals are large gatherings of Neopagans that normally occur in the spring and summer, although a few take place in the fall. The festivals are organized by Neopagan umbrella groups like Earthspirit Community, Elf Lore, Circle Sanctuary, and Covenant of the Goddess

(COG). The festivals are typically held outside, often at camping grounds or children's summer camps prior to their opening for the season. They have elements of both spiritual retreat and summer camp atmosphere for adults.[49] When entering a festival, one commonly sees people dressed in ritual robes, medieval styled garb, tie-dyed T-shirts and jeans, or skyclad—that is, naked or seminaked. Some individuals who need to hide their identity in their work lives revel in decking themselves out in Pagan jewelry—necklaces, bracelets, earrings with pentagrams, or images of goddesses. Most festivals boast a merchants' row with stalls selling a variety of Pagan-related goods and services, such as crystals, jewelry with Pagan symbols, massages, or herbal remedies for common ailments. A ritual fire, which is normally lit at the beginning of the festival and kept burning until the end, becomes the center of festival life. Rituals open and close the festivals and are held several times a day. Usually one large ritual a day occurs that most people attend. Workshops also take place throughout the day on a variety of topics. Some explore spiritual practices such as mask making, astral projection, and ritual construction. Others are organized as discussion groups to explore common problems within Neopaganism, such as how to raise a Pagan child, coming out of the broom closet, or dealing with religious discrimination. Meals are usually communal and participants are expected to volunteer for jobs around the camp—from working in the kitchen to helping with parking. Conflicts arise over people not meeting their obligations or participating in behavior that is offensive. This can vary from throwing cigarette butts into the ritual fire to making unwanted sexual advances to other participants.[50]

Neopagans come from across the United States and sometimes from abroad to attend festivals. There they meet others and exchange information, see rituals performed, and take workshops. Normally one group or tradition will lead a particular ritual. Others may learn some techniques, poetry, or ritual ideas from that group and then incorporate them into their own practice. Ideas are also exchanged throughout the day, as Neopagans sit around the central fire, dance, sing, and chat with one another. Most Neopagans do not attend festivals, and solitary practitioners are less likely to attend than those who are in groups.[51] Nonetheless, the impact of the festivals, in terms of sharing information and building networks, is greater than the numbers who attend, because people bring what they learned back to their local communities.[52] The effect of festivals is felt least by those who are the most isolated from their local communities. They are the least likely to attend the festivals and the least likely to interact with others who attended.

In addition to festivals, which bring together most if not all forms of Paganism, camps are organized to teach particular Pagan traditions. The Reclaiming Tradition is well known for their Witch Camps, which are offered in nine states in the United States—California, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, and Virginia. Reclaiming also has Witch Camps in Canada and Europe. The Witch Camps developed from classes offered in the San Francisco Bay Area, initially by Starhawk and a member of her coven, Diane Baker, in 1980. The initial classes, which took place over a six-week period, were so popular that new teachers were recruited to meet the demand. Requests by those who lived too far away to attend

the classes resulted in Witch Camps starting in 1985. The camps are an intensive week of classes, rituals, and group living. Participants are encouraged to take what they learn back to their local communities and teach others. The camps teach the Reclaiming form of Witchcraft, which is feminist, activist, and focused on self-transformation.[53]

The Reformed Congregation of the Goddess, International (RCG-I), also hosts a Witch Camp for Dianic Witches. These camps, which are weekend retreats, are less intense than those offered by Reclaiming. The organization, however, also offers the Cella course in Priestess training, which is done in part by correspondence and in part by face-to-face interactions over a one- to six-year period. Diana's Grove, another Dianic group, also offers Witch Camps and correspondence courses that can be completed either in person at the Witch Camps or online.[54]

In addition to festivals and Witch Camps, two annual women's music gatherings are important: The National Women's Music Festival and the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Both are held in the summer. They include Women's Spirituality and Goddess worship workshops, often led by well-known Neopagans, such as Adler, Budapest, and Jade River, one of the founders of the RGC-I.[55] Because there is an elective affinity between Neopagans and other groups, such as those interested in recreating historical periods, the New Age, science fiction, and fantasy literature, Neopagan teachers can often be found at Renaissance fairs, New Age gatherings, and science fiction conventions.[56]

CONCLUSION

The traditional path to Witchcraft and other forms of Paganism was through covens, groves, or groups. These collectives remain important in training initiates, but are becoming less central as more individuals practice alone or with one other person. Books, which since the spread of Neopaganism in the 1960s and 1970s were important in transmitting the religion to the next cohort, are even more important. As the religion grew in popularity, more books were produced that present spell work with little concern for other aspects of the religion. Since the 1990s, with positive images of teenage Witches appearing in movies like *The Craft* and subsequent television shows, bookstore shelves have seen an increasing number of books geared toward teenagers. Concerns were raised by many in Neopagan communities that this resulted in a diluting of the religion. Some speculate that the market in popular works on Witchcraft and Neopaganism is decreasing.[57] What this will ultimately mean for the religion is not clear. It is possible that the market is so saturated with introductory spell books that few if any more can be marketed. An increasing number of young people may be turning to the Internet for their information and therefore buying fewer books. My own research on teenage Witches suggests that, like their elders, they are readers. Teenage Witches search the Internet, at times participating in chat rooms, but they also read books, often those they find recommended on the Internet. Many of them read the classic works, such as those by Starhawk, Adler, Crowley, and Cunningham, and are not interested in spell books.

Although most Neopagans practice alone, a Neopagan community does exist; it is not on the whole a face-to-face community, but one that could best be described as a community of interest: people who are loosely linked through their shared concerns. Neopagans meet on the Internet, at festivals, and at other gatherings. These are venues for teaching and learning about the religion, mythology, and techniques for getting into an altered state of consciousness in order to come in contact with the spiritual world. Some individuals have become noted teachers through writing books, editing journals, running festivals, and organizing umbrella organizations. Others are known as teachers only on a small scale in their own local community where they work with a few people each year in their coven. Since Neopaganism has no accrediting agencies, anyone can become a teacher—but not all who teach are respected and not all well-known. Learning about Neopaganism is often multifaceted; people take lessons, participate on the Internet, and read widely on mythology, anthropology, and Witchcraft. However, as an increasing number of people become Pagans outside of training groups they are more likely to be eclectic—combining different strands of Paganism as they choose. Almost counterintuitively this has resulted in not greater variety but less, as Neopagans rely on the same books and Internet sites for information on how to do a ritual and engage with the other world.

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New and Alternative Religions in the United States: Ritual and Neopaganism

Adrian Harris and M. Macha NightMare

INTRODUCTION

Most of this essay has been entirely cowritten by M. Macha NightMare and Adrian Harris. For the section on *Neopagan Ritual in Practice,* however, we wanted to offer a more personal expression of this experiential spirituality. To that end, NightMare speaks there of her own experience of the Reclaiming Tradition.

As practicing Neopagans, we temper many years of experience with academic understanding to craft our perspective on this fascinating topic. Because Neopagans honor personal experience above any human authority or tradition, this diverse practice is in constant flux. As a result, whatever we write dates quite quickly. But rather than count this as a problem, we consider it as a mark of the vigor of the movement.

Neopaganism is one of the fastest growing New Religious Movements in the United States, and ritual is its primary expression. Both terms are somewhat problematic, and fixing a meaning of either seems an invidious task.

Given that *any* attempt at definition will necessarily be selective and blur subtleties, we offer our own as a guide that describes *most* Neopagan ritual, but note that it is an evolving practice.

A Neopagan ritual is a process played out through performance. It is set apart from the mundane and involves physical activity and symbolic verbal or nonverbal communication expressed through multiple sensory modalities. Some Neopagan ritual intends to engage with "ultimate reality" or mystical powers and takes place in the context of a heightened emotional state.

HISTORY OF NEOPAGAN RITUAL

> …in the absence of ritual, the soul runs out of its real nourishment, and all kinds of social problems then ensue.
>
> —*Malidoma Patrice Somé*[1]

Although some Neopagans claim links with ancient traditions, most celebrate the creative potential of following eclectic new spiritual paths. The tongue-in-cheek suggestion that there are as many Neopagan belief systems as there are Neopagans is not so far from the truth: New "traditions" constantly emerge, and existing practices are in flux. Mapping a history of such a varied landscape is tricky, but there are sufficient landmarks to show the lay of the land. Different Neopagan rituals share family resemblances and emerge from a common stock. In addition, most Neopagans venerate more than one deity, draw on ancient myths, weave magic (variously defined), and often believe in reincarnation.

Neopagan rituals draw inspiration from many myths and stories, both ancient and modern. However, the most common influences are the pre-Christian religions of northwestern Europe, ancient Egypt, Rome, and Greece. Whereas most Neopagans use the past as a creative resource, Neopagans called Reconstructionists attempt to revive or emulate earlier faiths as closely as possible.

To guide you through this complex landscape, we explore four intersecting pathways in the history of Neopagan ritual: Neopaganism as a "Nature religion," British Traditional Wicca (BTW), reconstructed traditions, and feminist spirituality.

NEOPAGANISM AS A NATURE RELIGION

Terminology is confusing and changeable, but most commentators on Neopaganism refer to it as a "Nature religion," a term that has been used extensively since the early 1970s to designate indigenous folk religions that make Nature their symbolic focus. Those who practice such religions venerate both "external nature and our own physical embodiment."[2] We see this veneration repeatedly expressed in Neopagan ritual; however, other influences complicate this practice.

Another term often used is "Earth-based spirituality." This term, along with "Nature religion," usually designates the various Neopagan traditions and does not imply indigenous folk religions, "ethnic" religions, or reconstructed religions.

In the world of international interfaith organizations, indigenous and tribal religions are considered to be Pagan, while contemporary revivals and reconstructions fall under the general term of Neopaganism.

BRITISH TRADITIONAL WICCA

Wicca, also known as "the Craft," is the most common form of Neopaganism in the United States and provides the foundation of most Neopagan ritual. It began with Gardnerian Wicca in the United Kingdom during the late 1940s and was soon joined by the offshoot Alexandrian Tradition. A third generation of Wiccan traditions later emerged, which included Raymond Buckland's Seax-Wicca.

The origins of Wicca remain in debate, but we can draw some conclusions regarding its ritual. Two linked influences are apparent: the Western Occult Tradition and Freemasonry. The Western Occult Tradition remained hidden for many years, but

during the Reformation and Enlightenment periods it manifested in the founding of Rosicrucian and Masonic organizations.

Aidan Kelly plausibly proposes that the Western Occult Tradition led to the emergence of Modern Druids, the Theosophical Society, Wicca, and the New Age movement.[3] Furthermore, the rituals, symbolism, and terminology of Freemasonry were "absorbed into … the rituals of the neopagan witchcraft movement."[4]

The influence of the Western Occult Tradition leads to what Harvey calls "the Gnostic temptation" in Neopaganism.[5] Because much of its ritual structure is taken from this esoteric tradition, some Neopagans sometimes "do or say things which denigrate matter."[6] He suggests that this influence might create a kind of "schizophrenia" in Neopagans who celebrate Nature yet seek transcendence.[7]

Susan Greenwood draws the related conclusion that the purpose of some modern witchcraft is more about enabling personal growth than creating a deeper relationship with Nature.[8]

The extent of the influence of BTW on North American Neopagan ritual is difficult to gauge. We note two points of discussion. First, although conventional wisdom has it that BTW came to the United States in the 1960s, evidence suggests that it arrived much earlier. Chas Clifton suggests that two Americans, independently of one another, brought Craft, as it is called, to the United States from England.[9] One, a career military man named Ed Fitch, anonymously published a book called *Rituals of the Pagan Way / A Book of Pagan Rituals*[10] that was widely used by American Neopagans for many years. The other, the late Joe Wilson, was stationed in England during his term in the U.S. Air Force. When he returned to the United States, Wilson carried on extensive correspondence with the late Robert Cochrane/Roy Bowers in England; copies of these letters have also been widely circulated, informally, throughout the American Pagan community. Both Fitch and Wilson subsequently published books and other writings about Witchcraft and shamanism in the United States.

Second, a North American Pagan revival was emerging well before British Craft arrived. Victor and Cora Anderson were practicing a form of witchcraft in Oregon as early as the 1930s. Originally called Faery tradition, later changed to Feri to distinguish it from other Craft traditions of similar names, their rituals were a synthesis of several strands, drawing heavily on Appalachian folk magic from Cora's childhood in northern Alabama, as well as African, Pictish, Yezidi from the Middle East, Hawaiian Huna sources, and Silva Mind Control.

As noted above, the Western Occult Tradition and Freemasonry had an early influence on British Wicca, and there is a long history of Freemasonry and lodges in the United States. Many elements from Freemasonry appear in contemporary Craft rituals. Among them are the symbol of the pentacle, or five-pointed star, the use of the phrases "Blessed Be," and, to seal a spell and assure its efficacy, "So mote it be." Ritual roles such as the Masonic "tyler" have become the "Man in Black" or the "Summoner" in Craft. The binding and blindfolding at initiation is part of both Masonic and Craft ritual, as is the swearing of an oath, although the specifics of the oath itself differ.[11]

Contemporary Craft traditions, based on a Wiccan, or BTW, format, include elements from Native American spiritualities, New Age, Buddhist, Hindu and other religions, as well as the human potential movement.

RECONSTRUCTED TRADITIONS

As Neopaganism grew in visibility and popularity, and as mongrel Americans of mixed genetic and ethnic heritage, instead of seeking assimilation into the mainstream of American culture, sought their (mostly) European roots, Neopagans began to reconstruct ancient Pagan traditions. Drawing from history, anthropology, mythology, and folklore, and using texts when available, people created rituals and traditions that addressed their personal ethnic and national heritages.

Perhaps the most widespread of the reconstructed traditions are various forms of Druidry and Celtic reconstructionism. Among other notable traditions are Hellenismos (reconstructed Greek religion), Nova Roma (reconstructed Roman religion), Kemetic (Egyptian), Polonia (Polish folk tradition), Canaanite-Phoenician, and Sumerian, as well as Stregheria, or Italian Witchcraft. Some practitioners of Asatru, a Norse Paganism whose adherents call themselves Heathens, fall under the broader classification of Neopagan; however, many Heathens consider their religion to be ethnic rather than a Nature religion or an Earth-based spirituality.

The rituals of these traditions are often performed in the language of the original practitioners, or a language as closely resembling the original as it is possible to know.

FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY

Neopaganism has always had a countercultural feel and to some extent is a reaction to patriarchal religions. Not surprisingly, Second Wave Feminism (SWF) in the 1970s took an interest in Neopagan ritual. An important element for women in the women's liberation movement was the acceptance of, love of, and respect for the female body. SWF fostered an appreciation of the values of roles such as motherhood, weaving, and cooking, traditionally performed by women. Women's overlooked history suggested to some that there had been a golden age of matriarchy in the distant past. Lacking adequate evidence, this theory has not withstood scrutiny; however, it served as a compelling emotional unifying force at the time, and perhaps continues to do so. Most importantly, many feminists found tremendous healing, support, and comfort in having a feminine image of the divine. Thus was born goddess spirituality.

Because Witches in popular culture were portrayed as ugly old hags unworthy of respect, early feminists "reclaimed" this word and applied it to themselves. In addition, mainstream religions were essentially male-oriented and male-dominated, further alienating women from the religions in which they were reared. Thus, the format—and the glamour—of BTW was wedded to a goddess-focused spirituality. Neopagans whose ritual style is based on BTW and whose rites center solely on goddesses are known as Dianics.

This development meant that, for some at least, Neopagan ritual became political. Margot Adler concludes that the only political Neopagan group of significant size is the "thousands of women from Greenham Common[12] to New York to California who are combining political action with women's spirituality and earth reverence."[13] Key influences are Starhawk and the Reclaiming Tradition, Z. Budapest, and archaeologist Marija Gimbutas. Feminist spirituality is generally nonhierarchical, creates eclectic detraditionalized rituals, and celebrates radically embodied notions of spirituality. Ronald Hutton believes that integrating the women's spirituality movement into the Craft was "America's most distinctive single contribution to that witchcraft."[14]

One notable result of the growth of Feminist spirituality is a rise in political and environmental activism among Neopagans that has led to the emergence of "Eco-Pagan" rituals described below in "Neopagan Counterculture" and "The Power That Connects."

KEY ASPECTS OF NEOPAGAN RITUAL

> It is a consciousness-altering technique, the best there is.
>
> —*Alison Harlow*[15]

When most people think of Neopagan ritual, they think of exotic rites involving fire, chanting, flowing robes, and ecstatic dancing. They would not be wrong, for these words do describe elements of many Neopagan rituals. Neopagan rituals share many elements in common, yet are astounding in their variety and endless creativity.

Broadly, Neopagan rituals are celebrations (e.g., festivals), veneration (e.g., shrines), rites of passage (e.g., initiations), or an attempt to shift existing patterns (e.g., spellwork). Many mix these somewhat simplified distinctions.

Neopagan rituals may be private or public, political, personal, or both. They may involve hundreds or just one person.

At one end of this spectrum lies public ritual. Such events include festival celebrations organized by one of the larger Neopagan organizations, such as Circle Sanctuary in Wisconsin or EarthSpirit in Massachusetts, or a political ritual to highlight an environmental or social issue.

The antinuclear protests at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California in the early 1980s, where protesters prepared for action with a dramatic burning of a wicker man, exemplify political ritual. The action itself very effectively combined protest with ritual as participants wove a giant web entangling police efforts to break up the group.

Public rituals are open to anyone and are advertised; semipublic rituals are by invitation only. These are usually celebratory events that take place in someone's home, in a larger rented property, or on private land.

Most such rituals are part of a gathering that may last a day or a couple of weeks. Over the course of a week-long festival, there may be many rituals. There is an

opening ritual and a closing ritual, with several more specifically focused rituals, such as coming-of-age rituals for young and old people, handfastings, etc., in between.

In her study of such festival events in the United States, Sarah Pike notes how important they are to creating a counterculture because they offer a shared reality that is very different from what Neopagans experience in their everyday lives.[16]

Pike's study gives a fascinating example of how festival goers use ritual dance to gain a more positive attitude toward their bodies. She provides an evocative description of a Fire dance ritual at Starwood, one of the largest Neopagan festival gatherings:

> …once the fire is lit there is no leader, no orchestration, no focus of attention, and the ritual develops its own organic forms. Emerging structures and patterns are unplanned and unspoken, taking shape in the interplay of drums and movement.[17]

The ritual continues through the night and a few will greet the sunrise with dance. The ritual dance Pikes describes exemplifies several aspects of Neopagan ritual in general. Because ritual space is safe, it is liberating: The dancers can fully express themselves because they are free from sexual harassment or social comment. As a result, participants come to "trust their bodies in ways that are new for them."[18] This trust allows participants to explore unfamiliar dimensions of physical expression: they move in different ways, finding new relationships between body and space that can transform the self.

Pike's personal experience of the ritual dance hints at its power:

> Upon entering the circle, I was overwhelmed by heat and smoke and mesmerized by the drums, and I began to feel a sense of oneness with the dancers and drummers … The endless circling facilitated our disorientation in time and space. It was this disorientation that played with the boundaries between self and other that made possible the feeling of union with others.[19]

Surrendering to the power of the ritual fire can bring a profound shift in how participants experience their bodies that remains long after the festival has ended. One festival dancer explained how "ritual dance may also be used to work on personal issues which are too threatening or deeply buried to address in our everyday consciousness. Emotions which have been repressed … can be allowed expression and worked through in the safe space created by dance."[20]

The festival culture is somehow more "real" because it embodies an ideal reality and offers heightened experiences. Ritual is an essential part of the process of creating this magical reality. An understanding of how this is achieved emerges in the course of this chapter.

Although festival culture is important, the majority of Neopagan rituals are private events involving small groups of close friends. Compatible people come together for ongoing ritual work, usually but not always under the guidance of a high priestess, high priest, or both. Sometimes several people with no training or outside guidance will form a ritual group and work from a book. These groups are called covens, groves, nests, cells, or other similar terms. They work together and grow, magically and spiritually, over a period of years, during which time their relationships bond.

Their understandings of ritual and its effect on their lives and the world deepens. They consider themselves as family.

Individual circumstances may make solitary ritual the only option; however, some deliberately choose to work alone. In principle, an individual ritual can achieve anything a larger one can, and most Neopagans work alone at least occasionally. Common examples are rituals that are focused on an altar or shrine, which are usually part of Neopagan personal practice. An altar typically holds sacred objects symbolizing the season and will change with each Festival. (See "Neopagan Ritual in Practice" below.) A shrine is an altar to a specific deity and serves as a way of venerating and building a relationship with them.

LIMINAL SPACE

Almost all Neopagan rituals take place within a "sacred circle," one notable exception being altar and shrine work. Altar and shrine work typically occur outside a circle because they are not usually concerned with raising power nor do they require protection. The circle may be physically marked out, but usually the participants "cast" a circle by visualizing it and using words, gestures, and tools to aid that visualization. (See "Neopagan Ritual in Practice" below.) The circle creates a sacred space, "between the worlds and beyond time" in which the ritual can occur.

Different people understand the sacred circle in different ways. For some Neopagans the circle is there to protect and ward off intrusion, while others cast a circle to help focus the power raised by the ritual. Still others explain it as being like a mixing bowl that serves both functions.

The circle also serves other functions. We can usefully describe the sacred circle as a "liminal" space. A limen is literally a threshold or sill, so a liminal space is one that is betwixt and between—neither one place nor another. The liminal space of the sacred circle marks a space that is outside normal social roles, responsibilities, rules, and even modes of thought. As a result, the circle provides the potential for great freedom and creativity.

Neopagans use the format of a circle for many reasons. When people come together to talk, they instinctively tend to group themselves into a circle, and humans circle round hearth fires. Circles are egalitarian, with no single person being above, below, or aside from everyone else. Circles are found in Nature in such things as tree trunks, flowers, the sun and the moon. Earth circles the Sun. Most significantly, perhaps, the horizon is circular. If you can see the horizon, you are always in the center of a vast circle. So the magic circle is a microcosm, a smaller version of the world. The center or focal point of a circle is like an umbilicus, the point between inside and outside, between life and death, between the world of matter and the world of spirit, the portal between the worlds.

ALTERED STATES

One result of the entry into the liminal space of the sacred circle is a shift away from more usual states of consciousness. This shift may be subtle or profound.

Some Neopagan rituals do not create altered states of consciousness. A handfasting (marriage), for instance, ritually sanctifies and celebrates the commitment of two (or more) people to each other in the presence of their loved ones. A ritual marking a change in the seasons is essentially celebratory in nature. It is aesthetic, but may not require a powerful ritual. An initiation or therapeutic ritual, however, is designed to have a profound psychological impact on the participants.

How does Neopagan ritual create an altered state of consciousness?

There are many sacred technologies that can shift us to a heightened state of awareness, and Neopagan ritual uses most of them. The most common are guided meditation, breathwork, and the powerful combination of rhythm, movement, and dance. We discuss these techniques in more detail in "Neopagan Ritual in Practice," below.

Some Neopagans use entheogens[21] and sexual intercourse in rituals, but neither is common practice. Many Neopagans are explicitly critical of any use of entheogens, believing that they are too unpredictable and tend to confuse rather than enlighten. When they are used, entheogens are generally part of a personal ritual in a shamanic tradition.

The popular idea that Neopagan ritual regularly involves sexual activity is unfounded. Although sexual contact between consenting partners does occur in private rituals, it is by no means common.

Gardnerian Wicca traditionally used scourging at every ritual, but this is unusual today. Traditional Wiccan initiations still include gentle scourging of the back. Although this was primarily intended to symbolize purification, the practice does have physiological effects that change consciousness. Scourging draws blood to the surface of the skin and thereby reduces blood flow to the brain, resulting in a light trance.

SYMBOLS

For Victor Turner symbols are "the basic building-blocks" of ritual.[22] Rituals speak to us at a deep level and use a language that we intuitively understand—the language of symbols.

Starhawk describes a simple street ritual that took place during the Genoa protests in 2001:

> We brew up a lovely magical cauldron—a big pot full of water from sacred places and whatever else women want to add: rose petals, a hair or two, tobacco from a cigarette, anything that symbolizes the visions we hold of a different world.[23]

Simply having the image of a strong, self-reliant goddess on an altar during ritual provides a more empowered attitude on the part of female participants. Worshippers place upon their altars images of deities that show qualities, strengths, and characteristics they admire and seek to emulate. This incorporation reaches deep within the psyche to assist people to develop those qualities within themselves. Bright, colorful flowers on a Springtime altar remind us of life's renewal. A harvest altar heaped with

the bounty of the fields and orchards conveys a sense of abundance without a word being spoken. Photographs of and small articles belonging to our departed loved ones ("Beloved Dead") on altars commemorating the dead bring them closer to us in spirit.

A symbol most Witches and Wiccans associate with their religion is the encircled pentacle, which symbolizes different things to different practitioners. However, one basic understanding corresponds the five points of the pentacle to the elements—Air, Fire, Water, Earth, and Spirit. The symbol that binds most Druids is the *awen* ("inspiration"), a circle containing three "bars of light" converging toward three dots. Such symbols as the pentacle and the *awen* help create a group identity.

CREATING RITUALS

Most religious ritual relies on the legitimating authority of tradition. The ritual has been performed in a particular way for many years; this is taken to guarantee its authenticity. Changes to such rituals require a special dispensation from a recognized spiritual authority, and if it is not performed properly it may be deemed ineffective.

But Neopagan rituals are unusual in that they are very often self-consciously created for the occasion.[24] Neopagans do not recognize *any* human as a spiritual authority and judge the effectiveness of a ritual entirely in terms of personal experience. (See "The Importance of Personal Experience," below.) Some Neopagans specialize in creating effective ritual, often understanding it as a form of sacred art.[25]

As we can see, this is a very flexible practice, and there is a wide range of practice from reconstructed rituals, through rituals of specific Neopagan traditions to eclectic workings.

Reconstructed and "traditional" rituals are usually carefully structured while the eclectic workings may be spontaneous. Eclectic rituals are, however, highly variable, and many are carefully planned and tightly structured.

RECONSTRUCTED RITUALS

A minority of Neopagans seek to reconstruct and recreate ancient rituals as accurately as possible. Their efforts are challenging, because adequate research into the ancient practice may be unavailable or conflicting and, of course, what was acceptable in a past culture may not be acceptable today.

Some Nordic Neopagans seek to recreate the rituals of pre-Christian Northern Europe that are described in medieval Icelandic literature and other sources. Rituals of reconstructed traditions are often conducted in the language of the parent religion, i.e., Celtic and Druid rituals in Gaelic or Hellenic rituals in Greek. In addition, they may wear clothing, jewelry, and accessories like those worn in the time and place that the tradition was previously practiced.

"TRADITIONAL" RITUALS

There are many different "traditions" in Neopaganism, including various forms of Wicca, Witchcraft, and Druidry. Using fairly common basic structures, each tradition has its particular style of working ritual. Although a Wiccan would recognize the structure of a Druid ritual, and vice versa, they would also be aware of significant differences. There are variations in language and symbols, the degree of formality, how the group invokes the sacred, which deities are celebrated, and even the timing of rituals. These differences give the rituals of each tradition different voices, character, and nature.

Rituals in these traditions are still being created and constantly evolving, but each works with the appropriate symbolic vocabulary.

ECLECTIC RITUALS

Many Neopagans choose to practice outside any recognized tradition. Instead, they freely combine aspects of many practices—both sacred and secular. Although Eclectics do look to the existing Neopagan traditions for inspiration, they might weave in Eastern religious practices, ideas from the human potential movement, and aspects of performance art.

BODY AND NATURE

Because most Neopagans consider their practice to be that of a Nature religion, a sensual relationship to nature lies at the heart of the spiritual practice. Deity is immanent in the physical world, and both the earth and the body are considered sacred. For Neopagans the natural environment is a fundamental source of spiritual truth: Jone Salomonsen noticed that the ritual symbols used by Reclaiming Witches in San Francisco are grounded in "ordinary human life and the human body, sexuality and parenting, as well as the earth and the seasonal cycles of the natural world."[26] This is typical of Neopagan practice in general.

The celebration of the passage of the seasons—the "Wheel of the Year"—structures the annual cycle of Neopagan ritual practice, and the deities venerated are understood as being immanent in Nature. (See "Neopagan Ritual in Practice," below.)

Ritual theorists have long recognized that the body is fundamental to ritual. Because we experience ritual in a heightened emotional state, a gesture or physical movement becomes loaded with symbolic power: what would be a simple wave of the arm in everyday space becomes an invitation to deity in the sacred circle.[27]

It is useful to understand ritual as a kind of bodywork that can be profoundly healing. Pike's discussion of ritual dance (see "Key Aspects of Pagan Ritual," above) provides a good example, while Salomonsen believes that ritualizing has the power "to deeply alter the consciousness and embodied thinking of western people."[28]

NEOPAGAN COUNTERCULTURE

By now it may be apparent that Neopagan ritual has strong countercultural dimensions. Neopaganism grew up in the counterculture 1960s and 1970s, and, although today its increasing popularity may be drawing it toward the mainstream, Neopagan practitioners continue to question social norms, just as counterculture enthusiasts did 30 or 40 years ago.

This aspect of Neopaganism is perhaps most apparent in the closely related Eco-Pagan and the women's spirituality movements. Eco-Pagans partly express their spirituality through environmental activism and rituals of resistance. For Eco-Pagans belief in the sacredness of Earth leads inevitably to political action. The rituals of the women's spirituality movements are similarly intended to create a space of resistance. According to Kay Turner, the feminists using these rituals believe them to be the most "radical affirmation of the revolutionary potential of the feminist movement."[29]

In patriarchal societies, which have been the norm worldwide for centuries, if not millennia, female children are socialized in ways that are not always in their best interests. Nor are they in the best interests of male children. These mores often inhibit, if not prohibit, women from expressing their full potential as humans. For instance, women were taught to defer to males, to "play dumb," and to be subservient. Married women could not have their own bank accounts, hold separate property, make decisions affecting their own bodies and reproduction, or establish credit independently of their husbands. Even worse, patriarchal societies tend to condone abusive behavior towards women. They teach the young that women are less worthy of respect than men. One of the major appeals of goddess spirituality and Dianic Witchcraft to women is the healing and empowerment that can be gained from the rituals. Encountering feminine images of the divine is a source of tremendous validation for women.

CROSSOVERS

By no means would all those in the women's spirituality movement identify as Neopagans, and neither are all environmental activists Eco-Pagans. But these connections exemplify the importance of crossovers between Neopaganism and other groups. There are also significant overlaps with the New Age movement, as well as Eastern, Native American, and African diasporic religions.

IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

As we noted above, Neopagans assess their ritual entirely in terms of personal experience, and religious authority is grounded in the self rather than any external institutions. Peter Beyer suggests that having personal experience as a "final arbiter of truth or validity" is a defining feature of Neopaganism.[30] Neopaganism is based not on belief, but on practice. As Adler says, Neopagan beliefs are "not based on

creed, they are based on process, they are based on ceremony."[31] We could go so far as to say that many Neopagans have no fixed belief system and our practice evolves from life as lived.

NEOPAGAN RITUAL IN PRACTICE

To better illustrate Neopagan ritual practice, Macha provides a personal view of her experience of a Witchcraft ritual in San Francisco. *Macha writes:* Here's a glimpse of a Witchen[32] seasonal celebration honoring the dead:

> Three guests of the host covens sit in the living room of an apartment in anticipation of our first "real Witches' sabbat." Preparations are going on in the penthouse above us. Now and then someone descends the stairs to fetch something or to tell us it won't be long before we start. None of us has met one another until this night. When the ritual space is ready, a priestess comes downstairs and tells us to remove our clothes, for this ritual, being "traditional," is skyclad, meaning that all celebrants are clad by the sky, or naked.
>
> Then she blindfolds each of us and leads us up the stairs. When we reach the door to the ritual room, we are told to put our hands upon the shoulders of the person in front of us. We walk in, we know not where. We are instructed to keep our hands on the shoulders of the person in front of us, to chant the words, "Set sail. Set sail," while swaying to the rhythm of the chant. We are going to the Isle of the Ever Young, the land beyond the mists, the place on the other side of the veil where the spirits of the dead live, for it is Samhain, the most sacred night of the year.

This is how I remember the first private ritual I was ever invited to attend. Of course, there was much more to the ritual than the little I have described. I am guessing that one of the first questions the reader might have is "what about this skyclad[33] business?"

In all my readings about Witchcraft up until that time I had read that Witches performed their rituals in the nude. There is more than one reason for this custom. One is that there is no visible difference in class or social status among unclothed people; the prince and the pauper are the same, just men. Another reason is that clothing can restrict the free flow of energy, and one of the things we cultivate in ritual is energy flow.

As you might expect, I was nervous about taking off my clothes with a bunch of strangers. The only person I knew before that night was the woman who invited me. The company was mixed gender. My nervousness was not so much because I was uncomfortable with nudity as a concept, or that I felt shame about the naked human body. It was not because I had a moral objection to nudity. It was because of my shyness about body image and whether my body was beautiful. But because I was blindfolded, I could let go of my apprehensions.

Nowadays, with the many changes that Witchcraft has undergone as we have emerged from the broom closet, fewer people seem to worship skyclad. Even at that time (1975), there were occasions when people wore ritual robes when they circled. Nighttime outdoor rituals always required robes for warmth. Some covens worked

robed rather than skyclad, only occasionally going skyclad for very specific rituals. Today we find people in various kinds of dress, stages of undress, or nude.

The point of these changes in clothing or doffing of clothing altogether is that they tell our hearts and minds that we are about to go into sacred space. We are preparing to shift our consciousness from the mundane to the magical. We are beginning to engage what in Reclaiming Tradition is called "child self."[34]

Ritual preparation is every bit as important as performing the ritual itself. We clean and rearrange and prepare our ritual spaces before our rites. We sweep, vacuum, dust, put away extraneous things, and clear up clutter. We clean old candle wax from holders; we wash and polish. We spread altar cloths on tables, and we find the right vase for flowers, greenery, and feathers. We select candles in the colors we want to use and the best incense for the purpose of a particular ritual.

When I do these things, when I set up a space in my home for working magic, when I get into it, I begin to build the ritual. Once the space and tools are cleaned, I withdraw to prepare my body with a purificatory bath or shower. I might choose to immerse myself in a particular herb or salt bath and to anoint myself with a special oil or lotion. Sometimes I will burn a candle, sometimes light incense in our bathroom. Once I am clean and robed, I return to the ritual space to set up the altars.

Ritual Roles

In many Witchcraft traditions, each coven has a high priestess and a high priest, or perhaps only one or the other. The shorthand terms used are HPS and HP. The covens in my tradition (Reclaiming), however, are based on group priest/esshoods where specific priestly roles are rotated or shared. We use the word priest/ess as both a noun and a verb, and we use it when we are speaking of any gender.

So a woman or a man is the priestess or priest who "priest/esses" a ritual when she or he assumes a specific role that moves the ritual along. In this essay I use those terms. In large public rituals we have other assigned roles, sometimes called "rehearsed participants." However, in small group work we have no need of these other roles.

Other traditions have such roles as a Maiden, who assists the HPS. A Man in Black or Summoner may give notice of meetings, guard the entrance to the circle, and admit individuals into the sacred space that has been created. In Reclaiming, we are all standing in circle together, and it is from that point that we all create sacred space around ourselves, rather than entering a space that has been erected by others. No one style is right or wrong: different styles appeal to different people.

Purification

Before a person can enter a sacred space, she must be ritually clean. She needs to let go of any cares and worries she may carry from her life before she enters the circle. I have already discussed purification. Here I mention some other methods we use to ritually purify ourselves and each other.

The most common method of purification is with water and salt. Salt is added to water and stirred until it is dissolved. Then the solution may be sprinkled on each person. Or the bowl may be passed to each person in turn so she may perform her own personal ablutions. Or a priest/ess might anoint each celebrant with consecrated oil, usually on the brow. A saltwater purification may involve anointing the brow, lips, heart, palms, or other parts of the body.

Another form of purification, called censing, is done with smoke. The priest/ess may use a bundle of burning sage, an abalone shell, or other nonflammable container with burning cedar, Indian sweet grass, or rosemary. Or she may burn frankincense, myrrh, copal, or other incense in a swinging censer on a chain. Incense smoke is also used to consecrate people and objects, or to "charge" them. Consecration sanctifies and dedicates an object or person to a specific purpose and is different from purification.

Regardless of whether one enters from outside a sacred space created by others or one is already within the space created with others, an act of purification precedes the ritual.

Creating Sacred Space

Creating sacred space means ritually erecting a safe space where those within can focus exclusively on the work at hand. This can be done in any number of ways. Many Witches use the besom, or Witch's broom, to sweep a space of negative energies, thus purifying the physical space where the circle will be. If the ritual space has already been set up, a challenger may confront each individual seeking to enter with a question before admittance is granted and the person steps over a broom that marks the circle's threshold.

A circle is a temporary mandala. It can be drawn on the floor or ground, with paint, tape, chalk, colored powders, corn meal, seeds, or flower petals or traced in the sand on a beach. This act is called "casting," or erecting, a circle.

Some covens may circumambulate the space with salt water and incense before the actual casting is done. They may draw the circle with a wand, staff, stang (two-pronged staff specific to some traditions), or sword.

Once the circle has been cast, the ritualists are "between the worlds."

Once a circle has been cast, it should not be broken. Small children, dogs, and cats seem to be able to go in and out of a circle without disturbing the containment that the circle provides, but adults, who are there to participate fully and not to passively observe, must honor the sanctity of the circle by remaining inside until the circle is ritually opened, or taken down, by a priest/ess. The hosts will usually advise people just before beginning a ritual to give them time to use the bathroom. If there is some exceptional reason why one must leave before the ritual is complete, he can be "cut out" by tracing a portal on the periphery and stepping through it. When outside the circle, the door is closed by retracing the portal in reverse. Some covens might have a designated person such as the Man in Black, tyler, or dragon who will help anyone who needs to leave and reenter the circle. This ritualistic "cutting" and

"closing" prevents the energy being used in the circle from "leaking" out, and it also assures the continued focus on the matter at hand by other celebrants.

Altars and Tools

The most practical purpose for having altars in ritual spaces is to hold the tools that will be used, including candles, salt and water, incense, blade and wand, chalice or cup, and pentacle, all usually set out upon an altar cloth. Altars serve our aesthetic sensibilities when they display images of deities, statuary, natural objects such as shells, feathers, rocks, flowers, and/or seasonal greenery. By taking care in choosing what is put on the altars, a mundane, even ugly, place can be transformed into a place of beauty.

Altars are built for specific purposes. Some Pagan traditions have a very specific altar layout: each item has its prescribed place. The same deity iconography—statuary, paintings, photographs—is used at each gathering. Or every altar may be a new work of art.

The specific purpose of the ritual suggests which items are put upon the altar, which incense burned, what color candles lit, what deity(ies) invited, and whose witness or aid is sought. Creating an altar for a Moon ritual brings to bear a slightly different sensibility than creating one to celebrate a maiden's first blood. A Yule altar will contain slightly different items from those found on a Beltaine (Mayday) altar. Choice of color, flowers, imagery, incense, and other variables enhance the sacred space and aid the work.

The number and placement of altars differ from group to group and from one ritual to another. Dianic circles tend to set their altars in the center of the ritual space. Some groups have one altar in the North and three other "point candles" in the Quarters, while others will have four altars, one for each element, the most common elemental correspondences being East to Air, South to Fire, West to Water, and North to Earth.

These seemingly more housekeeping-type activities have a part to play in making the best, most efficacious, most powerful, moving magic.

Grounding and Centering

Once all celebrants have formed a circle, a priest/ess leads a short meditation to "ground and center" everyone. This commonly involves holding hands in a circle, closing the eyes, and breathing deeply together. She may also lead a guided meditation. These practices allow celebrants to drop their mundane cares and concerns.

In my tradition, we use the image of the tree of life as our body, with roots extending down into the deep, dark Earth and branches reaching to the sky. A group becomes a sacred grove of trees all standing together and shading each other. At the conclusion of grounding and centering, all are ready to focus on the ritual and nothing else.

Sacred Technologies To Change Consciousness and "Raising Energy"

Neopagan worshippers of the Old Gods, of Gaia, of Mother, have an array of techniques to advance their personal and collective spiritual practices. In seeking to tread a path in balance, harmony, and respect for Nature, Neopagans use these technologies of the sacred to help shift consciousness and to aid and fortify magic.

The most obvious means of effectuating change are rhythm and drumming, breathwork, chants, song, and vocalization, as well as dance, movement, gesture, and asana.[35] Cleaning and preparing the ritual space, indoors or out, initiates the process of using sacred technology to change consciousness.

All, some, or none of these sacred technologies can be found in an individual rite. Some things may not work as well for one person as others. For instance, I can shift into a magical consciousness in my bedroom, which is already an intimate and sanctified space in my life, almost immediately by lighting quarter candles and perhaps incense. On the other hand, one friend of mine never uses candles except when working with others who do. He does not erect altars either.

Some people use fasting and/or entheogens to enhance their practice. For others—for reasons of health, their own moral consciences, predisposition, or the legal climate—fasting or ingestion of mind-altering substances is not an option.

A drummer may set the pace and guide the dancing, singing, or chanting. Or a group may use rhythm in a way for everyone to participate. They may have an assortment of rattles, tambourines, sistrums, castanets, finger cymbals, drums, and other rhythm instruments for all celebrants to join in the rhythm making. A common technique for "raising energy" is dancing, unless there are celebrants who cannot indulge in vigorous exercise.

Whichever of these techniques are employed in a particular rite, they are all part of a common treasure.

"Cakes and Wine"

At the end of a ritual, all share a drink and some food. This part of ritual is called cakes and wine, cakes and ale, the feast, or some other similar term. This traditional term may be inaccurate if the group does not use alcoholic beverages in its rituals. Alternatively, there may be more than one communal cup going around so that those who cannot indulge in alcoholic substances are still part of this communal toast. This communal breaking of bread allows for socialization and fun.

One or more priest/esses bless the beverage and food to consecrate it for consumption. The chalice and plate of food are usually passed around the circle deosil (clockwise), sometimes with a blessing such as "May you never thirst" or "May you never hunger." Cakes and wine are not necessarily limited to those two substances; many rituals, especially large sabbat celebrations, include an entire shared meal. In our tradition, cakes and wine are potluck, with everyone expected to bring something to eat or drink to share.

Sharing food and drink also helps us to "ground" after people have raised a lot of energy. This is an important element, since people who are not grounded well enough, who are not safely back into their everyday reality, can have problems negotiating life outside. They may find it difficult to drive or navigate. Their awareness of the mundane is compromised, and they are therefore vulnerable in the outside world.

Post-Ritual Evaluation

No ritual is complete without an evaluation. How did it go? What happened for you? What worked? What did not work? What should be repeated another time? What should be revised, and what should be abandoned because it did not work at all? I do not think it is fair to try to analyze a ritual until it has been given a chance to work its effect. Therefore, this should not be done until at least 24 hours have elapsed.

Critiquing a ritual does not mean criticizing the priest/ess(es) and their acts. Rather, critique tells how each individual experienced the ritual—what felt good, what sent a thrill through one's body, and what fell flat. This not only helps the process of integrating the experience into one's life, it also helps the ritual designers to know what is effective for others.

Each ritual should be approached with respect, awareness, and an open heart and mind to allow for the full experience that good rituals can provide.

THE PURPOSE OF NEOPAGAN RITUAL

> The purpose of ritual is to change the mind of the human being. It's sacred drama in which you are the audience as well as the participant and the purpose of it is to activate parts of the mind that are not activated by everyday activity.
>
> —*Sharon Devlin*[36]

All humans perform rituals of many kinds every day. Sacred ritual is what we humans do to create a sense of sacredness in an otherwise seemingly dull mundane world. We set aside a special time and place to focus on the spiritual aspects of our lives. Our ancestors may have used sacred drama to help us attain a sense of oneness with the cosmos. Ritual, which may have evolved from sacred drama, can help us access parts of ourselves that our rational minds normally obscure. Ritual can help us to attune ourselves to the cycles of Nature. Ritual can help us bypass our minds and experience our intuitive selves and our bodies in new and different ways.

When people think of Witchcraft, one of the first things they think of is magical spells. Spells are intended to effect change in our personal lives and in the world, changes such as healing, protection, or abundance. Neopagans ritualize their spells by "charging," or empowering, them in the sacred circle. Although spellwork is done in the context of ritual, not every ritual involves the casting of spells. Nor does every Neopagan perform spells. However, often the principles of good spellwork—intent,

harmonization, and attuning to the forces of Nature—are applied in rituals done for other reasons.

Many rituals are celebrations, marking an event in a very conscious and intentional fashion. These rites of passage are discussed in detail below. Other rituals are designed to help the ritualists to go deeper within themselves or to explore farther beyond the boundaries of their individual selves. Rituals foster bonding with the others in the circle and help transcend separateness. Rituals can lead to a deeper understanding of deity. The rituals called sabbats are celebratory in nature. They celebrate the seasons and the turning of the Wheel of the Year. Other rituals may be designed to bring people closer to a particular deity, to bring about personal insights or transformation, or to facilitate a deeper emotional and/or spiritual experience.

SPEAKING TO OUR OTHER SELVES

One fundamental purpose of Neopagan ritual is to allow the conscious mind to get in touch with other levels of awareness. Because ritual uses symbolism across a wide range of senses, it allows us to communicate with powerful parts of ourselves that do not use verbal language. These are often just those aspects of our being that have been most neglected.

As feminist priestess Z. Budapest said: "The purpose of ritual is to wake up the old mind in us, to put it to work. The old ones inside us, the collective consciousness, the many lives, the divine eternal parts, the senses and parts of the brain that have been ignored. Those parts do not speak English. They do not care about television. But they do understand candlelight and colors. They do understand nature."[37]

For many Neopagans this is a vital need not served in any other way by Western culture, and this is part of our drive to ritualize. Kelly feels that

> You do a ritual because you need to, basically, and because it just cuts through and operates on everything besides the "head" level … since ritual is a need, and since the mainstream of Western civilization is not meeting this need, a great deal of what's happening these days is, simply, people's attempts to find ways to meet this need for themselves.[38]

Ritual uses all the senses to achieve this: Incense, food, colorful images, robes or body paint, music, especially drums, dancing, and set gestures. All these elements have symbolic significance that our more instinctive, nonverbal awareness will readily understand.

Timothy Leary is attributed on several Web sites and in Neopagan discussion as having said that "Ritual is to the internal sciences what experiment is to the external sciences."[39] This is especially true for Neopagans, who, as we noted earlier, *deliberately create* their rituals. By using the sacred techniques of many spiritual paths and adopting ideas from many human disciplines, Neopagans attempt to construct rituals that will communicate with deeper levels of the self.

Some suggest that ritual is a way of "thinking" through the body. Richard Schechner believes that "Rituals don't so much express ideas as embody them. Rituals are thought-in/as-action."[40] For Performance theorist Deirdre Sklar, movement is "a

corporeal way of knowing." She believes that the body knowledge that comes through movement cannot be spoken about because it uses the "vocabulary" of sensations.[41]

Speaking to our other selves is perhaps most important at times of personal change, so they are marked with *rites of passage.*

RITES OF PASSAGE

Among the rites of passage celebrated for individuals are the following: presentation, naming, and blessing rituals for babies; first-blood rituals; a boy's transition to manhood; commitment ceremonies, handfastings, and/or weddings; eldering, croning (ritualizing a woman's coming to the age of wisdom and repose), and saging (ritualizing a man's coming into his age of wisdom and repose); dying and death; funerals and memorials.

Human life is defined by moments of transition: Birth, marriage, and death are the most familiar in Western culture, and Neopagans ritually mark such events. But Neopagans, like those in other times and places, honor more subtle life changes.

The principal rite of passage people usually think of in connection with Witchcraft is the initiation rite. This is done when a person commits herself to a chosen path. Some traditions have rites of passage for dedications, preparatory steps to full initiation. In such traditions, subsequent rituals are performed to acknowledge members' attainment of elevations, usually called First, Second, and Third Degrees. These degrees mean that members have acquired successively higher (or deeper) levels of knowledge and skill.

Arnold van Gennep first used the term "rites of passage" in 1908,[42] and, although his theory may oversimplify the complex process of ritual transition, it remains useful. He identified three stages in every rite of passage: (1) The process begins with the key participant being separated from her/his normal life in preparation for (2) entering liminal space. We have already noted the importance of liminal space above. (3) The final phase is reintegration into society in a new role.

According to van Gennep, different rituals emphasize different phases. The separation phase is more important in death rites, while reintegration is key in handfasting. The liminal phase is the most important part of an initiation, as this is where an initiate will be tested and taught secrets of the Tradition.

Van Gennep noted common elements of these rites, including simulated death and resurrection, and a symbolic passage through an opening or across a threshold. We have seen how these motifs are used in "Neopagan Ritual in Practice."

In some tribal initiation ceremonies participants may be isolated in the liminal space for a long period of time. Victor Turner describes the close bonding that occurs between people in liminal space as *communitas.*[43] Before leaving van Gennep, it is worth considering a key critique of his theory. Bruce Lincoln claimed that his theory describes only the structure of *male* rites. He noted several differences in traditional tribal women's initiations that challenge the van Gennep model: Women are usually initiated individually, so they have no opportunity to develop *communitas,* and there

is little in the way of new knowledge communicated to them. The whole process can be seen as an "opiate for an oppressed class," constructing social control rather than facilitating transformation.[44] Lincoln's work is relevant to Neopagan ritual precisely because it does not apply: Neopagan rituals, whether for women or men, celebrate and facilitate transformation, rather than construct control.

THE POWER THAT CONNECTS

Neopagan ritual can put us back in touch with "the wisdom of the body," a deep knowledge of our connection with the other-than-human world. We believe this reconnection can help us heal our relationship with the planet.

Most Neopagans would agree that modern life has led to increasing alienation from nature and from one another, and that ritual can—at least temporarily—shift our awareness to a more connected state. Adler believes that the whole purpose of ritual is "to end, for a time, our sense of human alienation from nature and from each other."[45]

Alexei Kondratiev expresses his belief that "attunement to the natural world" is the main contribution Neopaganism can make to the modern world. This attunement "is not just an intellectual understanding about what nature is good for" but rather "a gut feeling."[46]

In *Key Aspects of Neopagan Ritual* we noted how ritual dance can help resolve personal issues about our bodies, enabling a deeper emotional sensitivity and a greater understanding of bodily needs.[47]

Ritual reconnection may not only be with our bodies or the other-than-human world, but also with the ancestors. Ancestral reconnection is perhaps most apparent in rites of passage and during Samhain celebrations—the Neopagan "Day of the Dead." (See "Neopagan Ritual in Practice" above.)

Ritual can also help connect us at a social level. A feeling of *communitas* emerges during a ritual that helps bond social groups. It is common for Neopagans to describe a feeling of "coming home" when they first discover this particular path. Oz's experience of her first Neopagan ritual is typical: "Tears ran down my face. I felt a tremendous emotion as though after a long search I had finally found my people again."[48] The power of ritual to bond and inspire a group is used by Eco-Pagans, especially in preparation for a protest action. In her book *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex: Rapture of the Deep,* Dolores La Chapelle states,

> One of the primary biological functions of ritual behavior is to make it easier … for individuals to become synchronized for group action. This action might be directed toward some environmental challenge that cannot be met by individual action.[49]

Bron Taylor describes how some rituals at Earth First! camps use drumming and dancing in a similar way to those described by Pike, above. During these rituals "some activists report mystically fusing with the cosmos, 'losing themselves' and their sense of independent ego, as they dance into the night."[50]

Less ecstatic rituals take place to support activist comrades. Typically, a conventional circle is formed and energy is "drawn-down from the moon, from the four directions, and most commonly from earth itself." Taylor notes that both forms of ritual are typically coordinated by Wiccan priestesses, but our experience suggests a more eclectic range of practice.

CONTROVERSIES AND ISSUES

The Origins of Neopaganism

Eclectic Neopagan ritual draws on spiritual paths from many lands. Although this adds to the richness of our practice, there are accusations of cultural appropriation. Most discussions focus on Native American cultures, but others—notably perhaps Aboriginal Australian—are also appropriated. This is a complex and sensitive issue to tackle in a short space, but in essence the concern is that Neopaganism appropriates aspects of another people's culture.[51] Those who have honored an ancient path for centuries see their most sacred traditions misrepresented, used, or abused by people who have no understanding of their true meaning.

According to Native American scholar Lisa Aldred, this "imperialistically nostalgic fetishization" is an expression of a consumerist attitude to spirituality.[52]

While many share Aldred's view, the issues around cultural appropriation are complex and attitudes vary. Some Native Americans recognize the possibility of genuine cultural exchange. Many tribal groups do not object to teaching outsiders, but insist that they learn spiritual practices within a total cultural context and respect any restrictions that are placed on sharing knowledge.

Sam Gill believes that while it is appropriate for people "to be inspired by and influenced by other traditions," "[t]o do so superficially and to claim special knowledge of the source tradition is to engage in what can only be termed domination and conquest."[53]

Some accusations of cultural appropriation are due to misunderstanding: Neopaganism has a complex history, and aspects found in common with Native American traditions—like the quartered sacred circle—have evolved independently. In fact, a great deal of Neopagan ritual can be exonerated from any accusation of cultural appropriation: traditional Wicca and Witchcraft focus on European traditions, as does Heathenry (Northern Traditions) and most Druidry.

However, eclectic Neopagan ritual and Neo-Shamanism do draw on Native Americans traditions, and in many cases the accusations are sound. Although many Neopagans remain ignorant of the issues, others are working to develop a greater respect for the traditions from whom they might wish to borrow.

There is a danger that if Neopagans avoid working with any tradition that is not their own, their rituals will become "whiter and whiter."[54] In a world where cultures constantly mingle and cross-fertilize, this seems like a mistake.

As Starhawk says, "The edge where different systems meet is always fertile ground, in culture as well as in nature."[55]

But we must tread carefully as everyone loses when the rot of cultural appropriation sets in. Without cultural context a sacred practice is drained of meaning, and, even if it still functions, it is irrevocably distorted. As Paula Gunn Allen, Laguna Pueblo author and teacher, says, "You cannot do Indian spirituality without an Indian community … it's physical and social and spiritual and they're fused together."[56]

Some propose that the way forward is to develop genuine cultural sharing which "involves interaction with the whole of a person and community, reciprocal giving and receiving, sharing of struggle as well as joy, receiving what the community wants to give, not what we want to take."[57]

Oren Lyons, a traditional chief of the Onondaga Nation expresses a similar sentiment: "We've got real problems today, tremendous problems which threaten the survival of the planet. Indians and non-Indians must confront these problems together, and this means we must have honest dialogue, but this dialogue is impossible so long as non-Indians remain deluded about things as basic as Indian spirituality."[58]

The key is to be clear about what counts as appropriation and what is genuine sharing. Whenever colonialism or neocolonialism creates an unequal distribution of power then appropriation is likely to occur. If Neopagans are to work with spiritual integrity, we need to educate ourselves about the issues, abandon any practice that is legitimately refused to us, and develop rituals based on the cultural richness that remains. As we proceed with openness, honesty, and respect, we believe Neopagans will discover opportunities for real cultural sharing.

The Growth in Neopaganism

Neopaganism is one of the fastest growing religions in the United States. How are Neopagans coping with this prodigious growth? Several questions must be faced in the future: As more and more people want to perform ritual in the Nature they revere, what damage might ensue? Will Neopaganism lose its depth if it becomes a more popular, casual practice? Can a sizable religion function without more structure and hierarchy?

There are already Neopagan organizations that own and manage land for the community to practice ritual outdoors. This has worked well to date, and this model can be expected to alleviate pressures on the land. Permanent ritual structures are also appearing, including replica shrines created by reconstructionist traditions. For instance, Pagan landowners erect stone circles to the *vanir* (Norse Earth deities); others construct labyrinths. Also, there is a permanent shrine with a statue of Hekate in Index, Washington.

Neopagans typically worship in their homes, backyards, parks, woods, and beaches. Because of the intimate nature of Neopagan rituals and the small size of congregations, Neopagans seldom have need of large indoor ritual space. When needed, however, Neopagans rent halls, frequently at Unitarian Universalist Association buildings.

Ritual and Priesthood

Neopaganism is a moving target. In recent years the complexion of Neopaganism has been changing at a rapid pace. One result of this growth has been the emergence of a priest/esshood and a laity not seen before in countercultural movements. This development is appropriate in some of the reconstructed traditions, but it proves problematical in Witchen circles where all participants are capable of and empowered to perform any ritual role.

There are people who share a general Neopagan world view yet have no desire to pursue studies, training, or deeper involvement. However, they wish to share the seasonal celebrations with others and to have someone preside at their life passages. Ritual groups have arisen that produce public sabbat celebrations to meet this need.

In addition, Neopagan seminaries are beginning to train those who are called to service in ministry skills. Students learn about other forms of Neopaganism than their own tradition, in interfaith organizations, secular law as it affects religion, public liturgy, pastoral skills, requirements, and other relevant subjects. Although no Neopagan *must* minister to others in order to practice her tradition, it is important for those who are called to be well equipped to answer the call.

In addition to the aforementioned communal Neopagan land where Neopagans can live, work, study, and gather for festivals, parents are creating camps and schools for children and adolescents, as well as homeschooling.

Neopagans are greying, so they are beginning to look at ways to meet the needs of an aging community. More gatherings are taking place indoors where there are amenities like beds and indoor plumbing. Easier access allows for more comfortable participation of older—and very young—Neopagans in community activities. There is almost no infrastructure in terms of hospitals, facilities for the disabled or elderly, communal buildings, and cemeteries.

With thought and care and creativity, Neopagans will evolve in unique ways consistent with this unique religious response. The future of Neopaganism is wide open.

CONCLUSION

Victor Turner believed that 1960s counterculture, like the Neopagan ritual it inspired, sought the transformational power of "the liberated and disciplined body itself, with its many untapped resources for pleasure, pain, and expression."[59]

Schechner thinks Turner's optimism was probably unjustified.[60] But is it? Many Neopagans believe their rituals can have a profoundly transformative power, and the steady growth of the movement suggests it addresses a deep social need.

The West stands at a point of transition and challenge: Neopagan ritual offers itself as a paradoxical guide in these strange days—the path of an "ancient-future religion," drawing on the past, but working in the present towards a bright and sustainable future.

NOTES

1. Malidoma Patrice Somé, *Ritual: Power, Healing, and Community* (New York: Penguin/Compass, 1993), 1.
2. Joanne Pearson, Richard Roberts, and Geoffrey Samuel, eds., *Nature Religion Today* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 1.
3. Aidan Kelly, "Western Occult Tradition," in *Encyclopedia of Cults, Sects, and New Religions,* ed. James L. Lewis, 2nd ed. (New York: Prometheus Books, 2002), 791–792.
4. Lewis, ed., *Encyclopedia of Cults, Sects, and New Religions,* 344.
5. Graham Harvey, *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism* (London: Hurst and Co., 1997), 138.
6. Ibid., 139.
7. Ibid.
8. Susan Greenwood, "The Nature of the Goddess: Sexual Identities and Power in Contemporary Witchcraft," in *Nature Religion Today,* ed. Pearson, Roberts, and Samuel, 109.
9. Chas S. Clifton, personal communications with the authors.
10. "Both are different titles for essentially the same body of rites. These are the core of the Pagan Way, and were designed and published as 'public domain.'" Ed Fitch and Janine Renee, *Magical Rites from the Crystal Well* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1988), 146.
11. Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 54–57.
12. Greenham Common was the site of a U.S. Air Force base in England. In 1981 a women's peace camp was established there in protest at the deployment of cruise missiles. Over the next 19 years women at the camp drew on Goddess spirituality to support their protest. The camp closed on September 5, 2000, after 19 years of a continuous presence. It is now being transformed by the Greenham Common Trust into Greenham Common Park.
13. Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess Worshippers and Other Pagans in America Today,* revised and expanded ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 414.
14. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon,* 341.
15. Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon,* 198.
16. Sarah M. Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (Berkeley, CA, and London: University of California Press, 2001), 19–20.
17. Ibid., 183.
18. Ibid., 198.
19. Ibid., 186.
20. Ibid., 197.
21. An entheogen is a substance the ingestion of which creates an experience of the deity. For instance, the intoxication produced by wine can offer an experience of Dionysus (i.e., the Maenads). Other substances believed to provide divine insight are peyote buttons and amanita muscaria mushrooms. Traditional "Witches' flying ointment" is made of carefully combined plant substances known for both their soporific and stimulating properties.
22. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 19.
23. Starhawk, *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising* (Gabriola, B.C.: New Society Publishers, 2002), 103.
24. See "Invented Rituals" in Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 223–242.

25. See Sabina Magliocco, "Ritual Is My Chosen Art Form: The Creation of Ritual as Folk Art among Contemporary Pagans," in *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft,* ed. James R. Lewis (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 93–119.
26. Jone Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism: Ritual, Gender and Divinity among the Witches of San Francisco* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 14.
27. Catherine Bell, "The Ritual Body," in *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 93–117.
28. Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism,* 211.
29. Kay Turner, "Contemporary Feminist Rituals," in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality,* ed. Charlene Spretnak (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1982), 222.
30. Peter Beyer, "Globalisation and the Religion of Nature," in *Nature Religion Today,* ed. Pearson, Roberts, and Samuel, 17.
31. Ellen Evert Hopman and Lawrence Bond, *People of the Earth: The New Pagans Speak Out* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1995), 342.
32. The adjective "Witchen" refers to Craft rituals of all kinds, whether they are BTW (Wiccan) or not.
33. Unclothed, nude, clad in the sky.
34. See Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1979), for an explanation of "Younger Self," one of the Three Souls.
35. An *asana* is a sacred pose or posture used in yoga.
36. Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon,* 141.
37. Ibid., 198.
38. Ibid., 161.
39. http://www.spiritmoving.com/resources/ritual.htm; http://www.rawilsonfans.com/articles/neurologic.htm; http://www.mozuna.com/quotes.htm
40. Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 50.
41. Deirdre Sklar, "Can Bodylore Be Brought to Its Senses?" in *Journal of American Folklore* 107, no. 423 (Winter 1994): 9–22.
42. Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960 [1908]).
43. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 128–129.
44. Bruce Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Rituals of Women's Initiation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 105. Although in the 1981 edition Lincoln suggests that such rituals are a valuable means to provide meaning to women's oppression (1981, p. 107), his revised edition is highly critical of this process (1991, p. 112).
45. Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon,* 162.
46. Hopman and Bond, *People of the Earth,* 25.
47. Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves,* 198.
48. Oz, "An Insider's Look at Pagan Festivals," in *The Modern Craft Movement: Witchcraft Today, Book One,* ed. Chas S. Clifton (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1992), 40.
49. Dolores La Chapelle, *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex: Rapture of the Deep* (Silverton, CO: Finn Hill Arts, 1988), 154.
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51. See Christina Welch, "Appropriating the Didjeridu and the Sweat Lodge: New Age Baddies and Indigenous Victims?" in *The Encyclopaedic Source Book of the New Age,* ed. James Lewis (New York: Prometheus Press, 2004), 349–375.
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53. Sam Gill, in "The Power of Story," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 12, no. 3 (1988): 69–84.
54. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance,* 202.
55. Ibid.
56. Jane Caputi, "Interview with Paula Gunn Allen," *Trivia* 16/17 (Fall 1990): 50.
57. Myke Johnson, "Wanting to be Indian: When Spiritual Searching Turns into Cultural Theft," in *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality, and the New Age,* ed. Joanne Pearson (copublished by Milton Keynes, UK: The Open University, and Hants, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 287.
58. Ward Churchill, with M. Annette Jaimes, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonisation of American Indians* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1992), 216–217.
59. Turner, quoted by Schechner, *Performance Studies.*
60. Ibid., 62.

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Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America

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Edited by Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft

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Introduction

Although new or alternative religious movements, or New Religious Movements (NRMs), have always been part of the American religious landscape, they have not always received broad public attention. Most often, their formation, attraction of members, and growth or decline have occurred beyond the harsh glare of prolonged public scrutiny. In some striking cases, however, a new or alternative religious movement has dominated the news for a period of time, usually because the movement itself, or some of its members, became involved in something that was widely perceived to be illegal, immoral, or simply destructive. For example, in the wake of the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Minister Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam became notorious for his comment that Kennedy's murder meant "the chickens had come home to roost." In the 1970s saffron-robed members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, also known as Hare Krishna, became so well known for seeking donations and engaging strangers in conversations in public that they were easily lampooned in the comic film "Airplane." In the 1980s, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, leader of the Unification Church (or Moonies), was found guilty of tax evasion by diverting church funds for his personal use. More recently, in 1993, the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms staged a raid on the home and church of a small group of Bible students outside of Waco, Texas. In addition to the ten lives lost in the botched raid, the 51 day standoff between the students of David Koresh, a group widely known as the Branch Davidians, and agents of the federal government, particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation, culminated in the loss of 78 lives in a fire that consumed the Mount Carmel Center where the Branch Davidians lived. In 1997 followers of Marshall Applewhite, forming a group called Heaven's Gate, joined him in committing suicide so that they could all progress to what they viewed as "the evolutionary level above human." The list of such incidents could easily be multiplied.

In the late twentieth century as new and alternative religious movements continued to receive public attention for elements of their practice or belief that were highly controversial, a dominant image of such groups began to solidify. That image was

fostered by the activism of groups of former members, their families, some professionals in social work and psychology, and various other volunteers. When the opposition to new or alternative religious groups originated with more or less secular individuals, those opponents were generally called anticultists. When opposition originated with Evangelical Protestant Christians, those opponents were usually called countercultists. The tireless work of such activists, anticultist or countercultist, quickly produced a standard understanding of new and alternative religions that united a wide variety of groups under the umbrella category of "cults." In the perceptions of their anticult opponents, cults posed serious threats to vulnerable individuals and, ultimately, to the stability of American society itself. Anticultists and countercultists believed that cults had three prominent characteristics. First, they were led by unscrupulous, manipulative, and insincere individuals who sought only to increase their own power, wealth, and/or sexual enjoyment. Second, cults preyed upon unsuspecting, confused, and vulnerable individuals, often using sophisticated and virtually irresistible tactics of influence. Third, participation in a cult would surely bring harm to individual participants and might also lead them to commit any number of antisocial actions that threatened the public good. The stereotype of the "destructive cult" was aggressively marketed by the loose coalition of anticultists, particularly when disturbing news about any new or alternative religious movement became public. Thus, on the one hand, while a variety of events created a broad interest in learning about individual religious groups, their practices and beliefs, organizational structure, leadership, and many other topics, on the other hand, the predominance of the cult stereotype inevitably skewed the information available, attributed the perceived faults of any one group to all of them, and created expectations that any group labeled a cult must necessarily be worthy of suspicion, scorn, and vigorous opposition. Despite their prodigious efforts at educating the general public, the various anticult and countercult activists have, in fact, promoted much more misunderstanding than accurate understanding of the religious lives of some of their fellow citizens. Consequently, they have helped to create a very hostile environment for anyone whose religious practices do not fit within a so-called "mainstream." The personal and social costs of such religious bigotry may actually be higher than what the activists fear from cults themselves.

This set of volumes on "New and Alternative Religions in America" intends to rectify that situation for the general reader. It aims to present accurate, comprehensive, authoritative, and accessible accounts of various new and alternative religious movements that have been and are active in American society, as well as a set of essays that orient the reader to significant contexts for understanding new and alternative religions and important issues involved in studying them. The presentations are predicated on a simple but fundamental assumption. It is that accurate description and understanding must precede any judgment about the truth, validity, morality, or trustworthiness of any religious group or person. Accurate description demands that the group be presented in terms that it could itself recognize and acknowledge as being at least close to the way it understands itself. Providing an accurate description of the history, organization, practices, and beliefs of a particular group does not, in

any way, constitute an endorsement of that group, but it does provide an indispensable baseline for any further discussion. Such a baseline has often been lost in the public discussions of new and alternative religious movements, because their most bizarre, threatening, or even humorous aspects have been exaggerated. What is missing from such caricatured presentations is a sense of how any person could find such apparently ludicrous, lethal, or laughable groups worth joining. Simple dismissal of new or alternative religions as absurd, erroneous, or pernicious misses the social influence that they can have and demonstrably have had. Whatever an outsider's perception of new and alternative religions might be, many clear-thinking and well-intentioned individuals, throughout American history, have associated themselves with such groups. This set is founded on the idea that members' or participants' reasons for their decisions and their accounts of their experiences form the primary data for understanding new and alternative religions. Both hostile and approving accounts of new or alternative religions from outsiders provide a different sort of data, which reveals the social location and often-controversial careers of new and alternative religions. But neither approval nor criticism by external observers should take precedence over the self-understanding of each group as articulated by its members in establishing a baseline of descriptive accuracy.

Readers of this set of volumes will thus encounter both information and analytical frameworks that will help them arrive at an informed and appropriately complicated understanding of new and alternative religious movements in American history and society. Volume 1 provides a set of analytical perspectives on new and alternative religions, including the history of such movements in the United States, the controversies in which they have often become embroiled, the roles of leaders within the groups and the processes by which individuals become members and also leave their groups, the legal and global contexts in which new and alternative religions function, and a variety of prominent themes in the study of new religions, including roles of gender, children, and violence.

The four volumes that follow generally present accounts of individual groups, many of them well known but some much less so. Each chapter presents information about the origin and subsequent development of the group in question, its internal organization including the predominant type of leadership, its most important practices and beliefs, and controversies that have put the group in the limelight. Volume 2 focuses on groups that have developed out of the broad biblical tradition—Judaism and Christianity—and have achieved such a distinctive status as to be considered, at least by some observers, as independent religious groups rather than simple sectarian variations of more mainstream Jewish or Christian traditions. Volume 2 accordingly raises most acutely the problems of definition that are involved in using the admittedly malleable categories of "new" and "alternative" religions.

The description of a religious movement as *new* or *alternative* only begs further questions. Novelty can be in the eye of the beholder, or in the mind of someone claiming to be innovative. That is, religious movements are judged to be new, alternative, or anything else only in particular contexts and by certain audiences. They may claim, for example, to retrieve and correctly interpret or represent past beliefs

and practices, which have been neglected or forgotten. But their opponents might view the same claims as dangerous and deviant inventions. New religions themselves often manifest a pronounced ambivalence about their own novelty. A fundamental dynamic in new and alternative religions is that they strive to present themselves as both new and old, as unprecedented and familiar. The novelty of new religions cuts both ways; it can just as easily excite the interest of potential adherents as it can strain their credulity. As they spread their messages to those whose interest, approval, and even acceptance they hope to secure, NRMs proclaim both their challenging novelty and their comforting familiarity.

In their sectarian forms, these movements attempt to recapture the lost purity of an idealized past. Sects typically have prior ties to larger religious organizations from which they have intentionally broken off. They aim to return to the pristine origins of the tradition and reestablish its foundations. Sectarian forms of Christianity frequently exhort their partisans to get "back to the Bible"; contemporary Islamic sects similarly yearn for the purity of the times of the prophet Muhammad. Even the Church of Satan, founded by Anton Szandor LaVey in 1966, has spawned sectarian groups that accuse the original Church of Satan of having abandoned its initial commitments and emphases. Sects thus define themselves both in relation to the broader world and in relation to their specific tradition, both of which are perceived to threaten their purity of belief and practice.

In their typology of responses to secularization, Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge contrast cults to sects. Rejecting the polemical definition of cults spawned by their cultural opponents, they define cults as independent religious traditions. Cults may be imports from another culture or independent products of the society in which they develop. Like sects, cults often find themselves in tension or conflict with broader society, simply by virtue of being new and different. Because they, too, want to locate themselves in relation to an authoritative past, cults also lay some claim to previous tradition. What separates cults from sects in their relation to previous traditions is that cults typically do not have a history of institutional conflict and eventual separation. Cults are marked from their beginnings as new entities. Both sects and cults, then, simultaneously declare their novelty and sink their roots in the past. In order to avoid confusion about the term "cult," which has such negative connotations in contemporary American society, this set will keep to the designations of new and alternative religions, which are widely employed by many scholars even though they are somewhat imprecise. The choice of which groups to include in Volume 2, as with the other volumes, is a judgment call. The guiding principle was not only to provide a representative sample of new and alternative religious groups throughout American history, but also to present the groups in sufficient detail to enable the reader to form a complex understanding of them.

Volume 3 investigates groups in the occult or metaphysical tradition, including nineteenth century Spiritualism, the Theosophical Society begun by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in the late nineteenth century, and the contemporary New Age movement. Like the groups discussed in the second volume, those in Volume 3 are part of a broad tradition that has deep roots in

antiquity. For example, in *The Secret Doctrine* Madame Blavatsky included the ancient Vedic sages of India, the Buddha, and a collection of ancient Greek philosophers among the ancient teachers whose wisdom about the nature of human beings and the nature of god was being given its fullest expression in Blavatsky's modern Theosophical system.

The religious movements discussed in Volume 3 typically present a different organizational profile from those in Volume 2. The groups in Volume 2 have made substantial efforts to maintain boundaries between themselves and their surrounding social environment, demanding exclusive allegiance of their members; vesting authority over practice, doctrine, and group life in charismatic leaders; and offering new and improved interpretations of familiar texts already acknowledged to have broad cultural legitimacy. In contrast, the movements in Volume 3 center on individual teachers who attract shifting groups of students with varying degrees of commitment for varying lengths of time, leave the ability to determine the authority or validity of any pronouncements in the hands of individual seekers, and claim to bring to light extraordinary wisdom from previously unknown or underappreciated sources.

Many of the religions that have appeared to be innovative developments in American religious life have actually been transplanted from other cultures where they have often enjoyed long histories. The openness of the United States to immigrants has always been an important factor in promoting American religious diversity. The 1965 repeal of the 1924 *Asian Exclusion Act,* for example, permitted a variety of Eastern religious teachers to extend their religious activities to the United States. Late in his life, for example, Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, made the United States the focus of his efforts to awaken love for Krishna in as many people as possible. Military personnel returning from service abroad, often with spouses from countries where they had been stationed, also helped to introduce new religious practices and movements to the United States. This was the case, for example, with the form of Japanese Nichiren Buddhism known as Soka Gakkai. Even where it is difficult to provide independent corroboration of claimed international ties, they can nonetheless be claimed. A dramatic example here was the assertion that the elusive figure at the origins of the Nation of Islam, W.D. Fard, arrived in Detroit, Michigan, in 1930 from Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The movements in Volume 4 show clearly that religious innovation in the United States always needs to be considered in a broader, global context. That is no less true of the groups discussed in other volumes as well. For example, Ann Lee's small band of Shakers began in Manchester, England; David Koresh gathered Bible students from Australia, England, and other foreign countries as well as the United States. Theosophy's Madame Blavatsky was a Russian émigré. Finally, the Church of Scientology, like many other new religions that have begun in the United States, conducts a vigorous international missionary program.

The frequent movement of individuals, practices, and ideas across national borders could make a focus on new and alternative religions solely in the United States vulnerable to a myopia that could distort the nature and significance of those movements. That caution holds equally for homegrown and imported religions. Few

religions in the contemporary world, no matter what their age or relation to a mainstream, are confined within a single set of national boundaries. Nonetheless, the focus of this set remains on a selection of religions that have had, for one reason or another, a significant impact on religious and social life in the United States. Prominent in that selection is a group of religions that have been independently founded in the United States. For example, although the contemporary revival of Paganism can be traced to the career of Gerald Gardner in England beginning in the 1930s, many influential Pagan thinkers and teachers, such as Z Budapest, Starhawk, and Isaac Bonewits have flourished in the United States. Similarly, the Church of Satan and its subsequent offshoots owe their inspiration to Anton Szandor LaVey, who produced *The Satanic Bible* and other fundamental texts in San Francisco, California, in the 1960s. Also, beginning in the 1950s the prodigious literary output of L. Ron Hubbard gave rise first to the therapeutic system known as Dianetics and then, as his purview broadened, to the Church of Scientology. Other founders of NRMs in the United States, like Marshall Applewhite of the Heaven's Gate group, attracted far fewer adherents than the Church of Scientology but nonetheless carved out a place for themselves in American religious history through their dramatic, and sometimes tragic, actions. Volume 5 thus focuses on both new developments in international movements within the United States, such as the rise of Neo-Paganism, and the conscious construction of new religions, such as the Church of Scientology, by American teachers and organizations.

As this overview suggests, the definition of what counts as a new or alternative religion is frequently open to argument. Many groups that appear dramatically novel to external observers would claim that they are simply being faithful to ancient traditions. Joseph Smith, for example, claimed that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, was a restoration of primitive Christianity. Groups that claim to be innovative often express their messages in the form of fresh interpretations of ancient texts, as with Swami Prabhupada's effort to present the ancient Indian classic, the Bhagavad-Gita, "as it is"; or Rael's contention that the mentions of "Elohim" in the biblical book of Genesis actually refer to extraterrestrial beings who came to earth in space ships. Because of the subjective nature of the categories —new to whom? alternative to what?—it will always be difficult to delimit precisely which groups definitely do, and do not, "count" as new or alternative. Moreover, in popular discourse, where the category cult is frequently used but appears devoid of anything other than emotional content, and in interreligious arguments, where cult easily expands to include "virtually anyone who is not us," attempts at substantive definitions give way entirely to polemics. Discussion of new and alternative religions in the United States thus always refers to a shifting and vigorously contested terrain where categories like "alternative religion" or "cult" and implicit comparisons like those implied by "new religious movement" are used to establish, reinforce, and defend certain kinds of individual and group identities, even as they threaten, compromise, or erode other kinds of individual or group identities.

No mapping of such terrain can hope to be definitive. Too much is in flux. Those who enter the terrain need trustworthy and experienced guides. The essays in these

five volumes provide just such guidance. Experienced, authoritative, and plainspoken, the authors of these essays provide both perspectives on some of the most prominent general features of the landscape and full descriptions of many, but by no means all, of the specific areas within it. Those who want to explore the terrain of new and alternative religions in the United States will find in this set multiple points of entry. They may want to focus on a specific local part of the larger area, such as the Theosophical tradition, the Branch Davidians, or Heaven's Gate. On the other hand, they may want to investigate the characteristic dynamics of the broader field, such as the processes of conversion into and defection from groups or the interactions between new and alternative religions and their cultural opponents. There is much to explore—much more than can even be covered in these five volumes. But this set aims to equip the would-be explorer with enough tools and knowledge to make the exploration rewarding and worthwhile.

The Vedanta Society

Robin Rinehart

INTRODUCTION

The Vedanta Society was one of the first Hindu-inspired religious organizations established in the United States. Linked to the renowned Indian renouncer Ramakrishna (1836–1886), and his equally famous disciple Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), the Vedanta Society now has branches in a number of American cities. Individual chapters are independent (or in some instances recognized as subcenters[1]), but share the connection of their affiliation with the Ramakrishna Order in India. While the Vedanta Society's membership has generally been relatively modest in number, it has exerted an important influence on people outside the group and helped pave the way for other teachers from India to establish their own followings in the United States. The name "Vedanta" links it most directly to ancient Indian philosophy, but the group's teachings and practices draw from a wide range of religious traditions beyond Hinduism. Many centers, for example, celebrate Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian holidays as well as special days associated with the founding figures of the Ramakrishna Mission.[2] Indeed, the Vedanta Society teaches that there is an underlying truth in all religions.

The powerful and dynamic personalities of Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and other early leaders of the Ramakrishna Mission and the Vedanta Societies contributed to the movement's early successes, and its history in India and the West is marked by a number of charismatic, colorful teachers, disciples, and admirers including noted authors such as Henry Miller, Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, and J.D. Salinger. The study of Vedanta thought as the Vedanta Society presented it to the West illuminates the spiritual quests of many noted American thinkers. The concerted effort of authors affiliated with the Vedanta Society to promote Vedanta thought in the West has also influenced the scholarly presentation of Indian religions.

As the Ramakrishna Mission of India and the Vedanta Societies of the United States have presented their views on religion, Hinduism, and spiritual life, they have

been in the thick of ongoing debates about understandings and definitions of Hinduism. Some of the most influential Western scholars of religion have presented Vedanta, especially as taught by the Vedanta Societies, as the essence of Hinduism overall, although much recent scholarship on Hinduism challenges any neat categorization of the religion, and even rejects the possibility that "Hinduism" is a meaningful designation at all.[3]

In addition to its role in debates about the nature of Hinduism, the Vedanta Society has also weathered differences of opinion about the lives and teachings of its founding figures. The biographies and teachings of early Ramakrishna Mission and Vedanta Society leaders have at times been fiercely contested. While there are accounts published by disciples of these organizations, both Indians and Westerners have at times challenged the official view on what the leaders taught and how they lived their lives. These debates share much in common with controversies that have arisen in other traditions about how to portray major religious figures. Should biographies of religious leaders seek to "humanize" those whom adherents consider to be great prophets or even incarnations of a deity, particularly when the "humanizing" enterprise suggests imperfections or controversial behavior? Adherents may reject studies of a leader's teachings that suggest evolution or change within the teachings, substantial outside influence, or perhaps inconsistencies. There is sometimes a great divide between works on the Ramakrishna Mission and Vedanta Societies published by scholars outside the movements and works published by members of these movements, and the criticisms that one side may have of the other can be quite impassioned. Since the 1990s, there has been particular concern over varying portrayals of the life of Ramakrishna and, in particular, the nature of his relationships with his closest devotees.

In the United States, the Vedanta Societies have generally not been subjected to the kinds of intense negative publicity typical of more recently established Asian-based, guru-led groups such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. However, Swami Vivekananda did draw criticism from some Christian leaders in the United States because the swami was openly critical of the efforts of Christian missionaries in India. Because some of the earliest and most prominent American advocates of Vedanta were female, there were also detractors who argued that Indian swamis were preying upon gullible American women.[4] More recently, many conservative Christian anticult activists include the Vedanta Society on their lists of so-called "cults" because the group's teachings, while accepting of Jesus, do not assert that salvation is possible only through a particular kind of Christian faith. One Christian anticult group, for example, defines the Vedanta Society as a cult because it deems "Ramakrishna worthy of the same devotion as Christ."[5] However, while popular opinion may lump the Vedanta Society into the stereotypical category of "cult" with its attendant associations of manipulation and exploitation of followers, there is virtually nothing in the group's history to substantiate such claims. The Christian anticult movement's characterization of the Vedanta Society as a cult is based on a theological difference of opinion about whether Jesus Christ is the only

path to salvation, and not on any evidence about the group's recruitment or other practices.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE GROUP

To understand the history of the Vedanta Societies in the United States, it is necessary to begin in the nineteenth century in the state of Bengal in India. Ramakrishna, the man who inspired the founding of the Ramakrishna Mission in India and subsequently the Vedanta Society in the United States, lived there from 1836 to 1886. Calcutta, Bengal, was an important city in British India, and its complex cultural environment spawned a number of New Religious Movements (NRMs). The availability of Western-style education created a class of young men familiar with both Indian and Western thought, and many of the new movements incorporated dimensions of both.[6]

The boy who became known as Ramakrishna, however, spent his early years in a small village with little influence from the hybrid culture of British India. He was born into the Brahmin caste. Traditionally the occupation of Brahmin males is the priesthood and teaching, though not all Brahmin males pursue this path. Followers report that Ramakrishna had many spiritual experiences as a child. Late in his teens, Ramakrishna became a priest at the Dakshineshwar temple outside Calcutta. This temple is dedicated to Kali, a goddess famed for slaying demons the other gods of the Hindu pantheon could not vanquish. Though Kali is usually depicted as a fearsome figure dancing in a cremation ground, drinking blood, and clothed in severed body parts, Ramakrishna approached her tenderly as a son would his mother. His devotion was so fervent that some family members feared for his well-being.

Ramakrishna experimented with many forms of religious practice. Though his subsequent followers, most notably Swami Vivekananda, would highlight his acceptance of Vedanta, Ramakrishna was also involved with tantric practice and studied with several gurus or teachers. He also briefly tried practices of Islam as well as Christianity and is reported to have had visions of Muhammad and Jesus.[7] Throughout his life, Ramakrishna often went into a state of samadhi or spiritual absorption. Followers sometimes speak of his "divine madness."

Ramakrishna often spoke of the dangers "women and gold," in a larger sense lust and material wealth.[8] Although his family arranged a marriage for him to a woman named Sarada Devi (1853–1920), the marriage was never consummated, and the two focused on their spiritual development. Sarada Devi herself came to be revered as a great spiritual teacher, the "Holy Mother."

As word of Ramakrishna's unusual spiritual capacity spread, people from surrounding areas came to visit him. Among the visitors were many young men from Calcutta with western educations. Soon, there was a circle of young men who were ardent devotees, visiting Ramakrishna frequently. Not surprisingly, much of what is known about Ramakrishna has been filtered through the interpretive lenses of his closest followers. One of the most important primary sources of information on Ramakrishna himself is Mahendranath Gupta's *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*

(Gupta referred to himself in the book as "M").[9] A teacher, Gupta recorded all that he could about the last years of Ramakrishna's life. Swami Vivekananda, as the most publicly visible leader of the Ramakrishna Mission, also played a key role in promoting a particular understanding of what Ramakrishna had taught.[10] There thus exist divergent and sometimes competing portrayals of the movement's early history.

Many people have commented on the remarkable difference in backgrounds of Ramakrishna and his disciple Swami Vivekananda. While Ramakrishna had little education and lived the whole of his life in Bengal, Swami Vivekananda was educated at Presidency College and Scottish Mission College in Calcutta, sampled a wide range of literature, history, and philosophy in his reading, and traveled the world.[11]

Born into a wealthy Calcutta family in 1863, Swami Vivekananda's given name was Narendranath Datta. As a young man, he became involved with the Brahmo Samaj, a movement that rejected popular Hindu practices such as image worship and focused on the monistic world view of the Upanishads. When Narendranath finished his bachelor's degree in 1884, his world was shaken by the deaths of his father and the Brahmo Samaj leader Keshub Chunder Sen. His family, previously wealthy, now fell on hard times. Narendranath had met Ramakrishna for the first time in the early 1880s. Other disciples of Ramakrishna recalled that Swami Vivekananda, then still known by his given name of Narendranath, frequently challenged Ramakrishna and asked whether his spiritual experiences were, in fact, hallucinations.[12] Ramakrishna, however, continued to teach the future Swami Vivekananda, and his touch alone brought about powerful experiences for young Narendranath. Still, he went through a period of searching and questioning, leading some to decide he had become an atheist. Yet he remained an ardent disciple of Ramakrishna.[13]

The Ramakrishna Mission recalls that towards the end of Ramakrishna's life, when he was suffering from throat cancer, he gave saffron-colored clothes to his closest disciples, indicating that they were to become monks or renouncers and carry on his teaching. After Ramakrishna's death in 1886, Narendranath and some of Ramakrishna's other close male disciples gathered at Baranagore and took vows of renunciation.[14] In classical Hindu tradition, men, and less frequently women, may take formal vows of renunciation, known as sannyasa, which sever all ties to one's family and possessions. Normally those who take such vows also take a new name, most frequently preceded by the title "swami," which means "master" or "lord." Narendranath did not adopt the name Swami Vivekananda until 1892 or 1893.

Traditionally, Hindu swamis have no set residence and may wander to different spiritual centers or pilgrimage places practicing solitary yoga and meditation. Swami Vivekananda followed this path for some time, but also periodically met with his fellow monks and considered Ramakrishna's call to social service. The role of renunciants in public life and service was a concern for nineteenth-century Hindu leaders. Christian missionaries in India were active in opening schools and providing medical care and other social services, and saw such work as a way to gain converts. Many Hindu reform movements responded by developing their own educational and social service programs.

Swami Vivekananda eventually decided that he wanted to travel to the Western world to seek aid for India's people. He received the support of an Indian king (during British rule of India, a number of kings or maharajas maintained control over small kingdoms while paying allegiance to the British empire), and in 1893 left for North America, planning to attend the World's Parliament of Religions to be held in Chicago that year. Landing at Vancouver, British Columbia, in Canada, he traveled by rail to Chicago, only to learn that he lacked the credentials necessary to become a delegate to the Parliament of Religions. Fortunately for the swami, Americans he met arranged credentials for him. The swami's many addresses at the Parliament brought him fame and media attention both in the United States and India, and the transcriptions of his lectures there are a significant portion of the swami's collected works.[15]

In his lectures to the World's Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda spoke of his vision of Hinduism, criticized Christian missionaries who sought to convert Hindus, and solicited support for social reform in India. Swami Vivekananda described a Hinduism that could stand the onslaught of new sect after new sect, only to emerge stronger, having "sucked in, absorbed, and assimilated [each new sect] into the immense body of the mother faith."[16] This idea remains a core component of Vedanta Society teaching and provides the rationale for the assertion that Vedanta is the essence of Hinduism, capable of encompassing all other religions.[17]

The swami and other representatives of Asian religions such as Buddhism attracted much attention as they sought to describe traditions previously unfamiliar to most Americans. After the Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda continued to garner media coverage as he traveled throughout the United States. Newspaper reporters went to great lengths to describe not only what he spoke about, but his features and apparel. In March 1894, for example, the *Saginaw Courier-Herald* described him as "a strong and regular featured man of fine presence, whose swarthy skin made more pronounced the pearly whiteness of his even teeth. Under a broad and high forehead his eyes betoken intelligence."[18] Christopher Isherwood later wrote, "in those days, a foreign lecturer touring America found himself in a position midway between that of a campaigning politician and a circus performer."[19]

While the media coverage may not have always focused on the spiritual dimension of Swami Vivekananda's work, the swami's lecture tour attracted some of his first American disciples, such as Christine Greenstidel of Detroit, later known as Sister Christine, who remained a dedicated follower for the rest of her life. In New York, the swami taught classes on yoga, where he met a number of Americans who played a key role in the establishment of the Vedanta Society, such as Sara Bull (also known as "Mrs. Ole Bull") and Josephine MacLeod. MacLeod spent much time with the swami in the coming years, introducing him to many important people, but never declared herself a disciple. MacLeod's sister, Betty, married Francis Leggett, who led the Vedanta Society established in New York in 1894.

Swami Vivekananda spent much of the latter part of 1894 in the northeastern United States. That summer, he attended a conference on different religions at Greenacre, Maine. Weary after months of lecturing, in 1895 he shifted his focus to

offering classes for small groups. In the summer of 1895, Swami Vivekananda organized a retreat at Thousand Island Park in upstate New York. About a dozen students came together to study with Swami Vivekananda at a cottage owned by Mary Elizabeth Dutcher, and it was here that he first initiated Americans as renunciants, although the first two to do so, Leon Landsberg and Marie Louise, later left the movement.[20]

After four years of travel in North America and England, Swami Vivekananda returned to India in early 1897. There he met with great acclaim as a hero who had championed the cause of India and Hinduism in the West. Later that year, along with some of Ramakrishna's other close followers, he founded the Ramakrishna Mission with the goal of advocating service to God through service to humankind as an embodiment of divinity. Early in 1899, Belur Math in Bengal was established as the permanent headquarters of the Mission.[21] In the years that followed, a number of Swami Vivekananda's Western disciples and admirers visited India, including Sara Bull, Christine Greenstidel, and Josephine MacLeod. Western followers helped fund some of the early endeavors of the Ramakrishna Mission in India.

Late in 1899, Swami Vivekananda returned to the United States, visiting California and the Midwest. In 1900, the Vedanta Society opened a branch in San Francisco, and about the same time Shanti Ashram was established in northern California as well.[22] Swami Vivekananda also visited England, but efforts to establish Vedanta Societies there did not go well.[23] After visiting France and other European countries, Swami Vivekananda returned to India at the end of 1900. In 1901, the swami began relinquishing his official duties and public role, spending most of his time at the Belur Math. Struggling with poor health, in July 1902, he died peacefully at the age of 39. His disciples recall that he often predicted he would not live to the age of 40.[24]

After Swami Vivekananda's death, the Vedanta Society branches in the United States maintained their affiliation with the Ramakrishna Mission in India, which was by then becoming well-known for its social service and educational work.

THE VEDANTA SOCIETIES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

As part of the ongoing relationship between the Vedanta Societies in the United States and the Ramakrishna Mission in India, the Ramakrishna Order sent swamis to lead the American Societies. The early branches often struggled to survive, because there were uncertainties about how to organize the movement. Carl Jackson, in his 1994 study of the American Ramakrishna Movement,[25] explained that Ramakrishna swamis faced difficult questions about who would hold authority—local swamis, American disciples, or Ramakrishna Order officials in India. They also had to decide how to adapt their teachings and the practices they advocated to an American audience, how to handle finances (traditionally swamis do not handle money), and how much to focus on Ramakrishna as an object of worship.[26] The decisions that different swamis made helped lend a distinct character to each branch of the Vedanta

Society. Indeed, it is still common for Society members to speak of significant differences in the way branches in various cities pursue their study and practice of Vedanta.

Swami Abhedananda (1866–1939) took on the leadership of the New York Vedanta Society in 1897 and spent much time there until he returned to India in 1921.[27] He was one of the original disciples of Ramakrishna to have taken vows of renunciation at Baranagore in 1887. He lectured frequently in New York and throughout the United States, and also published extensively on Vedanta. He helped create a solid structure for the New York Society by incorporating it under New York law.[28] Even so, the New York Society went through difficult times, perhaps due to disagreements between Swami Abhedananda and some of the Vedanta Society's American supporters.[29]

Swami Trigunatita (1865–1915, full name Swami Trigunatitananda) was sent to head the San Francisco branch of the Vedanta Society in 1903. This swami, born Sarada Prasanna Mitra, was introduced to Ramakrishna by his teacher Mahendranath Gupta. Sarada's family tried to steer him away from a life of renunciation, but he too was one of the disciples to take vows of renunciation in 1897. Swami Trigunatita also established a society in southern California in 1904 and asked the Ramakrishna Order in India to send a swami to serve there. Swami Trigunatita is fondly remembered for undertaking the construction of the first Hindu temple in the West, completed in 1906, its architecture drawing on motifs from different religions. While the Ramakrishna Order and Vedanta Societies have generally steered clear of involvement in politics, Swami Trigunatita was sympathetic to and spoke publicly on socialism.[30]

From the very beginning of the Vedanta Society, there have been a small number of members who have chosen to take vows of renunciation, while the majority attend regular meetings and classes, and may occasionally go on retreats. Swami Trigunatita established a residence for novice American monks, and, quite ahead of his time, founded one for nuns as well. (The Ramakrishna Order did not establish a convent in India until the 1950s.) The monastery closed in 1915, the convent in 1912.[31] Tragically, Swami Trigunatitananda died early in 1915 from injuries sustained when a troubled former follower bombed the San Francisco temple.

The subsequent history of the Vedanta Societies in the United States has been guided by a later generation of swamis from the Indian Ramakrishna Order, while American followers have typically shared leadership responsibilities and handled much of the administrative work of the societies. Swami Paramananda, for example (1884–1940), came to New York in 1907 to serve as assistant to Swami Abhedananda. In 1910, he established the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society in Boston. He also established Vedanta groups in southern California.

Altogether, the early history of Vedanta Societies in the United States is one of only modest success. Some centers were founded and quickly fell apart; by 1920, only San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, and New York had established societies.[32] Carl Jackson has charted the movement's steady growth in the 1930s, detailing the histories of the major Vedanta Societies across the United States.[33] A series of Indian swamis from the Ramakrishna Order in India headed the various local societies,

typically lecturing to both members and outside groups, publishing works on Vedanta, and counseling individuals. In New York in 1933, the Vedanta Society was thriving to such an extent that Swami Nikhilananda established a second branch of the group called the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center. This swami also published a number of noted translations, such as *The Gospel of Ramakrishna* and original works on Vedanta.[34]

Swami Prabhavananda (1893–1976), who became a member of the Ramakrishna Order in 1914, was an especially important leader on the west coast of the United States for many decades. He began working at the San Francisco Vedanta Society, and then established a branch of the Vedanta Society in Portland in 1925 and the Vedanta Society of Southern California in 1930.[35] Two centers were opened in the Midwest in the 1930s as well: in Chicago in 1930, where Swami Vivekananda had given his addresses to the World's Parliament of Religions, and another in St. Louis in 1938, founded by Swami Satprakashananda.

In the middle of the twentieth century, several branches also established retreat centers, such as Vivekananda Cottage at Thousand Island Park, New York, and the Ganges Retreat Center in Ganges, Michigan, linked to the Chicago Vedanta Society. In some areas, the Societies grew to such an extent that congregations were divided; the San Francisco Vedanta Society, for example, separated into San Francisco, Berkeley, and Sacramento branches under the parent organization of the Vedanta Society of Northern California.[36]

Each local branch has its own history and character, determined by local conditions and often the particular strengths and emphases of the swamis sent from the Ramakrishna Order in India.[37] In some cities, repeated attempts to establish societies have been unsuccessful.[38] In other areas, the constituency of the membership has shifted over the years. As more and more Indians began to immigrate to the United States (particularly after the liberalization of immigration laws in the 1960s), the numbers of Indian-born members in Vedanta Societies has increased, particularly in Chicago, New York, and Seattle.[39] Some Vedanta Societies also cater to nearby colleges and universities. For example, the present head of the Boston branch of the Vedanta Society, Swami Tyagananda, also serves as the Hindu chaplain for the campuses of Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The basic leadership structure remains the same; all American branches are affiliated with the Ramakrishna Order in India, and most are led by Indian swamis from the Order. The Vedanta Center of Greater Washington, D.C., established in 1997 and affiliated with the Vedanta Society of Southern California, has an American-born swami named Swami Atmajnananda.[40] Although the Order now has both male and female renunciants, the major leaders in the United States have been male. In the 1940s, after the death of Swami Paramananda, his niece Gayatri Devi assumed leadership of the Boston Vedanta Society, but the Ramakrishna Order leadership in India refused to accept her. She eventually established a separate organization, which is still in existence.[41]

While the succession of various swamis is a critical part of the institutional history of the Vedanta Societies in the United States, equally important are their American

disciples. Who was attracted to the Vedanta Society, and why? American disciples provided the bulk of funding for activities and the purchase of property and construction of buildings, and assumed responsibility for much of the day-to-day functioning of the various branches. American and other Western disciples have also assisted the various enterprises of the Ramakrishna Order and Ramakrishna Mission in India. Jackson has noted that the Vedanta Societies have predominantly attracted members in urban, coastal areas of the United States, and that the group has not had much success in the south.[42] Pravrajika Vrajaprana, a nun at the Sarada Convent in Santa Barbara, California, also notes that it can be a challenge for the Ramakrishna Mission in India to find monks prepared to lead new centers in the United States even when the demand for a new center in an area exists.[43]

The earliest members of the Vedanta Societies were typically people who heard Swami Vivekananda speak during his two visits to the United States. Those who became followers were usually well-educated and fairly well-off financially (some, in fact, expressed their concern to Swami Vivekananda that he should work only with the "right" sort of people). Many had been involved in other religious groups outside the mainstream, such as the Ethical Culture Society, the Theosophical Society, Christian Science, and the Spiritualist movement.[44] As in many NRMs of the late nineteenth century, women played a key role in the establishment of American Vedanta Societies. Writing home to his fellow monks, Swami Vivekananda admiringly described the American women who worked with him. "Well, I am almost at my wit's end to see the women of this country! They take me to the shops and everywhere, as if I were a child.… I am really struck with wonder to see the women here!"[45]

Sara Bull, or Mrs. Ole Bull, who came to be known as "Swami Vivekananda's American mother," is a good example. In the 1880s, she joined a Spiritualist group led by a medium, and corresponded with friends who were attending Theosophical Society meetings.[46] She studied the *Bhagavad Gita* with a Theosophical teacher from India, a former Brahmo Samaj member named Mohini Mohan, and found that his exposition of the New Testament revived her faith in Christianity.[47] Thus, when she met Swami Vivekananda, she had been searching for some time and already had some familiarity with Indian tradition.

Christine Greenstidel, a school teacher who came to be known as "Sister Christine," had been raised as a Lutheran but became a Christian Scientist, and she first heard Swami Vivekananda speak in Detroit early in 1894. Impressed by his voice and his keen mind, she attended many lectures, becoming a follower.[48] The following year, she and her friend Mary C. Funke traveled to Thousand Island Park in New York when they heard that Swami Vivekananda was teaching a group of students there.[49] Christine and Swami Vivekananda established a close, father-daughter style relationship, and corresponded for many years. In the late 1890s, Christine helped with the administration of Vedanta Society-related enterprises in Detroit.[50] Sister Christine traveled to India in 1902, and was able to spend some time with the swami before his death. She later joined Sister Nivedita, a British follower of Swami Vivekananda, in Calcutta to assist with her school for young Indian girls and also

worked with older women. Christine lived for much of the next 14 years in India. She returned to the United States in 1914, but was not able to return to India again until ten years later. In 1929, poor health forced her to return to the United States, and she died in New York in 1930.[51]

Josephine MacLeod first met Swami Vivekananda in New York City in 1895, and she described the effect he had on her: "He said something, the particular words of which I do not remember, but instantly to me that was truth, and the second sentence he spoke was truth, and the third sentence was truth. From that moment life had a different import. It was if he made you realize that you were in eternity."[52] Like many Vedanta Society members, MacLeod was initially drawn to the movement by the charismatic qualities of a particular swami, which in turn inspired her to undertake study and practice of Vedanta.

In the mid-twentieth century, the Vedanta Society attracted a number of literary figures whose reference to Vedanta in their works helped bring Vedanta thought to a larger audience. The playwright and novelist Christopher Isherwood (1906–1986) was born and educated in England, and became an American citizen in 1946. In 1943, he became a follower of Swami Prabhavananda.[53] Isherwood published several books about Vedanta and his own spiritual development, and translated Sanskrit texts with Swami Prabhavananda. In an article entitled "Vedanta in America," Sarada Convent nun Pravrajika Vrajaprana traces the influence of Vedanta teachings and various Vedanta Society swamis on noted American authors such as Henry Miller, Aldous Huxley, and J.D. Salinger.[54] Salinger studied Vedanta with Swami Nikhilananda at the New York Vedanta Society in the 1950s. Like many who become interested in Vedanta, he had also studied other traditions such as Zen Buddhism and the thought of the Hindu guru Paramahamsa Yogananda.[55]

Given the substantial number of references to Vedanta thought in the work of many major American writers, it should come as no surprise that many followers first come to Vedanta through reading about it. Book sales and distribution are an important focus of both Vedanta Societies in the United States and the Ramakrishna Mission in India (whose publishing house is called Advaita Ashrama). In recent years the various centers in India and the United States have also established multiple Web sites that detail the movement's history, teachings, and current activities. Many of the major works of movement leaders are available online as well, and the accessibility of Vedanta Society and Ramakrishna Mission information may prove to be a new means of attracting new members.

BELIEFS

In Sanskrit, Vedanta literally means the "end" or the "culmination" of the Vedas, and it has most often referred to the teachings of the Upanishads, a set of texts appended to the Vedas. The Upanishads themselves do not present a single doctrine, but reflect the teachings of many sages in ancient India. There are certain basic concepts developed in the Upanishads, such as the notion that each person has an

eternal, imperishable soul known as the atman, and that the atman is part of a larger universal reality known as brahman. Each atman is caught in a cycle of death and rebirth known as samsara, a cycle governed by the law of karma. According to the law of karma, each action that a person performs has an effect that is determined by the moral quality of the action. One's present situation in life has been determined in part by karma from both the present and previous lives, and the karma one accrues within a lifetime will determine how the atman will be reborn after death. In order to escape from the cycle of death and rebirth, one must attain direct knowledge of the atman. Then, the atman will merge back into brahman at death rather than being reborn again. In Swami Vivekananda's words, "… the human soul is eternal and immortal, perfect and infinite, and death means only a change of centre from one body to another. The present is determined by our past actions, and the future by the present."[56]

The Upanishads present a variety of techniques to gain knowledge of one's atman, known collectively as yoga, which incorporate different forms of meditation, breath control, diet, and so forth. The earliest Upanishads were compiled when traditions of renunciation were developing within Indian society. Some men (and perhaps a very small number of women) chose to retire from society completely and dedicate themselves to the quest for release from the cycle of death and rebirth. The act of renunciation was eventually formalized, and different renouncer lineages and traditions were established. This was the context in which Buddhism arose; Swami Vivekananda made many references to Buddhism as well as Hinduism in his lectures.

In time, Vedanta came to be known as one of the six classical philosophical systems or darshanas of Hindu thought. There are various subsects of classical Vedanta, typically characterized by different views about what exactly happens when the atman is reunited with brahman, for example, whether it merges entirely into brahman (Advaita, or nondual Vedanta) or merges into brahman but maintains a separate sort of identity (Dvaita or dual Vedanta). Throughout much of the history of Indian thought, Vedanta teaching and most particularly its complex philosophical analysis were likely available only to a relatively few, mostly high-caste males who knew Sanskrit.

When India was under British rule, Indian and Western scholars translated a number of Sanskrit texts into English, other Western languages, and vernacular Indian languages, which fostered a critical reassessment of many dimensions of Indian thought. Western scholars, and most especially Christian missionaries, were frequently critical of Indian tradition, and one of the criticisms leveled at Vedanta was that it provided no basis for ethics. The "Practical Vedanta" which Swami Vivekananda and later Hindu leaders advocated in part was a way to demonstrate that Vedanta ideology could, indeed, provide the foundation for a way of life that did not require complete detachment from the world, but instead could incorporate active, ethical engagement in society. Unlike the classical Vedanta tradition available only to an elite few, Practical Vedanta was accessible not only to Hindus, but to the entire world, as evidenced by Swami Vivekananda's desire to bring it to the West. And unlike the typical Hindu renunciants who severed ties to worldly life, the

renunciants of the Ramakrishna Order, as practitioners and teachers of Practical Vedanta, could be active in social service.

From among the many viewpoints Ramakrishna had explored, Swami Vivekananda deemed Vedanta the most essential. Addressing the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, Swami Vivekananda explained that the Hindu religion comes from the revelation of the Vedas. The Vedas, he taught, are not books, but rather "the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times."[57] Swami Vivekananda's adaptation of classical Advaita Vedanta, and his promotion of that Vedanta as the core of the diverse Hindu tradition, was part of a larger late-nineteenth century trend to present Hinduism as a world religion on a par with, indeed above, the Western religions, most especially Christianity.

In later works by Vedanta Society members, such statements about Vedanta remain common. In his introduction to *Vedanta for the Western World,* for example, Christopher Isherwood asserts that Vedanta is the basis of all the sects in India, "a statement of the Philosophia Perennis, the least common denominator of all religious belief."[58] A similar view is found in the work of Huston Smith, author of one of the most popular introductory texts on world religions, *The Religions of Man* (now titled *The World's Religions*).

For Isherwood, Vedanta boils down to three main propositions: that human nature is divine, that one's goal should be to realize this nature, and that "all religions are essentially in agreement."[59] It is when people make the mistake of identifying themselves as individuals with particular backgrounds, particular religious affiliations, that they fail to see the fundamental unity of all religions. Isherwood presents a conversation in which he asks, "'Then why do I think I'm myself?' 'Because of your ignorance. Christopher Isherwood is only an appearance, a part of the apparent universe. He is a constellation of desires and impulses. He reflects his environment. He repeats what he has been taught. He mimics the social behavior of his community. He copies gestures like a monkey and intonations like a parrot.…'"[60]

From the Vedanta perspective, people do not realize their true nature because of maya or ignorance. Brahman, the ultimate reality, is at the heart of everything; Pravrajika Vrajaprana explains that the everyday world is like the changing images on a movie screen, while brahman is the "unchanging screen in the background."[61] The goal is to see the reality behind the images that most often engage people's attention and to realize that there is an underlying unity to everything. Spiritual practice, therefore, must aim towards seeing things as they really are from the Vedanta perspective. In J.D. Salinger's short story "Teddy," a precocious young boy who asserts he had lived in India and was spiritually advanced in his previous life, explains, "I was six when I saw that everything was God, and my hair stood up, and all that.… My sister was only a very tiny child then, and she was drinking her milk, and all of a sudden I saw that *she* was God and the *milk* was God. I mean, all she was doing was pouring God into God, if you know what I mean."[62] The idea that all humans have within them the atman or eternal soul, which is a part of the larger fundamental reality of brahman, of course also implies the interconnectedness of all humankind.

Vedanta thought allows for the possibility that the ultimate reality of brahman may be approached in a variety of ways. Swami Vivekananda drew upon classical Hindu tradition to enumerate different types of yoga suitable for different personality types. Yoga literally means to yoke or to join, and the term designates a variety of practices used to foster the union of the individual soul and ultimate reality. Bhakti yoga is the yoga of devotion, appropriate for people who yearn for a loving, emotional relationship with God. Swami Vivekananda believed that "the vast majority will always want something concrete to hold on to,"[63] meaning that the yoga of devotion is likely to have the greatest appeal. Jnana yoga, the yoga of knowledge, is suited for those who seek spiritual progress through intellectual inquiry. Karma yoga, the yoga of action, is for those who seek divinity through active service. Finally, raja yoga emphasizes meditation. Vedanta Society branches typically provide instruction in these different forms of yoga.

Practical Vedanta developed in an era of acute awareness of the challenges science posed to traditional religious belief systems. Swami Vivekananda and the many Vedanta Society swamis who have followed him have tended to emphasize the complete compatibility of Vedanta with science. Swami Vivekananda himself equated the Vedantic quest for self-knowledge with scientific inquiry; while the scientist reads the "book without," that is, studies the physical world, the sage reads the "book within." Mystics around the world, he argued, reach the same truths through their spiritual experiences, "and this becomes law."[64] Practical Vedanta therefore asserts that spiritual knowledge is derived through deductive reasoning on the basis of experience and not blind faith. This view is also a means to support the assertion that there is a common core to all religions and that this may be confirmed through spiritual experience.

The notion that all humans are manifestations of divinity provides a rationale for social service, because to serve other humans effectively is to serve God or the ultimate reality. Thus both the Ramakrishna Mission and the Vedanta Society in the United States have supported educational and other social programs. Most recently, they have been involved in relief for victims of the 2004 tsunami.

The concept of the divinity within all also meant that Swami Vivekananda rejected what he considered to be some of the overly ritualistic and discriminatory practices of Hinduism. Rules regarding food preparation and dining he derisively referred to as "kitchen religion," and rules of caste purity that may include avoiding contact with persons or things that bring about ritual impurity he termed "don't touchism."[65] Thus, the teachings of the Vedanta Society focus on a particular strand of thought and practice within Hindu tradition, but reject a great deal of the day-to-day social practices of some Hindus, many of whose beliefs and practices may be determined in part by caste affiliation and social status.

PRACTICES

The various centers of the Vedanta Society provide regular programs to assist those who wish to understand Vedanta and put it into practice. Centers typically host

weekly meetings and classes led by swamis or longtime members. The subject of classes may be Hindu texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita,* or studies of Ramakrishna Mission literature, such as *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.* A recent Vedanta Society of New York schedule lists meditation and study classes as well as devotional singing sessions and a class entitled "Overcoming Stress."[66]

Vedanta Society centers usually have photos or other images of Ramakrishna, his wife Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda. They may also have images of the goddess Kali and images or other symbols associated with other religions. Members may garland the photos and images and offer other forms of veneration typical of Hindu worship or puja. The relative emphasis on such devotional practices versus textual study may vary from one center to another.

The Vedanta Society does not actively recruit new members; those who join typically do so with the sponsorship of the swami who leads their local Society branch. Swamis offer private counseling sessions, and lead public classes and services; many lecture to outside audiences and write about Vedanta as well. A very small number of members choose to undertake a monastic life; several centers have monasteries, and there are convents for nuns in California as well. Many centers sponsor annual retreats with extended meditation and devotional sessions.

Membership in a Vedanta Society does not necessarily demand a radical change in lifestyle or the adoption of communal living or a particular style of dress. The Vedanta Society does not require absolute allegiance; it is possible to accept some or all of the Vedanta Society's teachings and still remain a member of another religious organization.

CONTROVERSIES

From the earliest days of the Vedanta Society, critics have rejected the assertion that Vedanta can incorporate (and by implication, supercede) Christianity, a charge that is still leveled by Christian anticult activists. The frequent charge in the movement's early years that gullible women were being taken in by swamis led to legal problems; when Sara Bull left her money to the Vedanta Society in 1911, the will was overturned on the argument that her belief in Hindu teachings was an indicator of insanity. In recent years, however, the Vedanta Society has not been a key target of the secular anticult movement. As such it may be contrasted with movements such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which Swami Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada founded in 1966. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) has faced enormously costly legal battles and charges of "brainwashing" of followers. After Swami Prabhupada's death in 1977, ISKCON was led by a group of American-born gurus, each of whom was in charge of a particular region. This leadership model proved problematic, and a number of the gurus were eventually found to have abused their power, which led to a reform movement, the removal of some of the gurus, and the establishment of a new organizational structure. In comparison, the Vedanta Society's organizational structure has proved to be more stable, perhaps because of the ongoing connection between the Ramakrishna Order

in India and the various American branches. The fact that individual branches are largely independent has meant that no one person has absolute control over the movement as a whole, and practices may vary from one center to another. The Vedanta Society has never engaged in the types of recruitment and fundraising activities that have brought negative publicity to groups such as ISKCON, nor does membership in a Vedanta Society require that one sever ties to family and friends not in the movement, characteristics that have tended to attract the attention of anticult activists to other groups.

Given that literature plays such a key role in the Ramakrishna Mission and the Vedanta Societies—from biographies of Ramakrishna and other swamis to collected teachings to translations of Vedanta texts—it is perhaps not surprising that the bitterest controversies within the movement and between members of the movement and those outside have arisen over the interpretation of this literature. How should people remember Ramakrishna? What did he teach? What was the nature of his relationship with his wife and his young male disciples? Publications by scholars of Hinduism that present new interpretations of these issues have come in for sharp criticism from Ramakrishna Mission and Vedanta Society members.

The most controversial book about Ramakrishna is Jeffrey Kripal's *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna.* The cover states that the book presents "a striking new vision of Ramakrishna as a conflicted, homoerotic Tantric mystic."[67] Kripal argues that Swami Nikhilananda's English translation of the *Kathamrita, The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* has brushed away overtly erotic dimensions of the original Bengali text. Kripal's book was positively reviewed by a number of scholars in the United States, and it received the American Academy of Religion's History of Religions Prize for the Best First Book of 1995. But when a critical review written by Narasingha Sil appeared in Calcutta's newspaper the *Statesman* in 1997, Kripal came under attack from angry letter writers, and there were calls to ban the book.[68]

Some Vedanta Society officials in the United States have gone to great lengths to counter Kripal's portrayal of Ramakrishna. Swami Tyagananda, who became head of the Boston Vedanta Society in 1998, published a response to Kripal's book in 2000 called *Kali's Child Revisited—or—Didn't Anyone Check the Documentation?*[69] Swami Tyagananda argues that Kripal mistranslated many Bengali words in his reading of the *Kathamrita,* that he distorted and manipulated sources, and that he misunderstood Bengali culture.[70] The swami's text quotes specific passages from Kripal's book and presents alternative translations and interpretations. Kripal, in turn, has responded extensively to his critics and made some changes to the second edition of his book. The controversy continues, however, in part because it is linked to a larger debate about how Hinduism is represented in the West.

THE FUTURE OF THE VEDANTA SOCIETY

While the Vedanta Society has had relatively modest numbers of members throughout its history in the United States, it remains stable and, indeed, is growing

in some areas. For example, a Vedanta Center for the greater Washington, D.C., area was founded in 1997, affiliated with the Vedanta Society of Southern California. The growth is in part a result of immigration from India. Bengali Hindu immigrants have assumed a significant role in many centers. The changing demographic makeup raises important questions for the future direction of the Vedanta Society. For many immigrants, communal religious activity is not just a matter of continuing to put one's religion into practice, but is also a means of celebrating and maintaining one's cultural heritage and language. This has affected the activities of some centers and led to debates about the use of the Bengali language versus English in classes and devotional ceremonies. Longtime American-born devotees in some instances feel that the Vedanta Society is moving away from its roots.[71] How Vedanta Society leaders manage to balance the needs of immigrant Hindus and American-born members is likely to be an important issue in the future.

The nature of the relationship between the American Vedanta Society branches and the Ramakrishna Order in India is also important. Will there be more American-born swamis taking leadership roles? Will women assume greater leadership roles? Some Vedanta Society nuns in California teach and give public lectures.[72]

Vedanta Society members also continue to participate in discussions about the nature of scholarship on Hinduism. Debates about the authority of scholars of Hinduism trained in the Western academy versus the authority of scholars and Hindu leaders who approach their work from within the Hindu tradition seem likely to persist for some time, particularly as the Hindu population of the United States continues to grow.

The Vedanta Society has also been actively involved in the interfaith movement, which is not surprising given its view that Vedanta can incorporate all religions. Society members' participation in interfaith meetings and conferences brings greater visibility to the movement and may serve as a means of attracting new members.

Similarly, the Vedanta Society branches' focus on creating and maintaining extensive Web-based material promoting Vedanta teachings and center activities may yet emerge as a powerful form of generating new interest in Vedanta, much as the writings of authors such as Salinger and Isherwood did in the twentieth century. As the twenty-first century begins, the Vedanta Society has clearly established itself as part of the American religious landscape that has had a powerful influence on American understandings of Hinduism.

NOTES

1. The Vedanta Society of Kansas City, for example, is "an official sub-center of the Ramakrishna Math under the Vedanta Society of St. Louis," http://www.vedanta.org/vssc/news/news_rko.html (accessed August 3, 2005).

2. See, for example, the "Services and Classes" section of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York's Web site, http://www.ramakrishna.org/act_srv.htm (accessed September 20, 2005).

3. Perhaps the best example is the chapter on Hinduism in Huston Smith's *The World's Religions* (originally titled *The Religions of Man*) (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). Joseph Campbell, another noted scholar of religion, was a member of the Vedanta Society.

4. For example, Sara Bull, one of Swami Vivekananda's first American disciples, willed a great deal of money to the movement, but after her death in 1911, her daughter successfully petitioned to have the bequest nullified on the grounds that her mother had been unduly influenced by the Indian Swami. See Carl T. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West: The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 92.

5. http://www.macgregorministries.org/cult_groups/counterfeit.html (accessed June 14, 2005).

6. The chapter "Situating Swami Vivekananda," in Amiya P. Sen, *Swami Vivekananda* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), provides a helpful introduction to the socioreligious environment of nineteenth-century Bengal.

7. See, e.g., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* trans. Swami Nikhilananda (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1952), 746.

8. See, e.g., Ibid., 748, 874.

9. The text was originally published in Bengali under the title *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita.* The Bengali original and Swami Nikhilananda's translation, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* have been at the heart of recent controversies over portrayals of Ramakrishna's life.

10. Narasingha P. Sil has argued that Swami Vivekananda, when speaking or writing about Ramakrishna, or critiquing others' works on Ramakrishna, wished to gloss over aspects of Ramakrishna's life that did not suit the image he wished to create of him as a prophet for a new India. Thus the swami avoided mention of some of Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences and aspects of Ramakrishna's relationships with young men that could be interpreted as homoerotic. See Narasingha P. Sil, "Vivekananda's Ramakrsna: An Untold Story of Mythmaking and Propaganda," *Numen* 40 (1993): 38–62.

11. Swami Vivekananda explained that he developed a reading technique that involved reading just the first and last lines of paragraphs or a few lines of a section. See Sailendra Nath Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 1 (Madras: Vivekananda Prakashan Kendra, 1975), 53.

12. Swami Gambhirananda, ed., *The Apostles of Shri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1966), 20.

13. For interesting reflections on portrayals of Swami Vivekananda, see George M. Williams, "Swami Vivekananda: Archetypal Hero or Doubting Saint?" in *Religion in Modern India,* ed. Robert D. Baird, 2nd rev. ed. (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1989), 313–342.

14. Gambhirananda, *The Apostles of Ramakrishna,* 28–30.

15. Swami Vivekananda's lectures, letters, writings, and other information about him, including newspaper reports, have been compiled as *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* 8 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964–1968). The complete works are also available online at http://www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/vivekananda/complete_works.htm.

16. Ibid., vol. 1, "Paper on Hinduism," 6.

17. For a critique of this viewpoint with respect to interfaith relations, see William Henry Harris, "Swami Vivekananda and Neo-Hindu Universalism," *The Iliff Review* 22, no. 2 (1965): 31–36.

18. Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 2, "Reports in American Newspapers," 484.

19. Christopher Isherwood, ed., *Vedanta for the Western World* (Hollywood, New York: Marcel Rodd Co., 1946), 23.
20. Sailendra Nath Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda, Part One* (Madras: Vivekananda Prakashan Kendra, 1975), 723.
21. For photos of the temple at Belur Math, see http://www.ramakrishna.org/rmk_ordr.htm.
22. For the Society's own account of its history, see http://www.sfvedanta.org?Vedanta/SocietyHistory.html (accessed May 25, 2005).
23. At present, the only Ramakrishna Order–affiliated group in England is the Ramakrishna-Vedanta Centre in Buckinghamshire, established by Swami Ghanananda (d. 1969) in 1949. For further information, see www.vedantauk.com.
24. Gambhirananda, *The Apostles of Ramakrishna,* 79.
25. Carl T. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West: The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).
26. Ibid., 49–50.
27. For Swami Abhedananda's own account of his early life, see his *My Life-Story,* translated from the Bengali by J.K. Roy (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1970).
28. For more on Swami Abhedananda, see Jackson, *Vedanta for the West,* 50–54; and Gambhirananda, *The Apostles of Ramakrishna,* 252–270.
29. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West,* 54–57.
30. Ibid., 59.
31. Ibid., 60.
32. Ibid., 65.
33. See Jackson, chap. 6, "The Movement since the 1920s," 108–129, for a detailed account of the different centers and their leaders in the United States.
34. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West,* 108–112.
35. For more information on Swami Prabhavananda, including a video clip from one of his lectures, see http://www.vedanta.org/vssc/prabhavananda.html.
36. For the Web sites of these branches, see http://www.sfvedanta.org/, http://www.softcom.net/users/vedanta-sacto/, http://www.vedantaberkeley.org/. The Society also has a retreat: http://www.sfvedanta.org/VedantaSocietyOlemaInfo.html.
37. For a listing of Vedanta Society and Ramakrishna Mission centers worldwide, with links to individual Web sites, see http://www.vedanta.org/wwc/world.html.
38. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West,* 118–120.
39. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West,* 118.
40. http://www.vedanta-dc.org/about.html (accessed November 13, 2005).
41. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West,* 120–121. For further information about the group founded by Gayatri Devi, the Ananda Ashrama, see http://www.anandaashrama.org/aboutanandaashrama.htm.
42. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West,* 127.
43. Pravrajika Vrajaprana, e-mail communication, December 22, 2005.
44. In an 1894 letter to some of his fellow monks, Swami Vivekananda noted that many Spiritualists respected him and that Christian Scientists admired him greatly. Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 6, letter 47, 270.
45. Ibid., 272. See also Hiltrud Rustau, "The Ramakrishna Mission: Its Female Aspect," in *Gurus and Their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India,* ed. Antony Copley (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 83–103.

46. Pravrajika Prabuddhaprana, *Saint Sara: The Life of Sara Chapman Bull, The American Mother of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Sri Sarada Math, 2002), 61.
47. Ibid., 61–62.
48. Pravrajika Vrajaprana, *A Portrait of Sister Christine* (Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1996), 1–5.
49. Ibid., 6.
50. Ibid., 50.
51. Ibid., 81–104.
52. Eastern and Western Admirers, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961), 235. Cited in "Leaves Pressed in the Book of Time, The Beginnings," *Leaves of Ridgely* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1998), http://www.ridgely.org/leaves/winter98/winter98_beginnings.html (accessed August 11, 2005).
53. http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/isherwoo.htm (accessed July 29, 2005). Isherwood describes his relationship with Swami Prabhavananda in *My Guru and His Disciple* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980).
54. Pravrajika Vrajaprana, 'Vedanta in America: Where We've Been and Where We Are," http://www.vedanta.org/reading/monthly/articles/2000/8.vedanta_in_america.html (accessed November 30, 2004).
55. See Margaret A. Salinger, *Dream Catcher: A Memoir* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2000), especially 11, 77, 86–87. For an interpretation of the role of Vedanta in Salinger's fiction, see Som P. Ranchan, *An Adventure in Vedanta (J. D. Salinger's The Glass Family)* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1989).
56. Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 1, "Paper on Hinduism," 10.
57. Ibid., 6–7.
58. Isherwood, *Vedanta for the Western World,* 1.
59. Ibid., 1.
60. Ibid., 4.
61. Pravrajika Vrajaprana, *Vedanta: A Simple Introduction* (Hollywood, CA: Vedanta Press, 1999), 5.
62. J. D. Salinger, "Teddy," in *Nine Stories* (New York: Bantam Books, 1964), 189.
63. "Bhakti or Devotion," in *The Perennial Vivekananda: A Selection* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1988), 89.
64. Ibid., "Religion and Science," 237.
65. Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 5, "The East and the West."
66. "Vedanta Society of New York—Monthly Bulletin," http://www.vedanta-newyork.org/weekly-program.htm (accessed September 20, 2005).
67. Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). A second edition with a new preface addressing some of the criticisms of the book was published in 1998. For a helpful discussion of the reception of *Kali's Child* in both India and the West, and references to reviews of the book, see Brian A. Hatcher, "Kali's Problem Child: Another Look at Jeffrey Kripal's Study of Sri Ramakrsna," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 3, no. 2 (1999): 165–182.
68. Kripal has a Web site on which he shares his views on the continuing controversy over his work: www.ruf.rice.edu/~kalischi/pale.html. Sil, a professor at Western Oregon State College,

has published books and articles on Ramakrishna. See, for example, *Ramakrsna Paramahamsa: A Psychological Profile* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991).

69. Swami Tyagananda, *Kali's Child Revisited—or—Didn't Anyone Check the Documentation?* (Boston, MA: Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, 2000). The text is also available online at http://home.earthlink.net/~tyag/Home.htm.

70. Swami Tyagananda, *Kali's Child Revisited,* 3.

71. See, for example, Clare Giles, "The Changing Shape of Vedanta Societies in America," www.pluralism.org/affiliates/student/giles/index.php (accessed October 12, 2005).

72. Pravrajika Vrajaprana, e-mail communication, August 9, 2005.

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The Hare Krishna Movement: Beginnings, Change, and Transformation

E. Burke Rochford Jr.

My dear Lord Krsna, You are so kind upon this useless soul, but I do not know why You have brought me here [United States]. Now You can do whatever You like with me. But I guess You have some business here, otherwise why would You bring me to this terrible place?[1]

The Hare Krishna movement is one of the more controversial New Religious Movements (NRMs) that emerged in the United States during the 1960s. Like other NRMs of this era, it has undergone profound change over the course of 40 years.[2] From a radical and controversial "cult" the movement evolved into a pluralistic religious community increasingly aligned with the dominant culture.[3] This chapter describes the origins, beliefs, practices, and American development of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), more popularly known as the Hare Krishna movement.

From uncertain beginnings in New York City, ISKCON's founder Bhaktivedanta Swami (1896–1977), and a small band of followers, successfully recruited thousands of members worldwide. Along with success, however, came public scrutiny and controversy. By the mid-1970s ISKCON had a public reputation as a threatening cult.[4] Under attack and facing a downturn in both recruitment and economic resources, ISKCON began to decline by the early 1980s. ISKCON's communal structure collapsed as married people and their children were forced to establish independent households and sources of livelihood. The death of Bhaktivedanta Swami, in November 1977, precipitated a crisis of leadership that continued into the new millennium. These and related issues resulted in the defection of many first and second generation members, and the decision by others to practice Krishna Consciousness independently of ISKCON. To avert organizational decline and possible failure, ISKCON's leadership has sought actively to develop a congregation of Indian Hindus in the United States to help revitalize the movement's communities.

This chapter is organized into five major sections. The first describes ISKCON's Indian origins, religious beliefs, and practices. The second focuses on ISKCON's charismatic founder, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. The third considers ISKCON's early growth and expansion in the United States. The next section

considers sources of conflict and decline that led to the transformation of ISKCON in the years following Bhaktivedanta's death. The final section of the chapter considers the increasing role of Indian Hindus within ISKCON and the future of the movement in the American context.

ORIGINS, RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, AND PRACTICES

The historical roots of the Hare Krishna movement can be traced to Bengal, India, in the sixteenth century. While aligned with the more prevalent forms of Hinduism, the Krishna Consciousness preached by Bhaktivedanta traces its beginnings to the *Krishna bhakti* movement founded by Caitanya Mahaprabhu (1486–1533). A distinctive feature of the Gaudiya tradition is that Caitanya is believed to be an incarnation of Krishna.[5] Caitanya and his followers were known as the Gaudiya school of Vaisnavism because of their Bengali origin and to distinguish them from other Vaisnava traditions.[6] ISKCON inherited Gaudiya Vaisnavism through historical links that included Bhaktivinoda Thakura (1838–1914) and his son Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati (1874–1937).[7]

Caitanya and his followers elevated Krishna as the supreme manifestation of God, instead of being one of several Hindu gods. Caitanya preached a devotional form of Hinduism called *bhakti-yoga* that emphasized love and devotional service to God as the means to spiritual salvation. In a controversial split with traditional Hinduism, Caitanya preached that all people, regardless of their caste or position in life, could gain self-realization by serving Krishna. As a consequence, Caitanya's movement had great appeal among lower caste peoples in eastern India.[8] In keeping with Caitanya's religious philosophy, ISKCON adherents (adherents or followers of Krishna) consider themselves first and foremost Krishna's servants, and view human life as a unique opportunity to revive their devotion to God through surrender to him.[9]

Caitanya also developed another innovation unique to Hinduism, which proved a trademark of the Hare Krishna movement. Growing out of his intense religious passion, Caitanya initiated *sankirtan,* a practice requiring his followers to venture out into the streets to dance and sing their praises to Lord Krishna.[10] Public chanting was seen as a first step to awaken devotion to Krishna for those hearing god's names.[11] When Bhaktivedanta began his movement in the United States, *sankirtan* (preaching, book distribution, and chanting in public) became the principal means of spreading Krishna Consciousness.[12]

By chanting and performing devotional service under the guidance of a spiritual master, a devotee can restore his or her eternal relationship with Krishna and thus bring the soul back to the spiritual realm.[13] Because of material contamination, the soul must assume a continuous succession of rebirths (*samsara*). To escape the laws of *karma* and break the cycle of reincarnation, devotees seek to perfect their lives by controlling their senses. As this implies, devotees understand that they are not this material body, but rather spiritual souls.[14]

A Krishna devotee participates in a number of religious practices meant to purify the soul. Central to this process of self-realization is chanting the Hare Krishna

mantra: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Composed of the names of God, the *mahamantra* is believed to be a genuine transcendental sound vibration having the potency to revive our transcendental consciousness.[15] For ISKCON members, chanting Hare Krishna is their single most important religious practice.

A major milestone in the spiritual career of a Krishna devotee occurs at the moment of initiation. A newcomer undergoes a trial period of six months to become accustomed to the demands of spiritual life and to choose an authorized ISKCON guru. In order to receive initiation the devotee must gain the blessing of local temple authorities who attest to the novice's character and motivation. Throughout ISKCON's history only men had served as gurus but this changed, in 2005, when the leadership officially afforded women the opportunity to serve as initiating spiritual masters.[16]

First initiation, or *harinama-diksa* initiation, is performed as part of a fire sacrifice where grains, fruit, and ghee are placed on an open fire in the temple room. When taking initiation from a guru, devotees commit themselves to chant 16 rounds of the Hare Krishna mantra daily on a string of 108 *japa* or prayer beads. They also agree to abstain from eating meat, engaging in illicit sex (sexual intercourse other than for propagation of god-conscious children), taking intoxicants (i.e., cigarettes, alcohol, tea, coffee, drugs), and gambling. The new initiate also receives a Sanskrit name from his or her guru. The name links the newly initiated devotee to a particular quality or form of god.[17] The name always includes the suffix, or last name, *dasa* for men and *dasi* for women. In each case this signifies that the devotee is a "servant" before god and guru.[18] Thereafter, newly initiated devotees are known within the ISKCON community by their initiated names (e.g., Caitanya dasa or Radha dasi).

A year or more after *diksa* initiation a devotee is considered for "second initiation." On this occasion the initiate receives the status of *brahmana,* symbolized by the sacred thread (*yajnopavita*). This ceremony was an innovation of Bhaktivedanta's guru, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, who sought to distance himself from traditionalists by rejecting the idea that one could only be a *brahmana* on the basis of birth (*jati*).[19] *Brahmana* initiation enables an ISKCON devotee to perform specific liturgical procedures and practices such as cooking for the deities, serving on the altar, and performing sacrificial rites.[20]

Although no longer a mandatory requirement, many ISKCON members continue their early morning worship (4:30 AM) at a local ISKCON temple or, more commonly today, at home. Devotees worship marble or brass images of Krishna and his consort Radharani on the altar, a spiritual plant *Tulasi,* and ISKCON's founder Bhaktivedanta Swami. Music accompanies this worship with a male or female leading others gathered in singing various Sanskrit and Bengali verses to the beat of *mrdanga* drums and *karatals* (small hand cymbals). Traditionally men worshipped in the front of the temple nearest the deities, with women behind them at the back. In 2000 this practice was officially changed, however, and now men and women worship on separate sides of the temple room, thereby giving both sexes equal access to the altar.[21] Between morning ceremonies, or during the day as time allows, devotees

busily chant their daily rounds. At the end of morning worship in the temple, a class is held on Bhaktivedanta's commentaries on the Vedic scriptures. The ritualistic routine performed by devotees in or outside of the temple is meant to maintain individual and collective purity by focusing the mind first and foremost on Krishna.

While many members of the public identify Hare Krishna with 1960s images of devotees dancing and chanting in the streets with shaved heads and saffron robes, few modern-day ISKCON members wear such traditional attire in their everyday lives. Today most ISKCON devotees are congregational members, living and working outside the temple community. Being in the world, most members wear standard dress and often avoid identifying themselves as Hare Krishnas.

ISKCON'S FOUNDER

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada founded the Hare Krishna movement. Bhaktivedanta Swami, or Srila Prabhupada as he came to be called by his followers, traveled to the United States, in 1965, at the age of 69 to make good on a promise to his spiritual master to bring Krishna Consciousness to the West.[22] Traveling from Calcutta on the steamship *Jaladuta,* Bhaktivedanta Swami sailed initially into Boston, before arriving in New York harbor.[23] He was dressed in traditional garb: he wore neck beads, a plain cotton *dhoti* around his body, a *cadar* (shawl), and carried *japa-mala* (chanting beads). His head was shaven except for the *sikha* (tuft of hair) in the back, and his forehead was marked with *tilaka* (sacred clay). With little more than 40 Indian rupees (about $7) and a trunk of books containing his translations of the ancient Vedic literatures, Bhaktivedanta set off to bring the message of Krishna Consciousness to the United States and ultimately to the world.[24]

He was born Abhay Charan De into a Gaudiya Vaisnava family in Calcutta, India, on September 1, 1896.[25] His father was Gour Mohan De, a cloth merchant, and his mother was Rajani. Across the street from the family's home in north Calcutta was a Radha-Govinda temple where the family worshipped. Bhaktivedanta's father raised his son to be Krishna conscious. At night Gour Mohan read from the *Caitanya-caritamrta* and the *Srimad Bhagavatam* (the principal scriptures of Bengali Vaisnavas), chanted on his *japa* beads, and worshipped Krishna. He hoped that his son would preach the *Bhagavatam,* and grow up singing *bhajans* (religious songs) and playing the *mrdanga* (a drum used to accompany congregational chanting).[26]

In 1916 Bhaktivedanta entered Calcutta's Scottish Church College where he studied English, philosophy, and economics. After passing exams for his degree, Bhaktivedanta refused his diploma. He did this to register his protest against British rule of India, for he was sympathetic to Mahatma Gandhi's Indian Independence movement.[27] After marrying Radharani Datta, Bhaktivedanta was employed as a manager in a Calcutta pharmaceutical firm to support his wife and family.[28]

He met his spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, in 1922. Upon meeting Bhaktivedanta for the first time, Bhaktisiddhanta commented, "You are educated.… Why don't you preach Lord Caitanya's message throughout the world?"[29] Later he told Bhaktivedanta, "If you ever get money, print books" to help

spread the mission of Lord Caitanya.[30] Although Bhaktivedanta accepted Bhaktisiddhanta as his spiritual master after this first meeting, he only became formally initiated as his disciple in 1932.[31] Thereafter, Bhaktivedanta assisted in the work of his spiritual master's organization, the Gaudiya Math. Following Bhaktisiddhanta's death, the Gaudiya Math faced years of infighting and schism. As a result, Bhaktivedanta created his own movement, the League of Devotees, in 1953, in Jhansi, India.[32] After two years, however, this organization collapsed, having made no full-time members.[33] Bhaktivedanta then moved, in 1956, to Vrndavana, a major pilgrimage town in northern India.[34] There he began translating the *Srimad Bhagavatam* (*Bhagavata-purana*) the foremost scripture of the *Krishna-bhakti* tradition. He completed the first of 12 cantos in three parts, which later were published in 1962, 1964, and 1965.[35] In 1944, Bhaktivedanta began publishing *Back to Godhead* magazine, which he distributed in India, and later worldwide after he began ISKCON in 1966.[36] At the age of 59, Bhaktivedanta took the order of *sannyasa,* in 1959, thereafter retiring from family life.[37] Until his death, he focused on translating and writing commentaries on the Vedic scriptures, which after 1971 were published by ISKCON's Bhaktivedanta Book Trust in Los Angeles, California.

After nearly nine years in Vrndavana, Bhaktivedanta decided to make good on the instruction of his spiritual master to preach in the West. He asked Sumati Morarji, who owned the Scindia shipping lines, to grant him free passage to the United States. On August 13, 1965, Bhaktivedanta sailed from Calcutta on an uncertain mission to the United States to spread Krishna Consciousness. As he wrote in his diary during the voyage, "Although my Guru Maharaja ordered me to accomplish this mission, I am not worthy or fit to do it. I am very fallen and insignificant. Therefore, O Lord, now I am begging for your mercy so that I may become worthy…"[38]

Before his death on November 14, 1977, Bhaktivedanta established over 100 temples worldwide, wrote more than 60 volumes, including *Bhagavad Gita As It Is* (1972), the multivolume *Srimad Bhagavatam* (1972–1977) and *Caitanya-caritamta* (1974–1975), *The Nectar of Devotion* (1970), and many other books on the Vedic scriptures. These volumes included translations of the original Sanskrit and Bengali texts, along with Bhaktivedanta's commentaries. His writings have been translated into more that 60 languages. Owing to the work of his nearly 5000 disciples and tens of thousands of followers worldwide, 500 million copies of Bhaktivedanta's books and magazines have been distributed around the globe.[39]

UNITED STATES GROWTH AND EXPANSION (1965–1977)

The early history of the Hare Krishna movement in the United States parallels the career of the 1960s and 1970s counterculture. The war in Vietnam, and the peace movement that grew in opposition to it, sparked the growth of numerous social movements. American values and ways of life faced critical questioning, and many young people experimented with a range of alternative values and lifestyles. This led some to join NRMs such as ISKCON.

Research on ISKCON clearly shows how the movement's early growth in the United States was based on recruiting alienated youth from the counterculture. ISKCON successfully attracted Anglo-American hippies in their late teens and early twenties from largely middle and upper-middle class families.[40] Before joining ISKCON, most participated in the antiwar movement as well as the Sixties counterculture.[41] Moreover, a considerable majority experimented with mind-altering drugs, such as marijuana, LSD, and/or other types of hallucinogens.[42] But with the end of American involvement in the Vietnam War, in 1973, the counterculture faded from the American religious and cultural landscape, and ISKCON's recruitment declined steadily thereafter.[43]

The Hare Krishna movement began modestly in New York City with the arrival of Bhaktivedanta in 1965. Bhaktivedanta, or "Swamiji" as his earliest followers referred to him, turned his proselytizing efforts to the young people living on the Bowery on the Lower East Side.[44] Initially, he attracted the attention of a few young people while chanting in Tompkins Square Park. Quickly word spread about "the Swami" amongst the musicians and bohemian crowd living in the area. Within a short time, several of Bhaktivedanta's followers helped him establish a small temple on Second Avenue in a storefront that previously served as a curiosity shop (Matchless Gifts).[45] In his new temple, Bhaktivedanta lectured on the *Bhagavad Gita* and other Vedic scriptures and held *kirtans* (congregational singing and chanting). Visitors sometimes brought harmoniums, flutes, guitars, and other instruments, which they played, often while "high" on drugs.

During his first year in New York City, Bhaktivedanta placed few demands on those expressing interest in Krishna Consciousness. He did not require his new followers to live with him in the temple and most continued to live and work in the surrounding community.[46] Only the most downtrodden ever took up residence in the temple, and next to none of them stayed on to become Bhaktivedanta's disciples.[47] In these early days, ISKCON had little in the way of spiritual practices that restricted the Bohemian lifestyle of those drawn to Bhaktivedanta. As one devotee who joined during this early period in New York recalled, "You have to remember that there was only the chanting, *kirtans*, the Swami, and *prasadam* [spiritual food]. That was all, it was a simple process, not complicated and culturally involved."[48] During this first year in New York, Bhaktivedanta initiated 19 disciples and, in 1966, legally registered ISKCON as a nonprofit, tax-exempt religious organization.[49]

ISKCON underwent radical change after Bhaktivedanta relocated in January 1967, to the emerging hippie community in the Haight-Ashbury section of San Francisco, California. At the time, thousands of hippies were migrating to Haight-Ashbury. Locating the temple in the heart of the district, ISKCON recruited an estimated 150–200 converts during the first two years.[50] Bhaktivedanta and his followers appealed directly to the hippies who quite literally were at the devotees' doorstep. As one researcher described:

> The immediate area around the temple was characterized by extensive foot-traffic compared to other sections of the city. Below the large "Hare Krishna" sign on the outside

of the temple was a smaller placard that stated: "Stay High All the Time, Discover Eternal Bliss."[51]

Because the majority of the hippie recruits drawn to ISKCON only recently migrated to the area and had no permanent or stable residences, ISKCON's communal structure emerged as a means to hold the young countercultural youth being attracted to Krishna Consciousness.[52] Living within the temple complex, Bhaktivedanta insisted that his followers adhere to the four regulative principles (no meat, intoxicants, illicit sex, or gambling) and that they chant and attend worship services in the temple.[53]

ISKCON's San Francisco organization served as a model for devotees deployed to other cities across North America to establish Krishna temples and recruit followers.[54] While an exclusive communal structure emerged in every ISKCON community, that structure was modified to meet local opportunities for recruitment.[55] For example, the social environment encountered by ISKCON when it moved into Los Angeles, in 1968, was quite different from the one found in Haight-Ashbury. Instead of locating itself in Hollywood or the Venice Beach area, where the countercultural youth of Los Angeles could be found in large numbers, ISKCON established its community in a largely middle-class residential area. Even though chanting parties were sent out to the wider community, devotees had limited success in persuading people to come to the temple. Because public places proved so unproductive, the community in Los Angeles focused its recruitment efforts on the friends and relatives of people already in the movement. In contrast to the recruits in San Francisco, most of those recruited in Los Angeles were from the local area.[56]

Even with local variations in ISKCON's structure and means of recruitment, the Krishna lifestyle generally afforded few opportunities for members to maintain societal contacts.[57] The outside was seen as a source of "pollution" threatening the spiritual development of ISKCON's newest members. The isolation of ISKCON's American communities was accelerated in the mid-1970s as ISKCON was attacked by deprogrammers and other opponents of cults. Given these threats, ISKCON's communities became increasingly closed religious enclaves, and interaction with outsiders was limited largely to proselytizing and literature distribution.[58] Yet in insulating its members through communalism and the imposition of rigid group boundaries, ISKCON only encouraged further scrutiny by member's parents and relatives, the anticult movement, and government officials increasingly concerned about allegations of "brainwashing" and the "cult problem" generally in the United States.[59] Anticult propaganda, widely disseminated by the media, helped reshape the public's image of Hare Krishna; from a peculiar, but essentially harmless religious movement, ISKCON came to be identified as threatening and dangerous.[60]

Most of those joining ISKCON during the late 1960s and 1970s were attracted by the movement's religious philosophy.[61] As one ISKCON member commented, "I saw logically and scientifically that this philosophy explains the how and why of everything I saw in this world. I also saw that as in other religious philosophies that I approached, there was no need for 'blind faith,' everything was provable logically

and to a certain extent 'scientifically.'"[62] Other reasons commonly cited for joining included "the warmth and friendliness of the devotees" and the attraction that many felt for Bhaktivedanta.[63] The latter was particularly compelling for ISKCON's earliest members, as many were able to establish personal relationships with their spiritual master. This became far less possible, however, as ISKCON grew and became a worldwide movement.[64]

Economically, ISKCON was largely supported by the practice of *sankirtan,* the public distribution of religious literature. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, devotees distributed incense or *Back to Godhead* magazines to the public in exchange for donations.[65] The strategy of combining the movement's missionary goals with collecting money became standard policy for ISKCON until the early 1980s.[66] In 1971, ISKCON established the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust in Los Angeles to publish Bhaktivedanta's translations and commentaries of the Vedic scriptures.[67] With his teachings now in print, Bhaktivedanta instructed his disciples to distribute his books in large quantities. Between 1972 and 1974, ISKCON members distributed Bhaktivedanta's writings primarily in shopping malls and parking lots across the United States and Canada.[68] While these locations proved productive, a major change took place in 1974 that had a revolutionary impact on the future of book distribution.

Under constitutional protections provided by the First Amendment, ISKCON shifted its *sankirtan* efforts into airports, national parks, and state fairs.[69] With these public locations available for *sankirtan* (especially airports), ISKCON's literature distribution increased dramatically between 1974 and 1976.[70] In 1976, for example, ISKCON members distributed over 18,000 hardback books *per week* throughout the United States and Canada.[71] At the Los Angeles International Airport alone, devotees distributed as many as 5,000 to 6,000 hardback books each week.[72] Literature distribution doubled each year between 1974 and 1976, and then declined modestly until 1980, when it declined significantly.[73] One conservative estimate is that ISKCON's communities in North America grossed over $13 million between 1974 and 1978 on hardback books alone.[74]

As ISKCON grew and the demands on Bhaktivedanta's time increased, he recognized that his movement needed a more formal structure of governance. In 1970, he created the Governing Body Commission (GBC) to help oversee the movement's affairs worldwide.[75] Initially Bhaktivedanta appointed 12 of his most trusted disciples to serve as GBC members.[76] The GBC continues to meet yearly in Mayapur, India, to make policies, address problems, and transact any and all business related to ISKCON and its worldwide communities. With ISKCON's worldwide expansion, the number of GBC representatives grew accordingly. In 2004, there were 37 GBC members having administrative responsibility for ISKCON communities in specific countries and regions of the world.[77]

By 1975 ISKCON had established communities and preaching centers in 30 cities in the United States and six in Canada. It also had 11 communities in Western Europe and 29 in other parts of the world (i.e., Australia, Africa, India, Asia, and Latin America).[78] The number of communities in the United States grew to 50 in 1983,[79] and, in 2005, ISKCON had a total of 44 communities.[80]

CONFLICT, DECLINE, AND TRANSFORMATION (1977–2005)

The death of a charismatic leader forms a critical juncture in the life of any group, community, or social movement. Yet it appears that most religious groups weather successfully the death of a charismatic leader.[81] Such was not the case, however, for ISKCON in the aftermath of Bhaktivedanta's death in 1977. ISKCON has undergone 30 years of conflict and ongoing debate about the authority of Bhaktivedanta's successors. Yet other issues of equal importance also preoccupied ISKCON's leaders and membership. Most critical of these issues were economic decline, the ascendancy of the nuclear family, and the fate of young people born and raised within ISKCON. These developments collectively transformed the radical structure and religious way of life that defined ISKCON as an NRM.[82]

Succession and the Problem of Authority

In the fall of 1977, the devotees' beloved founder died in Vrndavana, India, at the age of 82. Bhaktivedanta's death represented a major turning point in ISKCON's development in the United States and worldwide. Unable to travel in the months prior to his passing, Bhaktivedanta appointed 11 of his closest disciples to serve as *ritvik-gurus.* These gurus were responsible for initiating new disciples *on Bhaktivedanta's behalf.*[83] When Bhaktivedanta died, however, the appointed *ritvik-gurus* assumed the position of regular gurus, offering *diksa* (first) initiation to persons who accepted them as their spiritual master.[84]

Institutionally the newly appointed gurus were accorded the same reverence and authority as Bhaktivedanta. Having proclaimed themselves *acaryas* (heads of a religious institution), the successor gurus considered themselves largely immune from the decisions and will of the GBC.[85] For all intents and purposes, each of the 11 gurus led his own independent movements as he assumed control over separate portions of the globe. Within their geographical zones the gurus exercised exclusive political, economic, and spiritual authority.[86] New recruits to ISKCON had little choice but to seek initiation from the regional ISKCON guru. Controversial from the very beginning, this structure of authority known within ISKCON as the "zonal *acarya* system," existed for nearly a decade.[87]

The 11 gurus deeply affected ISKCON's governance. Within the GBC, they monopolized deliberations and exercised undue influence on decision making in their dual roles as gurus and GBC members. As one insider concluded, "Indeed, the gurus with their status as sacred persons, a status constantly emphasized by formal deference and ceremonial honors, and their growing numbers of personally devoted followers, quickly eclipsed the GBC."[88] The GBC was only able to tentatively regain a measure of authority after it suspended three gurus, in 1980, for improper behavior and, in 1981, ruled that ISKCON gurus must accept the final authority of the GBC.[89] Yet this latter decision ultimately had little practical impact as the 11 gurus retained control over their individual territories, and thus the zonal *acarya* system effectively remained in place.[90]

In the years to follow still other gurus were involved in scandals. In 1982, Jayatirtha, the ISKCON guru in England, defected with as many as 100 of his disciples, after his failed attempt to have one of Bhaktivedanta's godbrothers (i.e., fellow initiates of Bhaktisiddhanta) from India (Shridara Maharaja) recognized as an initiating ISKCON guru. In 1984, after years of controversy that included allegations of drug use and weapons violations in the Berkeley, California, temple, the guru Hamsadutta was expelled from ISKCON. In 1985 and 1986, three other gurus—Ramesvara, Bhagavan, and Bhavananda—were forced to resign their guruships after sexual misconduct and other charges were brought against them.[91] In a well-publicized legal case, ISKCON's West Virginia farm community, New Vrindaban, witnessed two murders and a resulting state and federal investigation. One of the murders involved a former resident of the community (Steven Bryant) who was killed in 1986 after making allegations of drug smuggling, child abuse, and fraud at New Vrindaban to local authorities in West Virginia. A disciple of New Vrindaban's leader, Kirtanananda Bhaktipada was found guilty of both murders and is serving a life sentence in a West Virginia prison. After an extensive investigation by the FBI, the Internal Revenue Service, and police in Los Angeles and in West Virginia, Kirtanananda pleaded guilty in 1996 to one count of federal racketeering and was sentenced to 12 years in federal prison. In 1988, New Vrindaban and its satellite temples and centers were expelled from ISKCON, although they were readmitted in 1998.[92]

The continuing questions surrounding the authority of ISKCON's successor gurus resulted in the defection of many long-standing members from the organization. Many of these apostates took up lives within conventional society, practicing Krishna Consciousness independently of ISKCON. Others left ISKCON to join forces with other Gaudiya Vaisnava organizations associated with one of Bhaktivedanta's godbrothers in India. Most notable have been B.R. Shridara Maharaja and Narayana Maharaja, the latter being a disciple of Bhaktivedanta's godbrother B.P. Keshava Maharaja.[93]

Under the leadership of senior disciples of Bhaktivedanta, many of whom were North American temple presidents, a reform movement successfully pressured the GBC, in 1986, to make a number of changes in ISKCON's guru institution. Among the most significant were the following: (1) expanding the number of ISKCON gurus that effectively undermined the zonal *acarya* system because gurus could no longer lay claim to exclusive geographical zones; (2) the GBC ruled that the term *acarya* could be used only to refer to ISKCON's founder, Bhaktivedanta; (3) the GBC restricted guru worship in ISKCON temples to honor Bhaktivedanta exclusively; and (4) elevated chairs (i.e., *vyasasanas*) previously reserved for zonal gurus were removed from ISKCON temples, leaving only a life-sized image of Bhaktivedanta (i.e., *murti*).[94] The number of gurus increased from 30 to 60 in 1990 and to 80 in 1993.[95] In 2005, ISKCON had about 90 gurus throughout the world. Despite these reforms, however, controversy over the guru system remained.

Beyond leaders' initiatives for reform, ISKCON also faced an increasingly organized and influential grassroots movement determined to redefine the guru system. Composed of former and current ISKCON members disturbed by ongoing guru

scandals, the *ritvik* movement argues that people taking initiation from current ISKCON gurus are, in fact, disciples of Bhaktivedanta. Those embracing the *ritvik* position believe that Bhaktivedanta never appointed any of his disciples to serve as initiating (*diksa*) gurus, but only *ritvik* gurus. For, indeed, Bhaktivedanta acknowledged before his death that none of his disciples were yet capable of serving as *diksa* gurus. In their role as *ritviks,* ISKCON's gurus were authorized to serve only as ceremonial priests initiating on Bhaktivedanta's behalf. Such an interpretation meant that Bhaktivedanta would remain as ISKCON's spiritual master even in death.[96]

Supporters of the *ritvik* movement have also produced evidence suggesting that Bhaktivedanta's death was not the result of natural causes but rather of poisoning. They suspect several ISKCON leaders, most notably one of ISKCON's successor gurus. Both sides produced elaborate studies and position papers meant to counter the other side.[97]

Many devotees inside and outside of ISKCON found the *ritvik* position on initiations appealing in the face of ongoing scandal and controversy surrounding Bhaktivedanta's successors. For example, the 1996 Prabhupada Centennial Survey of current and former ISKCON members in North America (N = 245) found that nearly one in four (22 percent) full-time members, 45 percent of the movement's congregational members, and over half (55 percent) of all ex-members agreed with the statement, "To my understanding, Prabhupada wanted the 11 *ritviks* he appointed to continue as *ritviks* after his departure."[98]

Setting aside theological debates about whether initiation requires a "living guru," the *ritvik* philosophy functionally restores religious authority to the guru institution (if not to the current gurus) with Bhaktivedanta serving as the single source of religious purity and authority within ISKCON. *Ritvik* gurus may fall from grace but the guru institution, so central to ISKCON's religious philosophy, maintains its spiritually pure character in the form of Bhaktivedanta.

Under pressure from a growing number of *ritvik* supporters, and facing recurring "fall-downs" by ISKCON gurus, the GBC passed a number of resolutions redefining the position of ISKCON's successor gurus in relation to Bhaktivedanta's spiritual authority. GBC resolutions referred to Bhaktivedanta as the "foundational siksa [instructing] guru for all ISKCON devotees" (1994), "preeminent siksa guru for every member of the institution" (1999), and "preeminent and compulsory siksa-guru for all Vaisnavas (gurus and disciples) in the Society" (1999).[99] A disciple of a guru expelled from ISKCON, in 1986, reflects on the importance of Bhaktivedanta to his own spiritual life in a way that reflects current institutional thinking about the role of ISKCON's founder. "Prabhupada is the absolute authority. He gave us our direct connection to Krishna and the *Parampara* [the guru lineage] through his books and instructions. Without the pure devotee, we would have nothing. He gave (and still gives) us everything as individuals, and as a society."[100]

Yet as critics point out, Bhaktivedanta's successors continue to perform *diksa* initiations and accumulate disciples. As one *ritvik* supporter and prominent leader of the ISKCON Revival Movement commented:

> The problem is that though the GBC is willing to allow some reform in the way Srila Prabhupada is perceived, they will not countenance *any* change in the way current *diksa* gurus are perceived.… Allow Srila Prabhupada's prominence and glory to increase, while still keeping one part of their theology [intact two words]—that to *access* Srila Prabhupada you must go through their *diksa* gurus.… That way their status and position being wedded to that of Srila Prabhupada's, automatically rises.…[101]

The ongoing debate and conflicts surrounding ISKCON's GBC and guru leadership have preoccupied the movement's membership for 30 years. As might be expected, questions surrounding the authority of both directly affected members' commitment to and involvement in ISKCON.[102] Despite the importance of these issues, others proved equally critical to ISKCON's North American development. Most immediate in the period following Bhaktivedanta's death was the erosion of ISKCON's economic base and resulting structural changes in the movement's communities.

Economic Crisis and the Demise of Communalism

Until the early to mid-1980s, ISKCON's communities in North America were supported financially by the distribution of Bhaktivedanta's writings on Vedic literature. Indeed, the revenues generated from book distribution supported ISKCON's worldwide expansion throughout the 1970s. By 1980, however, ISKCON's book distribution declined to less than one-quarter of its North American peak in 1976.[103] The corresponding loss of revenues had a devastating effect on ISKCON's communities. Although ISKCON's leaders undertook a number of alternative strategies in an attempt to avert the movement's economic decline (e.g., selling record albums, artwork, candles, and food in public locations) these proved successful only in the short run, and were highly controversial both inside and outside of ISKCON.[104]

With declining financial resources available to its communities, ISKCON faced a significant turning point in its North American history. No longer able to financially maintain its communal way of life through literature distribution and other forms of public solicitation, and lacking alternative means of support, most ISKCON members had little choice but to seek employment in the outside labor force.[105] For most this also meant moving outside of the communal fold and into independent living situations. Given the relatively high cost associated with supporting families, householders, in particular, found themselves searching for outside sources of income. As one longtime ISKCON member reflected, "So eventually a lot of people got married and hung onto the temples and that got very expensive to maintain. Suddenly householders wanted to retire from book distribution. They wanted a job in the temple.… In the end, we had temples overloaded with expensive householders."[106]

Comparing the findings from two American surveys conducted in 1980 (N = 214) and 1992 (N = 268) reveals the dramatic shift that occurred in ISKCON members' pattern of employment. In 1980, nearly all (95 percent) ISKCON members

surveyed worked in movement-owned businesses or within their local ISKCON community. One-fourth worked as *sankirtan* devotees distributing Bhaktivedanta's books in public. Only 2 percent worked for nondevotee businesses.[107] By 1992, however, ISKCON members' pattern of employment was strikingly different. Over one-third (36 percent) worked outside of ISKCON in a nondevotee business or were self-employed. Somewhat more (39 percent) were employed in work settings with other devotees (that is in an ISKCON business, within an ISKCON community, or in a devotee-owned business). One-fourth were not gainfully employed at the time of the survey. Nearly all of the latter were women with family responsibilities, the majority of whom did regular volunteer work in their local ISKCON community.[108]

Findings from the 1996 Prabhupada Centennial Survey demonstrate clearly how outside employment influenced individual levels of ISKCON commitment and involvement for devotees in North America. In comparison with those employed in devotee work environments, ISKCON members with outside jobs were significantly less involved in and committed to the beliefs and practices of Krishna Consciousness, as well as to ISKCON as a religious organization. They were also far more involved in the conventional society.[109]

ISKCON's economic crisis affected not only parents, however. It also led to the demise of the movement's system of education. In 1986 ISKCON's remaining boarding schools (i.e., *asrama-gurukulas*) in central California and upstate New York closed because of a lack of funds. Children, who in most instances spent the majority of their lives in ISKCON schools, were suddenly returned to the care of their parents.[110]

The Nuclear Family and the Growth of a Congregation

Perhaps no development in ISKCON's 40-year history was more consequential than the growth and expansion of family life. ISKCON's early years of existence were defined by the *brahmacari* [male] and *brahmacarini* [female] *asramas,* as a considerable majority of its new recruits were single people committed to lives of renunciation. Yet by the onset of the 1990s, ISKCON became a householders' movement in North America with the largest portion of its membership married and having one or more children.[111]

During ISKCON's early days in the late 1960s and early 1970s, marriage and family were viewed favorably.[112] But this was reversed after Bhaktivedanta became increasingly discouraged by the marital problems encountered by his disciples. In 1972 Bhaktivedanta turned what he called the "troublesome business of marriage"[113] over to local temple presidents and other ISKCON authorities, the majority of whom were renunciates. The result was that marriage underwent a fundamental transformation in meaning and value.

Marriage came to represent a concession for those too weak to control their sexual desires. Such a view applied largely to men, however, for whom renunciation was the

spiritual ideal. Spiritual and material fulfillment for women by contrast was defined in terms of marriage and family life.[114] Given the prevalence of these ideas, women became threats to men's spiritual advancement. The changed atmosphere surrounding marriage and family life turned contentious by the mid-1970s as renunciate leaders under Bhaktivedanta undertook a preaching campaign against householder life and women.[115]

Despite the ongoing denigration of marriage and family, and the loss of status accorded householders, most devotees ultimately married.[116] Yet under the influence of ISKCON's renunciate leadership, little was done to develop a movement culture supportive of householders and their children.[117] The only exception was establishing ISKCON boarding schools for the growing number of children, but these schools were seen by the leadership as primarily serving the preaching mission by freeing parents to distribute Bhaktivedanta's books.[118]

The emergence of the nuclear family ultimately transformed the very structure of ISKCON as a religious organization. Devotee families became self-supporting and increasingly independent of ISKCON and its control. Most families resided in their own households at a distance from their local ISKCON temple.[119] As a consequence, ISKCON could no longer assert totalistic claims over the lives and identity of householders and their children. The result was the growth of congregationalism.[120] Living and working apart from the movement, family members practiced Krishna Consciousness largely within their households. Worship and religious practice thus became increasingly privatized.[121] Indeed, by the end of the 1980s, the household largely displaced the temple as the central location for worship and religious practice.[122]

Not surprisingly, as householders created independent lives for themselves and their children, their commitments to ISKCON changed. The 1992 survey revealed that nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of devotee householders in North America agreed that work and family obligations placed limits on their ability to commit more time to their local temple. Half (49 percent) expressed the opinion that their family commitments were more important than their commitment to ISKCON.[123] As these and related findings on the effects of outside employment make clear, ISKCON's previous radical structure and lifestyle were transformed as the largest portion of its membership took up residence in the suburbs of ISKCON social life. This shift forced householders to recraft their identities in light of involvement in two worlds previously experienced as inherently hostile to one another—the inside world of ISKCON and the outside world of conventional society. As this occurred at the individual level, ISKCON changed from an exclusive and highly controlled NRM to one defined by increasingly pluralistic communities.

ISKCON's Second Generation

Theologian H. Richard Niebuhr noted long ago that the process of educating the young plays a determinative role in the development of religious communities.[124] In

being attentive to the educational needs of children, the religious enterprise undergoes change in the direction of accommodation with the conventional society. Yet as sociologist Rodney Stark noted, effective socialization distinguishes successful religious movements from those that fail.[125]

ISKCON largely failed to retain the commitment of second-generation members. Many young people rejected their upbringing, although many more identify themselves as Krishna devotees, even if they keep their distance from ISKCON itself. A minority continues to affiliate with ISKCON and its communities, although most do so in the role of congregational members with lives defined as much or more by the outside society as the religious world of ISKCON.[126] Why did ISKCON fare so poorly in securing the commitment of its second generation? I want to consider briefly three contributing factors.

The first and perhaps most simplistic explanation is that ISKCON provides little in the way of opportunities for the young people who grew up in the movement. With the demise of communalism, few opportunities exist for employment and/or other meaningful activities within the movement.[127] Unable to secure a life for themselves within ISKCON, young people were forced to follow in the footsteps of their parents' generation by seeking life opportunities in mainstream culture.

The second explanation is both complex and tragic. A significant but unknown number of ISKCON's second generation were abused—physically, sexually, and psychologically—while living as students in ISKCON's boarding schools in the 1970s and 1980s.[128] Because Bhaktivedanta emphasized that children should receive spiritual training as a first priority, he directed that they be removed from the care of their parents at the age of five years. He did so because he believed the natural ropes of affection between parent and child would inevitably limit a child's spiritual progress. Children attended the *gurukula* on a year-round basis, with occasional vacations to visit parents. They resided in an *asrama* with children of similar age and the same sex. It was assumed that young people would attend the *gurukula* until about 15 years of age, thereafter taking on adult responsibilities.[129]

Although no reliable statistics exist on the prevalence of abuse in ISKCON's *gurukulas,* a number of sources suggest it was probably commonplace in some ISKCON schools inside and outside of the United States (i.e., India primarily). As of January 2002, ISKCON's Association for the Protection of Vaisnava Children received allegations of child mistreatment and abuse against more than 300 present or former ISKCON members. About 60 percent of those tied to abuse were from the years prior to 1992, when "clusters of allegations connected with an ISKCON school" arose.[130] Many of those victimized were young adolescent boys attending ISKCON schools in Vrndavana and Mayapur, India, during the 1980s.[131] Yet both young girls and boys were abused in ISKCON *gurukulas* in Dallas, Texas, at ISKCON's farm community in West Virginia (New Vrindaban), and at schools in the states of California, New York, and Washington.[132]

A 1998 survey of former *gurukula* students conducted by the ISKCON Youth Ministry also suggests the extent of abuse that occurred. A nonrandom survey of

115 former students, including 40 males and 75 females, found that 25 percent suffered sexual abuse for more than one year and 29 percent for a period between one month and one year. Thirty-one percent of those surveyed indicated that a teacher, or someone older, repeatedly hit them, leaving marks on the body.[133]

In 2000 a federal lawsuit was filed in Dallas on behalf of 44 former students who claimed abuse in ISKCON's schools during the 1970s and 1980s (*Children of ISKCON v. ISKCON*).[134] After the case was dismissed by the federal court, lawyers for the plaintiffs filed a lawsuit in Texas state court in October 2001.[135] The suit sought $400 million in damages for the plaintiffs.[136] By 2005, the number of plaintiffs in the case grew to 92.[137] After several ISKCON communities named in the lawsuit filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, the case was finally resolved in May 2005 by U.S. Bankruptcy Courts in West Virginia and California.[138] Leading up to the final settlement an additional 450 claimants were added, after ISKCON authorities agreed to seek out all former students abused in its schools.[139] A total of 535 former students will receive compensation ranging between $2,500 and $50,000 from the $9.5 million settlement.[140]

The betrayal of trust represented by child abuse has challenged, if not shattered, the commitment of ISKCON's second-generation members. Child abuse is a powerful symbol of the failure of ISKCON's leadership and that form of social organization (i.e., communalism) that supported its political and spiritual authority. In failing to maintain a safe and healthy environment for the movement's most vulnerable members, ISKCON lost any claim to legitimacy in the eyes of many first- and second-generation devotees.[141]

A final factor that continues to influence the fate of the second generation is ISKCON's failure to develop an adequate system of education. Even during the years that the *gurukula* operated, it was largely confined to educating children of elementary ages. Given the legacy of abuse within the *gurukula,* the vast majority of ISKCON's children in North America today attend nondevotee schools, most often public schools.[142] ISKCON maintains only a small number of day schools in its communities for children of elementary ages. Only one school exists for middle- and high-school-aged girls in ISKCON's northern Florida community.[143]

Devotee young people educated in public institutions often found the transition a challenge to their social identities as ISKCON members. While clearly more of an issue for the young people who moved from *asrama-gurukulas* into public schools in the 1980s, nonetheless devotee children face the prospect of negotiating their ISKCON identity in an effort to gain acceptance from their nondevotee peers. Gaining acceptance often means that devotee youths must hide their identity as Hare Krishnas to avoid stigmatization. Yet in working to gain this acceptance, devotee young people in various ways accommodate to contemporary youth culture (e.g., musical tastes, dress, drugs) and, through it, to the mainstream culture as well. One result is the demise of many devotee youths' collective identity as ISKCON members, although most continue to identify as Krishna devotees.[144]

INDIAN HINDUS AND THE FUTURE OF ISKCON IN THE UNITED STATES

By the end of the 1980s, ISKCON's communities in the United States faced declining numbers of residents and a critical lack of resources. Few new recruits were joining and many of ISKCON's long-standing members either defected or were practicing Krishna Consciousness more or less independently of ISKCON. Moreover, a solid majority of the movement's second generation turned their back on ISKCON. In 2000, approximately 750–900 residents lived in 45 ISKCON centers in the United States.[145] ISKCON's Los Angeles community had nearly 400 adult residents in 1980 but was down to only 60 in 1994. A similar decline took place in other large ISKCON communities such as Chicago, Illinois; New York; and Detroit, Michigan.[146] ISKCON was declining rapidly, with the prospect that some of its communities would be forced to close down or scale back their operations significantly. To survive, ISKCON leaders sought aggressively to build a supportive congregation of Indian Hindus.

Estimates suggest that 50 percent or more of the movement's approximately 50,000 congregational members in the United States are of Indian descent. The substantial involvement of Indian Hindus represents a major change from ISKCON's early days. Bhaktivedanta generally ignored Indians in the United States because he feared his new organization would be overly identified with Hinduism. As Bhaktivedanta wrote to one of his disciples in April 1970, "… factually this Krishna Consciousness movement is neither Hindu religion nor any other religion. It is the function of the soul."[147] Moreover, Bhaktivedanta openly questioned the spiritual commitment of Indian immigrants in the West. He felt that their primary reason for coming to the United States was "to earn money" and that the "[b]est thing will be to avoid them as far as possible."[148] Despite the general disinterest shown by Bhaktivedanta and his followers, however, many Indian Hindus were drawn to ISKCON's temples to worship. This was largely because, when significant Indian immigration to the United States began after 1965, few established Hindu temples existed in the country beyond those offered by ISKCON.

Official ISKCON recognition of Indian Hindus in North America dates to the mid-1970s. At that time, ISKCON was under attack from the anticult movement. To defend itself against accusations that it was a dangerous cult, ISKCON authorities asked its Indian supporters to speak to the movement's authenticity as a traditional Hindu religious group.[149] Thereafter the leadership sought to publicly align ISKCON with the Hindu tradition and with its American Hindu supporters.[150]

ISKCON introduced the "Life Member program," begun in India, in 1970, to the United States to formally ally its Indian patrons in the mid-1970s. Life members contributed moral and financial support, as well as services to ISKCON's communities. Few Indians, however, became full-time members or took on positions of organizational responsibility. In return, Indians gained authorized access to ISKCON temples to worship and to socialize with other immigrant families. The Sunday feast, once an occasion for preaching and recruitment, was essentially handed

over to emerging Indian congregations in locations having substantial immigrant populations. It was not uncommon during the late 1970s in Los Angeles, for example, to find as many as 200 or more Indian Hindus at the temple for Sunday worship and the feast to follow.

As ISKCON's financial troubles grew to a crisis level in the mid-1980s, Indian Hindus took on renewed importance. In desperate need of financial resources, the movement initiated a campaign to expand its Indian congregation in hopes of bringing economic stability to its beleaguered American communities.[151] Initially ISKCON successfully raised funds from its Indian congregation to help defray legal expenses and a substantial settlement in the Robin George brainwashing case in Los Angeles.[152] On the heels of this successful undertaking, the movement established the ISKCON Foundation in 1991. The Foundation's mission was to raise money to help support ISKCON's struggling communities. To do this, the Foundation helped establish advisory boards in most of ISKCON's American communities. Influential Indians within local congregations composed the majority of these community boards. In raising money to support their local temples, advisory boards afforded Indian congregations a degree of influence and organizational power they had never experienced. As a consequence, Indians were able to exert considerable influence over decision making within ISKCON's temple communities.[153] Not surprisingly, advisory boards sought to advance the interests of local Indian congregations, sometimes at the expense of temple residents. Moreover, there is accumulating evidence that Indian Hindus are beginning to challenge, if not reshape, ISKCON's religious culture. For these and other reasons, tensions emerged between temple residents and local Indian congregations.

Despite the increased role and presence of Indian Hindus within ISKCON's North American communities, they have generally failed to become integrated into them. Any visitor to an ISKCON community on a Sunday will note minimal interaction between temple residents and Indian congregational members. A researcher of ISKCON's Philadelphia temple found that 40 percent of the temple residents reported that they had no relationship with Indian visitors on Sunday, other than to acknowledge them by saying, "Hare Krishna." Sixty percent, including some devotees in the temple hierarchy, admitted to holding bitter and highly critical views of the Indians. One significant reason stems from the refusal of most Indians to accept temple residents as legitimate devotees. Many Indian Hindus deny the very possibility that temple residents, who are Westerners, could be priests or brahmins. Moreover, funds contributed by Indians are directed toward projects related to the temple, not to improve the living spaces and situations of temple residents. Also, these funds are not used to further ISKCON's traditional preaching mission.[154]

The increased role of Indians in ISKCON communities is also beginning to jeopardize ISKCON's distinctive religious culture. Because Hindus immigrating to the West come from different regions, language groups, and sects practicing diverse rituals, Hinduism is practiced as an ethnic religion outside of India.[155] The Indian Hindus attracted to ISKCON are no different in this regard than other Hindu immigrants.[156] Yet ISKCON temples are neither dedicated to "ethnic Hinduism" nor to

an eclectic form of Hinduism. ISKCON temples, for example, are dedicated exclusively to the worship of Krishna and his incarnations. Although Indian immigrants are clearly familiar with the forms of worship, teachings, and religious practices associated with Krishna, most do not consider Krishna the supreme God.[157] Rather they favor worshipping a variety of Hindu gods and acknowledge different Hindu traditions as equally valid.[158] These differences became points of contention as Indians gained power within ISKCON temples.

Nurit Zaidman detailed a number of negotiations between Indian advisory board members and local ISKCON officials in Philadelphia during the early 1990s. One negotiation related to organizing an evening for Durga, a Hindu goddess. Board members asked the temple president to conduct a *puja* (worship service) for Durga in the temple room. The request produced some apprehension, as Durga, like other demigods (i.e., gods other than Krishna and his incarnations), is not worshipped in ISKCON temples. After some negotiation, the temple president allowed the program to take place, but in a rented hall. A further condition was that Krishna be symbolically represented as the supreme god and given an elevated status to Durga. Yet not all aspects of the event were controlled to fit ISKCON standards. The actual *arti* (worship) ritual performed was not in accordance with ISKCON ritual standards.[159]

A recent and more dramatic example of the influence of Indian Hindu congregations on ISKCON's religious culture can be seen in the building of a new ISKCON temple in San Diego, California. The Indian congregation raised millions of dollars to help build the temple. The temple, however, failed to strictly conform to ISKCON traditions, as it was complete with images of Siva and Ganesh with accompanying *samskaras* and *pujas* "performed regularly for the Indian community."[160] One member of the San Diego temple community claimed that such a concession represented "kowtowing to the material conceptions of the Indian community."[161] In pursuit of needed financial resources, Bhaktivedanta's movement is becoming a Western sect of Hinduism.

ISKCON's Indian Hindu congregation clearly helped to rescue a failing religious organization. Yet the newly gained power of Indian Hindus within local temples seems likely to reshape ISKCON's mission and religious culture in the years to come. Indeed, ISKCON may well transform into an "ethnic church" serving the religious and ethnic needs of Indian Hindus in North America.[162] In this form ISKCON is unlikely to appeal to other Americans seeking alternative religious paths. Such a development would signal the fundamental transformation of ISKCON as an NRM.

NOTES

1. Diary entry of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami upon his arrival from India on the ship *Jaladuta,* Commonwealth Pier, Boston, September 18, 1965, in Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, *Planting the Seed: New York City 1965–1966,* vol. 2, *Srila Prabhupada-Lilamrta* (Los Angeles: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1993), 5.

2. E. Burke Rochford Jr., "Social Building Blocks of New Religious Movements: Organization and Leadership," in *Teaching New Religious Movements*, ed. David Bromley (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).
3. E. Burke Rochford Jr., *Hare Krishna Transformed: Family and Change in the Hare Krishna Movement* (New York: New York University Press, forthcoming).
4. John Clark, Michael Langone, Robert Schecter, and R. Daily, *Destructive Cult Conversion: Theory, Research and Treatment* (Weston, MA: American Family Foundation, 1981); Ronald Enroth, *Youth, Brainwashing and the Extremist Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977).
5. Steven Rosen, "Who is Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu?" in *The Hare Krishna Movement: The Postcharismatic Fate of a Religious Transplant,* ed. Edwin Bryant and Maria Ekstrand (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 63–64.
6. Gauda is the ancient name for the area corresponding to much of present day Bengal. Federico Squarcini and Eugenio Fizzotti, *Hare Krishna* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books), 45, 87.
7. Ibid., 45.
8. E. Burke Rochford Jr., *Hare Krishna in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 11.
9. Squarcini and Fizzotti, *Hare Krishna,* 54.
10. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 11.
11. Squarcini and Fizzotti, *Hare Krishna,* 51.
12. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 11–12.
13. Squarcini and Fizzotti, *Hare Krishna,* 54–55.
14. Ibid., 56.
15. Guy Beck, "Hare Krishna Mahamantra: Gaudiya Vaisnava Practice and the Hindu Tradition of Sacred Sound," in *The Hare Krishna Movement,* ed. Bryant and Ekstrand, 35–36.
16. ISKCON Communications, "ISKCON Governing Body Discusses Gurus," http://www.iskcon.com/new/050311_gbc.htm.
17. Squarcini and Fizzotti, *Hare Krishna,* 43.
18. Ibid., 43–44.
19. Ibid., 44.
20. Ibid., 44.
21. GBC resolutions pertaining to women's participation can be found in *ISKCON Communications Journal* 8, no. 1 (1999): 21–22.
22. Goswami, *Planting the Seed,* 1.
23. Ibid., 5–7.
24. Ibid., 7–8.
25. Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, *A Lifetime in Preparation, India 1896–1965,* vol. 1, *Srila Prabhupada-Lilamrta* (Los Angeles: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1993), 1.
26. Ibid., 2, 6–7.
27. Ibid., 22–33.
28. Ibid., 33–34.
29. Ibid., 39.
30. Ibid., 91.
31. Ibid., 69–72.
32. Ibid., 154–160.
33. Ibid., 168–170.

34. Ibid., 197–231.
35. Squarcini and Fizzotti, *Hare Krishna,* 6.
36. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 10.
37. Ibid., 10.
38. Goswami, *Planting the Seed,* 4.
39. Squarcini and Fizzotti, *Hare Krishna,* 62.
40. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America*, 46–48, 50–51.
41. Stillson Judah, *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture* (New York: Wiley, 1974), 110–111; Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 65.
42. Judah, *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture,* 127–136; Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 67.
43. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 278.
44. Ibid., 153.
45. Goswami, *Planting the Seed,* 102–108.
46. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 155.
47. Goswami, *Planting the Seed,* 124–125.
48. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 156.
49. Ibid., 156; Goswami, *Planting the Seed,* 130.
50. Gregory Johnson, "The Hare Krishna in San Francisco," in *The New Religious Consciousness,* ed. Charles Glock and Robert Bellah (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 33.
51. Johnson, "The Hare Krishna in San Francisco," 38.
52. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 158–159.
53. Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, *Only He Could Lead Them, San Francisco/India 1967,* vol. 3, *Srila Prabhupada-Lilamrta* (Los Angeles: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1993).
54. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 159.
55. Ibid., 159.
56. Ibid., 159.
57. Ibid., 159.
58. Ibid., 159–160.
59. David Bromley, "Hare Krishna and the Anti-Cult Movement," in *Krishna Consciousness in the West,* ed. David Bromley and Larry Shinn (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1989), 255–292; Anson Shupe and David Bromley, *The New Vigilantes: Anti-Cultists, Deprogrammers, and the New Religions* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980).
60. E. Burke Rochford Jr., "Shifting Public Definitions of Hare Krishna," in *Collective Behavior,* ed. Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1987), 258–260.
61. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 69–70; Larry Shinn, *The Dark Lord: Cult Images and the Hare Krishnas in America* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 87–88.
62. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 69.
63. Judah, *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture,* 153; Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 70–72.
64. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 71–72.
65. Ibid., 173.
66. Ibid., 173.
67. Ibid., 173–174.
68. Ibid., 174.

69. Ibid., 174.
70. Ibid., 174–175.
71. Ibid., 174.
72. Ibid., 174.
73. Ibid., 175.
74. Ibid., 174.
75. Ibid., 18.
76. Squarcini and Fizzotti, *Hare Krishna,* 10–11.
77. GBC Resolutions, 2004.
78. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 277.
79. Ibid., 277.
80. List of U.S. ISKCON communities, http://www.iskcon.com/worldwide/centres/north_america.html.
81. J. Gordon Melton, "Introduction. When Prophets Die: The Succession Crisis in New Religions," in *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements,* ed. Timothy Miller (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 8.
82. Bromley argues that new religions are defined largely by their prophetic character and related antistructural tendencies, including radical forms of social organization. See David Bromley, "Whither New Religious Studies: Defining and Shaping a New Area of Study," *Nova Religio* 8, no. 2 (2004): 83–97; and Rochford, "Social Building Blocks of New Religious Movements."
83. E. Burke Rochford Jr., "Reactions of Hare Krishna Devotees to Scandals of Leaders' Misconduct," in *Wolves Within the Fold: Religious Leadership and Abuses of Power*, ed. Anson Shupe (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 111.
84. Rochford, "Reactions of Hare Krishna Devotees to Scandals of Leaders' Misconduct," 111; Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 222.
85. Rochford, "Reactions of Hare Krishna Devotees to Scandals of Leaders' Misconduct," 103.
86. Ibid., 104.
87. See Tamal Krishna Goswami, "The Perils of Succession: Heresies of Authority and Continuity in the Hare Krishna Movement," *ISKCON Communications Journal* 5, no. 1 (1997): 21–25; Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 221–255; Rochford, "Reactions of Hare Krishna Devotees to Scandals of Leaders' Misconduct"; Shinn, *The Dark Lord,* 43–60; and Ravindra Svarupa Das, "Cleaning House and Cleaning Hearts: Reform and Renewal in ISKCON," pt. 2, *ISKCON Communications Journal* 4 (1994): 25–33.
88. Das, "Cleaning House and Cleaning Hearts," pt. 2, 27.
89. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 235–236.
90. Rochford, "Reactions of Hare Krishna Devotees to Scandals of Leaders' Misconduct," 105.
91. Ibid., 106.
92. E. Burke Rochford Jr. and Kendra Bailey, "Almost Heaven: Leadership, Decline and the Transformation of New Vrindaban," *Nova Religio* 9, no. 3 (February 2006): 6–23.
93. Shridara Maharaja attracted perhaps a few dozen ISKCON devotees in the years immediately following Bhaktivedanta's death when questions first arose about the authority of ISKCON's new gurus. Narayana Maharaja has been a greater and more recent threat to ISKCON, having recruited larger numbers of ISKCON members during the late 1980s and 1990s. After several prominent ISKCON gurus and leaders became involved with Narayana

Maharaja, the GBC, in 1995, passed several resolutions effectively banning association between ISKCON members and Narayana Maharaja and his followers. See Irvin Collins, "The 'Routinization of Charisma' and the Charismatic," in *The Hare Krishna Movement,* ed. Bryant and Ekstrand, 222–223.

94. Rochford, "Reactions of Hare Krishna Devotees to Scandals of Leaders' Misconduct," 109–110.

95. Squarcini and Fizzotti, *Hare Krishna,* 26.

96. Krishnakant, *The Final Order: The Legal, Philosophical and Documentary Evidence Supporting Srila Prabhupada's Rightful Position as ISKCON's Initiating Guru* (Bangalore, India: ISKCON Revival Movement, 1996).

97. Nityananda Das, *Someone Has Poisoned Me* (Mayodan, NC: New Jaipur Press, 1999); Bhaktivedanta Investigation Force, *The Poison Issue: Judge for Yourself* (n.p., 2003); *Not That I am Poisoned* (published by the GBC Ministry for the Protection of ISKCON, 2000).

98. These findings are slightly different from those reported in Rochford, "Reactions of Hare Krishna Devotees to Scandals of Leaders' Misconduct," because the percentages reported do not include Indian respondents. Many Indian congregational members remained largely unaware of the *ritvik* movement. This and other items on the questionnaire that addressed issues of initiation were asked only of devotees who were themselves initiated. The total sample in North America was 594 respondents.

99. Dhira Govinda Dasa, *Srila Prabhupada: The Prominent Link* (Alachua, FL: Satvatove, 2002), 26.

100. Rochford, "Reactions of Hare Krishna Devotees to Scandals of Leaders' Misconduct," 113.

101. His emphasis, personal communication, June 2003.

102. E. Burke Rochford Jr., "Prabhupada Centennial Survey: Final Report," submitted to ISKCON's GBC, November 1998. For a summary, see E. Burke Rochford Jr., "Prabhupada Centennial Report: A Summary of the Final Report," *ISKCON Communications Journal* 7, no. 1 (1999): 11–26.

103. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America,* 175.

104. Ibid., 182–184, 191–211.

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Soka Gakkai: A Human Revolution

David W. Machacek

It is hard to imagine a less beautiful or desirable place than the mucky bottom of a pond. Yet, out of that muck grows one of the most beautiful flowers in the world, the lotus. This image of beauty growing in the midst of ugly conditions lies at the core of Soka Gakkai Buddhist belief. Like the lotus plant, Soka Gakkai teaches, humans have the ability to make something good and beautiful of their lives, even when their environment is undesirable. The practice of Soka Gakkai Buddhism is oriented to unlocking this innate potential, a process described by Daisaku Ikeda, the movement's former president and current spiritual figurehead, as "human revolution."

That is, to the Soka Gakkai, salvation involves not escape from this world, but a change in the way one orients oneself to and engages in the world. Bryan Wilson and David Machacek explain it this way: "The world is only as good or evil as we cause it to be, and the only delusion is the idea that forces bigger than ourselves, and therefore beyond our control—gods, natural laws, or history—determine our chances for a life of suffering or enjoyment. Hell or heaven, delusion or enlightenment, are not conditions imposed on us, but states of being."[1] While the classical Buddhist ideas about karma as an endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth remain, in Soka Gakkai the emphasis has been moved from past and future lives and life conditions to the present life and life condition, giving the religion a distinctly "inner-worldly" orientation. In other words, by understanding that one's actions are causes that have effects, one can take control of one's circumstances in the here and now.

This inner reorientation of the self to one's external circumstances is accomplished by chanting daimoku (*nam-myoho-renge-kyo,* an expression of devotion to the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra) and parts of the Lotus Sutra (a meditation on the lotus flower) before a copy of the Gohonzon, a mandala originally inscribed by a thirteenth-century Japanese monk, Nichiren, that depicts the name of the Lotus Sutra ("Myoho-Renge-Kyo," the title of a fifth-century Chinese translation of the Lotus Sutra) surrounded by characters representing the ten life conditions. These life conditions, which range from low—Hell, Hunger, Animality, Belligerence—to intermediate—Humanity, Heaven, Learning, Realization—to high—Bodhisattva

and Buddhahood, represent an individual's basic orientation in life, or, as one American Soka Gakkai leader put it, "patterns into which one's entire existence falls."[2]

Chanting in front of the Gohonzon can therefore be understood as something like looking into a mirror that helps one to see himself or herself as he or she really is. Although some practitioners have described a kind of mystical experience while chanting, for most people, chanting serves as an opportunity to focus attention on problem areas in their lives and, more importantly, how they might reorient themselves to those problems in order to achieve more desirable outcomes. Thus, for instance, Soka Gakkai members often talk about chanting with particular goals in mind, goals that can range from the trivial to the profound—from having more money or a new car to better relationships with family members or co-workers to world peace. However, chanting is not magic—members do not chant for a new car and expect to have one appear in the driveway the next day. Rather, the focus is on the individual's orientation to the goal. Is her desire for a new car merely an expression of a generalized hunger (one of the life conditions) or a real need? If a real need, what steps might she take to achieve this goal?

Perhaps the best way to understand chanting and its effects in Soka Gakkai belief and practice is by analogy. On a recent show, the popular National Public Radio show *Car Talk* featured a puzzler that went something like this: A woman had noticed that when birds landed on her feeder, all the birds seemed to approach it from the same direction on any given day. They did not seem to just approach the feeder from whatever direction they happened to be coming. The question was why? The answer was that the birds were adjusting their "attitude," a term used in aviation to describe an airplane's approach relative to wind speed and direction. A pilot or a bird cannot change the direction or speed of the wind, but they can adjust their attitude, and that makes the difference between a safe and unsafe landing; so, too, the Soka Gakkai believe, adjusting one's orientation to the circumstances of one's life makes the difference between happiness and unhappiness.

HISTORY

Soka Gakkai itself was born in the rather tumultuous circumstances of World War II in Japan. Its founder, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was an educator who began an educational reform movement that he called Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, or "Value-Creation Education Society," based on his book *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy.* Heavily influenced by western educational ideals oriented to the good, the true, and the beautiful, Makiguchi's pedagogy was a critique of educational practices then current in Japan, which emphasized memorization, obedience, and loyalty—especially, during the period of the Meiji Restoration leading up to World War II, loyalty to the emperor. Education, Makiguchi thought, should emphasize critical thinking oriented to the pursuit of value, benefit, and gain.

In 1928, Makiguchi had encountered and converted to Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism a relatively small but well-established sect that claimed to be the orthodox followers of Nichiren. Nichiren's Buddhism spoke to Makiguchi's experiences and

educational goals. Nichiren, like others of the Tendai sect of the Mahayana school of Buddhism, believed that he was living in the age of Mappo, "the latter day of the law," when misunderstanding of Buddhism and the propagation of false beliefs would cause suffering and social malaise. However, Nichiren believed that all individuals have within themselves the potential for enlightenment and that the enlightenment of individuals to their own inner Buddha nature would lead to resolution of these ills. The key to discovering and unlocking this inner Buddha nature lay in the simple wisdom of the Lotus Sutra. By meditating on the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, individuals could realize their own inner Buddha potential. Moreover, Nichiren believed that if his own understanding of Buddhism was established as the official religion of Japan—a conviction that nearly cost Nichiren his life and resulted in his banishment to the island of Sado in his later life—it would result in an end to social ills that Japan was then experiencing.

The belief that all individuals have the capacity for enlightenment resonated with Makiguchi's thoughts about educational reform, and, in an increasingly militaristic Japan, he probably also identified with Nichiren's difficulties with the government. He began to practice chanting along with some other members of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai. The religious zeal of a convert may have contributed to Makiguchi's eventual troubles with the Japanese government. His desire for educational reform itself ran counter to the government's growing emphasis on using schools to promote patriotic loyalty in the prewar years. However, it was Makiguchi's refusal to embrace State Shinto—the official cult of the state—that landed him in jail. Under the Religious Organizations Act of 1940, the Japanese government consolidated religion into a three-religion establishment—consisting of Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity—under the umbrella of a common "State Shinto" devised by nationalist Shinto theologians to legitimate the policies of the government. Refusal to pay obeisance to State Shinto was thus taken as a sign of political disloyalty. Makiguchi, along with several of his followers, did refuse; he was arrested in 1943 and imprisoned as an enemy of the state.

Among those who went to prison with him was Josei Toda, who is often described as a "disciple" of Makiguchi. It was Toda who took up the mantle of Makiguchi's cause after Makiguchi died in prison in 1944 shortly before the end of the Pacific War, but he also redefined the movement, emphasizing the religious over educational aspects of the movement that Makiguchi started. Reflecting the belief in the possibility of achieving happiness under awful conditions, Toda claimed to have achieved enlightenment while in prison by chanting daimoku over two million times. When he was released from prison, Toda reorganized the movement as the Soka Gakkai, or "Value-Creation Society," dropping "education" from the name and incorporating it as a lay association of the Nichiren Shoshu sect. Instead of educational reform, the movement henceforth promoted the spread of Nichiren's Buddhism and worked toward social reform through the enlightenment of one individual at a time.

The postwar period of American occupation in Japan was one of massive social change. As well as dealing with the devastation of war, Japan during that very short period was transformed from a feudal society to a modern industrial democracy. To

many, the traditional religions of Japan associated with the defunct regime seemed incapable of addressing these new experiences, giving rise to what scholars who studied the numerous New Religious Movements (NRMs) that appeared in Japan during this period have called "the rush hour of the gods." Among those NRMs the Soka Gakkai was one of the most successful. By the time of Toda's death in 1958, the organization claimed more than three-quarters of a million members.[3]

There are several reasons for Soka Gakkai's phenomenal growth. One, certainly, was that its message that individuals have the ability to be happy and to make something valuable and beautiful of their lives even under the worst conditions had a unique appeal to people experiencing this tumultuous time.

Another was a feature that made the movement very controversial. In their zeal to spread Nichiren Buddhism, the Soka Gakkai adopted a very aggressive recruitment tactic, *shakubuku* (which some have translated "break and subdue"), that involved confronting people about their religious beliefs and arguing that those beliefs were wrong and harmful. Some new members smashed ancestral shrines in their homes as a sign of their rejection of false religions. Massive rallies and parades reminded onlookers of those of the fascist regimes recently defeated in the war, leading many to suspect that the Soka Gakkai harbored aspirations of taking over the Japanese government. To this day, Soka Gakkai struggles to overcome the reputation of a dangerous cult movement that developed during this time.[4]

More objective onlookers deemphasized the role of such zealotry in Soka Gakkai's growth, emphasizing instead the fact that Soka Gakkai offered individuals a simple, practical way to respond to the challenging experiences of postwar reconstruction and a sense of belonging in a group that encouraged and supported people in their efforts to rebuild their own lives.[5] This aspect of the movement has also played a critical role in the movement's spread outside of Japan.

Toda's successor as president of the Soka Gakkai, Daisaku Ikeda, changed the movement in ways equally dramatic as those of Josei Toda. Under Ikeda's leadership, the Soka Gakkai put less effort into aggressive recruitment and more into shaping the movement's public image. Recruitment efforts today are less likely to emphasize the harm of holding false beliefs and more likely to emphasize the "benefits" of chanting. While the emphasis on personal practice remains, there has been increased emphasis on collective, value-making projects such as the movement's foundation of art museums, a concert society, schools modeled after Makiguchi's educational philosophy, a major university, and a political party oriented to social reform. Today, the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, Min-On Concert Association, Soka Schools, and Soka University—all founded by the Soka Gakkai—are independent of the religious organization and well-respected institutions in their own right. The Komeito, the political party founded by Soka Gakkai, has, after many changed manifestations and much public debate, become part of the ruling coalition in Japanese government. The Soka Gakkai itself, which claims to have eight million members, is now the largest Buddhist sect in Japan.

Two additional results of Ikeda's leadership merit further discussion. Early in Ikeda's term as president of Soka Gakkai, Ikeda set his sights on expanding the

movement outside of Japan. Perhaps motivated by Japan's experience in World War II, Ikeda came to believe that Nichiren's Buddhism had a special message to a world living in the chill of the Cold War and the threat of nuclear annihilation. In 1975, Soka Gakkai International (SGI) was formed as an umbrella organization to coordinate efforts to spread Nichiren Buddhism around the world. For obvious reasons, these efforts have followed patterns of Japanese migration, with members concentrated, predictably, wherever one finds significant numbers of Japanese immigrants. That includes, in particular, the United States, Brazil, and Great Britain.[6]

Ikeda has also been actively involved in dialogue with world leaders—political and intellectual—about the possibility of world peace. Under his leadership, the Soka Gakkai became a nongovernmental organization associated with the United Nations. Every year since 1983, Soka Gakkai representatives have presented a peace proposal authored by Ikeda to the UN. Ikeda's dialogues with Arnold Toynbee, Bryan Wilson, Johan Galtung, and other intellectual figures of world renown have been published by reputable presses, such as Oxford University Press.[7]

Expansion overseas and Ikeda's ever-growing prominence, however, meant a declining emphasis on the role of priests, which led to tension between the Soka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shoshu. Although Soka Gakkai made efforts to build temples and import priests to staff them wherever it developed a significant following, for members overseas the priesthood was a remote presence at most. From the beginning, the Soka Gakkai, as a lay movement, had emphasized individual practice; apart from a pilgrimage to the head temple, which Soka Gakkai had encouraged early on, and special occasions such as weddings and funerals, Soka Gakkai members had little contact with the priests. Supporting temples came to seem less compelling to many members than supporting SGI's goals of promoting nuclear disarmament, environmental protection, and cross-cultural dialogue. Building temples and supporting priests was an obligation, but building schools, art museums, and concert halls was, for many, a more imminently satisfying expression of members' Buddhist values—that is, of creating something good and beautiful in a mucky world. All of these institutions were built and endowed with money donated by members during annual contribution drives.

Moreover, members heard regularly from Daisaku Ikeda through a variety of SGI publications. It was Ikeda, rather than any of the priests, that Soka Gakkai members called "Sensei" (teacher). That seems to have offended the priests. At the priests' urging, Ikeda stepped down from his role as president of the Soka Gakkai in 1979, but he remains a central figure in the lives of Soka Gakkai members worldwide.

The combination of the emphasis on individual practice and study, the priority of SGI's own collective projects, and Ikeda's continuing influence finally erupted into conflict with the priests in the early 1990s, when statements made by Ikeda implied that the priesthood was unnecessary. Soka Gakkai members and leaders, furthermore, objected when the priests decided to raise the fees they charged for wedding and funerary services, a major source of revenue for the priesthood. Soka Gakkai leaders accused the priests of being greedy; the priests accused Soka Gakkai of being disobedient. When the priests demanded an apology, the Soka Gakkai refused; and,

in 1991, the priests announced the excommunication of the Soka Gakkai and all of its members.[8] The bitterness of the dispute was dramatized on the world stage when in 1999 the priests executed plans to demolish the Sho Hondo, a temple complex built with donations from Soka Gakkai members in 1972 to house the Dai-Gohonzon (the original copy of the Gohonzon inscribed by Nichiren) and described by aficionados as an "architectural treasure." The priests claimed that the building's foundation had crumbled, but it seemed evident to horrified onlookers that that explanation was more symbolic (referring to the role of the Soka Gakkai in its construction) than factual.

The Soka Gakkai, however, seems to have suffered little as a result of the schism. In fact, for organizations outside of Japan, the event seems to have been liberating. Very few members accepted the priests' offer to disavow the Soka Gakkai and join temple groups called hokkeko. For most, the social and emotional bonds were with the Soka Gakkai, and losing access to priestly services meant little to those who had little contact with the priests to begin with and had come to understand their faith in terms of personal practice and Soka Gakkai-sponsored activities.

SOKA GAKKAI IN AMERICA

The first American Soka Gakkai Buddhists were mostly Japanese wives of American military men. The reason, of course, for this overwhelmingly female demographic was the state of American immigration law at the time. Until President Lyndon Johnson signed immigration reforms into law in 1965, American policy restricted immigration from Japan to the immediate members of American citizens' families. The practical result was that immigrants from Japan consisted almost exclusively of women who had married American military personnel. The Soka Gakkai Buddhists among those women maintained their practice privately.

Shortly after his election as president of the Soka Gakkai in 1960, however, Daisaku Ikeda announced his intention to oversee the worldwide spread of Nichiren's Buddhism. In preparation for Ikeda's first visit to the United States, Masayasu Sadanaga—who later changed his name to George Williams to emphasize his American identity, setting a precedent that the movement as a whole would follow—began organizing Soka Gakkai members and established an American headquarters in Santa Monica, California.

The first American converts, unsurprisingly, were mostly other Japanese women and the husbands and friends of current members. In the early 1970s, when David Snow conducted research on the Soka Gakkai in America, about 41 percent of all American members of the Soka Gakkai were associated with the military by occupation or through immediate family members.[9] As the title of his book—*Shakubuku*—suggests, however, broader recruitment efforts soon began in earnest.

By 1963, there were enough non-Japanese members to warrant holding meetings in English. When Phillip Hammond and David Machacek conducted their study in 1997, the membership of the American branch of the movement was predominantly non-Japanese. The single largest ethnic group among the American members

today is white (about 42 percent), but the organization also has substantial numbers of black members (about 15 percent), Latinos (6 percent), and people of mixed ethnicity (about 15 percent). Only about 23 percent of all American members of the Soka Gakkai today are of Asian ethnicity.[10] Those demographics suggest why some scholars of Buddhism in America have described Soka Gakkai International–USA (SGI-USA) as an "evangelical" type of Buddhism, as opposed to "ethnic Buddhism" in which ethnic and religious identity are intimately bound up together.[11]

The Americanization of the Soka Gakkai Buddhist movement in the United States has been a subject of much scholarly interest, and, as Hammond and Machacek argue, probably helps to account for its overall success as an NRM here.[12] Some of the changes, of course, came about as a result of practical necessity—using English at meetings, for instance. Others, such as reforming the organizational structure to give more autonomy to local organizations, probably resulted from pressure by American members accustomed to the congregational form that most American religious organizations take as a result of the predominance of Protestant Christianity in the United States. Likewise, internal pressure by American members led to a greater openness to the possibility of women assuming leadership roles.[13] To some degree, however, Americanization of the movement expressed a conviction, articulated by Ikeda during a visit to the United States at the time of the American bicentennial celebration, that the Buddhist humanism promoted by Soka Gakkai is of critical importance to democratic societies, enabling individuals to make the most of the possibilities afforded by individualism and freedom. The theme of that year's national Soka Gakkai convention, "200 years from now," reflected the conviction that the human revolution promoted by Soka Gakkai would be as important to America's future as the political revolution of 1776.

The movement in the United States is so important to SGI's understanding of its global spread that one occasionally hears talk about the possibility of relocating its international headquarters here. Those speculations are, apparently, entirely unfounded, but they suggest, nonetheless, something about the way that the globalization of the movement has affected its identity. Specifically, the American movement no longer sees itself as a Japanese religion in the United States; it sees itself as thoroughly American. As an international movement that encourages members to think of themselves as "global citizens," the cultural link between Soka Gakkai and Japan has been more or less severed. That process was already underway before the break with the priesthood, but the schism has clearly untethered the movement from its Japanese cultural origins.

Demographic changes since the 1990s may be pushing the movement even beyond the "Americanization" process. According to Bill Aiken, Director of the SGI-USA Office of Public Affairs, increased immigration of Asians and South Americans to the United States has meant a significant increase in their representation in the American organization. "The organization has gone from being 'diverse' just in the traditional American sense to a much more global membership."[14] Among other responses, such as local "language and culture groups" and the possibility of organizing conferences in members' native languages at SGI-USA's Florida Nature and

Culture Center, the organization now offers supplements to its English-language publications in Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, French, Portuguese, Thai, and Cambodian. Almost half of all subscribers to the *World Tribune,* SGI-USA's weekly newspaper for members, receive one of these language inserts.

On its Web site SGI-USA claims to have 330,000 American members and 71 community centers around the country.[15] As with all religions, good data on membership are difficult to come by, and there is good reason to believe that the official estimate is inflated. Using a very strict definition of active membership and data on subscriptions to SGI-USA publications, Hammond and Machacek estimated there to be about 36,000 active American members.[16] The emphasis is on putting the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra to work in one's own life, however, and participation in organized Soka Gakkai activities is not necessary. It is impossible to know how many Soka Gakkai Buddhists are inactive in the organizational life of the movement. Because of their sampling method—they distributed surveys to people who subscribe to SGI-USA publications—and because their definition of active membership emphasized participation in the organization, Hammond and Machacek's estimate is probably quite low. Actual membership is probably 60,000–80,000. More accurate numbers may soon be available, as the organization is now developing a membership reporting system.

In addition to growing its membership, SGI-USA has developed a considerable network of subsidiary organizations in the United States. The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, devoted to collaborative efforts with a variety of educational and not-for-profit organizations to develop "cultures of peace," was founded in 1993.[17] The Florida Nature and Culture Center, already mentioned, is a conference and retreat facility located on 125 acres of wetland in Ft. Lauderdale. In 1994, Soka University opened a graduate school in Calabasas, California, dedicated to training language teachers. In 2001, Soka University opened a campus in Aliso Viejo, California, that offers a bachelor's degree in liberal arts.

SGI-USA is easily one of the most successful new religious movements in America, as well as one of the most successful NRMs to have come out of postwar Japan. Moreover, it is unique among the various Buddhist religious groups in the United States because of its exceptionally diverse membership—most Buddhist organizations being identified with a particular ethnic-immigrant group or consisting of mostly white Buddhist converts. Perhaps these unusual features account for the abundance of academic literature on the movement, despite the fact that it is relatively unknown to the general public.

RESEARCH ON SOKA GAKKAI

In 1994, Bryan Wilson and Karel Dobbelaere published the results of a survey of Soka Gakkai members in Great Britain. In addition to describing the British converts demographically, their book, *A Time to Chant,* described how converts to the movement compared with the British public generally on a number of attitudinal items. The results led Wilson and Dobbelaere to suggest in an epilogue that conversion to

Soka Gakkai Buddhism might be understood in terms of converts' response to changes taking place in Britain's advanced industrial economy. They argued that Soka Gakkai Buddhism had a particular appeal to those experiencing the shift from the producer-oriented culture of early industrial society to the consumer-oriented culture of advanced industrial society.[18] Just as early industrial society required that people be motivated to work hard, save, and invest, as Weber had described in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* an advanced industrial society requires consumers and thus an ethic of self-fulfillment and gratification of desires. Soka Gakkai seems to provide such an ethic, and this accounts for the large numbers of self-employed entrepreneurs, artists, and persons employed in the caring professions—that is, persons whose career choices suggest that self-expression and fulfillment took priority over economic security—among members. Their data, unfortunately, provided only a limited basis on which to draw such a conclusion.

Hammond and Machacek, however, used the Wilson and Dobbelaere study as the basis of their survey of Soka Gakkai Buddhists in the United States. In addition to reproducing many of the questions used in the British survey of movement members, they added questions from the General Social Survey—a yearly survey of Americans' attitudes about a variety of social issues—that allowed them to test the hypothesis. They found that converts to Soka Gakkai in the United States were drawn disproportionately from a subculture that differs from the American public generally by its perspective on consumerism, individual responsibility with regard to social issues like poverty and the environment, and modernity generally, a cultural orientation described by others as "transmodern." Hammond and Machacek write:

> [I]t is not difficult to understand the appeal of Soka Gakkai to people who are this emerging transmodern subculture. By interpreting personal success as a sign of "human revolution" taking place in individuals' lives, Soka Gakkai endows the gratification of personal desires with religious meaning and moral sanction. The idea of karma, however, encourages participants to think about personal benefits in terms of their impact on others, providing a check on the moral license seemingly granted to members. A religion with a distinctly humanist edge, Soka Gakkai affirms the potential of human progress but draws upon the wisdom of Buddhist tradition for insight into the responsible uses of modernity's products.[19]

Most importantly, on a battery of questions drawn from the World Values Survey[20] designed to test the relationship between economic change and shifts in value priorities, researchers in both the British and American studies found Soka Gakkai converts to be overwhelmingly in the "post-materialist" camp. Unlike the general public in both nations, in other words, Soka Gakkai members prioritized self-expression, personal freedom, and aesthetic pleasure over economic and physical security.

Daniel Metraux used a survey modeled after those used in the Wilson/Dobbelaere and Hammond/Machacek studies in research on Soka Gakkai in Australia and discovered a similar pattern, lending further credence to the idea that Soka Gakkai Buddhism holds a unique appeal to that social sector most affected by economic shifts in advanced (or post-) industrial societies. Metraux writes, "Personal autonomy,

dependence on one's own efforts, and a growing sense of personal responsibility for one's life dictate the need to seek greater control over one's destiny."[21]

Among the NRMs that scholars have studied, Soka Gakkai is rare because of the availability of credible data from a national random sample of members in the United States, as well as data that can be directly compared with the general public and with members of the movement in other nations. Indeed, the availability of such data may be unique to this movement, representing an uncommon opportunity for students and scholars of NRMs.

An initial effort to consolidate findings of scholars who have studied the movement around the world was undertaken by David Machacek and Bryan Wilson in 2000. The resulting book, *Global Citizens,* charts the birth and growth of the movement in Japan before discussing its spread to the United States, Brazil, Great Britain, Italy, and, more recently, Southeast Asia. A couple of insights emerge from that exercise.

While there were similarities in the demographic profile of new converts in each nation, reflecting the movement's appeal to highly educated, new class professionals (that is, professionals employed in knowledge and caring industries), the beliefs and values promoted by Soka Gakkai Buddhism seem to have little to do with what initially attracts people to the movement. Instead, the initial appeal seems to be an attraction by the newcomer to the people he or she meets upon the initial encounter.

Both the Wilson/Dobbelaere and Metraux studies (of SGI in Great Britain and Australia, respectively) found an unusual number of recent immigrants among converts to the religion, persons for whom a sense of belonging and companionship in a multiethnic religion would seem to hold a special appeal. Metraux observes:

> The fact that many members found SGIA [SGI Australia] to be a tolerant and caring community was especially important for immigrants new to the Australian life. SGIA provided a ready-made community containing a diverse group of white Australians and Asian-Australians from virtually every region or country who could extend a welcoming hand to a newcomer from Malaysia, Korea, Hong Kong, or Japan. Newcomers often found SGIA to be their port of entry and social base while entering Australian society.[22]

Wilson furthers this line of thought by noting that the desire for belonging may extend beyond just immigrants to socially mobile people in contemporary urban environments generally: "its local groups do something to restore a sense of community and identity in a society [that] has become steadily depersonalized."[23]

Although there were fewer recent immigrants among members in the United States, Hammond and Machacek found evidence of geographic mobility as well. Most American converts first encountered the movement, they report, at a time in their lives when they were "unencumbered" by personal relationships and other social commitments, such as active participation in an organized religion and full-time jobs. Most were young, single, and often still in college when they first became involved in the movement; many (about 43 percent) reported that they were not living in the same geographic area as their parents or siblings.[24] These findings are

consistent with those reported by David Snow, who found that early converts to the movement in the United States were "structurally available" for recruitment when they encountered Soka Gakkai.

It is hardly surprising, then, that each of these studies reported that, when asked about what initially attracted them to Soka Gakkai, converts typically said they were attracted to the people they met. Further reinforcing the notion that Soka Gakkai provides a sense of community, it is notable that many converts elaborated their response to indicate that they found the members they met on their initial encounter to be warm, caring, and sincere.

The diversity of Soka Gakkai members itself may contribute to the movement's appeal. Beyond the frequency with which geographically and socially mobile persons are found among members, there is good reason to believe that Soka Gakkai members are unusually cosmopolitan. Hammond and Machacek found that a remarkable 66 percent of converts to Soka Gakkai in the United States had traveled outside the United States prior to becoming involved in the religion. Many reported having had a prior interest in non-Western cultures and, particularly, reported interest in eastern religion and philosophy. Moreover, movement growth has been concentrated in pluralistic and cosmopolitan environments both in the United States and abroad. In other words, Soka Gakkai not only offers converts a sense of community, it also provides access to a particular kind of community—one characterized by the diversity of its members—that probably holds a unique appeal to people with cosmopolitan outlooks.

More than merely providing access to diverse social networks, Soka Gakkai Buddhism provides a way to think about and understand the encounter with people of diverse cultures. Among the movement's many goals with regard to the wider society is the promotion of cross-cultural dialogue. The title of Machacek and Wilson's volume, *Global Citizens,* in fact, is taken from Soka Gakkai publications. The religion specifically rejects narrow, parochial perspectives on the world and actively promotes, both among its members and in society generally, the exploration of diverse cultures, especially through the arts.

The Min-On Concert Association and Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, which, as mentioned above, Soka Gakkai founded in Japan, are expressions of the religious belief that understanding and appreciating the beauty of diverse cultures is a means of promoting world peace. Indeed, members are strongly encouraged to be active in the arts themselves. Thus, for instance, most local organizations sponsor a variety of artistic endeavors such as bands, dance troops, and so on, so that members can literally make beauty as an expression of their belief in the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra. This feature of the religion may also help explain why prominent American artists, such as musicians Tina Turner and Herbie Hancock, have been drawn to Soka Gakkai Buddhism.

Each of the major studies of Soka Gakkai discussed in this section emphasized that Soka Gakkai's efforts to promote world peace through cross-cultural dialogue, promotion of the arts, and the like are a crucial element in understanding why a religion that emphasizes individual practice, one in which participation in collective worship

is not required, stimulates so much participation in group activities. Wilson puts it this way in a discussion of the appeal of Soka Gakkai to British converts:

> [T]here is an eighth source of appeal in the support the movement lends to campaigns for the preservation of the environment, for peace, as well as for the more usual candidates of religious concern such as aid for the Third World and care of refugees. Members are encouraged to participate in projects and programs organized by the movement to provide benefit in all of these areas. Chanting and worship are thus not just ends in themselves, but are seen as instrumental in awakening members to their responsibilities to the wider society. Cultural events are no less a feature of this proactive disposition. Concerts, entertainments, and exhibitions are all objects of regular sponsorship to promote the opportunities for artistic expression and creativity.[25]

Hammond and Machacek found that belief in the possibility of world peace was among the strongest predictors of involvement in movement activities. Those, in other words, who linked their personal practice to the movement's collective goals of promoting art, education, and peace were more involved than those whose practice was oriented to purely private goals.[26]

Members thus are able to express and act upon their cosmopolitan identities in the context of enjoyable local activities in an ethnically and culturally diverse religious organization that links individual efforts to create value and beauty in their own lives with the collective goal of world peace.

These studies have by no means exhausted the possibilities for research, of course. In fact, at least three directions for future research appear evident.

First, mention was made above about recent demographic changes in the American movement. It is reasonable to think that, just as the advent of American converts prompted cultural and organizational changes in SGI-USA, the growing presence of new immigrant members is likely to have a powerful impact on the movement, although one can only speculate what that impact will be. In particular, it will be interesting to see how the movement balances its current emphasis on local activities with an increasingly global outlook, and how it balances the seemingly contradictory impulses of particularism (in promoting what it conceives to be the universal message of true Buddhism) and pluralism (in promoting awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity). Of course, it probably goes without saying that all American religions, new and old, face these kinds of challenges.

Second, Soka University is now preparing to graduate its first undergraduate class and, in doing so, hopes to achieve accreditation as a baccalaureate degree-granting institution. That process may involve countervailing pressures—on the one hand, to remain true to its mission to provide a humanist education expressive of Buddhist values and, on the other hand, to conform to the expectations and standards of American educational institutions. It will be interesting to watch how Soka University negotiates this critical juncture.

Third, since the break with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood in 1991, SGI-USA has become more actively engaged with other Buddhist groups in the United States. Since 2000, there has been a considerable increase in coverage of SGI by *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* and *Buddhadharma Magazine,* which are widely read by American

Buddhists. These developments suggest that SGI-USA is becoming more mainstream, at least within the larger American Buddhist "community."

CONCLUSION

If there is, in fact, an affinity between an economic culture of consumption, pluralism, and cosmopolitanism and Soka Gakkai's belief in the possibility of achieving world peace through individual enlightenment and happiness and cross-cultural dialogue, then it is reasonable to expect that Soka Gakkai will continue to grow, especially in countries, such as the United States, where these economic and cultural trends are most pronounced. Indeed, Hammond and Machacek point out that the value profile characteristic of converts to Soka Gakkai is shared by about 24 percent of the American population.[27] Clearly, only a small proportion of those people will ever encounter and convert to Soka Gakkai Buddhism. Nonetheless, it is also clear that the movement has not maximized its growth potential.

In any case, an NRM that has achieved the remarkable feat of growing into a worldwide movement with some 10 to 12 million members in 190 different countries in a mere 60 years is worthy of the attention of students and scholars of new religions and, for that matter, of religion in general. It is a movement that has much to teach not only about the dynamics of NRMs and their growth, but also about the relationship between religion, economic change, and globalization.

Indeed, the movement's history and development challenge the conventional understanding of what "new religious movements" are. Soka Gakkai, after all, is a new expression of a very old and very traditional sect of Buddhism. It might be better conceived as a revitalization movement—specifically, an expression of Buddhism that speaks more effectively than its parent, Nichiren Shoshu, to the experiences of contemporary social life.

NOTES

1. "Introduction," in *Global Citizens: The Soka Gakkai Buddhist Movement in the World,* ed. David Machacek and Bryan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5.

2. Robert Eppsteiner, *The Soka Gakkai International: Religious Roots, Early History, and Contemporary Development* (Cambridge, MA: Soka Gakkai International–USA, 1997), 9.

3. Richard Seager documents the relationship between the growth and development of Soka Gakkai and developments in the postwar Japanese culture and economy in a forthcoming book, *Nichiren's Lions.* Richard Hughes Seager, *Encountering the Dharma: Daisaku Ikeda, Soka Gakkai, and the Globalization of Buddhist Humanism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

4. The fascinating history of Soka Gakkai's public image is documented by Takesato Watanabe, "The Movement and the Japanese Media," in *Global Citizens,* ed. Machacek and Wilson.

5. See, for instance, James White, *The Soka Gakkai and Mass Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1970).

6. The international spread of Soka Gakkai is documented in *Global Citizens,* ed. Machacek and Wilson.

7. Arnold Toynbee and Daisaku Ikeda, *Choose Life: A Dialogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); Aurelio Peccei and Daisaku Ikeda, *Before It Is Too Late* (Tokyo/New York: Kodansha International, 1984); Rene Huyghe and Daisaku Ikeda, *Dawn after Dark* (New York/Tokyo: Weatherhill, Inc., 1991); Bryan Wilson and Daisaku Ikeda, *Human Values in a Changing World* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, 1987); Johan Galtung and Daisaku Ikeda, *Choose Peace* (London: Pluto Press, 1995); Karan Singh and Daisaku Ikeda, *Humanity at the Crossroads* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

8. The schism captured the attention of many scholars, who noted the similarity between this event and the circumstances leading to the Protestant Reformation in Europe. See Jane Hurst, "A Buddhist Reformation in the Twentieth Century: Causes and Implications of the Conflict between Soka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shoshu Priesthood," in *Global Citizens,* ed. Machacek and Wilson; Daniel Metraux, "The Dispute between the Soka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shoshu Priesthood: A Lay Revolution against a Conservative Clergy," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 19, no. 4 (1992): 325–336.

9. David Snow, *Shakubuku: A Study of the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist Movement in America, 1960–75* (New York: Garland, 1993).

10. Phillip E. Hammond and David W. Machacek, *Soka Gakkai in America: Accommodation and Conversion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 44. Regional variation in the ethnic makeup of Soka Gakkai members in the United States is described by David W. Chappell, "Socially Inclusive Buddhists in America," in *Global Citizens,* ed. Machacek and Wilson.

11. 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).

12. Hammond and Machacek, *Soka Gakkai in America.* See also David Machacek, "Organizational Isomorphism in SGI-USA," in *Global Citizens,* ed. Machacek and Wilson.

13. In fact, one of the main sources of Nichiren Buddhism's appeal to contemporary professionals is the fact that Nichiren taught that women, as well as men, could achieve enlightenment. This egalitarian aspect of Nichiren Buddhism has been realized more rapidly in American and western European Soka Gakkai organizations than in Japan, and in Japan more rapidly since the schism than before.

14. Personal correspondence with the author, September 9, 2004.

15. http://www.sgi-usa.org/thesgiusa/aboutsgi/purpose.html.

16. Hammond and Machacek, *Soka Gakkai in America,* 41.

17. "Who we are," http://www.brc21.org/who.html.

18. Bryan Wilson and Karel Dobbelaere, *A Time to Chant: The Soka Gakkai Buddhists in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

19. Hammond and Machacek, *Soka Gakkai in America,* 141.

20. Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

21. Daniel A. Metraux, "Soka Gakkai in Australia," *Nova Religio* 8, no. 1 (2004): 68.

22. Ibid., 67.

23. Bryan Wilson, "The British Movement and Its Members," in *Global Citizens,* ed. Machacek and Wilson, 358.

24. Hammond and Machacek, *Soka Gakkai in America,* 144–148.

25. Wilson, "The British Movement and its Members," 358–359.

26. Hammond and Machacek, *Soka Gakkai in America,* 158–159.

27. Ibid., 142.

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From Guru Maharaj Ji to Prem Rawat: Paradigm Shifts over the Period of 40 Years as a "Master" (1966–2006)

Ron Geaves

INTRODUCTION

Prem Rawat, more commonly known as Guru Maharaj Ji or Maharaji, sprung to fame in the West in the early 1970s as a child guru believed by many of his predominantly counterculture followers to be the new world savior. Throughout the first half of that decade, the movement founded to promote his teachings, Divine Light Mission was possibly the fastest growing new religion in Britain and the United States. Although the present activities in these two countries can no longer compare to that period, Prem Rawat has consolidated his teachings around the globe.

In the spring of 2005, Maharaji toured India, holding events in 11 locations, attracting over 1.5 million people. The event in Kanpur was the largest crowd that he had ever addressed, with an audience of 375,000. In addition, 325,000 gathered in Gaya, a city in the state of Bihar.[1] In July 2005, speaking to a gathering of 5,000 European followers, he announced that he intended to tour Indian villages and refocus his efforts on the Pacific bowl. The resurgence of Maharaji's teachings in India and their successful arrival in South-East Asia marks him as a truly global phenomenon whose outreach activities have given his teachings a presence in Australasia, Asia, including mainland China and Japan, North and South America, including Cuba, Europe, and Africa. There is a small but growing interest in some parts of the Muslim world. Significantly, he has been able to present his message in a way that transcends his origins in North India and move to a universalist teaching based on inner experience and the shedding of any cultural or religious cosmologies that would continue to root him in a particular time or place milieu. It is this successful globalization and the ability to transcend cultural and religious particularity, combined with his apparent pragmatic ease to adapt and transform a core teaching to meet with new circumstances and a rapidly changing world, that make him interesting to scholars of New Religious Movements (NRMs) as well as contemporary religion in general.

Maharaji retains a significant following in the United States even if it is not as large as it was in its heyday of the 1970s. We do not know exactly how many practice the techniques of Knowledge as no membership lists are maintained. Numbers at national events in the United States are about 5,000–6,000, but these may include visitors from South America and Europe. However, Maharaji's roots in the United States go beyond the numerical. He effectively adopted America as his home in 1974 when he met his wife, a native Californian. His four children were raised, first in Miami and then in Malibu, where the family still retain their residence. He is an American citizen, and The Prem Rawat Foundation was recently founded in the United States.

BIOGRAPHY

Maharaji was born on December 10, 1958, in the small village of Kankal on the opposite bank of the Ganga River from the sacred Hindu pilgrimage center of Haridwar in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. While he was still a small child, the family moved to Dehradun, where he remained until invited to visit the West in 1971. His family name was Prem Pal Singh Rawat, the youngest of four sons born to Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, but only recently has he become known by that name. In childhood, he was affectionately known as Sant Ji by his father's followers, Balyogeshwar (born lord of Yogis) by the Indian public on account of his young age and precocious spirituality, and later Guru Maharaj Ji by his students. During the 1980s, wishing to divest himself of the identity of "guru" he simply became known around the world as Maharaji.

The young Prem Rawat's life was never like that of other children his age. His father, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, was a renowned North Indian *satguru* (true teacher) teaching a *nirguna bhakti* (worship of the formless God). This teaching of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj superficially paralleled the Radhasoami tradition,[2] at least in its organizational forms, with a focus on *satguru, satsang,* and *satnam,* identified by Charlotte Vaudeville as the three key components of the Sant tradition.[3] Behind the hagiography attached to the young Prem Rawat, we know that he loved his father deeply and felt the impact of his father's charisma and teachings. From his infancy he attended his father's public discourses in North India, sleeping on the stage, and first spoke in public to amazed crowds at the age of four to five years.[4] Prem Rawat considers these experiences to be defining moments in his life, times when he served his father by attracting to the events a public curious to hear a small child speak. At the age of six, the relationship of master/student with his father was formalized when he accepted Shri Hans Ji Maharaj's invitation to be initiated along with his three elder brothers.

In 1966, his father died at the age of 60, leaving a young family and tens of thousands of followers bereft. The question of Prem Rawat's succession to his father's position of *satguru* is controversial and now disputed by his eldest brother, but at the time the family accepted the decision. According to Maharaji's own accounts in his oral teachings, supported by close followers of his father who remain alive, Shri

Hans Ji Maharaj had clearly indicated to senior disciples and his family that he wanted his youngest son to continue his life work. In addition, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj on numerous occasions indicated the special spiritual bond that existed between himself and his youngest son. However, Maharaj Ji's mother and other family members had reservations about this transition in leadership. His mother considered Prem Rawat to be too young for such responsibility and favored her eldest son. However, the matter was taken out of their hands after the frequently mentioned incident in which the young Prem Rawat sat in his father's empty *gaddi* (chair or throne) and began to address the assembled gathering of grief-stricken disciples. While the family debated leadership succession with senior disciples, the crowd acknowledged the eight-year-old Prem Rawat as their new master. Thus began a period in Prem Rawat's life when he attended school at St. Joseph's Academy in Dehradun during the academic year, touring Northern India and addressing large audiences during school holidays. The family assisted him in his efforts, his mother acting as legal controller of her husband's assets and patron of Divine Light Mission, the organization created in India to promote Prem Rawat's teachings.

This situation lasted until Guru Maharaj Ji, as he was now known, reached the age of 11. In 1969 he attracted the attention of four English travellers to India, all of whom were involved in the 1960s counterculture and were seeking "enlightenment" in the East. Excited by his teachings, they invited him to Great Britain—an offer he responded to by sending a trusted follower, Mahatma Gurucharanand, to London in late 1969. From 1969 to 1971, North American visitors to India discovered the young guru and became his students. Meanwhile a small group of about 100 young men and women were initiated in London, gathering around the daily discourses of Gurucharanand. On June 17, 1971, the 13-year-old Guru Maharaj Ji accepted the invitation of his growing band of Western followers and came to London. His arrival at the age of 13 attracted considerable media attention that mostly focused on the young guru's age.[5] In addition, the success of the movement founded in the West, then known as Divine Light Mission, attracted scholarly attention in the 1970s and, to a lesser degree, the 1980s.[6] By the 1990s, both scholarly and media attention had moved on and the general assumption was that the movement was in decline if not completely extinct.

ORIGINS

Although categorized as an NRM in the West, the organizations that developed to promote Maharaji's teachings, especially the now defunct Divine Light Mission, are better understood within the context of Indian *sampradaya* formation and the global reach of Eastern spirituality in the second half of the twentieth century.[7] Although many sociologists of religion claimed that Maharaji's origins are in the Radhasoami tradition,[8] those scholars who identify Maharaji's roots as Sant Mat, or more specifically Radhasoami, are mistaken. Maharaji's history is linked to the lineage of Advait Mat, a North Indian cluster of movements that trace their origin to Totapuri, the teacher of Ramakrishna Paramhans. He claimed to have ancient links to

Shankaracharya through a succession of Dasnami sadhus.[9] However, Maharaji is unusual in that he does not consider his lineage to be significant and does not perceive his authority as resting in a tradition. He has referred to it in the past as follows:

Shri Totapuri ji Maharaj (1780–1866)
Shri Anandpuri ji Maharaj (1782–1872)
Param Hans Dayal Shri Advaitanand ji (1840–1919)
Shri Swarupanand ji Maharaj (1884–1936)
Yogiraj Param Hans Satgurudev Shri Hans ji Maharaj (1900–1966)

With the exception of his father, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, this lineage concurs with that of all Advait Mat movements. Advait Mat are a large cluster of movements acknowledging Shri Swarupanand Ji Maharaj and Shri Advaitanand Ji as their founder gurus.[10] The difference between the various Advait Mat groups is determined by their narratives concerning authority and succession after the death of Shri Swarupanand Ji in 1936. Certainly there is no doubt that Shri Hans Ji Maharaj saw himself as his *satguru's* appointed successor and began to teach in North India after Shri Swarupanand's death.

Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, according to the accounts of his followers, had, like Swarupanand Ji before him, been one of his master's inner circle with a special enthusiasm for promoting the teachings. He was given permission to teach the techniques but he probably was not accepted as having equal status by the *sannyasi* order that Swarupanand Ji developed. Shri Hans Ji Maharaj was married, and in spite of the ethos of equality that was inherent to the guru's teachings, the long conditioning of Hindu culture and the traditional view of the superiority of the renunciate over the householder prevailed with many of the monks. The narrative of his followers states that Shri Hans Ji Maharaj was away when his master died in Nangli. Various senior *sannyasis* gathered to discuss the succession, and they chose from amongst themselves Vairaganand Ji to continue the lineage. It is highly unlikely that they considered a householder, especially since the previous masters were renunciates.

However, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj contested this succession on his arrival at the ashram. Supposedly Swarupanand Ji said, "I am in Hans' heart and Hans is in my heart" and once lifted Shri Hans Ji Maharaj's hand and declared that the disciples should follow him after the guru's death. Whatever the circumstances, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj was fully convinced that he inherited his master's mantle, and he left the ashram with a very small group committed to him and began promoting his own teachings throughout India.[11] Vairaganand Ji received his guru's property and began an institutionalized panth in Anandpur, a former ashram of Swarupanand Ji in Madhya Pradesh. A panth is the term used for the final phase of a sant lineage, when it has become a sectarian institution. A panth claims to spread the teachings of the past sant(s), but the dominant focus of spiritual power now resides in ritual forms and scripture. Shri Hans Ji Maharaj traveled from place to place, slowly collecting a following that recognized him as their master. He first taught in the Punjab, basing

himself in Lahore. When India and Pakistan separated in 1947, he moved to Delhi and promoted his teachings among the workers at the Delhi Cloth Mill. As mentioned, at Shri Hans Ji Maharaj Ji's death in 1966, he is believed to have appointed his youngest son, Prem Pal Singh Rawat, who is now known as Maharaji, as his successor.

The succession of Maharaji was never considered to be a hereditary one. His father's disciples thought that young Maharaji possessed his own charisma and authority. This understanding distinguishes Maharaji and his father from Advait Mat lineages, forming a new phenomenon.

TEACHING

Maharaji's teachings can be summarized in his oft-repeated formula "that which you are searching for can be found within, inside of you."[12] His discourses do not reveal a coherent philosophy or theology, nor do they draw upon any existent cosmology, although the knowledgeable listener is able to discover echoes of a universalist idiom that parallels Sufis, such as Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), or North Indian *nirguna bhaktas* or worshippers of the formless God or supreme power, such as Kabir (1398–1448) or Nanak (1469–1539). Indeed, Maharaji demonstrates a tactful ambivalence regarding religious doctrines and is not concerned with placing himself in any category that would limit his message to an audience of theists, atheists, agnostics, or nontheists. Simply expressed in his terms, if you are human, that is sufficient; much of his discourse is directed towards the deconstruction of labels, definitions, and limitations. The difficulty here is that many spiritual teachers associated with NRMs also utilize the strategy that their message has universal appeal. The difference would seem to be that Prem Rawat has behind him a long tradition of such iconoclasm that he can draw upon for resources.

His discourse consists of humor, folk wisdom, modern parables, stories, and examples from daily life, all focused around a very basic message. The first element of the message is the identification of thirst, a need for fulfilment, that Maharaji perceives to be a universal factor of human existence. The second element is that lasting fulfilment cannot be achieved from anything impermanent. He does not venture into the realm of the afterlife, and permanence is conceived in terms of a constant that accompanies the human being from birth to death. The third element is the need to satisfy the thirst in this life, to make it a priority. The fourth element posits the need for a practical experience to satisfy the thirst rather than a belief system. The fifth element introduces the idea of Knowledge, the initiatory techniques that allow the individual to go within and experience the fulfilment that already exists within his or her own life-force. The sixth element refers to the need for guidance and inspiration to maintain inward focus alongside the other attractions and distractions of daily life. A key aspect of guidance and inspiration lies in the master/student relationship, maintained primarily by listening to Maharaji's discourses. Maharaji is keen to point out that the gift of Knowledge is free and requires no external lifestyle practices such as vegetarianism, rituals, special behavior, or moral codes to support it.

However, it does require a commitment to practice regularly. In addition, he frequently points out that there is no compulsion or membership in a movement. He stresses individuality and personal experience, noting that each person is free to commence or cease practice whenever he or she wishes.[13]

At one level, Maharaji's discourses reveal a relativist who acknowledges only one form of permanence, that is, the moment by moment gift of life as manifested in the breath, whose contemplation allows the mind to remain in the present. However, he is not a relativist in the same way that New Age advocates tend to pick and mix elements of preexisting religious traditions. He would not acknowledge that "all roads lead to Rome" but rather that the techniques of Knowledge lead to the goal of inner fulfilment unique to the experience of the individual who practices. In this respect, he is an exclusivist who places absolute value on the path he was taught by his father. Although the transformations made throughout his life show that he was comfortable with change, secure in the knowledge that permanence can be discovered only in the deepest recesses of the self, Maharaji's discourses also indicate that he has a profound sense of commitment, of respectful stewardship for the trust that was invested in him by his father to carry the message into the wider world. He is certain that the practice of Knowledge is ancient, renewed by living masters and entrusted to such masters to communicate to the thirsty.

DIVINE LIGHT MISSION

Divine Light Mission began in the early 1960s, when some followers of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj asked him to found a formal organization to develop and structure his growing activities across India. By this time, Shri Maharaji, as he was known to his followers, had taught for nearly 30 years without any formal organization, but he gave in to the growing pressures from a number of active disciples to organize.

In 1971 British followers spoke to Maharaji about placing the activities in the United Kingdom on a properly organized footing. The Divine Light Mission was registered as a religious charity. In the United States, Divine Light Mission formally entered existence when it filed for tax exemption as a church-type organization.

During the early 1970s, Divine Light Mission grew phenomenally. Maharaji's teachings spread quickly to Great Britain, France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Scandinavia, Japan, South America, Australasia, Canada, and the United States. However, it was in the United States that the movement attracted the largest numbers of followers. By 1973 some 50,000 people had learned the four techniques, or Knowledge. Not surprisingly most scholarly study of the Divine Light Mission also took place in the United States.[14] The rapid growth of the movement attracted attention from newspapers, television, and magazines, as well as from academics on both sides of the Atlantic who attempted to analyze the organizational forms but had scant knowledge of the teachings. Most of these studies were conducted by sociologists of religion who wanted to explain the growing diversity of NRMs throughout the 1960s and 1970s.[15]

Daniel Gold posited three stages in the life of a *sant* lineage: (1) it begins with a solitary figure such as Kabir, Nanak, or Ravidas. Authority is derived from personal charisma, and it is highly unlikely that there is any intention of beginning a *panth* (sectarian institution). The followers of an individual *sant* are part of no overarching formal organization, but are united with their teacher in being committed to the value of personal experience. (2) A lineage is continued by disciples who became noteworthy *sants* in their own right. Usually a disciple is chosen to continue as the guru by the original *sant.* A *sant* lineage is called a *parampara* as long as the dominant focus of spiritual power is still contained in the living holy person. (3) The term *panth* is used for the final phase of a *sant* lineage, when it has become a sectarian institution. A *panth* claims to spread the teachings of the past *sant(s),* but the dominant focus of spiritual power now resides in ritual forms and scripture. A *panth* is usually headed by a *mahant* (religious functionary usually a monastic) and a committee who looks after the ritual and administration.[16] Divine Light Mission displayed the characteristics of Gold's second stage, the *parampara* as it brought with it from India:

(i) a hierarchical structure (Prem Rawat and his family members followed by a renunciate order of mahatmas, celibate *ashram* devotees, and then the wider body of noncelibate followers);

(ii) the *ashram* tradition that led to the establishment of a network of renunciate communities across Europe and North America, whose members provided the backbone of Divine Light Mission's activities;

(iii) a lifestyle in which vegetarianism, renunciation, and celibacy were idealized even though not everyone practiced them;

(iv) certain Hindu practices familiar to *bhakti* traditions, for example, daily *arti,* veneration of the *guru;*

(v) a set of doctrines that utilized the narratives of *nirguna bhakti,* displaying a particular form of that tradition where the *guru* is *isvara* or personal Lord.

The result of all these was the founding of an NRM in the West, even though Prem Rawat always indicated that his intention was not to establish a religion. On reaching adulthood, between 1975 and 1977, he tried to tear down the whole edifice, with only partial success. The countercultural background of his followers remained fresh in their memories, and the removal of the boundaries formed by the lifestyle of Divine Light Mission resulted in a return to countercultural values and a loss of commitment to the practice of Knowledge. From 1977–1982, the ashrams in the West were reopened and a gentler approach was taken towards deconstruction. In the 1980s, the Divine Light Mission was taken apart to be replaced by Elan Vital. The name was inspired by Prem Rawat reading the philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859–1941). Bergson was critical of all forms of intellectualism and believed that the way to reality lay through intuitive knowledge. Elan Vital or life-force lay at the root of all moral action.

Thomas Pilarzyk's assertion that the movement declined by the 1980s is not completely accurate.[17] Certainly major transformations occurred. The Divine Light

Mission was replaced by Elan Vital, and Maharaji's teachings departed from the countercultural milieu in which they were located in the 1970s. Concerted efforts also were made by Maharaji to remove the outer trappings of Indian culture and doctrine that accompanied the arrival of the teachings from North India. Maharaji continued to promote the benefits of the experience of Knowledge throughout the world, but remained unnoticed by both academics and journalists.

Maharaji's attempts to transform organizational structures and to eradicate the more overtly Indian cultural and religious aspects of his teachings led to conflict between his own commitment to the ideal of no structural organization and the need to continue teaching. Maeve Price argues that the Divine Light Mission transformed itself into a "sect" marked by a degree of "epistemological authoritarianism" throughout the early 1970s, although she admitted that this was never total and, in reality, a high degree of epistemological individualism existed.[18] However, in spite of this epistemological individualism many followers began to assert a very strong exclusivist claim to salvation. Their epistemology derived from certain devotional forms of Hinduism that contained ideals of monasticism, celibacy, and vegetarianism, as well as from a range of Hindu-based customs. The result was a powerful emotive epistemology of incarnation in regard to Maharaji. This combined Hindu classical *avatar* (incarnational descent) doctrines with the common attribution of divinity to the guru and strong millennial hopes arising out of a countercultural wish for an end to "straight society," which borrowed more from Christian hopes of a messiah than from Indian traditions. All these developing practices and beliefs were encouraged by the senior members of Maharaji's family, especially his mother and eldest brother, and the visiting Indian *mahatmas* ("great souls," here a title for monastics), who led the Mission during Maharaji's childhood and were attributed with varying degrees of divinity by followers. Maharaji's feelings about the powerful religious movement developing around him are difficult to ascertain, but he clearly felt a degree of ambiguity concerning all that unfolded in his name. Upon reaching adulthood, he asserted his own vision, to the consternation of some family members and the Indian mahatmas. Three key events between 1973 and 1975 hastened the demise of Divine Light Mission. In addition, the iconoclastic approach taken by Maharaji throughout the 1980s weakened the original countercultural composition of his Western following, with its world view of both hope for inner transformation and outer revolution, combined with Eastern philosophy and the need to discover alternative resources to counteract the psychic damage done to individuals as a result of drug use and hedonism.

The three significant events were the conference in the Houston Astrodome in November 1973, the marriage of Maharaji to an American follower named Marolyn Johnson in 1974, and the subsequent departure of Maharaji's mother and two eldest brothers for India, after which they announced that Maharaji was "corrupted" by his stay in the West and the eldest brother was taking over as the new satguru and leader of Divine Light Mission.

The Houston Astrodome had been hired by Divine Light Mission in the United States and heavily promoted. The intention was to fill all the seats in the massive

stadium and give the public maximum exposure to Maharaji, who would speak every day of the three-day event. The Houston Astrodome somehow focused the hopes of North American countercultural followers for an imminent millennial event. Their expectations of an announcement of Maharaji's messiahship were combined with UFO-based religious ideas about alien and angelic presences at the Astrodome to welcome the new messiah. These expectations were uniquely North American and did not impact followers who attended the event from Europe. The relative failure of the Astrodome event to match expectations of followers, leaving the Mission in considerable debt, was seen by academics as one of the principal reasons for the decline of the movement. In addition, the failure to fulfill prophecies created disillusionment in some North American followers. However, the apparent decline was due to rebuilding efforts required by the young adult Maharaji as he assumed actual leadership following the departure of his mother and brothers.

Maharaji's family had divided bitterly after his marriage to Marolyn. His mother had tried to prevent the marriage. According to Indian tradition, she had arranged a future partner for him and was not happy that he had ignored her choice and married for romantic motivations. However, it was more likely that this was only the obvious and highly visual expression of her dissatisfaction. As devout Hindus, both the mother and eldest brother were unhappy with Maharaji's increasing commitment to the West and his challenging of the Indian trappings of Divine Light Mission. Maharaji was becoming an adult and had his own ideas about how he wanted things to develop and the form that his teachings should take in the Western world. The family, with the exception of Raja Ji, the second youngest son who remained with Maharaji, returned to India where they took over the Indian Divine Light Mission and announced that the eldest brother was the new guru. This remained the situation in India for many years. Maharaji began anew in India, opening his own center in Mehrauli, New Delhi. However, in recent years he has become very successful in promoting his message throughout India and now spends approximately six months a year touring there.

A liminal period of several years ensued, in which Maharaji experimented with organizational forms, closed down the ashrams, removed Indian forms, and set up new channels to communicate his vision to those followers who remained. The result was entrenchment and inwardness with little focus on outreach, a period of reflection, and developing awareness of why the transformations were peripheral to the central message but nevertheless essential.

ELAN VITAL

In the 1980s, Elan Vital replaced the Divine Light Mission, functioning as an organizational tool for correct usage of resources, both human and financial, and the coordination of Maharaj's continuous world tours.[19] In recent years, Elan Vital has shrunk in size. It is now simply the vehicle for the organization of international tours, for the effective but legal use of financial resources, for addressing health and safety issues for volunteers and paid employees, and for securing the rights of

volunteers. Maharaji has effectively utilized technology to promote his message. In spite of the decreased significance of Elan Vital, however, it allowed Maharaji to achieve two important goals. First, he eliminated the features of Divine Light Mission that demonstrated either the outward appearance of an NRM in the West or a direct transmigration of an Indian religion. Second, he transformed a problematic and unwieldy vehicle for the dissemination of his teachings and the promotion of his own self-image. Unhappy with the "guru image transferred from Indian culture," the "cult leader" stereotype of the popular media, and the "redemptive" figure projected on him by counterculturally influenced followers, Elan Vital provided not only a new vehicle for managing and financing Maharaji's global tours, it also offered a period of introversion and retraining of his followers' attitudes towards him and his message. The shift from Divine Light Mission to Elan Vital was substantive. Elan Vital was organized, wherever possible, as an educational charity or trust responsible for promoting Maharaji's teachings. Its main activity was the spread of Maharaji's message through various types of events, including national and international venues where Maharaji spoke in person, as well as smaller, local venues where his sermons were presented on video.

The final closing of the ashram communities in 1982 dried up the pool of full-time volunteers. A process of democratization followed closure of the ashrams and the removal of the "enlightened" status given to the full-time *mahatmas* as their role was demystified. They were now labeled as instructors, guides who showed interested people the techniques of self-knowledge. The result was that a wider array of followers actively participated in the work. Most of these followers were now married, employed, and upwardly mobile. The elite hierarchical structure borrowed from the Indian model was destroyed, and an emergent egalitarianism was encouraged. The small staff needed to run Elan Vital were paid salaries. The move from Divine Light Mission to Elan Vital provided Maharaji with the opportunity for the first time to explore his own vision of his work without inherited baggage from the past. It is unlikely that this happened suddenly but was part of a gradual process in which Maharaji exerted his own understanding upon the teachings passed on to him by his father. Primarily this manifested in an examination of the dominant modes of thought towards the satguru in Hindu cosmology. Traditionally such figures have been heralded by devotees and even proclaimed in sacred texts to be avatars or manifestations of God. Maharaji began to express his own view on this and to affirm his humanity. In addition, the techniques of Knowledge had always been taught within a framework of Indian devotional narratives, supported by the teachings of Hindu sacred texts. This was removed completely, and Knowledge was allowed to stand for itself by emphasizing its personal experiential dimension rather than "proof" by reference to outside authorities. However, no new ideas or practices were included, but rather a streamlining and clarification of the existing teachings. Also, those who received the techniques taught by Maharaji entered into personal relationships with him without feeling themselves to be part of an NRM or a sect of Hinduism. They benefited from the teachings and met together on occasion to receive inspiration from their teacher, choosing how involved they wanted to be with Elan Vital.

Developments in technology permitted Maharaji to travel with a film crew who recorded all of his events around the world. These were quickly mass-distributed and shown to audiences worldwide. These video events enabled Maharaji to communicate his message directly to individuals without the requirement of intermediaries. Although Maeve Price was correct in stating that the young teacher did not want to control the lifestyles, morals, and behavior of his students, Maharaji definitely wanted his teachings accurately conveyed without distortion from others' interpretations.[20] Simultaneously he increased the tempo of his world tours by using an executive jet that he piloted himself, spending less time at his home in California. In the early 1990s he took another step towards independence, which encouraged further demystification and democratization. He decided to teach people the techniques of Knowledge himself, with instructors providing only support services. Although open to criticism that he was increasing centralized control, Maharaji resolved the problem identified by Price of establishing his teaching without creating a "radical meditation sect," but still "maintaining loosely formulated objectives and unspecific demands."[21] Thus, the need for strict control was developed not in organizational terms, but to maintain the teachings in a form fully reflecting Maharaji's own world view.

THE PREM RAWAT FOUNDATION

Elan Vital or equivalent organizations continue to function today. They provide organizational vehicles for Maharaji's activities and allow him to expand globally. The old Indian communal structures and discourse are no longer recognizable or even existent and a loose-knit formation now exists that allows Maharaji to promote his teachings. The attempts to disengage from the cult or new religious movement image have been partially successful. The shift to Elan Vital and the deconstruction of Divine Light Mission allows Maharaji to avoid both popular and academic attention, but his critics fail to recognize that recent transformations are more than cosmetic. Lack of new material in the media means that any renewed interest tends to look back to the catalogue of articles published on the Divine Light Mission. It has become difficult for Maharaji to escape his own legend.

Once again demonstrating his innovative and flexible approach to organization, he created The Prem Rawat Foundation (TPRF) in 2002.[22] New technology has made it possible to move away from community structures to an increased focus on the teacher-student relationship. More significantly, TPRF provides a platform for Maharaji to reach new select audiences in a way that Elan Vital organized events cannot. Maharaji's Elan Vital events fall into two categories, those that inspire existing students and those that reach out to new audiences. Participants in outreach events are invited individually by existing students. Little, if any, advertising takes place in advance. Maharaji enters such environments dependent to a degree on the methods of communication utilized by existing students. However, the TPRF events allow him to address academic, professional, and political audiences independently of Elan Vital's structures and in his own name.[23] As Prem Rawat he can communicate a message of peace and self-fulfillment. TPRF also provides donations and works

with charities on disaster relief.[24] It marks a complete break from Maharaji's earlier approach and gives him almost complete independence from his existing students if he wishes it. The transformations continue those initiated by Maharaji when DLM was dismantled, providing Maharaji with more independence and control over his teachings, particularly with regard to quality control, accuracy, and transmission. The new developments also further the "de-deification" process, emphasizing the message over the man.

Shifting to TPRF is more than merely an organizational change. It represents a new paradigm. Just as he dropped the appellation of "Guru" from his title to become known simply as Maharaji, he can now function under his own name. It marks a move away from complete dependence on Elan Vital to promote his teachings. The Foundation is primarily concerned with creation of materials to promote the message and appears to be seeking ways to allow Maharaji's message to reach new audiences.

This move away from representation by an organization or movement is further enhanced by the use of satellite technology providing an alternative communication to video presentations. The broadcasts are produced by a commercial company and picked up by a variety of audiences worldwide. In many countries it is possible for any members of the public to find the channel as long as they have access to satellite television.[25] The satellite programs, broadcast seven days a week, consist of edited highlights of Maharaji's recent tours. As a result, Maharaji's dependence on any organization is further reduced, as is the need for community or group identity. Many people can now tune into Maharaji's discourses in the comfort of their own homes, and if they wish to have no contact with other practitioners, they can see others only when they attend Maharaji's live events. Utilizing the newly launched Keys programme designed by Maharaji, it is now possible for individuals interested in Maharaji's teachings to follow a learning program online and by DVD sent to their homes.[26]

The results of these new transformations are that Maharaji's audiences are more likely to be strangers to each other, rather than the close-knit "insider" gatherings of the Divine Light Mission or even Elan Vital periods. However, considerable networking takes place through e-mail conferencing, local and national meetings of active volunteers, informal friendship circles, and, where technology is underdeveloped or unavailable, the use of printed materials and video events. Attitudes towards Maharaji range across the spectrum. It is unlikely that new students approaching Maharaji's teachings through the medium of Web sites and DVDs will have the same intense affective relations with him as the hard core of about 2,000 European and North American followers of long standing who attend as many of his live events around the world as possible.

OPPOSITION

Maharaji was always ambiguous to the media. When he first arrived in the West, newspaper coverage focused on his youth. It was difficult for journalists and their

editors to take seriously the teachings of a child, especially when Divine Light Mission insisted that the guru is an incarnation of the divine. However, it was not necessarily negative, but rather an adopted "tongue-in-cheek" humorous approach. But media coverage became increasingly negative as Maharaji approached adulthood with little signs of living the lifestyle of a "holy man" or a "religious leader." Maharaji rejected the roles of healer, priest, social worker, or a doer of good works. In addition, he claimed for himself no special powers or ability to perform miracles or read the minds of his followers. Neither did he endorse renunciation or draw upon a lineage or tradition, in spite of having one to which he could lay claim. Any of these might have made media publicity easier because each was a role readily understood and labelled by Western reading and viewing audiences.

In addition to not being easily labelled within conventional frameworks, the Indian attitude towards *satgurus* was not readily translatable in Western terms. In India, as David Smith notes, it is virtually impossible for followers not to venerate gurus, investing them with the trappings of great wealth, and status comparable to royalty.[27] Indeed, the title given to Prem Rawat by his followers of Maharaji literally means "Great King." This attitude is difficult to convey to Westerners, whose view of sanctity is influenced by the renunciate model of Jesus and those who followed in his footsteps, and it is also about the West's ambivalence regarding the relationship between sanctity and accumulation of worldly possessions. However much Prem Rawat may distance himself from the qualities expected of religious leadership, it is difficult for most perceptions to divorce him from certain types of religiosity, and his private wealth, his refusal to fit any of the stereotypes of religiosity or spiritual lifestyles, the high profile Millennium event at the Astrodome, the antagonism of his family, and the event of Maharaji's marriage all attracted media attention but now the mood has turned more hostile.

The proliferation of NRMs in the 1970s gave birth to a negative cult discourse, and Maharaji and Divine Light Mission found themselves positioned sharply within it. Mostly the criticism focused on the contrast between the lifestyles of commitment lived by the communal "ashram" dwellers and Maharaji's wealth. However, no financial wrongdoing was ever discovered, either in Divine Light Mission work or in Maharaji's personal finances. The dismantling of Divine Light Mission provided the opportunity for very clear financial accounting, with the income of Elan Vital being used primarily to finance Maharaji's increasingly extensive world tours. The success of Maharaji in ditching both the cultural inheritance of India and the wilder aspects of his original countercultural following led to a period of reconstruction during which he disappeared from public view. Academics assumed that, with the decline of Divine Light Mission, Maharaji was no longer a significant force in the contemporary religious arena, and the newspaper reporters had nothing controversial to interest their editors.

Yet a significant form of opposition appeared from the 1980s onwards, especially with the introduction of the World Wide Web. Over the years, a number of dissatisfied ex-followers, although not large in numbers, became increasingly vociferous in their opposition. Refusing to accept the changes from Divine Light Mission to Elan

Vital, they accused Maharaji of making cosmetic changes as a result of anticult criticism, and they accused followers of engaging in a "revisionist" attempt to rewrite the movement's history. Operating largely through the creation of their Web site, they maintain to the present an opposition that goes beyond their numerical membership in its strength.[28] It is possible to argue that the process of constant deconstruction and repackaging can actually manufacture a type of cognitive dissonance where practitioners cling to former structures, feeling that they were betrayed.

RELIGION OR SPIRITUALITY

Over the years, Maharaji demonstrated his antipathy to both of the categories of "religion" and "spirituality" in a number of discourses. A closer examination of his talks reveals that Maharaji defines both categories within very narrow parameters. The former is somewhat easier to deal with than the latter. There are a number of reasons why Maharaji would not want to acknowledge his teachings under the umbrella of religion. Maharaji's affinities with the medieval *nirguna bhaktas* of Northern India, although he would not define himself as such, preclude the possibility of categorization as religion. Maharaji shares with these exceptional figures in world spirituality an iconoclasm that exalts inner experience of the sacred over and above the ceremonial, ritual, social, and doctrinal dimensions of religion. Elsewhere Maharaji has been defined as a sant,[29] following the classic definition of such figures provided by Vaudeville:

> a holy man of a rather special type, who cannot be accommodated in the traditional categories of Indian holy men—and he may just as well be a woman. The sant is not a renunciate…. He is neither a *yogi* nor a *siddha,* practices no *asanas,* boasts of no secret *bhij mantras* and has no claim to magical powers. The true sant wears no special dress or insignia, having eschewed the social consideration and material benefits which in India attach to the profession of asceticism…. The sant ideal of sanctity is a lay ideal, open to all; it is an ideal that transcends both sectarian and caste barriers.[30]

It is certainly true that well-known sants, like Guru Nanak and Kabir, were ambivalent towards the religions as practiced in their time. Nanak, the founding guru of Sikhism, emphasized the *sant's* freedom from subservience to religious doctrinal or ideological world views very strongly:

> There are many dogmas, there are many systems,
> There are many scriptural revelations,
> Many modes to fetter the mind:
> But the *Sant* seeks for release through Truth.[31]

However, Maharaji goes further than the Sants. His universalism frees him from the need to express his vision within the cosmological frameworks of any existent religious tradition. He remains nonspeculative, refusing to engage with culture- or religion-specific doctrines concerning afterlife, the nature of divinity, or even its existence. His discourses reveal a pragmatism and even a strong skepticism towards the unproven such as doctrines concerning heaven and hell, reincarnation and

ontological categories of good and evil. He tends to see religions as concerned primarily with the next life rather than this one. However, Maharaji's linguistic origins lie in India where "religion" has no comparable term. The nearest approximation would be "dharma," a concept that summarizes a totality of behavior governing all activities and associated with a way of life believed to have originated in a cosmic or divinely revealed social and cultural order. It is quite clear that Maharaji's teachings bear no resemblance to Indian dharmic systems and do not provide a code or a way of life that regulates behavior or provides a religious culture. Indeed, it is doubtful that Maharaji would see himself as any type of religious specialist and would certainly refuse the label of "holy man" given by Vaudeville in her definition of a sant. If Maharaji is to be defined within the realm of religion, it would have to be defined as a religion that espouses experience and rejects the necessity of any other outward activity or the maintenance of any particular cosmology.

Many people in the West would describe the above characteristics as "spiritual." However, that description is also eschewed by Maharaji, whose discourse suggests that he sees it as a discredited and imprecise label, appropriated by a consumerist culture of "spiritual" seeking and given esoteric significance, neither of which are consistent with his pragmatic iconoclasm or his requirement to commit to one focused discipline. On the other hand, if Paul Heelas's definition of spirituality as "subjective-life forms of the sacred, which emphasize inner sources of significance and authority and the cultivation of unique subjective-lives"[32] is taken as the benchmark definition of "spirituality," then certainly as far as the West is concerned those who become inspired by Maharaji's message to the point of initiation into the four techniques of Knowledge are moving away from institutionalized forms of religion that emphasize conformity with external principles. However, the sociological shift in the West would not be applicable to Maharaji's success in the East. Emic or "insider" understandings would insist that the search for "subjective life of the sacred" has been an ongoing human project for millennia.

CHARISMA AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Maharaji's history shows that he belongs to a continuous chain of masters who resisted institutionalization and religion building. All of the masters identified earlier in this essay had iconoclastic and antinomian tendencies, and each walked away from the material and religious infrastructures inherited at the death of the previous master in order to begin again. Elsewhere I called this phenomenon "traditionless tradition" maintained to uphold the integrity of the "experiential iconoclasm" world view of each master.[33] Maharaji demonstrates this position even more than his predecessors. A pragmatic sense of the "eternal" in the "now" perhaps conveys something of his position, but it is not a world-renouncing or world-denying perspective. Rather, Maharaji attempts to maintain a charismatic moment against the processes of institution and all that that entails. Charisma is difficult to define precisely, other than in terms of personal qualities associated with leadership. From a follower's perspective, Maharaji is charismatic, in the sense that he sustains intense affective bonds with

followers based on their personal sense of gratitude and appreciation. However, from his perspective charisma is played down with a focus on the message and the transformative powers of Knowledge. Any understanding of Maharaji's motivations has to take into account the challenge to preserve the purity of his teachings from institutionalization. Thomas O'Dea argued that the founder-innovator is concerned only with communicating the message and maintaining the spontaneity of the transcendental experience.[34] Although O'Dea perceived these ensuing conflicts and tensions as a way of exploring the development of charismatic authority to institutional authority, an analysis of this new *sant* phenomenon still at the first stage of development provides an example of how a contemporary *sant* master, the first to globalize fully his teachings, grapples with and seeks innovative solutions to the problems of institutionalization. Gold and Vaudeville describe stages in the development of Sant lineages, from the original charismatic moment embedded in the teaching of a solitary Sant resistant to religious building to the emergence of fully developed religious institutions after his death. Building on these analyses, it could be argued that Maharaji perceives himself as a solitary *sant* whose authority derives from his teachings, not from any overarching formal organization. And he does not have to subscribe to any particular world view. Gold argues that such figures have little inclination to establish a *panth* or sectarian institution.[35] As such, Maharaji can be placed within the Sant phenomena, but further research demonstrates how far he has transcended that label to forge for himself a unique category. Elsewhere I argue that although there may be pragmatic concerns, such as financial stability, the attitudes of the wider society, and the opposition of former practitioners, focusing on these as the prime factors of change and adaptation misses the importance of the relationship between charisma and institutionalization. And such a focus overemphasizes reaction to external forces as the dominant motivation in understanding NRMs. In particular, Maharaji's movement promises fascinating insights into the fine balance between the integrity of teaching and experience over the apparently inevitable processes of organizational and sectarian development. Maharaji chooses perpetual transformation in which organizational forms are created, utilized, and then destroyed, thus providing flexibility to deal with rapidly changing social attitudes, to provide pragmatic solutions to internal problems, and, above all, to keep his students focused on the core message that he wishes to transmit.

CONTINUITY AND CHALLENGES

Maharaji has demonstrated an extraordinary resilience: a determination to continue teaching globally despite changes in circumstances or opposition to his activities. He successfully took the inheritance from his father and transformed it from a contemporary manifestation of a "solitary Sant" to a genuinely globalized spirituality able to reach human beings of all cultures, all religions, or none. In doing so, he continually had to assess what is essential to his message and what is peripheral, or able to be jettisoned. Simultaneously, he carried his existing students with him on his

journey of transformation, convincing them of the benefits of such changes. Not all were convinced, and a handful bitterly opposed him.

The process of transformation continues. If it did not, the inner experience of formless absolute reality apprehended in the practice of Knowledge would gravitate toward religious or cultural elements rooted in time and space. In maintaining the emphasis on experience rather than tradition, dogma, or ritual, the students of Maharaji create a space for the sacred in forms different from those that went before, looser and less compartmentalized than even their own previous efforts to shape the teachings of, for example, Divine Light Mission. Yet they risk the loss of a recognizable identity, becoming a part of the postmodernist zeitgeist where subjective forms of self-perception vary and become fragmented. The deconstructions carried out by Maharaji could dissolve intensity, essential to an entity that extols the experiential. Although Maharaji's strategies may have reduced ritualization, replication, domestication, and fossilization, there remains the challenge to maintain authenticity. In addition, the leaders today are the same people who were leading 30 years ago. Maharaji apparently is aware that he needs to develop potential young leaders, but as Martin Percy points out in another context, they may lack the charisma of the founder leaders[36] who entered Maharaji's orbit with much greater expectations than those who came later. In addition, newer students enter the environment of Maharaji's latest teachings without knowing the past. The challenge is to inspire them with the same passion and enthusiasm demonstrated by the founder-leaders. The changed religious environment of the twenty-first century in the West, which Percy defines as pluralist and postmodernist, may result in new practitioners adopting the characteristics of consumers; they may relate to practices taught, without pursuing them wholesale.

In the earlier manifestations of Divine Light Mission, a sense of *communitas,* a special sense of bonding channelled through belief, values, and norms of a specific religious tradition, was developed through initiation, giving a special sense of "elect" secrecy, shared by an intimate community to maintain strong boundaries that demarcated the "insider" from the "outsider." That strong sense of community identity is now lacking, deconstructed by Maharaji's efforts to destroy the obvious manifestations of religion in Divine Light Mission. As Maharaji increasingly emphasized the individual over the community, inevitable dispersal and dilution has taken place. Balance has to be part of the process, in which individuality and experience are lauded but not to the point where cohesive organization is sacrificed. Too far one way and results can lead once again to the sense of "elect moral status" and the renewal of group boundaries. Too far the other way and disintegration becomes a problem. Maharaji is a master manipulator of these two contrary forces, but what will happen after he dies? Perhaps that unsettling impact of his death will be offset by the continuity of the inner practices and the experience that it brings. The future is likely to see much more focus on the message, especially the applicability of Knowledge towards the fulfilment of human life journeys and the freeing of Maharaji from any identity with particular organizations or movements, except his own TPRF, which will continue as a vehicle for profile raising and presenting his message. Maharaji

has travelled far from the counterculture "guru" of the 1970s, arguably an identity he was never at ease with, and is now operating increasingly on a global platform with audiences that know nothing of the history. The challenge for future followers of Maharaji will be to develop a new generation that can take the message into the next stage, without unwanted institutionalization. In Western Europe and North America, core followers are graying. However, this is not true around the world.

SIGNIFICANCE

Maharaji is significant in a number of ways. He provides a fascinating study of the tensions between charisma and institutionalization, showing how institutionalization is not only a linear process that begins when charisma is finished but rather is resisted by the charismatic in an ongoing way. He also provides insight into the globalization and universalization of Indian traditions in the twentieth century. New phenomena in the West usually must be interpreted in terms of continuity, transformation, authenticity, and tradition as one generation passes on to another. As part of an old inheritance in India, there is the possibility of insights into the creation of *sampradayas, panths,* and *paramparas.* He is also a key figure in the transformation of institutionalized religion towards individualized and internalized spiritualities and should be located in the history of that change in western religious landscapes. He is certainly the first Indian-origin teacher of any tradition who has genuinely succeeded in liberating himself and his teachings from any reference to the East and thus is able to claim an authentic universalism on a global stage. Although there are other teachers originating in Indian religions who claim to be universal, their apparent universalism is rooted in the narratives of contemporary Hindu construction, which prefers to see itself as *sanatan dharma* or the universal and eternal truth. However, analysis of behavior and discourse will reveal to the scholar of religion a teaching rooted in an Indian background. This is increasingly difficult to observe in Maharaji's presentation of his teaching, and, in fact, he is openly skeptical of basic ideas in oriental world views, for example, reincarnation and doctrines of karma and dharma.

It would be tempting to understand the transformations that have taken place over the years simply in the context of a religious movement new to the West and adapting itself accordingly, but this would fail to acknowledge Maharaji's perception of himself as a contemporary master in the Sant idiom. The Sant's role in India has been that of innovator and rebel against religious orthodoxies and institutions, and sometimes social hierarchies and institutions.[37] Spirituality is interior and has nothing to do with any external form of religiosity. But the Sants have had to face the challenge of institutionalization and the development of religious formations after their demise. It is to be expected that a living Sant would be determined to avoid this process for at least as long as his or her lifetime. Maharaji has chosen to keep alive a traditionless tradition, a state of permanent transformation, confident in his own conviction that the core experience of the inner life achieved by his teachings can transcend and survive continuous revolution and deconstruction.

NOTES

1. http://www.tprf.org/media_press_room.htm (accessed October 4, 2005). I can verify these accounts from personal experience, having attended the Indian events in 2003, and saw for myself the numbers that were gathering. The organization in India maintains a reliable counting system based on the way people are seated in blocks.

2. The Radhasoami traditions is a cluster of movements that originated with the teachings of Shiv Dayal Singh in the 1860s in Agra, North India. The teachings show some affinity with North Indian Sants such as Kabir and Nanak and Shiv Dayal Singh perceived himself to be contemporary Sant. The tradition focuses on the saving power of a spiritual master in transforming the self and achieving access to inner worlds through the use of sacred words. A detailed analysis of Radhasoami traditions can be found in Mark Juergensmeyer, *Radhasoami Reality: The Logic of a Modern Faith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

3. Charlotte Vaudeville defines a *sant* as a teacher or holy man who stresses "the necessity of devotion to and practice of the divine name (*satnama*), devotion to the divine Guru (*satguru*) and the great importance of the company of the *Sants* (*satsang*). The Name, the divine Guru and the *satsang* are the three pillars of the *Sant sadhana.*" See Charlotte Vaudeville, "Sant Mat: Santism as the Universal Path to Sanctity," in *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India,* ed. Karine Schomer and W.H. McLeod (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 31.

4. These biographical details are well-documented in the archives of Elan Vital in the United States. They contain large amounts of original film footage utilized in a number of promotional videos and DVDs.

5. I have researched this early history in the West in earlier publications which include Ron Geaves, "From Divine Light Mission to Elan Vital and Beyond: An Exploration of Change and Adaptation," *Nova Religio* 7, no. 3 (March 2004): 45–62; Ron Geaves, "From Totapuri to Maharaji: Reflections on a Lineage (*Parampara*)," *Indian Religions: Renaissance & Renewal,* ed. Anna King (London: Equinox, 2005); Ron Geaves, "Globalisation, Charisma, Innovation, and Tradition: An Exploration of the Transformations in the Organisational Vehicles for the Transmission of the Teachings of Maharaji," *Journal of Alternative Spirituality and New Age Studies* 2 (February 2006): 44–62.

6. For a detailed analysis of previous scholarly literature see Geaves, "From Divine Light Mission."

7. The analysis of the earlier movements in the context of Indian movements can be found in Geaves, "From Totapuri to Maharaji."

8. L. Dupertius, "How People Recognise Charisma: The Case of Darshan in Radhasoami and Divine Light Mission," *Sociological Analysis* 47, no. 2 (1986): 111–124; J. Gordon Melton, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Religions,* 5th ed. (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1996), 890; Roger Olsen, "Eckankar: From Ancient Science of Soul Travel to New Age Religion," in *America's Alternative Religions,* ed. Timothy Miller (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 363–364.

9. The Dasnamis are ten orders of ascetics founded by Shankaracharya in the eighth century and that still flourish in India. The orders are Aranya, Asrama, Bharati, Giri, Parvata, Puri, Sarasvati, Sagara, Tirtha, and Vana. The early gurus of Advait Mat belonged to the Puri order.

10. I fully researched Maharaji's lineage in India during 2002–2003, and the results have been published in "From Totapuri to Maharaji: Reflections on a Lineage (*Parampara*)."

Information on Shri Maharaji's guru and his predecessors can be found in Sri Swami Sar Shabdanand Ji, *Shri Swarup Darshan* (New Delhi: Sar Shabd Mission, 1998).

11. Professor Tunden, *Satguru Shri Hans Ji Maharaj: Eternal is He, Eternal is His Knowledge* (Delhi: Divine Light Mission, 1970), 2. However, Professor Tunden was a loyal devotee of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj and secretary of Divine Light Mission in India. It is not possible to corroborate this insider discourse from elsewhere.

12. Written sources are few. Maharaji is an inspired public speaker who communicates directly to people who attend his events. The discourses are then distributed worldwide as videos or DVDs where they are shown locally to groups of invited guests or individually. There are four Web sites: www.maharaji.org, which contains only some poetry pertaining to Maharaji's message; www.tprf.org, which is the offical Web site of Maharaji's foundation, The Prem Rawat Foundation; www.contactinfo.org, which provides information for interested people; and www.thekeys.maharaj.org (accessed January 15, 2006), where a mail order distribution of DVDs exists for those explicitly interested in being taught the techniques known as Knowledge. The most succinct expression of Maharaji's views on peace can be found on www.tprf.org/Maharaji_on_peace.htm. Anyone who spends any amount of time listening to Maharaji's discourses to the public will find the formula I have mentioned.

13. There is no shortage of Maharaji's discourses in the public arena. These observations on the teachings were taken from analysis of a number of videos and DVDs of speeches given over the past 25 years.

14. In addition to cited texts from this period, there is also James Downton, *Sacred Journeys: The Conversion of Young Americans to Divine Light Mission* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); and Daniel Foss and Ralph Larkin, "Worshipping the Absurd: The Negation of Social Causality Among the Followers of Guru Maharaji," *Sociological Analysis* 39, no. 2 (Summer 1978).

15. Detailed information on the history of Divine Light Mission has been extracted from Geaves, "From Divine Light Mission."

16. Daniel Gold, *The Lord as Guru: Hindu Sants in the Northern Indian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 85.

17. Thomas Pilarzyk, "The Origin, Development, and Decline of a Youth Culture Religion: An Application of Sectarianization Theory," *Review of Religious Research* 20, no. 1 (1978): 23–43.

18. Maeve Price, "Divine Light Mission as a Social Organization," *Sociological Review* (February 1979): 279

19. Detailed information on the history of Elan Vital has been extracted from Geaves, "From Totapuri to Maharaji."

20. Price, "Divine Light Mission," 280.

21. Ibid., 279–289.

22. See http://www.tprf.org. Detailed information on the formation of TPRF has been extracted from Geaves, "From Totapuri to Maharaji."

23. See http://www.tprf.org/media_press_room.htm under press releases for details of such events.

24. http://www.tprf.org/humanitarian_initiatives/index.htm (accessed October 4, 2005). The Web pages provide detailed information on TPRF's current and past initiatives and projects.

25. See http://www.contactorg.com (accessed July 7, 2006). Other Web sites are http://elanvital.org.uk and http://www.Maharaji.org.

26. See http://findingoutmore.com (accessed July 7, 2006) and http://www.thekeys.maharaji.net (accessed January 15, 2006).
27. David Smith, *Hinduism and Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 172–173.
28. See http://expremies.org (accessed July 7, 2006).
29. Melton, *Encyclopaedia of American Religions,* 890, although he makes the error of identifying Maharaji with Sikhism. I also suggest that the "sant model" is useful as a starting point for categorizing Maharaji (Geaves, "From Totapuri to Maharaji").
30. Vaudeville, "Sant Mat: Santism as the Universal Path to Sanctity," 34.
31. Trilochan Singh, Jodh Singh, Kapur Singh, Bawa Harkishen Singh, Khushwant Singh, trans. *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs,* 3rd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 74–75.
32. Paul Heelas and others, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).
33. See R.A. Geaves, "Forget Transmitted Memory: The De-traditionalized 'Religion' of Prem Rawat, Religion and Society: Challenging Boundaries" (presented at 28th Conference of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion, Zagreb, July 18–22, 2005).
34. Thomas F. O'Dea, "Sociological Dilemmas: Five Paradoxes of Institutionalisation," reprinted in *Man's Religious Quest,* ed. Whitfield Foy (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1978), 298–305.
35. Gold, *The Lord as Guru,* 85.
36. Martyn Percy, "A Place at the High Table? Assessing the Future of Charismatic Christianity," in *Predicting Religion,* ed. Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 97.
37. See Mark Juergensmeyer, *Radhasoami Reality: The Logic of a Modern Faith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 23, for a definition of a Sant.

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Adidam

Scott Lowe

While there have been many saints and sages in human history, the ancient traditions of humankind foretell a final Revelation, a God-Man promised for the "late-time" who will perfectly fulfill the deepest longings of the human heart. Adidam is established on the recognition that this all-surpassing Event has occurred. Ruchira Avatar Adi Da Samraj is the Divine Being of Grace and Truth Who authenticates the ancient intuitions.[1]

INTRODUCTION

It is remarkably difficult to delineate the exact contours of Adidam, the religion centered on the person and evolving teachings of Franklin Jones (AKA Dhyananda, Bubba Free John, Da Free John, Da Hridayam, Da Love-Ananda, Da Love-Ananda Hridayam, Da Kalki, Hridaya-Samartha Sat-Guru Da, Da Avabhasa, the Ruchira Avatar, Santosha Da, and Avatar Adi Da Samraj).[2] The motives of its enigmatic founder are often obscure and clearly beyond the reach of accepted methods of scholarly inquiry. What is certain is that the teachings of Adidam throughout its history have directly reflected the spiritual and psychological state of its founder, leader, guru, and central focus: Franklin Jones.

In September 1970, after years of intellectual study, spiritual seeking, and remarkable inner experiences, Franklin Jones attained what he believed to be a permanent state of enlightenment. He was 30 years old. Starting in New York City as a self-proclaimed guru and *siddha* (perfected one) in the following winter, he began to attract a small but devoted following.

In 1972, Jones moved to Los Angeles, where he opened the Dawn Horse Bookstore. The bookstore sold Jones's personal selection of what he considered the world's best spiritual literature as well as his first self-published books; it also served as a meeting place where Jones held regular *satsang,* lecture and meditation sessions during which Jones displayed his strong verbal skills, distinctive psychological insights, and considerable erudition. Many early participants also claim that Jones demonstrated an ability to produce profound alterations in the states of consciousness of susceptible individuals through a mysterious process of energy transmission. This

putative process of energy transmission, or *shaktipat,* is to this day a primary feature of Jones's teaching work.

Jones was young, charismatic, learned, and life affirming. Unlike the strict, sober, morally conservative Asian gurus beginning to cause a stir in a deeply divided America, Jones was witty, sex positive, and contemporary in language and style. Perhaps most importantly, he was American, a homegrown guru who spoke with clarity, intelligence, and absolute certainty. He *knew,* and he was not coy about proclaiming his enlightened status.

Jones's following grew quickly to something like its current size of 1000 members a few years after the community moved from Los Angeles to northern California in 1974. Despite the vigorous publication efforts of the group—dozens of books have been compiled from Jones's edited talks, and several revisionist biographies of the guru have been put out by the Dawn Horse Press—the group has probably never had many more than a few thousand members at any one time, though it is estimated that perhaps as many as 40,000 spiritual seekers, primarily from America, Europe, and Australia, have been involved through the decades. As in most New Religious Movements (NRMs), turnover in Adidam is high, though there is also a core of highly committed devotees who have remained in the group for decades.

Like the self-bestowed titles of the founder, the name of the religion also changes every few years, having been The Dawn Horse Communion, The Free Primitive Church of Divine Communion, The Johannine Daist Communion, The Free Daist Communion, The Free Daist Avataric Communion, etc. As of late 2005, the religion is now named Adidam, a term derived from Adi Da, the palindromic title currently favored by Franklin Jones.

The new titles for the guru often correspond with changes in the teachings and practices Jones communicates to his followers. Despite Jones's early claims of complete, final, permanent enlightenment, it is clear that his revelations are still ongoing and his message continues to evolve. Every few years, it seems that Jones experiences a new breakthrough, or "crucifixion," as Saniel Bonder, one of Jones's official biographers, puts it.[3] These often take the form of apparent health crises or "near-death" experiences. After these pivotal experiences, described in dramatic detail in Adidam publications, Jones usually announces that a spiritual transformation of cosmic significance has occurred and changes his message accordingly.

It should be noted that Jones never specifically repudiates his earlier teachings; he merely adds to them, with each new addition seen as complementing, not replacing, previous material. This in part explains the difficulty critics experience in determining Jones's exact teachings on any particular issue; at one time or another he has espoused almost every Eastern theological position imaginable. As a result, Jones's teachings can be seen as extremely comprehensive—even encyclopedic—or flat out self-contradictory and incoherent, depending on the sympathies of the analyst. For his devotees, Jones is a supremely enlightened spiritual superman, the only living incarnation of God for this and all other worlds and the only savior for a suffering humanity. For his admirers, he is a brilliant intellectual who has constructed an inspired and inspiring synthesis of the best insights of the world's great spiritual

traditions. For his critics, he is a well-educated, articulate teacher who shows moments of clarity but is basically just repackaging ideas drawn from extensive reading in a wide range of often-obscure spiritual texts.

As his teachings have developed, Jones has made ever greater and more exclusive claims for his level of spiritual attainment; he is now proclaiming himself to be the greatest spiritual master and most complete expression of the divine that this universe has ever produced, the "First, Last, and Only Adept-Revealer (or Siddha) of the seventh stage of life."[4] Along the way Jones's teachings have gradually shifted from a recognizable, if exuberantly complex, variant of Advaita Vedanta–based on the recognition of the already free, happy, blissful, and enlightened state of all humans—to a dark, rule-bound, messianic, "final days" devotional path of avatar worship that promises salvation only to the very few.

Adidam experienced a brief period of notoriety in the 1980s when reporters for the *San Francisco Examiner* discovered several lawsuits that had been quietly filed by disgruntled ex-followers of Jones.[5] The allegations made against Jones in the suits—especially the plausibly documented claims that the guru engaged in prodigious drug and alcohol abuse, mental cruelty, and sexual exploitation of "brainwashed" followers—fired the public imagination for a while. The fact that some of the alleged abuse took place on Naitauba, a private Fijian island that Jones had purchased from the actor Raymond Burr a few years earlier, made the story even better. Coming only six years after the unrelated, but sometimes unfairly linked, Jonestown tragedy, involving another NRM centered in the Bay Area that had fled to a tropical paradise—with disastrous consequences—many imagined that they saw history repeating itself. However, Franklin Jones's loyal followers began a public relations counterattack. While not particularly effective, the response managed to muddy the waters. When it became clear that *this* Jones was unlikely to kill off his followers anytime soon, the public lost interest, and the group slipped back into relative obscurity.

Though Jones once predicted that the entire world would recognize him as the savior by the dawn of the twenty-first century, in fact, his books and his religion remain largely unknown outside esoteric spiritual circles, where Jones is often considered to be a brilliant theoretician of consciousness, though his inflated, exclusivist claims tend to be viewed with considerable skepticism. So despite Adidam's remarkable publication efforts, its "New Age" celebrity endorsements (by Ken Wilber, Larry Dossey, Barbara Marx Hubbard, Israel Regardie, and others), and its occasional public scandal, the group's profile is much lower than that of many less intellectually rigorous NRMs. That this lack of public recognition must be frustrating for a self-proclaimed "World-Teacher" is confirmed by internal Adidam documents leaked on the Internet.[6]

HISTORY OF THE GROUP

The history of Adidam is largely the story of its colorful founder and central figure. Franklin Jones was born on Long Island in November 1939. He spent most of

his outwardly normal childhood in the Queens County town of Franklin Center. However, as his autobiography *The Knee of Listening* makes clear, Franklin was no ordinary child.[7]

Even before his birth, young Jones was conscious of himself simply as "the Bright," a blissful flow of divine energy. In fact, Jones claims that the person of "Franklin Jones" came into existence only when, at the age of two, he was jarred into bodily awareness by the frolicking of a puppy his parents had bought for him. Especially in the later, longer editions of his autobiography, Jones's early inner life is presented as utterly exceptional. Jones remembers vivid dreams from early childhood and reports a continuous experience of enlightenment even as an infant. Lest readers misunderstand, Jones makes it clear that he is not reporting the common early experience of all humans, forgotten as they grow up and are socialized into ordinary consciousness. Jones was uniquely enlightened from birth, an avatar, the unique descent of the divine into a human body, God in our midst.

The big drama of Jones's childhood came when he "surrendered" his enlightened state and began living as an ordinary human being. Just how this worked is unclear, since as he tells it Jones seems to undergo repeated crises of surrendering his enlightened state, just as he later experiences repeated instances of regaining it. In any case, it is clear that Jones's autobiography might best be understood as a kind of autohagiography, since its purpose is to preserve for posterity a sanitized, mythologized, and highly selective account of Jones's life and spiritual adventures.[8]

A striking feature of Jones's autobiography is the intensity of the ups and downs in his life. When not experiencing ecstatic awareness, Jones was often depressed and desperate; he was rarely on an even keel. A good student—he has degrees from Columbia and Stanford—Jones found academic study ultimately meaningless. An early participant in hospital studies of LSD and other hallucinogens, Jones discovered that his psychedelic drug experiences sometimes mimicked the ecstatic states he had known in childhood and was now desperate to recapture. He spent 1963–1964 secluded in remote cabins in northern California working on his experimental writing, which he describes as a method of investigating consciousness, not a technique for producing publishable fiction. During this period of reclusive introspection, Jones was supported by his girlfriend Nina Davis, a woman he later married, establishing a pattern of financial dependence on others that marks all but a few years of his life.

In 1964, Jones began experiencing fragmentary visions of an oriental antique store.[9] He felt compelled to move to New York City, convinced that his guru would be found there, in that store. A few months later, Jones located the store and discovered his first guru: Rudi.

Albert Rudolph (Swami Rudrananda or simply Rudi, d. 1973) was an American original. Though he had been a disciple of several powerful Indian gurus as well as a student of the Gurdjieff work and Subud,[10] he followed and taught a path of his own creation, one that focused on hard work, personal responsibility, and unending spiritual effort. Rudi immediately recognized that Jones needed discipline and required him to become self-supporting before he could be accepted as a student.

Now 24 years old, Jones had never held a job, with the exception of short stints at menial labor. He was sufficiently impressed with Rudi, and especially the "Force" that Rudi transmitted, to settle down and get serious. Jones worked a real job and studied with Rudi for the next three and one-half years.

As Jones described it, Rudi's method of teaching his students was based on unending work (mental, physical, and spiritual) and surrender. Whenever students encountered Rudi outside of meditation class, they were given a task. In Jones's case, the task was often to take out the garbage. This in turn provoked resistance in the students, who were taught to surrender these negative feelings, to become "like smoke."[11] In Rudi's formal periods of instruction, he would transmit what he called "the Force" to his students by staring into their eyes as they sat in meditation.[12] For their part, the students were required to strive to remain open and receptive. Once the Force had become active in students, it would continue to work at all times, as long as they surrendered to the experience.

Jones claims to have had many deep insights and profound experiences during his years with Rudi, but he eventually came to reject his teacher's methods and metaphysical assumptions, especially those regarding work, effort, and the unending nature of the spiritual search. Reading Jones's autobiography, it is easy to feel his frustration with the spiritual search and share his desire for closure. Jones clearly wanted an end to his labors; he longed to enjoy perfect peace, perfect happiness, and perfect ecstasy. According to Rudi, this was impossible.

Nonetheless, Rudi's influence on Jones was so strong that he was able to pressure Franklin into marrying his long-term girlfriend Nina Davis. Rudi even convinced Jones to enroll in a Lutheran seminary, though Jones reported feeling like "an imposter" studying for the ministry. The Force, Rudi argued, was just another name for God. It would be good for Jones to learn to explain his beliefs and spiritual experiences in the language of mainline Protestant Christianity.[13] Both the marriage and the seminary experience ended prematurely—Jones eventually divorced Nina, taking on nine "wives," and he left the seminary at the end of his first year, after a religious breakthrough that Jones himself describes as "surrounded with apparent evidence of a 'clinical breakdown.'"[14] The experience at the seminary also seems to mark the end of Jones's attachment to Rudi and his "muscular" spirituality of effort and endless seeking. The effort that Rudi demanded seemed to Jones to be the very activity that obstructed realization; the method itself ensured that the goal would never be reached. Jones now decided to go directly to the source of the Force—India and Rudi's own teachers, Swami Muktananda and the deceased, but apparently still powerful, Swami Nityananda.

In 1968, when Jones first met Baba Muktananda (1908–1982), the swami was relatively unknown in the West. Muktananda was simply a highly regarded, but obscure, guru with a large following in India. The swami's grand tours of the United States, Australia, and Europe came later, and his alleged sexual and financial exploitation of his followers became well known only after his death.[15] Jones's total time with Muktananda during the visits he made to India over the next few years was remarkably short—just weeks—but the transformation Muktananda produced in

his young disciple was remarkable. Under Muktananda's spiritual guidance, Jones quickly experienced "conditional nirvikalpa samadhi," a state often equated with "enlightenment" in Indian religious texts. (It is the culmination of the fifth of seven stages of life in Jones's typology discussed below.) Jones further experienced the profound awakening of the *kundalini,* a mysterious force that according to esoteric yogic physiology lies latent in the spinal column. The aroused kundalini was to continue its spontaneous transformation of Jones over the next months and years.

The following year, Jones returned to Muktananda's ashram, seeking a "spiritual" name and permission to teach. Muktananda obliged him on both counts, giving him the name Dhyanananda ("bliss of meditation") and a letter conferring the authority to teach kundalini yoga "according to the rules of the lineage."[16] Jones has made much of this letter, having it translated repeatedly through the years. Especially in the earlier translations, the letter is quite unremarkable.[17] Muktananda acknowledges Jones's spiritual accomplishments and authorizes him to teach within his tradition, and that is all. Jones is not hailed as an avatar, sat-guru, or world teacher, and it is not clear if he is even given permission to set up his own organization; most likely Muktananda expected Jones to merely prepare beginners for later work with Muktananda in India. In any case, the letter does refute the claim, made by some critics, that Jones is an entirely self-authorized, independent guru. It is clear that Muktananda recognized Jones as a teacher within his lineage of Siddha Yoga.[18]

The first "final" culmination of Jones's spiritual search occurred on September 10, 1970, the apparent follow-up to a remarkable experience Jones had had on the previous day when he had engaged the goddess Mother-Shakti in ecstatic sexual intercourse in an empty temple on the grounds of the Vedanta Society in Hollywood.[19] In the afterglow of his cosmic union with the goddess, Jones permanently entered *sahaj samadhi.* As he describes it, "I simply sat there and knew what I am. I am Reality, the Self, and Nature and Support of all things and all beings. I am the One Being, known as God, Brahman, Atman, the One Mind, the Self."[20] Jones has described his intimacy with the goddess in ever more grandiose terms over the following years. In some accounts the experience is sublimely spiritual; in others it is crude. For example, in a 1974 talk, Jones bragged, "I fucked her brains loose."[21]

Jones began his formal teaching in 1972, with the opening of his first ashram "Shree Hridayam Satsang" ("The Company of the Heart") in Los Angeles.[22] At this point Jones was apparently modeling his teaching on Rudi's. He emphasized responsibility and work, striving to bring order and stability into his first followers' lives. Jones also began the ongoing practice of recording his talks and conversations with his devotees; much of this early material was later published in a dense book called *The Method of the Siddhas.*[23] In the book, one can see how Jones worked with his followers, leading them in dialogue, undermining their assumptions, and displaying his insights, his humor, and his certitude. Decades later, Jones still comes across well.

In 1973, Jones went to India for a third time, returning as Bubba Free John, a changed man with a strange new name (the first of many) and an equally strange method of teaching. The ashram was soon moved to Lake County, in northern California, where Jones and his followers had purchased a rustic, run-down hot springs

resort complex called Seigler Springs. Jones promptly rechristened the resort Persimmon, in keeping with his practice of bestowing unusual, and often apparently irrelevant, names on his properties. (There were no persimmons at Persimmon.) Jones and his entourage took over the one livable building on the property, while the majority of his followers found housing in San Francisco, several hours away by car. Jones has continued this pattern of living with a small, changing entourage on community-owned retreat properties while the followers make do elsewhere, commuting to the retreat centers for satsang, retreats, and volunteer service on the guru's many projects.

The new teaching phase Jones embarked upon has since become known as the "Garbage and the Goddess" period. In many ways it foreshadows his entire later career. Outwardly, it was a time of unrestrained, antinomian employment of alcohol, tobacco, food, and sex for ostensibly transcendent spiritual purposes, while inwardly devotees reported experiencing huge transmissions of energy from the guru that led to extraordinary states of consciousness. (At the very least, observers reported seeing Jones's devotees writhing, howling, and generally behaving in remarkable ways.)

Several arguments have been made in support of the guru's actions during this time. One is that he was simply shaking his students up, breaking down their false stereotypes of "holiness" and "spirituality."

Another, more problematic claim, made by Jones himself, is that Jones was simply reflecting his students' own desires (for sex, alcohol, tobacco, and meat) back for them to see, so that they would be forced to directly encounter, understand, and ultimately transcend their own futile, hedonistic search for material gratification. As Jones put it,

> What I do is not the way I am, but the way I teach. What I speak is not a reflection of me, but of you. People do well to be offended or even outraged by me. This is my purpose. But their reaction must turn upon themselves, for I have not shown them myself by all of this. All that I do and speak only reveals men to themselves.[24]

This is an interesting postmodern rationalization, but it does not withstand examination. First, Jones was the one who initiated the period of hedonistic excess, not his devotees, most of whom seemed to be settling down comfortably to responsible lives. We have only his word that this "teaching demonstration" was necessary. More significantly, there is a great deal of firsthand evidence, some available as sworn testimony, that Jones not only continued his heavy drinking, binge eating, promiscuous sexual activity, and drug use for decades after the so-called period of Garbage and the Goddess ended, but that he conspired with his inner circle of devotees to hide these activities from outsiders, including new members of Adidam.[25] This is not a teaching demonstration. Then there is the logical problem. If everyone claimed that their behaviors were not their own but merely reflections of the tendencies of others, then no one would ever be responsible for any of their actions.

The most common explanation for Jones's wild excesses, one still favored today in Adidam, is that Jones exemplifies "crazy wisdom" teachings.[26] Devotees make much of this argument and strive unconvincingly to find precedents for Jones's behavior in other religious traditions. Their basic claim is that truly enlightened beings have risen

far above the childish moral rules that govern the lives of ordinary mortals and cannot possibly be limited by them. From the crazy wisdom perspective taught in Adidam, anything goes, so long as it serves to lead devotees to liberation. (Of course, only the omniscient guru can foresee the long-term consequences of his actions. Actions that appear hurtful or cruel to the unenlightened observer might ultimately be of great benefit to the apparent victim.) Furthermore, it is assumed that devotees cannot be liberated as long as they are controlled by ordinary societal inhibitions. (By this flawed reasoning, sociopaths are well on their way to enlightenment.) Adidam's version of crazy wisdom is founded on several dubious presuppositions: (1) that the crazy-wise teacher really is enlightened and not just crazy; (2) that he or she has the best interests of the faithful at heart; (3) that morality is a barrier to liberation that must be surmounted; and (4) that an enlightened guru cannot be corrupted by power, drugs, and sex.

Even those who accept the legitimacy of crazy wisdom often recognize that Jones is not a good representative of that teaching style. In fact, Jones has admitted as much, saying "you cannot make an equation between Me or My kind of Work and all others who may be called 'Crazy' Masters or 'Crazy' Teachers."[27]

The intense inner experiences that Jones was apparently triggering at this time are also highly problematic. Taken at face value, devotees appear to be describing a kind of possession. This is not atypical for the siddha yoga lineage. In *The Knee of Listening,* Jones describes several instances when his body and mind were forcibly taken over by either Muktananda or Nityananda.[28] In Muktananda's autobiography, he too describes powerful experiences of having his mind and body taken over by his guru Nityananda.[29] Here is how Sal Lucania, then a member of Jones's inner circle, describes his ongoing experience of Jones (called Bubba in the passage below) in 1974,

> The most significant thing about this event is that, contrary to the usual beliefs, even of traditional spirituality, the Guru *literally* enters and transforms. It is a kind of possession. It is God-Possession. Bubba animates this body. I feel Him all the time, not as an experience, but *as* Him.[30]

The Garbage and the Goddess period ended as suddenly as it had begun when Jones abruptly reasserted the lifestyle regulations he had discarded a few months earlier. This was the beginning of a pattern that was to continue for decades; periods of strict control and purity would abruptly be replaced by periods of relaxation and "celebration," all governed by the inscrutable and unquestioned whims of the guru. Devotees were kept for years in a state of constant uncertainty by these erratic cycles of pressure and release. Meanwhile Jones did as he pleased, occasionally observing the rules he imposed on others but more often indulging in promiscuous sex and heavy abuse of alcohol, food, and psychoactive drugs.[31]

Jones's frustration with his teaching work was quick to manifest. Much as Jones had demanded an early end to his spiritual search, so he now demanded instant results from his followers. When they failed to display the complete submission he expected, he became angry and abusive. As early as 1974, Jones announced that he

had finished his teaching work and would now enter seclusion, emerging only after his devotees had matured sufficiently to respond to his message. In the following decades, Jones would repeatedly withdraw from public teaching, going into "retreat" with his predominately female entourage, only to emerge months later with a new flurry of activity. Each withdrawal was announced with solemn finality; each return was celebrated, though it eventually became apparent to outside observers, if not Jones's devotees, that no decision Jones makes is ever final.

From the beginning of his teaching career Jones made it difficult for potential critics, rivals, or even followers to meet with him in person. Alan Watts, the then-famous spiritual raconteur, prolific author, and deeply revered mentor to the counterculture, a man much older and more widely respected than Jones, was told that he would have to jump through the same hoops required of any other beginning student before he could meet with the guru.[32] Watts declined.

Jones has made his self-protective seclusion a defining mark of his teaching career. The reasons for this behavior are unclear. The most obvious explanation is that Jones fears that he might fail to measure up to the expectations he has created. What if Watts had met with Jones only to return to San Francisco denouncing Jones as delusional? Clearly that would have been disastrous for the fledgling movement.[33] It is also in Jones's best interest to appear aloof, remote, and distant to his devotees. This allows them to project their fantasies of divinity upon him and dramatically increases the value of every precious moment of contact with their beloved guru. Other charismatic twentieth century religious and even political leaders, ranging from Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Bhagwan Rajneesh to Chairman Mao, have exploited this strategy to good effect.

Another explanation, one favored by Jones's devotees, is that as a supremely enlightened avatar of God, Jones can be approached only by those who have already proven their devotion and respect for his divinity. Jones reinforces this impression by claiming that he is too sensitive to endure the humiliations inflicted upon him by uncaring and inattentive followers.

The closest Jones ever came to inadvertently suggesting an explanation for his aloofness came in this astonishingly unguarded, probably drunken admission, "I've talked to many people. I've talked to many teachers, and none of them agrees with me. They all tell me that I'm mad, that I'm undeveloped. So that must be so."[34]

Whatever the reasons, Jones is one of the few gurus who did not participate in the spiritual free-for-all of the 1970s, when Sikh masters, Sufi pirs, swamis, yogis, roshis, rimpoches, and self-proclaimed gurus of all stripes shared stages and podiums across the United States, debating, proselytizing, and generally bringing color and life to university towns.

In his pursuit of the perfect retreat, Jones acquired a six-acre property on the Hawaiian island of Kauai that he named Tumomama ("Fierce Woman"). A few years later, in 1983, after a long and expensive search, Jones acquired Naitauba, his Fijian island kingdom, now his primary sanctuary. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Jones was on the move again, acquiring a second residence in northern California and severely taxing the resources of his relatively small following.

The most loudly trumpeted event since Jones's initial enlightenment was his so-called "Divine Emergence," the result of an apparent near-death experience Jones had in 1986. As Jones describes it, he was in such despair over the failure of his work that he prayed for an immediate end to the charade. He then died, only to be brought back to life by the anguish and love of his devotees. The result of the experience was that Jones's enlightened consciousness now fully inhabited his body, "down to the bottoms of My feet."[35] As Jones later concluded, his body is now fully divine. "This (My) Body (or bodily human Form) *Is* the Teaching."[36] This new revelation led to an increased emphasis on the worship of Jones's body. Devotees are taught that liberation is to be found only through visualizing, thinking about, viewing, and physically serving Jones's body or its likenesses.

In 1993, Jones revealed that he is the reincarnation of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902). (He had been making veiled references to this possibility for some time.) As he explains it, every human being is composed of gross biological elements, derived from their parents, and subtle spiritual elements that reincarnate from life to life. Jones believes that his own "subtle core" is Swami Vivekananda, the great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886). In a curious incident near the end of his life, Ramakrishna claimed to have transmitted his spiritual power to Vivekananda, leaving nothing for himself. Consequently, Jones believes that he is also in some sense Ramakrishna. Even more mysteriously, Jones seems to suggest that Ramakrishna was originally a reincarnation, or perhaps an emanation, of Jones himself. As the guru puts it:

> I Am the One Who Awakened (and, thereafter, Worked through) Ramakrishna. He Recapitulated the past, in order (by a Spiritual Sacrifice) to Serve the future. I AM the One Who Worked through (and has now Most Perfectly Awakened) Swami Vivekananda. He Served the future, in order (even by physical death and physical rebirth) to Transcend the past (and, Thus, and by Means of a great and Spiritual Awakening, to Bless and to Liberate the future).
>
> Now and forever, Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are One, at the Heart, And I AM the One They have Realized There.[37]

There are several oddities one might recognize in this passage. The most obvious is the strange capitalization. It is a characteristic of all of Jones's later writings.[38] He claims a spiritual purpose for this practice. Ostensibly it serves to undercut the "egoic" focus of his readers, though there appears to be little coherence to the method. (For example, why capitalize "Thus"?) More practically, it serves to alienate casual readers. It does not, in this author's opinion, serve Jones well, and it certainly does not expand his readership.

A second oddity one might notice is the dualism of the language. For someone whose central realization is the oneness of Reality, Jones seems at great pains to emphasize himself in contrast to everyone else. Few writers use "I" and "Me" more frequently and enthusiastically than Jones, though he occasionally qualifies the apparent egotism by pointing out that his readers are really Him anyway, whether they know it yet or not.[39]

Other oddities include the legalism of Jones's wording and the constant restatement he employs. Parenthetical synonyms and paraphrases, following and ostensibly

clarifying nearly every statement, have been an increasingly prominent feature of Jones's writing since the 1980s. His most recent work reads like highly esoteric legal documents or perhaps the fine print at the bottom of a very strange credit card bill.

The year 2000 was momentous for Jones. He was not recognized by the entire world, contrary to expectations, and he died again. With this new death, Jones's divinity ascended from the bottoms of his feet to rest above his head, returning to where it had been before the Divine Emergence of 1986. This return was necessary, Jones claimed, because he was beset by "dark forces" that could no longer be allowed into his body. Rumor has it that Jones was suffering from anxiety attacks and was put on tranquilizers by his physicians.[40]

Jones also broke precedent when he actively recruited the following of the late "Zen Master Rama" (aka Frederick Lenz, 1950–1998) after the latter's highly sedated death by drowning. Lenz's followers were widely admired for their success in business and computing and represented quite an attractive potential "catch." From all reports, Jones pulled out all the stops, giving immediate satsang to Lenz's followers and inviting some directly into his inner circle, thereby deeply offending his own long-suffering devotees, who felt that their years of service were being slighted and overlooked. Jones also proclaimed that Lenz, safely dead, had been a reincarnation of Swami Ramatirtha, a disciple of Vivekananda. Since Jones claims to be a reincarnation of Vivekananda, that makes Lenz a disciple of Jones (once removed) and implies that Lenz's followers are reconnecting with their guru's guru when they join Adidam. Making matters much worse, Lenz's followers in Jones's inner circle then instituted a complete news blackout, cutting off the steady stream of rumors on which Adidam thrives. It was a bad year.

The most interesting news that has emerged from Adidam recently concerns Jones's attempts to establish himself as an art photographer. Jones has mounted several exhibitions of his monumental collage-like compositions. Some of the images are available online.[41]

PEOPLE

Franklin Jones is the only leader of Adidam, though he is surrounded by an inner circle of highly committed devotees who implement his directives. By all accounts, Jones is a "hands-on" manager, making final decisions on matters ranging from ashram finances to the capitalization and punctuation of the published transcripts of his talks. Though his communities are governed by a board of directors and administered as tax-exempt trusts, the sworn testimony of former highly placed followers suggests that Jones maintains absolute, if indirect control over every aspect of Adidam.[42]

Although Jones is remarkably well protected—it is virtually impossible for outsiders even to glimpse, much less meet, him—he needs an inner circle of devotees to provide for his many needs and manage his complex organization. Adidam's inner circle is composed of individuals who have managed to distinguish themselves from

the rank-and-file devotees by their exceptional obedience, enthusiasm, and willingness to believe. Once invited into this select group, they are tested again and again until Jones is sure that they can be trusted with his secrets. This process has been described in some detail by several former insiders in accounts available on the Internet.[43] Consequently, Jones is surrounded by a loyal core of supporters who do a great deal of hard work transforming the apparently rather ordinary events of Jones's life into a spiritual drama of cosmic proportions.[44] This great drama is then reported to the devotees on the fringes of the inner circle, who then magnify and elaborate the tales for those even further removed from the guru.

Although those closest to Jones are often targets of his abuse and manipulation, his followers are not simply victims. Devotees play key roles in the organization. They reinforce Jones's rules and regulations, they discipline the wavering, they collect the tithes, they run the centers—giving inspirational talks and leading services—and ultimately they give tangible form to the mystique that Jones has worked to cultivate. Ex-followers generally agree that Jones's most surrendered devotees play critical roles in maintaining the peer pressure that keeps the organization intact, that keeps new followers fascinated, and that makes satsang with the master so desired by all.

Information, usually expressed as gossip about Jones and his closest devotees, serves as a kind of currency within Adidam, giving status and authority to its purveyors. Proximity to the guru is not only thought to be spiritually beneficial, it also provides greater access to information and therefore status and power within the community. Those relatively close to the guru always want to draw closer, while those farther away often strive to prove their devotion so that they may one day join the elite. Once one has finally gotten close to the guru and is in a position to see the very human ways in which he actually behaves, there are strong incentives to suppress all one's doubts, to deny or reinterpret disturbing incidents, and to strenuously reaffirm the guru's unique divinity even (and especially) when the clear evidence of one's senses goes directly against the claim. So even if those closest to Jones were to decide their guru is not, in fact, the "First, Last, and Only Adept-Revealer (or Siddha) of the seventh stage of life," they would not be able to proclaim this insight without destroying the status and position that they have sacrificed years or even decades of their lives to attain. Having invested so much of their lives, energy, and love in Adidam, it is especially traumatic for insiders to break free of the organization.

Sociologists of religion often assert that charisma, rather than being a mysterious spiritual power emanating from leaders, is, in fact, a creation of the faith, hope, love, and spiritual aspirations of devout followers, who project idealized virtues upon the object(s) of their devotion. While members of Adidam would reject this analysis, it is clear that without his devotees Jones would find himself in very different circumstances.

In keeping with this control of his organization, Jones has also attempted to establish mechanisms to manage his spiritual legacy for centuries after his eventual death. In a novel legal move, Jones has claimed "perpetual copyright" on all his books and audiovisual materials and has begun releasing "New Standard Editions" of his most important "source texts."[45] Additionally, Jones has permanently "empowered" his

community's sacred sites, so that his spiritual blessing will be available forever to present and future devotees.

In the 1970s members of the Dawn Horse Communion were filled with expectations that they would soon be fully enlightened, enjoying their natural state of spontaneous joy and liberation. That expectation of immanent release has been replaced by a much more modest hope for eventual salvation through complete devotion to the bodily image of Jones. According to Jones's later teaching, none of his disciples will ever become fully autonomous, independent gurus; instead, at some future date, he will recognize several of his most advanced devotees as *murti,* a Sanskrit term for "image" that is commonly used to refer to empowered statues of Hindu gods. These "Living Murtis" will apparently be empty human vessels filled with Jones's *shakti,* or spiritual energy. After Jones has died, the Living Murtis will be worshipped as Jones's proxies, ensuring that the avatar's blessing will continue to be available in this world of darkness.

Scholars of religion have long observed that NRMs are especially vulnerable when their founders die.[46] This is a "make or break" moment for many groups, when ambitious followers compete to assume the status and position of the former charismatic leader. Only the strongest new religions come through this process intact. Jones is aware of this and seems intent on creating a legacy that will be preserved, without any change whatsoever, for all eternity. He has decided that he will have no real successors, only empty shells filled with his spiritual transmission. No new theology will be created, no new practices will be introduced, and the teachings will not evolve with the times.

In actual fact, Jones does not have that much control. At least one former member of Jones's inner circle has already established a competing organization, and more are likely to follow.[47] Another lesson from religious studies that Jones seems to be ignoring is that fossilized traditions have little vitality, gain few new followers, and soon die.

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The early beliefs of Adidam were largely derived from Advaita Vedanta and the Kundalini Yoga of Swami Muktananda. Jones has always claimed that his teachings come directly from his personal experiences, but it is obvious to outside observers that Jones has drawn extensively from his wide reading in world religions.[48]

In contrast to the theism of western traditions, Adidam presupposes an "eastern" view of divinity and accepts the concepts of karma, reincarnation, chakras, auras, and the like almost without comment. God, or the divine, is a principle and energy, a consciousness that predates the creation but is not a willful creator itself or a being to be worshipped. "Gods" are largely irrelevant to the spiritual process, though the divine *Kundalini Shakti,* a spiritual energy often symbolically represented as a "goddess," is foundational to the awakening of the disciple. The focus of devotion is Jones, the guru, an enlightened source of power and awakening who serves as a gateway to the divine. Through serving the guru and sitting in his presence (*satsang* in

Adidam's terminology), the devotee's consciousness is gradually transformed in the image of the guru's.

The purpose of human existence is enlightenment, an awakening to ultimate reality that is the natural state of all human beings. Because of the widespread ignorance and delusion of the human race, nearly all humans are oblivious to their true nature and therefore believe themselves to be limited, suffering individuals. The basic mechanism creating suffering is a fundamental contraction at the core of every individual's being, lying somewhere below the normal level of conscious awareness. This contraction cuts humans off from experiencing their true nature, condemning them to the endless seeking and self-contemplation symbolized by the myth of Narcissus. While seeking is necessary at the beginning level of spiritual life, it is ultimately seen to be the fundamental obstacle preventing true realization. Paradoxically, the natural, always existing, and therefore already present enlightened state can be intuited only when humans are no longer seeking it. The contraction and self-consciousness symbolized by Narcissus is revealed in nearly every aspect of the seeker's life, but especially expressed in the avoidance of relationships (with others, with the world, with life energy, and especially with the guru). The key to dissolving the ongoing process of contraction is "understanding," a direct liberating insight into the mechanism of contraction. Since seeking itself is the problem, this insight cannot be achieved through effort or will, but can arrive only through grace, understood as a kind of direct transmission from the guru to his open-hearted, fully surrendered disciple. Therefore proximity to the guru, the source of grace and enlightenment, becomes a primary goal for the sincere aspirant.

The main early practice enjoined by the young guru was for his followers to sit in his presence. This "satsang" would automatically lead to spiritual development. When Jones was not available, devotees were to sit in meditation before an officially authorized picture of Jones, himself in meditation, while contemplating the koan-like question "avoiding relationship?" Over time, understanding, a western analogue to the Sanskrit term *jnana,* or direct insight, was expected to develop naturally.

The upbeat tone of the early *sadhana,* or spiritual practice, of the community is revealed in this quote from 1974:

> To be free is the ultimate discipline. Sadhana is not to go through this weary self-discipline, self-limitation, self-frustration, in which you are endlessly learning all kinds of bullshit lessons. The discipline is happiness. The discipline is freedom. To live in this free state under all conditions is sadhana… Sadhana is life in the condition of Truth. So sadhana has nothing whatever to do with the cultic solemnities of traditional spirituality. Sadhana has to do with continuous happiness, continuous bliss, continuous freedom, continuous Satsang. To live Satsang under all conditions is the discipline of our work.[49]

Thirty years later, the preferred descriptive term in Adidam for the spiritual path its members follow is "Ishta-Guru-Bhakti Yoga." Ishta is the Sanskrit word denoting one's chosen deity, so basically what this phrase means is "the yoga (spiritual practice) of worshiping one's chosen deity-guru (namely Franklin Jones)." Despite strenuous attempts to argue for the uniqueness of this practice, it sounds a great deal like

standard Indian *bhakti,* or devotional worship. As of 2001, here is how Jones describes the method and goal of Ishta-Guru-Bhakti Yoga:

> Bring your bodies and minds to Me, as I bring this body-mind to you. Then you will be given the Realization of My All-Pervading Person, and you will find Me always present under the conditions of all experience and in the company of all beings. Then even when I am not bodily with you, you will worship Me and surrender to Me via every state of body and mind, and I will always be with you. At last, you will be drawn into the Eternal Identity, so intimate with Me that no essential difference is noticed by you. Then you will Abide in Me forever…[50]

Both the goal and method advocated here seem significantly different from the radical understanding Jones taught in the 1970s, though hints of this guru-centered devotional faith were present in Jones's early lectures.

As the decades have passed, Jones has gone from being a kind of spiritual elder brother, albeit a very powerful, all-knowing, and controlling one, to a remote god-like being, worshipped with increasingly formulaic rituals and strict ceremonial protocol. Many of his current formal disciples—those who have passed through the rigorous financial and psychological screening required for new members of Adidam—have had very little personal contact with the guru. Few display familiarity with the movement's past controversies and the accompanying exposés in the media.

Much of Jones's intellectual credibility comes from his map of the states of human psycho/spiritual development. Jones's typology of the seven stages of development, while not entirely original, has impressed a number of readers. For example, Ken Wilber, the noted theoretician of all things transpersonal, spent much of his early writing career reworking and expanding Jones's insights.[51]

According to Jones's system, the first three stages are devoted to the development of the physical, emotional-sexual, and mental functions of the body-mind. Most humans partially master these basic levels more or less automatically as they grow to adulthood and psychological maturity, though they rarely progress beyond or even fully develop them. Jones suggests that adolescents could master these rudimentary stages though "devotion to the bodily (human) Form of the Sat-Guru."[52]

Profound spiritual life starts only in the fourth stage with the awakening of full-hearted surrender to God. This is the stage where Jones places most of the great saints of the world's religions. (One of the ways Jones uses the seven-stage typology is to classify, and subtly denigrate, the experiences and realizations of spiritual rivals, past and present.)

The fifth stage is one of ascent, the stage reached by great yogis who rise above the body-mind into realms of bliss, culminating in *nirvikalpa samadhi,* a temporary state of enlightenment. Mastery of the fifth stage is rare, and fifth-stage saints, like Swami Muktananda, are impressive beings, according to Jones, even though they have not reached the peak of spiritual development.

The sixth stage is marked by the death of the ego. In this stage the separate sense of self is completely transcended, and life is experienced from the perspective of the transcendental "witness consciousness." According to Jones, this state is incomplete,

because it neglects the outer world; the sixth-stage saint identifies completely with consciousness to the exclusion of all external reality.

The seventh stage has been fully attained only by Jones, though certain spiritual geniuses—Ramana Maharshi is sometimes cited—have intuited premonitions of it.[53] In this ultimate state, the "individual recognizes everything as a modification of the Radiant Transcendental Being … the world is recognized as continuously arising in the Ultimate Being, which is co-essential with the absolute Self-Identity … That is the Disposition of Sahaj Samadhi or native Ecstasy."[54]

Jones describes sahaj samadhi, the end goal of the seven-stage process, as a permanent, natural background state of "open-eyed" ecstasy. Curiously, sahaja samadhi is well attested in the yogic literature. For example, it is the primary goal of the Bauls, a loosely organized brotherhood of itinerant musician/ascetics from Bengal whose practices and beliefs are drawn from both mystical Islam and tantric Hinduism, yet Jones portrays it as his own exclusive state. "I Am the First and Last seventh stage Adept to Appear in the human domain (and in the Cosmic Domain of all and All). It is neither possible nor necessary for another seventh stage Adept To Appear anywhere."[55]

Like everything else in Adidam, the lifestyle practices of the group have changed through the decades. In the early 1970s, Jones seemed most concerned with creating a stable, mature "spiritual culture." To this end, he required his followers to submit to a series of experiments in diet, fasting, and sexual regulation. At times his devotees were expected to adhere closely to a strict raw foods or vegetarian regime—practicing complete abstinence from caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, and all psychoactive drugs—while at other times these regulations were dropped to allow Jones to preside over wild, drunken parties. (Jones himself rarely practiced the dietary and lifestyle rules he prescribed.) Devotees were expected to follow a detailed fasting schedule and at certain stages of membership practice celibacy. At other stages, responsible, mature sexuality was enjoined; this loosely translated into exuberant promiscuity. Perhaps the single most important regulation for followers was that they work steady jobs and tithe a significant percentage of their pretax earnings to the community. (The current tithe is 15 percent, though additional monthly and annual fees are levied, and pleas for special contributions are frequently made.)

As the decades have passed, the rules and regulations governing the lives of practitioners of Adidam have grown increasingly elaborate and onerous. Virtually no aspect of life seems outside the guru's control; at one point he even instructed his followers in proper flossing technique. In addition to all the mundane rules, devotees observe a busy spiritual schedule of daily chanting, hatha yoga, ritual worship (puja) of the guru's images, journal writing, and meditation. Despite the group's infamous history, the lives of its current members, outside the guru's inner circle, are sober, restrained, and basically conventional. Ordinary members live routinized, rule-bound lives that are largely indistinguishable from those of the members of any high-demand religious movement.

In keeping with the routinized, exoterically demanding daily practices of Adidam, it has become incredibly difficult to enjoy the guru's satsang. The current

probationary process takes at least 9–12 months to complete and requires a significant academic, temporal, financial, and devotional investment. The following ten steps are the minimal requirements that must be met before new students are eligible to receive the avatar's spiritual transmission:

1. Take the introductory "First Word" course.
2. Take the Pre-student course, "The Only Truth That Sets The Heart Free" ($350.00 cost).
3. Sign and return copy of "Sacred Agreement."
4. Sign and return notarized copy of "Membership Agreement."
5. Sign and return notarized copy of "Legal Release form."
6. Sign and return copy of "Health & Life Circumstance Questionnaire."
7. Sign and return copy of "Form to calculate tithe."
8. Receive a physical examination, including blood work.
9. Take the MMPI Psychological evaluation test.
10. Take the student beginner vow.

After this exacting preparation, it is easy to imagine that student expectations would be high by the time they experience their first satsang with the man they believe to be the world savior. Most of the reports available suggest that new devotees generally have very positive first experiences sitting before the man they believe to be God. Even those who have subsequently gone on to reject Jones and his teachings often claim to have been deeply impressed by his show of apparent power in their first meetings. It is only later, sometimes much later, that they report realizing that there is a vast discrepancy between what Jones teaches and what he actually does in the privacy of his retreat centers. Curiously, many apostates, including some of Jones's fiercest critics, believe that Jones displays real power. Determining precisely what the source and nature of that power might be is a recurring, unresolved endeavor that drives much of the ongoing debate about Adidam on the Internet. While it is tempting to speculate that the "power" Jones displays is simply the product of the expectations, hopes, and projections of his eager and emotionally primed devotees—skillfully choreographed by a psychologically astute, manipulative guru—many disillusioned former followers reject this common-sense explanation.

CONTROVERSIES AND ISSUES

As already indicated, Adidam is a highly problematic group, with most of the controversy centered on Jones's "crazy-wise" teachings, spiritual pretensions, growing eccentricity, and unethical behaviors.

The lawsuits of the mid-1980s were settled out of court, reportedly with cash payments to the plaintiffs who then signed confidentiality agreements. The full story may never be known, though the sworn affidavits of the plaintiffs are available online at the Daism Research Index. The charges are horrifying and, if true, provide a

cautionary picture of what can happen when a brilliant manipulator who truly believes that he is god acquires unquestioning followers who are willing to obey his every command.

Another cautionary lesson emerges from the effusive endorsements given to Jones by Watts, Wilber, and other popular writers on eastern and New Age spiritual topics who were so taken by Jones's transcribed talks and written essays that they concluded that he must be an "enlightened being." (Wilber has since amended his assessment of Jones.) The problem seems to lie in equating brilliant language and intellectual insight with spiritual realization. Additionally, Watts and Wilber appear to have been misled by the related assumption that one cannot talk or write convincingly about deep spiritual realization without actually having experienced it. Wilber also seems to believe that anyone experiencing him/herself as god must also be a decent human being. These assumptions are obviously false. That said, a number of students of religion find Jones to be fascinating, precisely because of the contradictions he embodies.

When it comes to eccentricity, Jones has few rivals. Recognizing no intellectual or spiritual equals, accepting no criticism, and living in isolation, surrounded by a protective circle of sycophants, Jones has allowed his whims free reign. Judging from how he chooses to present himself to the world in his writing and Web sites, Jones has lost all sense of effective public relations.[56] In an especially misguided move, Jones has been rewriting his earlier books, reissuing them in New Standard Editions. The prose of the New Standard Editions is dreadful; once entertaining books have become nearly unreadable and—even worse—boring. This project seems likely to destroy any positive literary legacy Jones might hope to leave.

The Internet poses both opportunities and challenges for NRMs. Adidam is not faring as well as its detractors in this new medium. Ex-members and critics of Adidam have been very successful in placing their critiques and exposés, along with a great deal of supporting documentary evidence, on the Internet.[57] In comparison, Adidam sites do not appear to be effective recruiting tools. The photographs on official Adidam sites show Jones looking old, dissipated, and miserable, yet the sites gush about his supremely attractive divine form and unearthly physical beauty. The quotations Jones provides are similarly jarring, "The only-by-Me Revealed and Given Way of Adidam is a Free Gift. But It is a Gift that Flows in the heart-relationship that exists between Me and each of My true devotees."[58] Casual readers must be baffled.

Observers have long remarked on Adidam's complete disinterest in charitable activities. While Jones constantly demands more money and gifts for his pleasure, he has made no efforts to engage in social service of any sort, unless one counts his four private zoos. While many new religions place more resources into institution building than charitable outreach, especially in their first years, Adidam is extreme in this regard.

Perhaps the biggest current problem in Adidam lies in Jones's attitudes towards his followers. Jones seems to have decided that his devotees are hopelessly inept. Much as the members of Adidam project every positive spiritual ideal on Jones, he seems to project every possible failing or weakness on them. They have failed to bring him

world recognition and famous new devotees; they have even failed to become rich and successful. Therefore Jones feels financial constraints. The world teacher has been reduced to conducting high-pressure fund drives amongst the faithful just to meet his expenses. In consequence, Jones has been lashing out with increasing ferocity. Not surprisingly, as Jones gets more critical and demanding, his surrendered devotees, convinced that Jones is always right, become more insecure, more self-doubting, more tentative, in fact, more inept. As the devotees become paralyzed by devastatingly low self-esteem, Jones becomes ever more convinced that they have failed him and his divine mission. Jones and his devotees appear trapped in a destructive, self-perpetuating cycle.

FUTURE

The future of Adidam is in question. Jones appears to be in mental and physical decline. His cutting sense of humor has become dulled; he rants where once he entertained. In talk after talk, he berates his followers, blaming them for the failure of his world-saving mission, oblivious to his own pivotal role in his religion's stagnation. Jones's frustration, anger, and megalomania are transparent:

> So far, the organization has zero signs. Devotees are frightened. You are afraid to stand up for the Truth, so you are giving people no alternative. I'm not here to be a joke. I'm here to actually get people out of their stupidity … You are so ambiguous as a gathering and a culture—it's incomprehensible …
>
> In your weak-minded approach, I end up being ignored. You must have concrete gifts to give Me … You have to vigorously counter the growing sentiment against gurus, which is fueled by the anti-cult movement …
>
> How can there possibly be zero growth, with all the Gifts I have Given? There is no way, with all the Gifts I have Given, that you couldn't succeed, unless you are hiding behind some kind of false belief, some lack of doing … Because you are all so weak-minded, after 30 years of resisting your responsibility, you are satisfied with maintaining a social and phony scene that defeats everything real. Serious practice is not engaged.[59]

Jones's followers appear exhausted and many have become impoverished due to the religion's insatiable financial demands; for a supposed "renunciate," the guru is extremely high maintenance. Their self-confidence cannot be strong after enduring years of abuse and belittlement from a man they believe to be omniscient. Many of the organization's members entered Adidam directly from the spiritual counterculture that has flourished over the last three decades, so they have never had the opportunity to develop remunerative careers. Few have made preparations for retirement. And according to Jones, none of them are enlightened.

Jones believes that after his death his books, his "empowered" retreats, and his Living Murtis will continue the process of world transformation he has initiated. Ironically, in the 1970s Jones ridiculed groups that revered deceased founders and prophets. "Dead gurus can't kick ass," was his refrain. Yet even while living, Jones has been unable to attract more than 1,000 committed individuals to his religion at any one time. Once he is gone it is hard to imagine that the rigid, dogmatic,

institutionalized structure he has created to represent him in perpetuity will do much better.

Unreadable books and strange Web sites do not attract new followers. (Even good Web sites do not appear to be effective recruiting tools for most religious movements.) Exhausted, burned-out, unhappy, insecure devotees are not effective proselytizers either. By encouraging devotees to live together, Jones has ensured that they have few friends and little influence outside Adidam. Their ability to attract new followers is limited.

The Internet has become a powerful forum for critics of Adidam. Jones clearly still exerts a fascination for many with only brief experience of him. Huge amounts of energy have been expended trying to determine the source of his appeal and apparent power. According to a number of critics, Jones is a textbook narcissist, displaying all the defining characteristics of Narcissistic Personality Disorder as described in the DSM-IV, a standard psychiatric diagnostic manual, yet simple narcissism may not fully explain Jones's vast literary output, theological creativity, and constant reinvention. Adidam may survive longer as a case study of a new religion gone wrong than as a living faith.

CONCLUSION

The religion of Adidam is doctrinally complex, confused, and confusing. Though it claims great originality, it appears to have been artfully assembled from bits and pieces of preexisting traditions. As such it is an accurate reflection of the thought of Franklin Jones, its founder, ultimate authority, guru, and god.

Like many NRMs, Adidam appears strange when viewed from outside; however, again like many contemporary faiths, once its basic assumptions are accepted, it displays a measure of internal consistency. Simply described, Adidam is an exclusivist devotional religion based on the worship of Franklin Jones. In theory, practice, and theology it now differs little from traditional Indian guru bhakti, in its most sectarian forms. If one accepts that Jones is divine—the avatar for this age, the "First, Last and Only seventh-stage Adept Realizer," omniscient and infallible—and that all of Jones's actions serve to benefit his followers by leading them to eventual awakening, then the rest of the religion follows, more or less rationally. Of course, this stripped down version of Adidam is neither interesting nor attractive. Perhaps that is why the religion is rarely presented this way. If the religion now offers little that is profound, what about its founder?

Jones's life has been distinguished by the search for permanence, perfection, and control: perfect, permanent enlightenment, perfect sex partners, perfect devotees, perfect isolation, the perfect tropical retreat. Now he is trying to establish the perfect teachings and the perfect legacy, to last for all time. By some standards, Jones has been successful: He owns a 3,500-acre tropical island and three other beautiful retreat centers. He lives like a king and is worshipped as a god. He has reputedly slept with hundreds of women. He has claimed perpetual copyright on his massive corpus of books and has placed his art in galleries. He has even had his four-hour long

dramatic piece "The Mummery" produced on several occasions (to reviews that would devastate a mere mortal). However, Jones seems miserable, frustrated, and humorless, a far cry from the wild, ecstatic, laughing visionary who started the religion more than three decades ago.

Perhaps Jones himself has already provided the key to understanding the complex, contradictory, and ultimately mind-numbing religion he has created. Since he always demands the final word, he will get it here, "I've talked to many people. I've talked to many teachers, and none of them agrees with me. They all tell me that I'm mad, that I'm undeveloped. So that must be so."[60]

NOTES

1. http://www.adidam.org/adi_da/promised_god-man/index.html.

2. The one constant in Jones's names over the past two decades is Da, which occurs in nearly every one of his recent titles. Jones asserts that Da is an ancient word meaning "the Giver." Based on the Sanskrit consonant and accompanying vowel with which the title is often written, it should be pronounced closer to "Duh" than the English Da, though this is probably not Jones's intent.

3. Saniel Bonder, *The Divine Emergence of the World-Teacher: The Realization, the Revelation, and the Revealing Ordeal of Heart-Master Da Love-Ananda, a Biographical Celebration* (Clear Lake, CA: Dawn Horse Press, 1990), 167.

4. See http://www.kheper.net/topics/gurus/Problems_with_Adi_Da.html. Jones does assert that others can reach the seventh stage of realization, the highest goal of the spiritual path, but only by a process in which they take on his qualities through a kind of self-emptying that sounds almost like possession.

5. For an example of the lurid media coverage see "'Sex Slave' Sues Guru," *San Francisco Chronicle,* April 4, 1985, A16. The text of the article is archived at http://lightmind.com/thevoid/daism/sfchron-04.html.

6. Nearly all inside information regarding Adidam is withheld from the public; the group has been especially sensitive about public exposure since the scandals of the mid-1980s and releases only highly sanitized (and mythologized) versions of its own history. However, from time to time internal documents are leaked to individuals who post the material on the Internet. Though most of the leaked material is plausible, and some of it is almost certainly legitimate, by its very nature it cannot be definitively confirmed. The various "Daism Reports" (example: http://www.lightmind.com/thevoid/daismreport-06.html) use alleged internal documents to paint an especially dark picture of the mental state of a frustrated, peevish World-Teacher suffering the long-term consequences of decades of binge eating, heavy drinking, smoking, and drug abuse. If true, it appears that Jones has developed arteriosclerosis and relies on prescription antidepressants to cope with daily annoyances.

7. Franklin Jones, *The Knee of Listening* (Los Angeles: Dawn Horse Press, 1973).

8. Just how selective the retelling is can be seen in Jones's treatment of his experiences as a Scientologist. In the original manuscript of *Knee,* Jones's nearly year-long, full-time involvement with Scientology (he passed through "Clear" and several subsequent "O.T. levels") was given an entire chapter. In the first published edition of *Knee,* a 271-page text, this was cut to a few hundred words. In subsequent editions, Jones deleted all mention of Scientology, despite the fact that so much new material was added to the book that it eventually tripled

in length; the newest version is 840 pages long. For the original chapter, see http://beezone.com/WaterNarcisuss/scientology.html. The beezone.com site contains a remarkable number of texts by and about Jones and is well worth exploring.

9. Jones places a great deal of emphasis on his dreams and visions, which seems curious since he denies the ultimate validity of all yogic states and denigrates the visionary experiences of others.

10. Georges I. Gurdjieff (1866–1949) was an enigmatic, controversial, and deliberately mysterious spiritual teacher who flourished in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century; his intellectual influence on subsequent western esotericism has been enormous, if poorly documented. Subud, founded by Bapak Subuh, an Indonesian mystic, is an intentionally low profile, diffusely organized spiritual movement that has almost no intellectual content; instead, its simple practice is focused on the transmission of spiritual energy.

11. Adi Da, *The Knee of Listening: The Early Life Ordeal and the Radical Spiritual Realization of the Divine World Teacher,* New Standard Edition (Middletown, CA: Dawn Horse Press), 152.

12. Rudi's use of "the Force" as the term for this spiritual energy long predates George Lucas's *Star Wars* movie franchise.

13. Jones, *Knee,* 170–173.

14. Ibid., 196. Jones claims that this experience, diagnosed by a psychiatrist as an anxiety attack, was the "death of Narcissus," a breakthrough into "unqualified Consciousness Itself."

15. See William Rodarmor, "The Secret Life of Swami Muktananda," *CoEvolution Quarterly* no. 40 (Winter 1983): 104_111. The complete text of the article is archived at http://www.leavingsiddhayoga.net/secret.htm.

16. Translations of this letter are provided in many Dawn Horse Press publications. For an example, see Da Free John, *The Dawn Horse Testament of Heart-Master Da Free John* (San Rafael, CA: Dawn Horse Press, 1985), 28.

17. With each translation, the letter becomes more effusive in its praise of Jones's spiritual accomplishments and more convoluted in its syntax. The recent version provided in the New Standard Edition of *Knee* reads exactly as if Jones had written it himself. See Jones, *Knee,* 252–255.

18. It is less clear why anyone would want Muktananda's imprimatur, given what is now known about the fallen swami. Whatever his initiatory power, a great deal of evidence suggests that Muktananda was deeply corrupted by his desires for money, control, and sex. To get a feel for Muktananda's methods of operation, see www.leavingsiddhayoga.net.

19. Da Free John, *Testament,* 34–35. It is hard to know how literally Jones wishes this claim to be taken. One might be safe in assuming that Jones is describing a vivid dream or some sort of visionary experience. After all, it was in Hollywood, one of the homes of virtual reality.

20. Jones, *Knee,* 1st ed., 134–135. This passage has been significantly modified in later editions of *Knee,* with the addition of quotation marks, new capitalization, and extensive parenthetical material. For an example, see the 1995 New Standard Edition (popular format) of *Knee,* 357.

21. Bubba Free John, *Garbage and the Goddess: The Last Miracles and Final Spiritual Instructions of Bubba Free John,* ed. Sandy Bonder and Terry Patten (Lower Lake, CA: Dawn Horse Press, 1974), 107.

22. Da Free John, *Testament,* 44. The name of the ashram was soon changed to the Dawn Horse Communion.

23. Franklin Albert Jones, *The Method of the Siddhas* (Los Angeles: Dawn Horse Press, 1973).
24. Bubba Free John, *The Enlightenment of the Whole Body* (Middletown, CA: Dawn Horse Press, 1978), 53.
25. See testimony of Beverly O'Mahony archived on the Daism Research Index site, http://lightmind.com/library/daismfiles/omahony.html.
26. For a deeper discussion of this issue, see Georg Feuerstein, *Holy Madness* (New York: Paragon House, 1991).
27. Bonder, *Emergence,* 302.
28. Example, see Jones, *Knee,* 1st ed., 92–93.
29. Swami Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness* (South Fallsburg, NY: Syda Foundation, 1987), 52–54.
30. Bubba Free John, *Garbage,* 151.
31. As already noted, Jones has done a good job of covering his tracks; however, an increasing number of former followers have dared to break the silence. Firsthand descriptions of Jones's sexual predations and prodigious drug consumption are now posted on the Internet. The accounts are persuasive. For a start, read the material archived on the Daism Research Index site, http://lightmind.com/library/daismfiles/.
32. And this after Watts had recognized Jones as an avatar, providing a quote to that effect that the Dawn Horse Press still uses on occasion. The effrontery of the demand must have struck Watts, a proper Englishman, as galling.
33. Given that Watts was nobody's fool, it might well have happened.
34. Bubba Free John, *Garbage,* 106–107. The candor of Jones's remarks in *Garbage and the Goddess* were presumably a motivating factor in Adidam's late 1970s attempt to recall and burn every existing copy of the book.
35. Bonder, *Emergence,* 265.
36. Ibid., 38. Punctuation, capitalization, underlining, and italics are all in the original.
37. Jones, *Knee,* New Standard Edition, 1995, 557.
38. In the text (but not the title) of Da Free John, *The Dawn Horse Testament,* the initial letter of nearly every word is capitalized. Later writings show the more erratic capitalization that now marks Jones's prose.
39. One need not be a Jungian to detect evidence of "inflation" in Jones's pronouncements.
40. http://www.lightmind.com/library/daismfiles.
41. http://www.daplastique.com/.
42. For an example, see the declaration of Patricia Masters (1985) given in the Superior Court of the State of California in Marin County, http://lightmind.com/library/daismfiles/masters.html.
43. For one account, see http://lightmind.com/thevoid/daism/lifeonnaitauba.html.
44. Jones's several "death" experiences provide a clear illustration of this process and demonstrate that even a simple anxiety attack can be turned into a spiritual resurrection of cosmic import if retold repeatedly with sufficient devotion, credulity, and imagination.
45. Perhaps the most bizarre aspect of this new publication effort—even stranger than releasing "new standard" versions of books that Jones had written and published with his own press only a few years earlier—comes from the claim that a new edition of his autobiography was required because the first edition had been truncated to half its original length "after consultation with the publisher." All of Jones works are self-published by the Dawn Horse Press, a press over which he has complete control.

46. On the course of movements after founders die, see Timothy Miller, ed., *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

47. Saniel Bonder, author of *Emergence,* has created his own path to liberation and appears to be successful, having authorized a number of coteachers and potential successors. See www.wakingdown.org.

48. For years, Jones has promised to release a final version of his *Basket of Tolerance,* an annotated bibliography of what he considers the world's greatest spiritual texts. The earliest versions of this bibliography were massive, demonstrating that Jones is extraordinarily well read in the literature of the world's religions, especially Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity.

49. Bubba Free John, *Garbage,* 9.

50. Jones, *Knee,* 522–523.

51. Critics of Wilber have often wondered why he allows the Dawn Horse Press to continue using the hyperbolic jacket blurbs he wrote for Jones in the 1980s. These samples of Wilber's prose are representative: "Adi Da's teaching is, I believe, unsurpassed by that of any other spiritual Hero, of any period, of any place, of any time, of any persuasion," and "… he is the first Western Avatar to appear in the history of the world … His teaching contains the most concentrated wealth of transcendent wisdom found anywhere, I believe, in the spiritual literature of the world, modern or ancient, Eastern or Western."

52. Bonder, *Emergence,* 466.

53. Before the 1990s, Jones recognized a number of historical and semilegendary spiritual luminaries as "seventh stage Realizers." More recently, he has retracted this acknowledgement, asserting that he alone has reached this final stage.

54. http://www.beezone.com/AdiDa/7Stages/7_stages_of_life.html.

55. http://kheper.net/topics/gurus/Adidam_Revelation.html.

56. A quick Google search will support this observation.

57. Not constrained by the rules of scholarly writing, critics have speculated, often convincingly, about the psychopathology underlining Jones's strange career. They also recount X-rated tales of Jones's actions that will stun the squeamish. For compelling insights, see Jim Chamberlain, "Beware of the God," http://bewareofthegod.blogspot.com/.

58. http://www.adidam.org/teaching/five_books/index.html.

59. Daism Research Index, "Adi Da Discusses the Failures of the Last 30 Years," October 2001, http://lightmind.com/library/daismfiles/failures.html.

60. Bubba Free John, *Garbage,* 106–107.

FURTHER READING

The Beezone. www.beezone.com. This site archives a remarkable number of Jones's essays and book chapters, some of which are quite hard to find elsewhere. Though the site is maintained by an apparent follower of Jones, the materials are often in their original, presanitized form.

Bonder, Saniel. *The Divine Emergence of the World-Teacher: The Realization, the Revelation, and the Revealing Ordeal of Heart-Master Da Love-Ananda, a Biographical Celebration.* Clear Lake, CA: Dawn Horse Press, 1990.

Chamberlain, Jim. "Beware of the God." http://bewareofthegod.blogspot.com. This monograph documents some of Jones's most questionable antinomian behaviors and provides fascinating insights into the group's dynamics.

Da Free John, *The Dawn Horse Testament of Heart-Master Da Free John.* San Rafael, CA: Dawn Horse Press, 1985. Jones considers this to be the most important expression of his teaching.

The Daism Research Index. http://lightmind.com/library/daismfiles/. Much of the material on the DRI comes from Adidam apostates and critics. It also provides valuable links to other relevant sites. The content can be sexually explicit and shocking.

Feuerstein, Georg. *Holy Madness: The Shock Tactics and Radical Teachings of Crazy-Wise Adepts, Holy Fools, and Rascal Gurus.* New York: Paragon House, 1991.

———. "Holy Madness: The Dangerous and Disillusioning Example of Da Free John." Originally published in *What Is Enlightenment* magazine and now archived on the Web, this is a condensed reworking of the material Feurstein covered in his book *Holy Madness* listed above. http://www.wie.org/j9/feuerstein_madness.asp?pf=1.

Jones, Franklin. *The Knee of Listening.* Los Angeles: Dawn Horse Press, 1973; and Adi Da. *The Knee of Listening: The Early Life Ordeal and the Radical Spiritual Realization of the Divine World Teacher.* New Standard Edition. Middletown, CA: Dawn Horse Press, 1995. It is especially useful to compare earlier and later editions of this text to see the ways in which Jones is attempting to rewrite his personal history.

Lowe, Scott, and David Lane. *DA: The Strange Case of Franklin Jones.* Walnut, CA: The Mt. San Antonio College Philosophy Group, 1996.

Buddhism in America

Jeff Wilson

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism presents an unusual case in the religious history of the United States. One of the oldest religions on earth, to many Americans it seems like something new and unusual. Buddhist terms such as nirvana and karma are now part of everyday language, yet the actual number of practicing Buddhists in the country remains quite small. And then there is the problem of exactly what Buddhism is in the first place: many Americans balk at accepting that a religion can lack the concept of God and focus on something other than heaven as the final goal in life. Yet alternative concepts such as "philosophy" or "a way of life" seem inadequate to denote Buddhism's mind-bogglingly expansive pantheon of supernatural beings, its belief in reincarnation and magic, and the heavy emphasis on ritual and ceremony in traditional Buddhism. No wonder that Buddhism's transmission to the West has been marked by both resistance and fascination.

This essay first explores the history of Buddhism in Asia and then its arrival and development in the United States. For information about specific Buddhist groups, such as Zen or Tibetan Buddhism, and their approaches to Buddhist practice and theology, skip down to the section "Buddhist Groups in America."

HISTORY IN ASIA

From the start, Buddhism displayed a missionary impulse, which led to many cross-cultural encounters. Buddhism began with a man, Siddhartha Gautama, born into a noble family in what is now Nepal. His exact dates are uncertain, but recent scholarship puts his birth at approximately 485 BCE and his death in 405 BCE. Gautama became dissatisfied with the pleasures of palace life and went to the forest to find a path beyond human suffering. At the age of 35, after six years of searching, he achieved a spiritual breakthrough that finally brought him the peace he was looking for. He began to teach his methods and insights to others and was called the "Buddha," meaning "the one who has awoken."

Central to his teaching was a cosmology that saw the world as composed of several different realms that living beings are repeatedly born into, ranging from realms of suffering and punishment, through the realms of animals and humans, to the heavenly lands. In Buddhist understanding, an impersonal natural force known as karma controls where a being will be reborn at the end of its life: good actions lead to relatively pleasant rebirths, bad actions lead to undesirable new births. All beings—humans, animals, gods, or ghosts—eventually die and are reborn, and even the most fortunate life contains some degree of suffering. Therefore, the goal of Buddhism is to escape from the endless cycle of birth and death. Escape is effected through a process of mental perfection so that one sees the true nature of reality and ceases to create conditions for the ripening of additional karma. This leads to permanent dwelling in the state of nirvana beyond the sorrows of mortal life. Both the exact process of achieving this awakening—akin to the understanding of the original Buddha—and particular interpretations of what exactly nirvana constitutes differ among the various schools of Buddhism.[1]

One common element that originated with the earliest Buddhists and continues in all groups today is the act of taking refuge in the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha. The Buddha is the teacher of the doctrine and guide to nirvana; usually this means the historical Buddha, Gautama, although in some cases it can refer to other figures, mythical or historical, also considered to be Buddhas. The dharma is the teaching itself, the body of doctrine and practice that leads to awakening. And the sangha is the community of practitioners, frequently taken to specifically mean the orders of monks and nuns established by the Buddha. To take refuge in these three guides is to place one's trust in them, assured that they lead beyond suffering, and is traditionally seen as the event that marks one as a Buddhist.

Over the next several centuries after the Buddha's death, Buddhism spread throughout the Indian subcontinent, and under the Buddhist king Asoka (c. 272–231 BCE) extended into southeast Asia. It reached China sometime during the first century BCE, Korea by the fourth century CE, Japan in the sixth century CE, and Tibet in the seventh century CE. Naturally, the doctrines, beliefs, and practices of Buddhism changed considerably over such a long period, both within India and in other parts of Asia. In many cases, Buddhism was far more than just a religion: as it spread it carried medical and scientific knowledge, alphabets and literature, music and cuisine, social theories and moral proscriptions, always altering each new society it encountered. In general, Buddhism's dissemination was peaceful, growing from the activities of pious merchants along the Silk Road and monks and nuns sent abroad to bring the Buddha's teachings to the world. It stimulated changes in the preexisting religions it encountered, sometimes being copied or partially assimilated with other religions, sometimes prompting backlash and anti-Buddhist revivalism.

Buddhism had spread over much of non-Muslim Asia by the United States' birth in 1776, but had also died out in India, replaced with Hinduism and Islam. Three broad types of Buddhism appeared in the meantime, each encompassing many individual sects. The first of these was general early Buddhism, of which the only survivor in the modern world is the Theravada school, based in south and southeast Asia. A

second type is Mahayana, a highly diverse group of Buddhist sects including Zen and Pure Land. Mahayana Buddhism is the dominant tradition in such nations as China, Vietnam, and Japan. The third main type is Vajrayana or tantric Buddhism, popular in Tibet and the Himalayas but also influential in East Asia as well. Specific forms of Buddhism are discussed in greater detail below.

EARLY HISTORY IN AMERICA

Most likely, the first Buddhists to visit areas that were or would become part of the United States were seafaring merchants in the late eighteenth century. For instance, a group of Chinese sailors arrived in the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1789 as part of the trans-Pacific trade.[2] Meanwhile American entrepreneurs seeking wealth in Asia encountered foreign religions in the course of their work. Information on non-Western religious traditions slowly filtered into the United States via trade ties and European scholarship. The pace of American exposure to Buddhism increased somewhat with the beginnings of the American Protestant foreign missionary enterprise—in 1813 Adoniram and Ann Judson became the first American missionaries to a Buddhist country, arriving in Burma after being expelled from India. In 1817 Americans made their first real contribution to the study of Buddhism with the fourth edition of Hannah Adams's *A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations: Jewish, Heathen, Mahometan, Christian, Ancient and Modern.* Adams was one of the first Westerners to approach the subject of world religions with a relatively unbiased view. The 1817 edition of her dictionary included many references to Buddhism in different parts of Asia, listed variously as "Grand Lama Paganism," "Foe," "Bubsdo," "Siutto," "Boodu," and "Buddow," and it attempted to explain such key concepts as karma and reincarnation.[3] The concept of "Buddhism" as a single tradition running in some manner through these many groups, however, was absent from her study.

The first real milestone year for Buddhism in the United States was 1844. Two significant events happened in that year that together indicated growing American interest in Buddhism. The more dramatic of the two was the first English-language publication of a Buddhist scripture. The excerpt, entitled "The Preaching of the Buddha," appeared in the liberal religious journal *The Dial.* Its translator was Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, and the editor of the magazine was Henry David Thoreau. Peabody translated a section from the *Lotus Sutra,* the most popular Buddhist text in East Asia.[4]

The other major event in 1844 was the convening of the American Oriental Society. At the first meeting, Edward Elbridge Salisbury delivered a well-received lecture entitled "Memoir on the History of Buddhism."[5] This scholarly address helped to enhance the sophistication of American knowledge about Buddhism—nonetheless, there was still quite a way to go. And while small numbers of the religious intelligentsia began to take an interest in Buddhism, actual Buddhists were conspicuously missing from the scene. But all of that was about to change.

The California Gold Rush began in 1848 after a handful of nuggets was found in the American River near San Francisco. Soon people from across the United States

and around the world journeyed to California in search of gold. Among the first overseas workers to reach the West Coast were the Chinese. Within a few years tens of thousands of Chinese arrived to seek their fortune by working in the mines, building railroads, doing laundry, and opening small restaurants. Nearly all of these newcomers practiced an eclectic blend of religions that included elements of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. Popular Chinese Buddhism was frequently nonsectarian; most of these early pioneers would best be broadly categorized as Pure Land Buddhists (for information on Pure Land and other types of Buddhism, see the "Buddhist Groups in America" section below).[6]

By 1853 the Sze Yap Company established the first temple in the United States. Located in San Francisco's Chinatown, it provided a mixture of Pure Land Buddhism and other Chinese religious elements. The following year rivals of the Sze Yap Company founded their own temple in San Francisco. But 1854 also saw some of the first stirrings of anti-Chinese sentiment. The Chinese were resented for doing work that might otherwise go to Americans and were seen as invaders from a foreign ethnic stock practicing an alien religion. In a homicide case involving the death of a Chinese immigrant, the California Supreme Court ruled that Chinese people in America could not serve as witnesses in criminal cases and essentially had no rights before the law. Both racial and religious reasons were cited for this decision.[7] The Court somewhat reversed itself in 1859, when it was declared that Chinese immigrants did have the right to practice Buddhism in the United States. However, popular sentiment hardly followed this lead. As the Chinese moved up and down the West Coast, carrying Buddhism with them, they encountered ever more discrimination. In 1877 there were large-scale attacks on Chinese laundries in San Francisco, and in 1880 Congress passed the *Chinese Exclusion Act,* banning most Chinese immigration. This did not cool anti-Chinese feelings: in 1885 twenty-five Chinese were lynched in Rock Creek, Wyoming. Yet, even in the face of such persecution many Chinese thrived in the United States. A reflection of this can be seen in the fact that the 1890 U.S. Census reported that there were now 47 temples in the United States.[8] It was another 75 years before significant Chinese immigration was once more allowed, but Buddhism was here to stay.

While the Chinese were struggling to find a niche in an often xenophobic America, the number of American citizens interested in Buddhism was quietly mushrooming. The year 1854, the same year that saw the establishment of the American temple, also saw the publication of a translation of the life of the Buddha by the *Journal of the American Oriental Society.* And though Buddhism still seemed remote to most Americans, particularly the East Coast elite whose studies and publications fueled most of the American discussion about Buddhism, it was steadily becoming entangled in the country's future. The year 1854 was also the year that Commodore Perry forced Japan to open its ports to trade with the West, an event that soon brought Japanese to the Americas and American traders and missionaries to Japan. The United States was growing into an imperial power and at the same time was continuing its role as the promised land of immigrants the world over. Such factors made the growth of Buddhism inevitable.

American attitudes toward Buddhism during this period were a complicated mix of scholarly interest, exotic attraction, half-informed speculation, and anxiety over the implications of a seemingly passive, nihilistic, atheistic religion commanding the devotion of a large part of humanity. For many Christians, Buddhism was dismissed out of hand as paganism, at best misguided and at worst demonic, destined to be supplanted by Christianity. At the same time, there was a vigorous discussion among many liberal public intellectuals over the nature of Buddhism. In particular, the Transcendentalists stood out as early American investigators and even experimenters with non-Christian religions. Theirs was a loose group of religious and literary elites who felt stifled by the rigidity of both the mainstream church establishment and Enlightenment rationality. Caught up in the wave of nineteenth century Romanticism flowing from Europe, they sought new experiences, innovative forms of expression, and uncharted avenues of spiritual exploration. They were led by such luminaries as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Buddhism, among other unfamiliar faiths, was a common interest, spurred in part by newly available information about religions in Asia.[9]

There are some common features to be seen in the writings on Buddhism by these Americans of the second half of the nineteenth century, whether they were Transcendentalists or more mainstream religionists. Most authors, such as James Freeman Clarke and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, approached their subject with assumptions that were quintessentially Protestant in nature.[10] The most obvious was that the Buddhism of the Buddha is the true Buddhism, the only authentic expression of the Buddhist impulse. Later developments in Buddhism were seen as degradations. American Protestants of the nineteenth century were concerned with the idea of returning to primitive Christianity; thus, they likewise idealized what they imagined as primitive Buddhism. And they sought this primitive Buddhism almost exclusively via texts—the older the better—which conveniently could be appropriated and employed by Western scholars and critics. Since the Bible was the center of Protestant religion, they assumed that texts were the logical repository of true knowledge about religion. The result, however, was that living Buddhists were rarely consulted in the quest to define and dissect Buddhism. Buddhism was first constructed from Western readings of ancient manuscripts and then interrogated using Protestant categories and concerns. To the extent that Roman Catholics were involved in the American discourse on Buddhism, they proved even less sympathetic, mainly confining their writings to polemics that debunked the alleged similarities between Buddhism and Roman Catholicism and the apparent influences of Buddhism on Christianity.[11]

Another feature of these essays is their near universal respect for Buddha the man. Even the most vehement opponent conceded a certain grudging admiration for the reconstructed historical Buddha. But regardless of the level of appreciation shown, it mainly emanated from a single source: esteem for the Buddha's morality. The cosmology and complex of practices that supported and flowed from this morality were largely dismissed, but Buddha himself was spoken of almost as a little brother to Christ: pure, chaste, kind. Meanwhile, Buddhism as a religion really came into focus

for these Americans only when it was assimilated to previously understood phenomena. Of course, the prevailing question was whether or not Buddhism was or was not like Christianity. For many commentators, Buddhist practice was compared to Roman Catholic rituals, usually to Buddhism's detriment. But when looking at philosophy or morality, Buddhism suddenly appeared to them as a species of Protestantism, and their regard increased. It is in this context that the following statement by Thoreau in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* should be understood: "I know that some will have hard thoughts of me, when they hear their Christ named beside my Buddha, yet I am sure that I am willing they should love their Christ more than my Buddha, for the love is the main thing."[12] Thoreau knew virtually nothing of the subtleties of Buddhist thought or practice. But in the idealized person of the Buddha he could find a kindred spirit and moral exemplar worthy of comparison to Jesus.[13]

During the later nineteenth century, a second wave of Buddhist immigrants arrived in the United States and future American territories. Starting in 1868, many Japanese immigrated to the Kingdom of Hawaii to work on plantations. Unlike the Chinese, the Japanese brought Buddhist traditions that were often highly sectarian. For the most part, these early immigrants were members of the Jodo Shinshu denomination of Pure Land Buddhism. However, it was not until 1889 that the first informal Buddhist missionary activities began in Hawaii, as Jodo Shinshu priest Soryu Kagahi arrived to assess the conditions in this new land. Before leaving he established the first Jodo Shinshu temple in Hawaii in the town of Hilo.[14]

As the century drew toward a close, American interest in Buddhism transformed: rather than merely talking about Buddhism, some Americans actually identified themselves with the tradition in some way. The first American to publicly call himself a Buddhist was Dyer Daniel Lum in 1875.[15] In 1879 Sir Edwin Arnold published *The Light of Asia,* a biography of the Buddha that sold hundreds of thousands of copies in the United States, greatly increasing interest in the religion. The following year during a Theravadin ceremony in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Colonel Henry Olcott and Helena Blavatsky become the first Americans to formally pledge their allegiance to Buddhism. Olcott and Blavatsky were the founders of the Theosophical Society, an eclectic religious movement that grew out of American Spiritualism and incorporated Hindu and Buddhist themes into its beliefs. Even after their vows, their understanding of Buddhism was heavily influenced by Theosophical ideas.[16] But the same cannot be said of Ernest Fenollosa and William Sturgis Bigelow, who in 1885 took the Tendai precepts and began practicing Shingon meditation in Japan, becoming the first American Vajrayana Buddhists.

It was 1893 that proved to be a watershed year in the history of Buddhism in the United States. This was the year that the World's Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago in conjunction with the World's Columbian Exposition. The Parliament brought together representatives of many religions, ideally in dialogue, though more often to pontificate. Here the two strands of Japanese Buddhist missionary work and American interest in Buddhism met. Popular speeches were delivered by representatives from the Jodo Shinshu, Nichiren Shu, Rinzai Zen, Shingon, and Tendai sects.

Also, Anagarika Dharmapala, a Ceylonese protégé of Colonel Olcott representing Theravada Buddhism at the Parliament, wowed audiences. One attendee brought a relic of the Buddha with him, the first to reach American soil. And afterwards, Charles T. Strauss became the first recorded American to take refuge in the Three Jewels in the United States.[17] At the same time, exhibits at the Exposition demonstrated the high quality of Japanese Buddhist architecture, arts, and crafts.

Paul Carus was a German immigrant interested in promoting what he called "The Religion of Science," and he identified Buddhism as one of the closest approximations to this vision of a rational, investigative approach to universal spirituality. As editor of *Open Court* and *The Monist,* he disseminated information about many types of religion. In 1894 he published *The Gospel of Buddha, According to Old Records,* a popular book that, like *The Light of Asia,* helped to introduce Buddhism and the biography of the Buddha to a general reading audience. In 1897, Suzuki Daisetz (usually known as D.T. Suzuki) moved to LaSalle, Illinois, to assist with Carus's publishing work. Over the next 11 years this partnership proved fruitful, as Carus learned more about Buddhism from Suzuki and Suzuki in turn learned more about how to market Buddhism to a Western audience.[18]

The end of the nineteenth century seemed to herald a bright future for Buddhism in the United States. When the United States annexed Hawaii in 1898, 25,000 Japanese Buddhists already lived there. Furthermore, the Japanese began to immigrate to the continental United States, and the Jodo Shinshu establishment in Japan sent missionaries along with them. The result was the creation of the Buddhist Mission of North America in 1899.[19] And yet, Buddhism had only barely penetrated the diverse but often contentious American religious landscape. A handful of converts and a vibrant but marginalized collection of Chinese and Japanese communities did not add up to a mass movement. In fact, it would be another two generations before Buddhism began to make major inroads into the American consciousness and could boast significant numbers of followers.

AMERICAN BUDDHISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Essentially, the first five decades of the twentieth century were dominated by Japanese forms of Buddhism in the United States. Japanese Buddhist sects founded many of their first American temples during this time, including Nichiren Shu (1902, Hawaii), Shingon (1912, Los Angeles), Soto Zen (1913, Honolulu), and Jodo Shu (1936, Los Angeles). Rinzai Zen did not found formal temples at first, but a number of Rinzai teachers offered dharma training to lay people, including Soen Shaku in 1905 and Sokatsu Shaku in 1907, both in California. Soen's student Nyogen Senzaki began teaching in San Francisco in 1922, and by 1927 established the first permanent Zen meditation group in the United States.

The primary form of American Buddhism, the Japanese-derived Jodo Shinshu Pure Land school (often called Shin Buddhism), continued its rapid expansion during this period. Already by 1900 English-language study groups and periodicals were appearing. In 1924 the Shin-based Buddhist Mission of North America ordained

Ernest and Dorothy Hunt as the first Euro-American Buddhist priests. Nevertheless, Jodo Shinshu remained a heavily Japanese American form of Buddhism.

Unfortunately, Japanese and other Asian immigration stopped with the *Immigration Act of 1924.* With the flow of Japanese immigrants cut off, Pure Land Buddhism's growth slowed, and few other sects experienced further development. Furthermore, Japanese imperialism in the Pacific and then the American entrance into World War II directly impacted the Japanese American population. The day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, federal agents detained Buddhist priests and other prominent leaders of the Japanese American community. By 1942, more than 120,000 Japanese Americans and non-naturalized immigrants were forced from their homes and into concentration camps in the western United States due to suspicion of their loyalties. Temples were ransacked during the process, and many families lost their homes and land.[20]

In the camps, makeshift Buddhist centers formed and the younger generation advocated adaptations that would make Buddhism seem more "American." Among the results was the reorganization of the Buddhist Mission of North America into the Buddhist Churches of America, the widespread use of English in services and publications, and the adoption of Christianized terms such as "minister" and "bishop." After the war, when the internees were released, the trauma of this persecution by their own government left deep scars on the Japanese American community. While there were important exceptions, the camp experience drove many to turn inward, confining their missionary projects and turning Shin temples into safe ethnic enclaves resistant to non-Japanese Americans. Many also left Buddhism, becoming Christian or secular in an attempt to avoid any perception of being un-American.[21]

While these 50 years of American Buddhism largely belong to the Japanese Americans, a few notable milestones were achieved by others as well. In 1919 adventurer W.Y. Evans-Wentz became the first American to study Tibetan-style Buddhism, in the Sikkim region of central Asia. Eight years later he produced one of the most famous American Buddhist texts, a translation and commentary of the *Bardo Thodal* entitled *The Tibetan Book of the Dead.* A second classic of American Buddhism was published by former Protestant missionary Dwight Goddard in 1932. Goddard's *A Buddhist Bible* was a large collection of sutras and other traditional materials in translation. The first easily accessible volume of such texts available to the English-speaking world, it proved highly influential on the next generation of American Buddhists.

The Beats arose beginning in the 1950s. Led by poets and writers such as Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder, and Allen Ginsberg, the Beats were the mid-twentieth century equivalent of the mid-nineteenth century Transcendentalists: romantic liberal religionists and avant garde literary pioneers plundering Asian and other traditions in an effort to find meaningful art and spirituality. Unlike the Transcendentalists, the Beats had considerable access to sophisticated information on Buddhism. Kerouac, Snyder, and Ginsberg became Buddhists, and their literary works contributed to renewed American interest in Buddhism. Probably the most famous of the explicitly Buddhist-related works produced by the Beats was Kerouac's 1958 novel

The Dharma Bums, a semifictional account of hitchhiking literary Buddhist wanderers roaming the highways and alleys of Eisenhower's America. Never a very large movement, the Beats nonetheless were tremendously influential on the direction that American literature and alternative religion would take in coming years.[22]

In part, the Beat interest in Buddhism was possible only because of the efforts of Asian and Asian American Buddhists to spread the dharma during the 1950s. In 1949 D.T. Suzuki returned to the United States to teach Buddhism, especially Zen, at the University of Hawaii and Columbia University in New York City. Suzuki's lessons caught the imagination of the developing counterculture and led to profiles in major magazines and television appearances. Although his interpretation of Zen was highly idiosyncratic, he was a talented teacher in the Western classroom, and his novel presentation of Zen as an unfettered, ineffable, experiential core of religion permanently stamped American attitudes toward Zen.[23]

Another important source of Buddhist activity was the Berkeley Buddhist Temple, under the administration of Rev. Kanmo Imamura. This Shin temple provided a first encounter with Buddhism for many students and Beats through its classes and publication, *Berkley Bussei.* Kerouac and Snyder, among others, both wrote for the *Bussei,* and the temple introduced not only Pure Land but also Zen, Tibetan, and other forms of Buddhism to newcomers. It was not only Euro-Americans who benefited, since these activities helped keep a vital spirit alive in the Buddhist Churches of America. The temple nurtured many young people who went on to become the cutting edge priests in the next decades, such as Taitetsu Unno, a major American scholar of Japanese Buddhism.[24]

The 1960s was the breakout decade for American Buddhism. In 1960 Ikeda Daisaku, the leader of the Japanese Buddhist New Religious Movement (NRM) known as Soka Gakkai, visited the United States for the first time. An American Soka Gakkai organization was quickly established, and Soka Gakkai Buddhism spread, first through Japanese immigrants and military wives, and then into the general populace. In 1963 Soka Gakkai held its first English-language meetings. A number of new Zen missionaries were offering Zen practice, beginning in 1949 with Robert and Anne Aitken in Honolulu, Shunryu Suzuki's San Francisco Zen Center (founded in 1962), Eido Shimano at the Zen Studies Society in New York City (founded in 1956 by D.T. Suzuki and led by Shimano beginning in 1965), Philip Kapleau at the Rochester Zen Center (founded in 1966), and Taizan Maezumi at the Zen Center of Los Angeles (founded in 1968). Significantly, these Zen teachers included not only Asian immigrants but also Euro-Americans. Both types of Zen missionaries tended to focus their efforts specifically on non-Asian Americans. This contrasted with a new generation of Chinese teachers and promoters, such as Hsuan Hua and Chia Theng Shan, who directed their energies toward Chinese American and non-Asians alike, and included not only Zen-type Chan Buddhism but Pure Land, tantric, and scholastic Buddhism as well. In 1969 five of Hsuan Hua's students became the first fully ordained American-born monastics.

The most important event of the 1960s for American Buddhism, arguably of the twentieth century as a whole, was the passing of the *Immigration Act of 1965.* This

legislation lifted restrictive racist immigration laws, allowing a new tide of Asian immigrants to wash into the United States. The Chinese came again, as did the Japanese (though in much smaller numbers), and were joined now by Sri Lankans, Koreans, and Vietnamese. These newcomers brought new forms of Buddhism, either to be transplanted in the United States or to be used as religious commodities to offer to a new mission field. In the wake of this revitalization of American Buddhism, the first Theravada temple in North America was founded in 1965 in Washington, D.C.

The first trickle of Tibetans into the United States also began after 1965. A Mongolian Vajrayana temple in a Tibetan lineage, the Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America, had already been founded quietly in New Jersey in 1955. But Mongolian influence on American Buddhism was nothing like what Tibetan influence would become. In 1965 Robert Thurman became the first Westerner ordained as a Tibetan monk, taking the lower ordination in a ceremony presided over by the Dalai Lama in India. In 1969, Tarthang Tulku founded the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center in Berkeley, the first temple in the Nyingma tradition, the oldest of Tibetan Buddhism's sects. Also in that year Shambhala Publications, the first large Buddhist press in the United States, was established.

A perception of Buddhism as ancient, wise, peaceful, and esoteric pervaded the 1960s and 1970s counterculture, with concepts like karma and reincarnation reigning side by side with free love and widespread drug use in the growing network of new convert Buddhist centers.[25] Some missionaries did little to discourage these combinations. One example of this was Chogyam Trungpa, a Tibetan guru who founded the Tail of the Tiger practice center in Vermont in 1970. Enormously charismatic, keenly insightful, traditionally trained, sexually promiscuous, and hopelessly alcoholic, Trungpa embodied a form of "crazy wisdom" highly compelling to the Baby Boomer seekers investigating Buddhism and other Asian religions.[26]

Not all Buddhist teachers, Tibetan or otherwise, were as flamboyant as Trungpa, of course. The 1970s saw a steady increase of highly trained Tibetan monks who attracted small bands of followers, such as Kalu Rinpoche and Dudjom Rinpoche. Another form of Buddhism, the lay-oriented Vipassana meditation movement, also reached the United States during this time. It was led by American laity trained in Theravadin countries, such as Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, and Sharon Salzberg who cofounded the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts in 1975. While a relatively late arrival, Vipassana's popularity grew steadily as the twentieth century drew to a close. Other types of Buddhism, such as the Japanese Tendai and Nipponzan Myohoji traditions, also arrived during the 1970s. And the flow of immigrants continued, bringing the first Thai (1971), Korean (1973), and Cambodian (1979) temples.

The counterculture began to wane in the 1980s, as the Baby Boomers aged and the culture shifted in a more conservative direction. Nonetheless, Buddhism continued to expand in the United States during the presidential administrations of Ronald Reagan and later George H.W. Bush, largely along the same established trajectories. Zen, tantric, and Vipassana Buddhisms continued to thrive, and Asian immigrants increasingly cultivated ethnic forms of Buddhism. Perhaps the most significant new

player in American Buddhism was the Community of Mindful Living, established by Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh in Berkeley in 1983. Hanh's emphasis on simplicity and everyday application of Buddhist teachings was very practical, and a network of mainly lay-led meditation groups emerged across the country. Based in France but a prolific author and world traveler, Hanh was one of the few major teachers who could successfully minister to Vietnamese exiles, Europeans, Euro-Americans, and African Americans alike.[27]

In some ways, the 1980s was the golden era of women's Buddhism in the United States. In 1987 the Theravada nuns' order was resurrected at the Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara in Los Angeles. The same year Jetsunma Ahkon Lhamo was recognized as the first Western female tulku in a Tibetan tradition. Less positive in its genesis but ultimately of equal significance was the development of greater democracy and awareness of the need for inclusion of women teachers in convert Buddhist centers, sparked in part by a series of sex scandals involving prominent male Buddhist teachers.[28]

Buddhism once more became trendy in the 1990s, with major movies (including *Little Buddha* and *Kundun*) and bestselling books (such as Lama Surya Das's *Awakening the Buddha Within*). Many American celebrities followed the example of Hollywood leading men Richard Gere and Steven Seagal in becoming Tibetan Buddhists. The first major English-language Buddhist magazine, *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review,* appeared in 1991, oriented toward elite Buddhist converts involved in Tibetan, Zen, and Vipassana Buddhism. The same year, Soka Gakkai, which now boasted tens of thousands of members in America, found itself summarily excommunicated by its parent Nichiren Shoshu organization. This only temporarily slowed their efforts. Soka Gakkai quickly regrouped and seemed to thrive without the guidance of the traditional priesthood. The network of temples and centers founded by Chogyam Trungpa likewise rebounded after a period of scandal and decline, reorganizing as Shambhala International, which continues to be a major force in American Buddhism.

As the millennium turned, Buddhism seemed to have made itself comfortable in the United States at last. American-trained teachers now led most of the major convert temples founded in the previous three decades, and branch meditation groups affiliated with major lineages were operating in every part of the country. Asian American temples were also flourishing, and an impressive secondary literature on Buddhism's many American manifestations had appeared.

BUDDHIST GROUPS IN AMERICA

From humble beginnings, the American Buddhist community has come a long way: virtually every form of Buddhism has some representation in the United States, and Los Angeles alone is a contender for the most diverse Buddhist city in history. There are too many different sects of Buddhism to treat here, but it is important to touch on some of the broader categories that have significant numbers in the United States.

Theravada ("Teaching of the Elders") Buddhism is primarily represented in the United States by Thai, Sri Lankan, Burmese, Cambodian, and Laotian immigrants and their descendents; there are also smaller numbers of Bengali American and Vietnamese American Theravadin Buddhists. This is the oldest surviving form of Buddhism, though like all religious traditions it has undergone significant changes over the centuries. Theravada is distinguished by its reliance on the Pali Canon, a collection of authoritative scriptures written in the ancient Pali language, in which the earliest Buddhist texts were preserved. This conservative form of Buddhism has a strong focus on the original Buddha—Gautama—and on his immediate disciples, though various other saints, deities, and spirits also receive veneration in popular practice. Monks (the nuns' order died out in 456 CE[29]) are held to a strict interpretation of the monastic rules, necessitating in most cases their reliance on the laity for food, clothing, transportation, and other needs. Donations to the monastic sangha reap karmic rewards, such as birth in one of the heavenly realms or perhaps as a monk, offering the possibility of strenuous meditation and moral practice to achieve nirvana. Major Theravada temples include the New York Buddhist Vihara, Wat Thai in Los Angeles, and the Bhavana Society in West Virginia.

The twentieth century saw the rise of a subtradition within Theravada, known as the Vipassana movement. Named after a popular form of meditation, this reformist movement has placed meditation practice at the center of Buddhist life, often stripping away the more ceremonial and communal aspects of Theravada. Vipassana attracted many Euro-American converts since its introduction in the mid-1970s. Also known as Insight Meditation, the Vipassana community created an influential network of practice centers nationwide, and is particularly noted for the many doctors and mental health workers involved in the practice, some of whom combine meditation and more traditional therapies in their work with patients. The most notable Vipassana centers in the United States are the Insight Meditation Society (based in Barre, Massachusetts) and Spirit Rock Mediation Center in northern California.[30]

While Theravada is a relatively unified tradition, Mahayana ("Great Vehicle") Buddhism is a riot of different sects stressing various scriptures and venerating a greatly expanded pantheon of cosmic Buddhas and bodhisattvas (Buddhas-in-training). They share a relatively liberal interpretation of the monastic rules and a common origin in canons based on Sanskrit, another ancient Indian language. Most Asian American communities practicing Mahayana forms of Buddhism hail originally from Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, China, or the Chinese diaspora in places such as Taiwan and Malaysia.

Perhaps the prototypical form of Mahayana Buddhism in the modern world is Pure Land Buddhism, which focuses on the salvific powers of figures such as Amitabha Buddha, Avolokiteshvara bodhisattva, and Kshitigharbha bodhisattva. These figures are believed to assist suffering beings through intervention during difficult circumstances and to provide teachings accommodated to one's situation. Many also preside over their own nirvanic realms outside the ordinary mortal world. Devotion to Pure Land figures through such common practices as chanting the name

of Amitabha Buddha can result in rebirth in these perfected lands, where it is easy to become a Buddha oneself.

Pure Land ideas and motifs are widely diffused throughout Buddhism, found in some manner within virtually all Buddhist sects other than Theravada. In its more organized forms, such as the Japanese Jodo Shinshu sect, it has been present in the United States since the latter part of the nineteenth century. While arguably the most widespread form of Buddhism in Asia, this is the only major Buddhist tradition that has failed to attract significant numbers of American converts. The most important Pure Land organization in the United States is the Buddhist Churches of America, the largest representative of Jodo Shinshu in the United States. A second significant group is the Amitabha Buddhist Society, whose American headquarters are in Sunnyvale, California. This organization attracts mainly Chinese Americans.[31]

Another type of Mahayana Buddhism is Chan, more familiar to Americans by its Japanese name, Zen. Central to this tradition is emphasis on specific lineages of awakened patriarchs who embody a penetrating insight into reality passed down from the original Buddha. While frequently portrayed as a meditation-oriented tradition, actual Chan meditation in Asia is rare, confined mainly to specialized monks or priests. Rather, Chan activities for the average layperson tend to include heavy amounts of Pure Land–type Buddha, bodhisattva, and ancestor veneration. This makes it hard to categorize the average Chinese temple as simply Chan, Pure Land, tantric, or any other specific tradition. A good example of this mixture is Fo Guang Shan, a large Taiwan-based international organization whose American headquarters are located at the Hsi Lai Temple outside Los Angeles.

Chinese Chan and its Korean (Son) and Vietnamese (Thien) versions are primarily practiced by Asian Americans in the United States. However, Zen presents an interesting exception to this trend. Never enjoying particularly large representation within the immigrant Japanese population, Zen was spread instead by the missionary efforts of Westernized Asian Zen teachers who portrayed Zen as a timeless, intuitive spiritual tradition focused on silent meditation and relatively unadorned with ritualistic trappings. This modern reformist Zen appealed to many Euro-Americans beginning in the 1950s, resulting in the first significant groups of American Buddhist converts by the 1960s. Major centers include the San Francisco Zen Center, representing the Soto Zen sect, and Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji in upstate New York, a member of the Rinzai Zen sect. A few convert-oriented versions of Son and Thien, often simply labeled "Zen," have also enjoyed considerable popularity since the 1970s. The most prominent ones are the Korean-derived Kwan Um School, represented by the Providence Zen Center in Rhode Island, and the Community of Mindful Living, a remarkable network of small-scale meditation groups centered on the teachings of Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh.[32]

A third form of Mahayana is Nichiren Buddhism. This is a highly fractious form of Buddhism containing many sects, which all trace their teachings back to the thirteenth-century Buddhist monk Nichiren, who advocated complete reliance on the *Lotus Sutra* and chanting the title of the sutra as the ultimate practice. While constituting only a tiny portion of worldwide Buddhists, Nichiren Buddhist groups are

often highly missionary in orientation and have successfully brought their understanding of the dharma to other countries in recent decades. In the United States the most significant of these is Soka Gakkai, founded in twentieth-century Japan by Makiguchi Tsunesaburo. Characterized by sometimes aggressive proselytization efforts and a belief that chanting can have material as well as spiritual rewards, Soka Gakkai is somewhat unusual in its declaration that Nichiren was the True Buddha for our age. Beginning in the early 1960s, this sect grew to be one of the single largest Buddhist groups operating in the United States by a successful recruitment of Euro-Americans, African Americans, and Latinos. Other Nichiren groups are also present but less popular, such as the mainstream Nichiren Shu and liberal Rissho Koseikai.[33]

The third and final broad type of Buddhism is Vajrayana (Diamond Vehicle) or tantric Buddhism. This outgrowth of the Mahayana tradition includes an even larger pantheon of deities and awakened beings, often manifesting both peaceful and wrathful forms. Vajrayana Buddhism includes an additional cycle of authoritative scriptures known as tantras, couched in esoteric and highly symbolic language requiring special initiations to understand. The master-disciple relationship is particularly central to tantric Buddhism, which claims to be able to help one become a Buddha within a single lifetime. Vajrayana Buddhist immigrants come mainly from Tibet, Mongolia, and Nepal, none of which have very large populations in the United States. An even smaller number of Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans practice in specifically tantric lineages, though tantric influences are common in many Mahayana Buddhist traditions. There are four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism—Gelug, Kagyu, Nyingma, and Sakya—and two Japanese tantric sects, Shingon and Tendai. All of these groups have temples in the United States. One notable Chinese American network of tantric temples is the True Buddha School USA.

So-called "Tibetan Buddhism" in America is, in fact, dominated by Euro-American converts, who easily outnumber the small numbers of Asian American practitioners. Fueled in part by positive Hollywood portrayals and the international charisma of the Dalai Lama, but also by dynamic and highly trained teachers in the United States, Tibetan Buddhism blossomed, beginning in the 1980s, and may soon overtake Zen as the most visible form of convert Buddhism. This type of Vajrayana includes a belief in tulkus, wise teachers who deliberately reincarnate in lifetime after lifetime in order to continue teaching unawakened beings. The Dalai Lama, currently in his fourteenth incarnation, is the most famous example of this. He belongs to the Gelug sect, represented in the United States by such centers as Namgyal Monastery in Ithaca, New York, and Jewel Heart in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Probably the most important Tibetan Buddhist organization in North America is Shambhala, based in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia and with dozens of centers in the United States. Founded by the flamboyant Tibetan missionary Chogyam Trungpa, this eclectic lineage includes elements of the Kagyu and Nyingma sects.[34]

One question that often confounds researchers is the deceptively simple issue of "who is a Buddhist?" Because Buddhism is largely noncreedal in nature and most

Asian temples do not have formal members in the way that American churches do, there can be significant difficulty in determining what constitutes legitimate Buddhist identity. Is someone who reads several books on Buddhism a year and likes its philosophy a Buddhist? What about someone who meditates and occasionally attends dharma teachings, but does not believe in reincarnation or karma? And what of the many people who regularly attend Buddhist centers, perform Buddhist practices at home, and whose world views are clearly shaped by Buddhism, yet refuse to explicitly label themselves as Buddhist? Obviously, such behaviors make it difficult to quantify the number of Buddhists in the United States, a task made even harder by the persistent tendency of surveys (which undercount immigrants and non-English speakers) to overlook segments of the American Buddhist community.[35]

A possible solution lies in the attempt to measure Buddhist *influence,* rather than simply numbers. Scholars estimate that the number of Buddhists in the United States ranges anywhere from 1.4 to 4 million adults, but a recent study demonstrated that one in seven Americans had contact with Buddhism and one in eight believes Buddhism made a measurable impact on their religious life. That is 12.5 percent, a percentage far above the actual representation of fully identified Buddhists in the population.[36] Thus Buddhism's contribution to American religious culture seems to lie less in its ability to obtain converts or nurture immigrant communities, and more in the way that Buddhist ideas, practices, and motifs have successfully permeated the culture at large.

SOME ISSUES

All religious groups must contend with numerous issues, both internal and external, and for religions outside the mainstream the challenges are often greater still. Buddhism has faced the normal difficulties with funding, organization, and maintenance of zeal, as well as particular problems involved in the Americanization of this relatively late-arriving, non-Western tradition.

Perhaps the most obvious issue involving the Buddhist communities in the United States is the racial homogeneity of so many temples and meditation groups. While not a universal phenomenon, most Buddhist groups are overwhelmingly composed of a single ethnic group, whether Euro-Americans, Chinese Americans, Thai Americans, or some other ethnicity. In many cases, dialogue and cooperation among groups occur along racial lines. For instance, a Euro-American Vipassana group is more likely to share members and even hold joint activities with a Euro-American Zen group than with a nearby Cambodian American Theravadin temple, even though the Vipassana and Theravadin temples share a common lineage alien to the Zen group. While instances of cross-racial cooperation and appreciation do occur, more common are misconceptions and even prejudices about the ways the other racial group is believed to practice Buddhism.

Meanwhile, African Americans often feel particularly marginalized in American Buddhism, lost in a sea of nonblack faces wherever they go. The only significant exception to these segregating trends is Soka Gakkai, which is probably one of the

most racially integrated religious organizations in the country.[37] While the average Soka Gakkai group is still fairly homogeneous due to the organization's neighborhood-based model, the frequent district or chapter meetings display high levels of diversity.

A second issue is gender, specifically, the roles that women play within American Buddhism. Most Asian Buddhist traditions have maintained conservative attitudes toward women's leadership and in some cases actively maintained that women's spiritual capacities were lower than those of men. In the United States, women Buddhists pushed for greater responsibility and recognition, in some cases fueled by sexual inappropriateness on the part of male teachers. Euro-American groups in particular often made efforts to develop more female-affirmative Buddhist ideals, and a growing number of female teachers and abbesses have appeared in the past 20 years or so.[38] Less recognized are the strides made by Asian American women as well, whose labor and donations are often the backbone of their communities, and who also frequently play important organizational and spiritual roles at their temples.

The emergence of stronger positions for women within American Buddhism is partially the result of another issue: the lack of monks. Traditionally, the monastic orders played a key role in the maintenance of teaching, guidance, and morality in Buddhist cultures. Furthermore, the monks (and, in those fewer countries that have them, nuns) acted as fields of merit, engines for generating good karma that could be tapped by the laity through the traditional lay roles of providers and disciples. But celibacy and renunciation are not as common among American Buddhists as they were in historic Buddhist regions. Asian American youth and young adults are more likely to choose a high-paying career over the life of a religious beggar, and Euro-Americans seem disinclined to consider full-blown monasticism as an option. For Asian American communities, this necessitates the importation of foreign monks and nuns, often with weak English-language skills and cultural and religious assumptions out of step with those of their parishioners. Meanwhile, many Euro-American groups elevated lay people into the roles traditionally played by dedicated monastics.

A secondary issue related to this development is the unusual way in which Euro-American groups tend to conceive of proper Buddhist activities. Meditation is central to most Euro-American Buddhists, for leaders and lay people alike. This is a startling contrast to historical Asian Buddhism, where meditation was always a relatively uncommon practice engaged in by a small number of elites, usually monks. This strange positioning of converts, neither monk nor layperson, is reshaping Buddhism. Many find this combination liberating; it remains to be seen, however, whether laity embedded in families and jobs can carry on strenuous monastic-type practices over decades and pass on strong traditions to new generations.

The American Buddhist community has also struggled with a number of major scandals, often connected to the indeterminate position of teachers in Euro-American convert communities. For example, Richard Baker resigned his position as abbot of San Francisco Zen Center in 1983 due to criticism of his liaisons with female students and seemingly excessive accumulation of material wealth. The

problem, rooted in conflicts over power, sex, and money, arose in part from confusion over exactly where he was expected to act like a monk and where like a layperson.[39] The Asian American Buddhist community also had its fair share of scandals, perhaps most famously the campaign finance debacle at Hsi Lai Temple in Hacienda Heights, California, that brought criticism to Vice President Al Gore in 1996. Once again, this incident turned on the issue of the appropriateness of alleged renunciants involving themselves in the secular world.

Buddhist temples have faced discrimination from non-Buddhists. The Chinese and Japanese first encountered prejudice in the nineteenth century, and, while religious tolerance has grown considerably since those first problems, Asian American Buddhists continue to face difficulties in many places. Race complicates the often futile attempt to classify vandalism of temples and harassment of monks as specifically ethnic or religious bigotry, but clearly Buddhism's non-Christian status is one significant contributing factor to Buddhists' marginalization. Besides outright confrontations, Buddhists often find themselves unable to build temples due to restrictive zoning laws, in some cases enforced specifically to keep Buddhists out.

But not all interactions with non-Buddhists are negative. In fact, many of the people attending Buddhist centers identify themselves as Christians or Jews. In some cases, this is part of a dual religious identity, while for others Buddhism is approached as a technique or a philosophy, not a religion per se, and thus offers no particular threat to more traditional American religions. There are even prominent Buddhist teachers who are also ordained Christian clergy, such as Robert Kennedy, a Zen master and Jesuit priest, and James Ford, a Unitarian Universalist minister who leads the Henry Thoreau Zen Sangha in Massachusetts.

WHITHER AMERICAN BUDDHISM?

Where is Buddhism going in the twenty-first century? First, as important as the American context is for Buddhism in the United States, developments in Asia will have the biggest impact on American Buddhism. Buddhist immigration has always been tied to political and economic conditions in Asia. Unforeseeable events will continually reshape the American Buddhist landscape as new wars and other factors push various Asian groups to seek a better life in the United States. Even established Buddhist groups are likely to remain at least somewhat porous to new ideas and practices developed first in Asia.

A second development counter to the first is the expansion of American Buddhist missionary programs to other countries. Despite its relatively young status among the nations of the world, the United States has long been a launching pad for foreign missionary endeavors. As Americanized forms of Buddhism continue to evolve, the unparalleled status the United States enjoys as a rich, technologically sophisticated, and militarily powerful country will likely facilitate the spread of Buddhism to other places, such as Latin America. Even though the United States will remain an importer of Buddhism, it will also become a significant exporter of Buddhism.

This raises the issue of exactly what "American Buddhism," versus "Japanese Buddhism" or "Tibetan Buddhism," might be. Many Buddhist groups themselves have wrestled with this question, some attracted to the idea of a uniquely American expression of Buddhism, others fearful that American materialism and ignorance will dilute the dharma. American society is so large, so diverse, and already host to so many forms of Buddhism that American Buddhism will probably experience ever-increasing pluralism, rather than coalescing into a united or definitive form.

A final issue confronting Buddhism's future in the United States is the difficulty of transmitting the tradition to younger generations in a meaningful way. The Japanese American-based Buddhist Churches of America has declined to 17,000 members, down from a high of approximately 50,000 in 1960.[40] This decrease resulted primarily from outmarriage and conversion to Christianity among the newer generations and from the low rate of Japanese immigration to replace aging members. Other primarily Asian American Buddhist groups face similar problems as many of their young people leave Buddhism behind in their ongoing assimilation to mainstream American culture. On the other hand, Euro-American groups are aging as well due to the tendency to emphasize meditation—an activity that typically excludes unruly youngsters—and the lack of effective children's programs at convert temples. While Buddhism will surely continue in some fashion, the specific organizations that currently dominate the scene may fail to survive these processes of attrition.

NOTES

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3. Hannah Adams, *A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations,* 4th ed. (Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, 1817). Reprinted by Scholars Press in 1992 with an introduction by Thomas Tweed.

4. A sutra is a text believed to have been directly recorded from the teaching of the Buddha. Elizabeth Peabody, "The Preaching of the Buddha," *Dial* 4 (January 1844): 391–401.

5. Edward Salisbury, "Memoir on the History of Buddhism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 1 (1843–1849): 81–135.

6. See Sylvia Sun Minnick, "Never Far From Home: Being Chinese in the California Gold Rush," in *Riches for All: The California Gold Rush and the World,* ed. Kenneth N. Owens (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

7. See Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: the Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

8. See U.S. Census Office, *Report on Statistics of Churches in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894).

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12. Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1867), 75.
13. For more on nineteenth-century American attitudes toward Buddhism, see Thomas A. Tweed's groundbreaking study, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844–1912,* paperback ed. (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Much of the nineteenth-century information in this essay is indebted to Tweed's work.
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16. Prothero, Stephen. *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.
17. For more on Buddhism at the World's Parliament of Religions, see Judith Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
18. Martin J. Verhoeven, "Americanizing the Buddha: Paul Carus and the Transformation of Asian Thought," in *The Faces of Buddhism in America,* ed. Charles Prebish and Kenneth Tanaka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
19. Buddhist Churches of America, *Buddhist Churches of America 75 Year History, 1899–1974* (Chicago: Nobart, 1974).
20. See Duncan Ryuken Williams, "Camp Dharma: Japanese-American Buddhist Identity and the Internment Experience of World War II," in *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia,* ed. Charles Prebish and Martin Baumann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
21. For more on the development of the Buddhist Churches of America, see Tetsuden Kashima, *Buddhism in America: The Social Organization of an Ethnic Religious Organization* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977).
22. See Jane Falk, *The Beat Avant-Garde, the 1950s, and the Popularizing of Zen Buddhism in the United States* (Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2002).
23. Robert H. Scharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism,* ed. Donald S. Lopez (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
24. For the biography of one woman involved in the Berkeley Buddhist Temple and other important Japanese-American Buddhist institutions of the time, see Jane Imamura, *Kaikyo, Opening the Dharma: Memoirs of a Buddhist Priest's Wife in America* (Honolulu, HI: Buddhist Study Center Press, 1998).
25. For perspectives on drug use among American Buddhists, see the special section "Psychedelics: Help or Hindrance," in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* IV, no. 1 (Fall 1996). The word "center" is frequently used by convert Buddhists. This is done to distinguish their meeting places from "temples," which are often perceived as more "churchy" and ethnic in nature.
26. For a representative work of Chogyam Trungpa, see *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (Berkeley, CA: Shambhala, 1973).

27. For a representative work of Thich Nhat Hanh, see *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976).
28. For more on controversies within American Buddhism, see Sandra Bell, "Scandals in Emerging Western Buddhism," in *Westward Dharma,* ed. Prebish and Baumann.
29. There are efforts to revive the Theravada order of nuns. While interest in such a revival appears to be growing, it remains a fringe movement within Theravada overall.
30. For an excellent recent book on Theravada in America, see Wendy Cadge, *Heartwood: The First Generation of Theravada Buddhism in America* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).
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32. For more on American Zen, see Helen Tworkov, *Zen in America* (New York: Kodansha International, 1994).
33. For a study of the early years of Soka Gakkai in America, see David Snow, *Shakubuku: A Study of the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist Movement in America, 1960–1975* (New York: Garland, 1993).
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39. Michael Downing, *Shoes Outside the Door: Desire, Devotion, and Excess at San Francisco Zen Center* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 2001).
40. Theresa Watanabe, "Giving Tradition a Chance: Shin Buddhists Celebrate Little Tokyo Temple, but Ponder Faith's Future," *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), December 1, 2001, B1.

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Tibetan Buddhism in the United States

Daniel Cozort

Few Americans were more than dimly aware of Tibet until the early 1950s, when cinema newsreels showed its high plateaus being forcibly occupied by the Communist Chinese People's Liberation Army. Fewer still knew anything about its form of Buddhism until Tibetans in the thousands began streaming out of the country in the violent aftermath of the abortive uprising against the Chinese in 1959. But within the flow of exhausted and destitute Tibetan refugees were many of the greatest figures of Tibetan Buddhism; like the others, they escaped only to toil in the appalling heat and dust of India and Nepal, building farm colonies in scattered rural areas. For a time, these brilliant scholars, yogis, and teachers struggled in obscurity to rebuild religious life in their new homes. But within a few years, some Westerners, including some Americans, found their way to the crude new Tibetan monasteries, and some Tibetan teachers were accepting invitations to visit or live in the United States.

The social turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s provided fertile ground for Americans to experiment with what is unarguably one of the most exotic religions in the world. In contrast to the relatively austere style of the Zen masters and Theravada monks who preceded the Tibetans as Buddhist ambassadors to the United States, Tibetan monks came dressed in brilliant red and yellow robes, filled meditation halls with colorful silks and hanging scroll paintings (*thankas*) of fantastical beings and settings, punctuated ceremonies with enormous drums, long horns, cymbals, and unearthly chanting, and sometimes danced in costumes depicting demons and bulls. They taught the fundamentals of Buddhism, but they also brought the flower of their own tradition: the advanced teachings of Tantra, involving a special type of meditation involving creative visualization, clothed in secrecy and mystery.

For several decades, Buddhism has been the fastest growing religion in the United States. A recent study by Robert Wuthnow and Wendy Cadge[1] revealed that a surprising number of Americans are personally affected by Buddhism. Nearly four million Americans identified themselves as Buddhists. Fourteen percent (nearly 30 million adults) had significant contact with Buddhism, and of those, nearly 90 percent reported that it had an effect on their religious lives. Many of these

Americans were affected by Tibetan Buddhism, which grew more quickly than the traditions (mainly Japanese Zen and Southeast Asian Theravada) that arrived earlier.

Although these figures are not broken down by Buddhist tradition, the standard of "effect on my religious life" is probably the most meaningful way to consider the extent of Tibetan Buddhism in the United States, something otherwise difficult to quantify. The Tibetan tradition itself does not define a Buddhist by way of an initiation ceremony, graduation from a training program, or membership in an organization, for instance. A Buddhist is someone who "takes refuge" in the Buddha, dharma (teaching), and sangha (spiritual community), which simply means that a Buddhist is someone who, insofar as he or she understands the most fundamental teachings of Buddhism, feels them to be correct and resolves to live by them. But this is an internal, personal standard, one that can be interpreted quite loosely, rather than something that can be objectively enumerated.[2] Nor could Tibetan Buddhists be counted by adding up the membership lists of Tibetan Buddhist dharma centers (this being the usual designation for a center of teaching and meditation). This omits those who think about and practice Buddhism in some way, and perhaps identify themselves as Buddhist, but have no institutional affiliation. Similarly, counting as Tibetan Buddhists only those who explicitly identify themselves as such omits persons who are involved with Buddhism but would stop short of calling themselves Buddhist. This can occur for a number of reasons. Some have other religious identifications. Some are "nightstand Buddhists"; that is, they are attracted to Buddhist thought and practice, mainly through their reading, but are wary of being identified with the Buddhist religion. Some feel that to be a "Buddhist" means to have already come to a deep understanding of its central teachings and to have a daily practice.

Who are these Americans? Only a small fraction of them, about 10,000, are ethnically Tibetan. Tibetans were not allowed to immigrate to the United States in sizable numbers until the early 1990s, when a resettlement program established sites around the country where at least several hundred could be settled together. They generally do not participate strongly in the life of the existing dharma centers except to attend occasional teachings and celebrate the Tibetan New Year. In fact, in a few places, the marginalization of Tibetans in the practice of their own religion has become an issue.[3] Rather, most Americans who are involved with Tibetan Buddhism were born in the United States and are white, well-educated, and middle class. How did so many of these Americans discover what was not very long ago an obscure religion in the remotest corner of the world?

One key factor is the United States' growing fascination with the Dalai Lama, Tibet's most revered religious figure, considered by Tibetans to be the incarnation of the Buddha or Bodhisattva who personifies compassion. Until 1959 he was also Tibet's head of government. His Holiness was a well-known, if somewhat ill-defined, figure for most Americans until he was given the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Many thousands of Americans now see him in personal appearances, in interviews on American television, and in visits to the White House and Congress. They have discovered a warm, humorous, compassionate man who seems utterly at peace with himself yet grounded in the real world. As he has interacted with religious leaders,

scientists, human rights activists, political leaders, celebrities, and countless others, he has given Tibetan Buddhism an attractive presence, one whose encouraging and nonthreatening message is, "My religion is kindness."

Many Americans discovered him through his many English-language books, which now number in the dozens. Most of his books are edited transcriptions of oral teachings given on his many tours around the world. In the 1970s and 1980s, these sold modestly, but two of the most recent, *Art of Happiness* and *Ethics for the New Millennium,* sold nearly two and a half million copies. Americans also saw the major Hollywood biographical films of the late 1990s, *Seven Years in Tibet* (starring American actor Brad Pitt) and Martin Scorsese's *Kundun.*

Celebrities, always a major factor in American cultural trends, played a key role in bringing the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan situation to the attention of Americans. Among the Dalai Lama's celebrity admirers are Richard Gere, Harrison Ford, Goldie Hawn, and Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead. Gere, who has been a practicing Tibetan American Buddhist since the 1970s, cofounded Tibet House in New York, created the events of the International Year of Tibet, and is chair of the Board of the International Campaign for Tibet. Robert Thurman, a Columbia University professor and himself a practicing Buddhist, who was already known for his association with the Dalai Lama, surely drew more attention as the father of actress Uma Thurman. He helped to found Tibet House, is its president, and was named as one of the 25 most influential Americans by *Time* magazine in 1997. For younger Americans, rock concerts featuring acts such as the Beastie Boys, whose lead singer, Adam Youch, is a Tibetan American Buddhist, were important. *Rolling Stone, Time, Newsweek,* and many other major American popular culture and news magazines did major features on the Dalai Lama and Tibet.

Not all Americans who have embraced Tibetan Buddhism have learned about it through popular culture. Many other Americans learned about Tibetan Buddhism by enrolling in university or adult education courses, by visiting a Buddhist dharma center,[4] or by attending a public talk at another venue. Others got their first exposure to Tibetan Buddhism in art galleries where monks constructed sand mandalas (fundamentally meditation devices, but often termed something like "symbol of peace" for such occasions) or in concert halls where a touring monastic group performed ritual arts such as debating or chanting.

This chapter looks at the fundamentals of Tibetan Buddhism, how it came to the United States, the difficulties that arose in the process of its transplantation, and what we might speculate about its future.

TIBETAN BUDDHISM IN ESSENCE

Tibetan Buddhism existed not only in Tibet, but also among Mongolian and some Turkic populations across a vast stretch of central Asia. It is the most complex, elaborate, and varied form of Buddhism, and perhaps of any religion, with a vast number of discrete practices and teachings. Still, it has much in common with the Buddhism of other lands. Its core teachings are those of the historical Buddha. Its

many techniques all are ways either to enable the mind to become calm and focused or to bring about insight into the nature of reality. Its goal is enlightenment, that is, the removal of misconceptions about the nature of reality, which eliminates suffering for oneself and others.

Every Tibetan Buddhist teacher teaches about the Four Noble Truths (on the nature of suffering, its origin, the possibility of its cessation, and the eightfold path of ethics, meditation, and wisdom). However, this material is more often discussed under rubrics such as the "three principle aspects of the path" (renunciation, compassion, and wisdom) or "ground, path, and fruit." The topics that are normally discussed include the pervasiveness of suffering; the preciousness of human rebirth; impermanence and death; the benefits of taking refuge in Buddha, dharma, sangha; the workings of karma; the 12 links of dependent arising (an explanation of how intentions lead to results); nirvana (the absence of causes of suffering); ethics; techniques to develop compassion; meditative stabilization; and meditation on one's emptiness of being a stable, unchanging person.

These relatively simple teachings are the core of Tibetan Buddhism. However, in many Western writings, Tibetan Buddhism is equated with the Vajrayana ("Diamond Vehicle"), a nod to the prominence within it of tantra, the "diamond-like" practice that quickly cuts through all obstacles. Tantra is a type of esoteric spiritual practice found in Hinduism and Buddhism, but nowhere within those two religions is it more pervasive than in Tibetan Buddhism.

Tantric teachings are considered to be very powerful methods for the swift attainment of enlightenment, which is the insight into the nature of reality that liberates one from cyclic rebirth and the suffering that naturally occurs in it. They are supposed to be imparted only to students who are advanced in terms of their understanding and compassion. Permission to practice and instructions in method are given in ceremonies called "empowerments" (*dbang*, pronounced "wang"). In empowerments, a student, having made many promises about ethical behavior and secrecy, learns how to visualize himself or herself as a Buddha, living in an ideal environment like a palace and grounds and carrying out many activities to benefit others.

The practice is grounded in nontantric training: it is always important to begin by recalling one's debt to the Buddhas and lamas, to set one's motivation by reflecting on the suffering of oneself and others and resolving to end it, and to develop a sense of the delusory nature of the usual idea of oneself as a solid, unchanging entity. The images developed in meditation should arise out of understanding one's own emptiness of being such a solid and continuous person, and the compassion that sees the suffering of oneself and others as rooted in the delusion about the self. Those who succeed in creating intense visualizations then learn how to manipulate energy in the body, the purpose of which is to empower the mind so that enlightenment can be brought about more quickly.[5] It is considered to be dangerous on many levels to practice the teachings without authorization and supervision, one of the reasons why the teacher-student relationship is so crucial. In the United States, the number of serious tantric practitioners is growing, although the bulk of teaching and practice is still nontantric.

Literally hundreds of methods in Tibetan Buddhism exist for effecting changes in consciousness that will lead to enlightenment for oneself and others. Some aim at enhancing the student's motivation. For instance, meditating on death spurs a student not to waste time that might be spent practicing, meditating on suffering and rebirth builds compassion for others, and meditating on the potential in all beings to become Buddhas themselves gives confidence that the goal can be attained. Other practices develop the mind's capacity to be tranquil and focused, analytically probe one's preconceptions about the nature of the self, or prepare one for death. Within the large category of tantric practices are the preliminary practices, normally requiring several years of work doing prostrations, reciting mantras, and doing visualizations, all before the many complex tantric practices themselves. Finally, there are many practices performed for the sake of assuring the long life of the teachers, avoidance of malicious entities, the propitiation of protective deities, and so on. Thus, there are enormous variations in the daily practice of Tibetan Buddhism.

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT TIBETAN BUDDHISM?

In the world of Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism is unique in four respects. First, it is highly complex and diverse. All of the philosophical systems constructed from Indian texts (the various "schools" of India, which may or may not have existed as such) are studied and debated, and, as we have just seen, there is a bewildering array of meditation practices, ranging from the open, formless Dzogchen practice to highly detailed visualizations. This is principally because Tibetan Buddhism received its form directly from India, but over a millennium after the historical Buddha first preached on the plains of the Ganges River. By that time, Indian Buddhism was highly elaborated. The Mahayana (Great Vehicle) movement was several centuries old and had added to Buddhism a vast array of Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, an orientation to compassion as the highest value, new philosophical viewpoints, and a new respect for the capacity of laypeople to attain enlightenment. Tantric Buddhism was approaching its full flowering. Infused with the philosophy of the Mahayana, it provided for specially initiated practitioners an esoteric fast track to Buddhahood, involving complex visualizations, symbolic speech (*mantra*), sacred diagrams (*mandala*), and, most of all, devotion to the lama (guru, teacher) who was viewed as Buddha himself or herself. Because of Tibet's physical near isolation from the rest of the world, its Buddhism developed almost entirely without influence from either other Buddhist countries or Western colonial powers.

Second, Tibet had a strong shamanic tradition that was not replaced by Buddhism but rather either complemented Buddhism or became integrated with it. Shamans are a type of religious figure found in many traditions; their primary function is to heal the physically or mentally ill through determining the spiritual origins of these maladies and helping their patients reconcile themselves to the other world. A key element of shamanic diagnosis and cure is altered states of consciousness induced by techniques such as chanting, drumming, and visualizing. Many Tibetan rituals

performed for the sake of propitiating earth, water, or air deities, to control the weather, predict the future, or heal the sick, are not rooted in the Indian Buddhist textual tradition and might be better labeled "folk religion" that happens to be practiced by Buddhists. On the other hand, ostensibly Buddhist practices such as the lama's chanted directions for the spirit of a dead person (as embodied in what is popularly called the Tibetan Book of the Dead), the "cutting attachment" (*chod*) ritual in which one symbolically dismembers one's own body, or the "transference of consciousness" (out of the body, sometimes into a dead body), to mention just a few, are Buddhist practices built on this shamanic past. In addition, because tantric practices also involve altered states of consciousness and communication with a extraordinary reality, and especially because they may be performed for mundane purposes such as life extension or protection, they may also be considered shamanic.[6]

Third, in time the entire Tibetan society came to revolve around the Buddhist monastic orders, which became very large, rich, and powerful. In Tibet, before the Chinese invasion, probably more than one in every ten persons was a monk or nun (and in certain areas this may have been one in four), likely to be the highest percentage of persons in religious life to have ever existed in any culture.[7] Most belonged to one of four main religious orders: the Nyingma (the old or ancient tradition, which claims its roots in the very beginning of Buddhism in Tibet) or one of the "new" orders of Geluk, Sakya, or Kagyu. There is no overall authority, no "church" with a head "bishop"; even the Dalai Lama, the most respected figure in the religion, has no power to compel anyone to accept his views or to expel anyone from the religion. The Tibetan Buddhist canon of scriptures is vast (333 volumes) and complex, and Tibetan Buddhism has no "official" doctrines established by ecclesiastical authority. The orders differ in their emphasis on monasticism itself (e.g., many lamas of the Nyingma tradition are married), on the importance of philosophical study, and on their principal ritual and meditation practices. Within the orders, individual monastic and lay practicing communities operated with a great deal of autonomy, developing distinctive practices and idiosyncratic viewpoints.

Fourth, in Tibet the teacher-student relationship, important in Buddhism from its beginnings, evolved to new heights. The most important figure in Tibetan Buddhism is the lama (the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit term *guru,* referring to teachers who through their exemplary personal qualities and teaching abilities can lead others to enlightenment). The lama is not a priest in the sense of acting as an intermediary between the disciple and the sacred, but rather sits in the place of the original teacher, the Buddha, interpreting the tradition of Buddhist thought and helping others through their conceptual difficulties. Since in Buddhism, salvation from suffering is gained only by individual enlightenment, not through grace from an external source, it is absolutely necessary to understand correctly what one is doing. Beyond this, in the tantric practice the teacher is the template for the student's own enlightenment, modeling what it means to be a Buddha. The student relates to the lama's transpersonal qualities (that is, the lama's compassion and wisdom and the genuineness of the lama's lineage) rather than his or her personal qualities. The lama reflects to the disciple both his or her shortcomings and the purity of the mind that exists in the

disciple as it does in every person. Because of this, devotion to the lama is often regarded as the quintessence of practice.

HOW THE SWANS CAME TO THE LAKE

In 1976 the Karmapa, head of the Karma Kagyu order, was asked why Tibetan teachers came to the United States. "If there is a lake, the swans would go there," he replied.[8] The swan is an apt symbol for Tibetan teachers. Able to fly through the air, float on water, or walk on land, in the Indian tradition the swan long was used as a symbol of the renunciate, a human who can be at home anywhere. Not many years after the Chinese incursions into Tibet, lamas began to migrate to the west. They came at the invitation of students who met them in Asia; or, like missionaries, were sent by their own teachers; or came due to their association with teachers who were already overseas. Where they settled, however briefly, they established groups of students that in many cases quickly evolved into dharma centers and the centers into networks that became, in time, full-scale global organizations that, like church associations, provided overall direction, standardization of practices, and support for fledgling groups.

Buddhism in Tibet was structured around teaching lineages within the main monastic orders. When Tibetan teachers founded dharma centers they naturally expected their students to be loyal to their own traditions, inviting teachers from within it and supporting them financially. Hence, the American form of Tibetan Buddhism is still very much aligned with the Tibetan monastic orders. Let us look at a few of the most important teachers in each tradition.

Gelukpa Teachers

The first Tibetan lama to arrive in the United States was a Gelukpa monk, Geshe Ngawang Wangyal, who became the lama of a Kalmuck Mongolian refugee community in New Jersey in 1955.[9] A tenacious and hardy spirit, Geshe Wangyal had traveled in Russia, China, and Mongolia and seen for himself what communism might mean in Tibet; when the Chinese entered in 1951, he left immediately. He had already learned quite a bit of English from his work with Sir Charles Bell and Marco Pallis in Beijing (and from four months as the latter's guest in England). Once established in New Jersey, he got a job teaching part-time at Columbia.

Several Harvard students who heard about him became his earliest American-born students. They included Robert Thurman, who became the first American to be ordained a Buddhist monk (but who remained one for only a few years) and later taught at Amherst before coming to Columbia University, where he now heads a graduate program in Buddhist studies. Another was Jeffrey Hopkins, who went on to found a Buddhist Studies program at the University of Virginia, which has produced 18 Ph.D. recipients, many of whom now teach at American universities. Hopkins published dozens of books (and those who worked with him have published at least another score) that provide a fairly complete picture of Gelukpa

scholarship. They are used widely by Gelukpa Buddhist organizations to train Western Buddhist teachers.

Geshe Wangyal's monastery evolved into the Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center (TBLC) near Washington, New Jersey, which for over 40 years has been a base for Gelukpa monks and a learning center for Americans. One of the first monks to live at TBLC was Geshe Sopa, who went on to become a professor at the University of Wisconsin and to found the lively Deer Park Buddhist Center near Madison.

Lama Thubten Yeshe and Zopa Rinpoche[10] started to teach Westerners in Nepal and India in the 1960s and early 1970s; this evolved into the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), which has more than 130 centers and study groups around the world, 26 of them in the United States, the largest in California and Boston. Lama Yeshe died in 1984. His reincarnation, who has the name Lama Osel, was discovered in Spain and is expected to play a major role in the FPMT when he finishes his education, most of it at Lama Yeshe's Sera Je Monastery; Zopa Rinpoche has continued to lead the organization through a period of great growth and development.

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso has not spent very much time in the United States; he is based in northern England.[11] But the organization he founded, the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT), has become a major Buddhist organization in the United States. Geshe Gyatso came to England in 1977 to teach at Lama Yeshe's principal FPMT center, but within a few years had gone in his own direction. He first visited North America in 1990 and the following year established the NKT, which now has more than 800 centers and study groups internationally, 42 of them in the United States.

Sakya Teachers

Of the four major orders, the Sakya order to date has the smallest impact in the United States. Deshung Rinpoche and H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya came to the University of Washington in 1960 to work with Professor Turrell Wylie, a Tibetan language specialist.[12] They later founded Sakya Monastery there. The Sakya order has about 15 centers in the United States, concentrated in the Pacific Northwest. Other centers are in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and suburban Washington, D.C.

Nyingma Teachers

Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche arrived in the United States in 1968 and established the Nyingma Institute, a meditation center in Berkeley, California, the following year.[13] His organization also includes a publishing arm (Dharma Publishing) that has printed a version of the Tibetan canon and many other books, a secular training program called "Time, Space, and Knowledge," and a magnificent large new retreat center in Sonoma County.

Sogyal Rinpoche was a student of some of the most famous Nyingma lamas of the twentieth century, but also received a Western education, at Cambridge University in England.[14] He founded the Rigpa Fellowship, which is worldwide and has three

centers in Canada and 15 in the United States. His *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying,* which offers an overview of Buddhism, an extensive explanation of the Tibetan understanding of the process of death and rebirth, and perspectives on working with the dying and grieving, is an international best seller.

Penor Rinpoche, the head of the Palyul lineage and also presently head of the entire Nyingma order, established a half dozen American centers but also influenced American Buddhism by recognizing two adult Americans as tulkus. The first, Jetsunma Akhon Lhamo, is a controversial figure who led a non-Buddhist spiritual group in the Washington, D.C., area before encountering him.[15] His recognition of her led to the establishment of a lively center in Maryland, Kunsang Palyul Choling, and another later in Sedona, Arizona. The other is the film actor Stephen Seagal, in whom Rinpoche said that he felt the potential for enlightenment very strongly. Because his decision was controversial, Rinpoche issued an unusual public statement explaining his decision.[16] Seagal was not enthroned formally and may or may not become a dharma teacher.

Finally, an American teacher with a rapidly growing number of students is Lama Surya Das (Jeffrey Miller). He was designated "lama" upon completing two 3-year retreats in France under Nyingma masters. In 1991 he founded the Dzogchen Foundation in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is a well-known author, especially for *Awakening the Buddha Within.*[17] Several of his students were themselves named "lama" and teach widely.

Kagyu Teachers

The Kagyu order was the most pervasive of Tibetan Buddhist orders, with several of its lineages establishing many dharma centers. The first teacher to arrive in the United States, and still the most famous and influential Tibetan of all the orders (with the exception of the Dalai Lama, of course), was Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, who came to Vermont in 1970 after an English education in India and Oxford.[18] Trungpa was a tremendously energetic and creative teacher whose knowledge of English and the West enabled him to teach in a way that was very exciting for many people. He was particularly adept at translating traditional Buddhist cosmological and cosmogonic concepts (such as the realms of rebirth and the functioning of karma) into psychological language. Beginning with a meditation center now called Karme-Choling in Vermont, he built an organization called Vajradhatu, now called Shambhala International, which included a fully accredited Buddhist university, Naropa, in Boulder, Colorado. Naropa offers degrees in contemplative psychology, early childhood education, environmental studies, interdisciplinary studies, music, religious studies, traditional eastern arts, visual arts, writing and literature, and performance. Chogyam Trungpa's organization also includes a large retreat center in Colorado, the Shambhala Mountain Center; a large network of dharma centers in American cities called Dharmadhatus; schools for children and for dressage (a passion of his wife's); and a non-Buddhist (but Tibetan folk religion-inspired) training program called Shambhala. He was also very controversial; he drank heavily and

had many sexual liaisons, making no secret of the fact, and occasionally behaved and spoke in a bewildering manner. On the other hand, his Kagyu lineage contained within it a tradition of what he called "crazy wisdom," wherein the lama may act deliberately in a way that upsets the student's expectations. People associated with or familiar with Chogyam Trungpa's behavior continue to be divided, some condemning it, others attempting to set it within a Tibetan Buddhist context.

Trungpa's organization suffered through difficult times after his death in 1987; his regent (a person chosen to oversee the lama's students and interests until his or her reincarnation is discovered and completes an education), Osel Tendzin, died from AIDS in 1991. Trungpa's son became the head of Shambhala International. However, Trungpa's reincarnation, now a teenager, was recently found in Tibet; at this point it is not clear what role he will play in a future Shambhala organization.

Kalu Rinpoche was an important yogi. He was called "a modern Milarepa" after Tibet's famous eleventh-century yogin. He is a teacher who taught throughout the world until his death in 1989. He supervised the first 3-year retreats for Westerners, including some Americans, starting in 1976 in France. In the Kagyu tradition such retreats are a way to introduce students to the breadth and depth of tantric practice. He subsequently encouraged the retreat graduates to establish centers and teach in their home countries. He also authorized them to use the title "lama."

Lama Lodu Rinpoche was Kalu Rinpoche's student and has headed the Kagyu Droden Kunchab center in San Francisco since 1976. He continues Kalu Rinpoche's tradition of mentoring American students through the traditional 3-year retreat; the most recent group began in 2005. He also established another dozen satellite centers and has written several books in English.

The Sixteenth Karmapa, the head of the Kagyu order, played an important role in the establishment of Tibetan American Buddhism before his death in 1981, mainly through inspirational teaching tours. His sunny disposition and energy attracted people to the centers established in his name. The largest of these is his North American seat, Karma Triyana Dharmachakra in New York state, which now has 35 affiliates around the United States.[19] His reincarnation was born in 1985 and is being prepared to take on the role of head of the order soon.

Finally, the Drikung Kagyu lineage became well-established with 25 centers around the country.[20] Khenchen Rinpoche Konchog Gyaltsen came to Washington, D.C., in 1982 and by the following year had established the Tibetan Meditation Center, which relocated in 1991 to Frederick, Maryland, and is now building a retreat center. He started many of the other centers and facilitated a stream of lamas from India to teach at them.

WHY THE SWANS CAME TO THE LAKE

As the Karmapa said, "If there is a lake, the swans would go there." However, there were good reasons *not* to go. Tibetan lamas had responsibilities to the young monks who are their primary students and to the Tibetan laypeople who look to them for blessing and advice. They realized that there was a considerable cultural barrier,

beginning with language, and they may have heard from others who returned from the United States that Americans were fickle and undisciplined.[21]

Nevertheless, they came, virtually all of them primarily because it was clear that Americans wanted and needed the dharma. But also, for many, the transplanting of the dharma to the United States was one way to ensure that the Tibetan tradition continued. Although Tibetans in India and Nepal, and to a lesser extent elsewhere, were heroic in their efforts to continue their oral, textual, and artistic traditions, they knew that their tradition was in jeopardy. Americans offered to help: to preserve Tibetan texts, to translate them, and to record the Tibetan traditions of oral commentary. At first this happened at academic institutions such as the Universities of Washington, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Virginia. In some of these settings, Tibetan lamas became faculty members whose salaries also supported their home monasteries. Also, in many of the larger dharma centers, the teachings of resident and visiting lamas were recorded and turned into many books, tapes, CDs, videotapes, and DVDs. The income from these publications, as well as the donations made by students at the centers where the lamas taught, allowed for both further development of Tibetan Buddhist facilities in the United States and contributions to a massive building boom of monasteries and nunneries in India and Nepal. This in turn assured not only that there would remain a strong monastic tradition even in exile from Tibet, but that there would be no shortage of Tibetan teachers for service in the United States and elsewhere.

Still, it is probable that some teachers were also lured by the prospect of comfort and security in the West. The life of a monk in India or Nepal can be quite difficult, and the workload for a teacher can be very heavy. A few of the younger monks who subsequently came to the United States decided to give up their monastic vows, work, and marry.

WHY ARE AMERICANS ATTRACTED TO TIBETAN BUDDHISM?

Daniel Capper's two years of participant observation at the Karma Kagyu center, Karma Triyana Dharmachakra in upstate New York, addressed this question directly.[22] He found that Americans were attracted to Buddhism for many reasons: they believed that meditation would be beneficial; they admired Buddhism's moral system; they found Buddhism's world view convincing; they hoped that they would be able to experience mystical states. In the end, however, the most important factor for those who embraced Buddhism was the positive psychological relationships they established with Tibetan lamas. This "enchantment" was deeply personal, since the student felt completely open to the lama, as well as transpersonal, since the relationship was understood to be based not on personality but on compassion and might stretch back over many lifetimes. Most people experienced personal growth and enhanced autonomy from their contact with the lama. A definite therapeutic effect from the "countertransference" of experiencing the lama as engaged and caring was felt by these American disciples.

Harvey Aronson recently questioned this "therapeutic effect" by raising the issue of whether a student's spiritual growth is inhibited by having a motivation of seeking psychological growth.[23] While it can be very useful to use techniques of meditation to calm and clarify the mind sufficiently so that the sources and complexity of one's emotional problems become more apparent, the spiritual purposes of the exercises are then put aside. Like a number of other psychotherapists who are also Buddhists,[24] he thinks that Buddhist practice and psychoanalysis are both helpful but ought to have their own spheres. It is unrealistic to think that Buddhist practice, even in a strong and healthy teacher-student relationship, will suffice for students with psychological issues, just as it is unrealistic to depend upon psychoanalysis for spiritual growth.

Americans were also attracted to Tibetan Buddhism for the same reasons other Americans are drawn to religion. Religion can provide a coherent world view that explains the origins and purposes of the universe, the meaning of suffering, and what happens upon death. It can provide a moral community that gives one a concrete identity, nurturance, and support in difficult times. And it can be a vehicle for self-transformation. The latter is a particularly strong point for Tibetan Buddhism, which explicitly aims at converting ignorance, desire, and hatred into wisdom, generosity, and compassion.

CONTOURS OF TIBETAN AMERICAN BUDDHISM

Tibetan Buddhism's particular manifestation in American culture, which we refer to as Tibetan American Buddhism, has many dimensions. Let us consider four of them: the forms of the sangha (a term that in Asia referred to the monastic community but in the United States is more like the congregation of practitioners), the forms of the media, the academic study of Tibetan Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism's physical presence in the American landscape.

Communities

Tibetan American Buddhism has grown mainly as Tibetan lamas established networks of lay study and practice groups. When the groups grew sufficiently large or were blessed with a patron, they established their own dharma centers with an ongoing program and with a lama in residence some or all of the time. Typically, they also included a "dharma shop" to sell books, CDs, clothing, jewelry, paintings, and statues; some with a residential population also have a cottage industry such as making meditation cushions or running a café. In these larger settings, the centers function much as churches do for other Americans, with programs for children, purely social events, and groups for special interests and needs that are not necessarily connected with Buddhism.

The dharma centers are likely to have been started by local students of eminent lamas who may already circulate among many centers. At the center, participants learn about specific practices by attending weekend workshops or longer retreats

when the lama comes to town. There is normally an initial commentary on a text, after which the students are taught to chant (perhaps in Tibetan), to visualize Buddhas and other figures, to perform symbolic hand gestures, and to convert the teaching into a daily routine.

Between these more exciting events are practice sessions. Perhaps the center will hold a weekly practice session for the "preliminary practices" (prostration, visualization, and chanting) that are to be completed before tantric practices are begun. Perhaps smaller groups will meet for collective practice of a text into which they have all been initiated; others may meet to study a particular text or to work on the Buddhist study curriculum that has been supplied by the parent organization.

Many groups are still very small and have no dharma center. They meet at the homes of members, at community centers, at universities, or even in Unitarian Universalist churches, which sometimes have U.U. Buddhist Fellowships within them.[25] Many Tibetan American Buddhists do not have any regular community.

However, because the networks established by the Tibetan lamas are modern and global, they project a strong presence on the Internet. For some, community is found entirely or in part in cyberspace, where it is possible to have a kind of "cyber-sangha." In the largest sense, Tibetan American Web surfers become part of an overall sangha of Buddhists in whatever languages they can read. A vast amount of information about teachings and lineages is available online in addition to specific information about particular centers. Then too, a person might belong to the e-mail list or discussion forum of a particular Buddhist organization, perhaps as part of a study group. Or, a person might subscribe to an e-mail forum such as Buddha-L which operates independently of any Buddhist organization and is a site for dialogue with other Buddhists about theory or practice. Finally, the Internet can be used as a venue for teachings. For example, American students of Chogyal Namkhai Norbu, a prominent Nyingma teacher in the West (mainly Italy, but also in the United States), watched broadcasts of his teachings in Italy and elsewhere on their home computers.

Media

In addition to its manifestation as persons and communities, Tibetan American Buddhism has a robust presence in American media. Thirty-five years ago, when Tibetan teachers were just beginning to visit the United States, only a handful of books about Tibetan Buddhism were available. Now, there are many hundreds. Amazon.com, for example, lists over 1000 titles on a search for "Tibetan Buddhism." The principal American publishers are Snow Lion Publications of Ithaca, New York, and Boulder, Colorado; Wisdom Publications of Boston; Shambhala Publications of Boston; and Dharma Publishing of Berkeley, California. Many smaller presses also contribute to the supply of books, as well as academic publishers such as the University of California Press, State University of New York Press, and Oxford University Press. Whereas most books formerly were written by academicians for a scholarly audience, many of those currently available were written by Tibetan and Western Buddhist teachers. In addition, a number of translation committees (such as Padma

Kharpo, Nalanda, and Light of Berotsana), some associated with particular organizations and some not, were formed and produced a sizable quantity of translations.

Many of the same teachings that are available in print form are also now available in other media such as compact disks and digital video disks. It is commonplace for teachings to be recorded in as many formats as is feasible. People can purchase sets of the Dalai Lama's teachings on the Four Noble Truths; they can take entire courses on Buddhism through these media and by interacting with teachers and fellow students by e-mail and in electronic discussion forums.

Tibetan American Buddhism has its own high-quality journals such as the *Shambhala Sun* and *Buddhadharma* (both published by Shambhala International) and *Mandala* (published by the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition). It also figures prominently in the largest Buddhist journal, *Tricycle,* which has about 200,000 readers. No American academic journals are devoted to Tibetan Buddhist scholarship, but articles about Tibetan Buddhism appear frequently in publications such as the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies,* the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics,* and the *Journal of Global Buddhism.*

Academia

Many Americans learned about Tibetan Buddhism not through the popular media, their own reading, or personal contact with teachers of Tibetan Buddhism, but by enrolling in university courses. In addition to Naropa University in Colorado, which is a Tibetan Buddhist institution, at least 100 institutions of higher education offer courses in whole or part about Tibetan Buddhism. In addition, courses can be taken for college credit at Buddhist institutions such as Namgyal Monastery (for Cornell students) and Drepung Monastery (for Emory students), and American students can participate in study abroad programs located in Tibet (or in Tibetan communities of India) through the School for International Training in Vermont, Emory University, and the University of Virginia.

At the postgraduate level, students can pursue a master's degree or doctorate in Tibetan Buddhist studies at the universities of Colorado, Chicago, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, California–Santa Barbara, and Virginia, and at Harvard, Columbia, Rice, and Boston universities. At Virginia under Jeffrey Hopkins, and at Wisconsin under Geshe Sopa (the only Tibetan lama to become a tenured member of an American faculty), students absorb a truncated form of the Geluk monastic curriculum. At Virginia they also studied in the mode of monks, memorizing lists and definitions and attempting formal scholastic debate.[26]

The American Landscape

Tibetan Buddhism is becoming steadily more visible to the average American. Centers now exist in all major urban areas, with multiple centers in cities such as Boston and Los Angeles. Although almost none of these buildings were constructed specifically to be dharma centers, they often present an intriguing sight to the casual

observer, decorated with signs, colorful prayer flags, and various symbols such as the ubiquitous pair of deer bracketing a wheel, representing the Buddha's first teaching in a deer park. Retreat facilities tend to be in quieter rural areas. They may consist of simple cabins for personal meditation in a remote place or may be located near the main monastic and teaching center. Some centers also have stupas, symbolic monuments of Indian origin (but in Tibetan style) that are found all over the Buddhist world. They often contain the cremated remains of famous teachers. The most impressive stupa in the United States is the Great Stupa of Dharmakaya, built for Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, in the northern Colorado mountains.

ISSUES IN THE TRANSMISSION OF BUDDHISM

A Failure to Communicate?

The most obvious problem in the transmission of Buddhism from Tibetans to Americans is that of language. Although younger teachers may have studied English in monastery schools, most senior teachers have little command of English and must teach in Tibetan with a translator. Even under the best circumstances, when the Tibetan translator's English is good or the American translator has a fine understanding of Tibetan, this is a slow process, taking at least twice as long as direct communication. Often it is slowed further because the translator needs to clarify certain statements by the teacher. This tests the attention span of the listeners, people who are not accustomed to sitting on the floor on cushions for hours at a time. Translation terms can also be problematic, particularly when during a question and answer period the non-Tibetans ask questions that involve knowledge of science, other religions, American popular culture, or romantic relationships.

The venue in which the teacher works is normally a dharma center, a center for lay Buddhists that may also have residential space for several Tibetans and several American students. This situation is unlike anything that existed in traditional Asia, where Tibetan teachers were accustomed to dealing almost exclusively with other monastics in monasteries. At an American dharma center, they must teach laypeople who are coming at Buddhism from many perspectives, some of them based in an understanding of the nature of religion quite at variance with Buddhism. More than half of their students are female. The students come with a variety of motivations. Many are looking for psychological healing and growth. Some are looking for a spiritual achievement that will make them respected, perhaps famous. Some have an intense need for approval. And nearly all of them lead busy lives, with full-time jobs, families, and other commitments. Alan Wallace reported that lamas often consider their students to be lazy, fickle, and consumerist.[27] That is, they want to be taught the most advanced practices as early as possible, but are reluctant to take the time to solidify the teachings they received earlier. They do not stay the course with a particular practice, but want to switch to something else—perhaps even another tradition of Buddhism—if something does not go well for them in short order. And they have

a propensity to pick and choose among lineages, teachers, practices, and even points of philosophy to put together a package that appeals to them the most.[28]

Lamas also face many challenges in answering the sorts of questions posed by their American students. Since most of them are monks, they are ill-equipped to answer questions about romantic and marital relationships. They also were probably raised in a traditional Tibetan family, which may be quite unlike the family situations of Americans. They have very limited exposure to many subject areas familiar to Americans, such as science, geography, religion, and philosophy, not to mention the elements of popular culture such as music, television, and film, on which Americans often draw for illustrations and metaphors. They are also unaccustomed to talking openly about feelings. As Harvey Aronson notes,

> In our culture we question authority, value familiarity with emotions, highly prize the experience of romance, appreciate the robust expression of our unique individuality developed through free choice, and develop our relationships through verbally exchanging our thoughts, dreams, personal histories, and feelings. We then approach teachers who embody the traditional cultures of Asia, where continuity of custom and reverence for those who are old and/or wise is valued; relationships are governed by explicit and implicit rules related to the roles individuals play; and closeness is often achieved through intuitive accommodation to others' moods. Within these cultures, feelings and their verbal expression are not necessarily valued, and certain feelings such as anger may even be seen as obstacles. In these settings, spousal relationships may revolve around the social connections of the parents and societal obligations to produce children. Within Buddhist culture it is frequently taught that it is important to subordinate oneself and to practice for the sake of others.[29]

Lamas vs. the American Lifestyle

One of the most significant problems for Tibetan teachers is their relative isolation and underemployment. For those who travel to the United States without knowledge of English, their interactions with others are constrained by the necessity of translation. They may be accompanied by only a single attendant or translator with whom they can speak easily, and they may spend much time alone at the dharma center where they live because it is empty much of the time. Or, they may spend time traveling from one center to another for periods as short as a day or two. When they teach, they are obliged to talk about the same introductory topics over and over again, since few of their students are prepared for any deeper explorations of Buddhist philosophy.

There are two types of temptations for Tibetan teachers in these situations, particularly for younger teachers. The first is the general temptation of the American lifestyle—to enjoy popular culture, seek interesting experiences, and, finally, explore relationships with women. The second is to take advantage of their position in the dharma center or larger organization to arbitrarily exercise power over the students. This would not occur in Asia, because there they would be supervised. The 1980s

and 1990s saw several "lama scandals," where Tibetan teachers had affairs with students or abused them emotionally.

The New Generation of Tibetan Teachers

Many of the great teachers who founded the Western Buddhist organizations died in the past 20 years or so. It is not yet clear that their replacements will be capable of providing the wisdom and leadership that they did. Great hopes were invested in some of these younger teachers. For instance, former students of Lama Yeshe anticipate the teaching career of Lama Osel, born in 1985, who as a baby in Spain was recognized as the reincarnation of Lama Yeshe. From a young age he was trained in the Gelukpa monastic tradition at Sera Monastery in South India. The reincarnations of the Karmapa, Kalu Rinpoche, Ling Rinpoche, among others, are reaching the ages at which they may begin conducting teaching tours abroad. Will Americans accept these young men as authoritative in matters of Buddhist thought and practice? And will they be willing to trust their judgment about the administration of the organizations founded by their predecessors?

Western Teachers

Since at least the mid-1970s Tibetan masters authorized some of their American students to teach. Who are these American teachers? A few trained in Asia in the traditional way, communicating in Tibetan and living with Tibetan monks. Georges Dreyfus, who is Swiss, but lives in the United States and is now a professor at Williams College, was the first to complete a Tibetan monastic degree in the Gelukpa monasteries of India. Michael Roach soon followed, although he did much more of his study in the United States. Many others trained for years as monks in the traditional manner but stopped short of the degree, such as Jose Cabezon (a professor at University of California Santa Barbara) and B. Alan Wallace, who teaches widely.

Many more were the disciples of particular Tibetan teachers, studying with them in Asia, the United States, and other places in the West. Kalu Rinpoche, Chogyam Trungpa, Lama Yeshe, Zopa Rinpoche, Karma Thinley Rinpoche, and many others mentored Americans who teach on the dharma circuit. In addition, Americans trained in the new programs of organizations like the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT) and the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) have positions as leaders in those organizations. In both NKT and FPMT, programs ranging up to seven years in length were established to give a thorough grounding—in English—in the topics of Buddhist philosophy that would be taught in a Gelukpa monastery.[30] Many of the newest generation of teachers are women, such as Thubten Chodron in Seattle, Tsultrim Allione in Colorado, Pema Chodron in Nova Scotia. Many professors of Tibetan Buddhism, such as Hopkins, Thurman, and Anne Klein also teach at dharma centers. Because of their long training in conjunction with Tibetan teachers, they are esteemed as both scholars and practitioners.

What limitations or problems do these teachers have? First, most American teachers cover only the fundamentals of Buddhism, not the higher teachings, and do not confer tantric empowerments. They complement, rather than replace, Tibetan teachers. Many of them are quite itinerant, traveling around the United States and elsewhere in the world for teaching weekends, short retreats, workshops, and conferences. They may or may not have strong relationships with particular students themselves. They operate with a great deal of autonomy, as their Tibetan teachers do not attempt to oversee and supervise them.

The one instance in which an American became the head of a major Tibetan Buddhist organization very quickly became a near disaster. Osel Tendzin (born Thomas Rich) was appointed by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche as his regent, and succeeded him as the head of the largest Tibetan American organization, Vajradhatu (later Shambhala), upon Trungpa's death in 1987. A few years later, the public learned that Tendzin had AIDS and transmitted it to at least one of his students. The Vajradhatu Board of Directors wanted to remove Tendzin, but he refused to resign. The crisis was not resolved until his own death in 1991 and the installation of Trungpa's son as the head of the organization, which was renamed Shambhala International.

Buddhism Without Beliefs?

What about the dharma itself? Is it being presented to Americans in a diluted form? One ongoing controversy in Western Buddhism is whether, and to what extent, traditional Asian Buddhism might be shorn of its cultural trappings and presented in essential form. In particular, can Buddhism be coherent without its explanation of the structure of the universe—its cosmology—and its explanation of its cause—its cosmogony? Buddhism has many cosmologies, but all of them recognize a multiplicity of worlds, including hells and heavens, and the existence of types of beings that are not part of human experience, such as hell denizens, gods, and hungry ghosts (*pretas*). Buddhist cosmogony recognizes the force of intentional action—karma—which caused all of us to be reborn in all of these forms from time without beginning. This cosmology and cosmogony is virtually uncontested in Asia, but in the United States it strains the credulity of many students and potential students of Buddhism. Stephen Batchelor, a British Buddhist teacher and former monk in a Tibetan order, has argued that it is possible, even necessary, to be agnostic with respect to these elements of the Buddhist world view without rejecting anything essential about Buddhism;[31] others, such as Thurman, argue that Buddhist compassion is not possible without a belief in reincarnation at its base.[32]

This debate uncovers a larger and potentially more problematic issue within the transmission of Buddhism to the United States. On the one hand, Buddhism itself has a long history of resisting dogma. Rather than merely accepting Buddhist assertions as truth, individuals are themselves supposed to investigate the nature of reality and come to their own conclusions. This commitment to the primacy of reason was demonstrated particularly in the Dalai Lama's interactions with scientists. He frequently stated that if there is compelling proof that contradicts any Buddhist

doctrine, the Buddhist doctrine ought to be amended or rejected. On the other hand, in the absence of such proof, as in the case of reincarnation, where it would not really be possible to show that it cannot occur, should Buddhists not have faith in the teachings of enlightened masters? And can it be right for American Buddhists to accept only those points that are easy to accept rather than staying within the tradition?

ISSUES IN THE STYLE OF AMERICAN BUDDHISM

Both Tibetans and Americans recognize that when Buddhism is transplanted from one culture to another, it must adapt to its new host before it can affect any transformation in its society. But what should be changed and what retained? Among the questions that Americans have raised are these: is there any place for Buddhist monasticism in American culture? Should Americans follow Tibetan patterns of devotion toward the teacher? What danger is there that in the United States the dharma will become "commodified" and degenerate? Is there a possibility that Tibetan Buddhism will become a desacralized form of psychological therapy? Let us briefly consider these questions.

Monasticism

Clearly Tibetan American Buddhism will have to take a very different form than it has in Asia. Monasticism at anything approaching the level at which it existed in Tibet, where the monastic orders were at the center of Tibetan religious life, cannot exist here. Several tiny monasteries function in the United States. The first, Geshe Wangyal's Labsum Shedrub Ling, continues to exist in New Jersey as the Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center (although it has no monks in residence as of this writing). Within the Gelukpa order is a branch of the Dalai Lama's own monastery, Namgyal, in Ithaca, New York, and a branch of Drepung Loseling Monastery is located in the Atlanta, Georgia, area. Principal Kagyu monasteries are at Karma Triyana Dharmachakra in Woodstock, New York, and Gampo Abbey in Nova Scotia. The main Sakya monastery is in Seattle, Washington. Some of these have both Tibetan and American monks and nuns, whereas others have only Tibetans.

Many of the ordained live in or near dharma centers far from other monastics, which presents many difficulties in daily life. No developed tradition of support for monastics exists in the United States, either financially or in social esteem, and many of those who are ordained have subsequently relinquished their vows and robes.

Is this absence critical? Some, such as Thurman and Wallace, argue that monasticism is essential for American Buddhism as well. For Wallace, monasticism ensures that at least some people in any generation genuinely achieve profound insight, maintaining a kind of "gold standard" that backs up the claims of Buddhism about profound states of consciousness. For this, some people must be supported so that they can undertake long periods of study and contemplation. Thurman emphasizes the need for monastics to provide models for an enlightened society.[33]

Relating to a Spiritual Teacher

A more vital issue of style for many students is how to relate to their spiritual teachers. Most Tibetan teachers expect their students to follow Tibetan protocols: students should prostrate themselves three times before teachers when they enter the room, they should bow slightly upon their departure, and they should gladly serve them, supporting them financially but also cooking and cleaning for them and driving them where they need to go. They should not question the teachers' decisions about how the center or larger organization should be run. Predictably, this has presented several difficulties for many students. Americans are unaccustomed to prostrating before others and to acting as personal servants. They have egalitarian and democratic ideals that are challenged by the teachers' hierarchical and authoritarian style.

At the same time, they are aware that devotion to the lama is considered essential for practice, particularly at the level of tantra. If the students cannot see the lama as a Buddha, the lama may not be able to help the student experience his or her own enlightened quality. Several recent publications, prominently Alex Berzin's *Relating to a Spiritual Teacher: Building a Healthy Relationship,* addressed these difficult and subtle questions and clarified the way in which students can assess their obligations while honoring these Tibetan cultural patterns. The Dalai Lama frequently urged students not to rush into a committed lama-disciple relationship, but instead should take several years, if necessary, to adequately assess the guru with whom they are so enchanted initially. Not everyone agrees. Tara Carreon, a student of Tibetan Buddhism for 22 years, recently concluded that it will not "work" in the United States until it has been stripped of its Tibetan cultural trappings.[34] She regards Tibetan lamas generally to be ethnocentric, medieval, authoritarian, and greedy. American students, she says, are reluctant to speak out against abuses of power because in their tantric initiations they made promises (*samaya*) to venerate the lama.

Particular difficulties arise in the case of the child tulku. The tulku is a person identified as the reincarnation of a respected teacher. Tulkus usually receive monastic training, but may, like other monks, later give back their vows and marry. They get special treatment from the time of their identification. Some become great teachers like their predecessors, travel often, and are widely respected; some do not. But even if they display unusual maturity and intelligence as children, they are still children, prone to the moods and passions of children, and do not have the knowledge and insight of their former incarnations. Tibetans have dealt with tulkus for several centuries, but Americans have not, and the power issues that are so controversial with respected adult teachers are even more vexing when they arise with children.

Shopping for Enlightenment

Another issue in the style of Tibetan American Buddhism might be called "the commodification of the Dharma." Many Americans want to "pick and choose" what they like about the Buddhist dharma and leave the other parts behind. This can

extend to teachers and whole traditions as well. Commodification also occurs when the teachings are given on a fee basis. Whereas teachings in Asia were given freely, the expectation being that laypeople would voluntarily give to the teacher (or more generally to the monastery that supported the teacher), it is commonplace in the United States to set fees, sometimes rather high ones, for teachings and empowerments. Commodification also occurs when students surround themselves with the trappings of Buddhist culture—clothing, altars, statues, paintings, and jewelry. A more subtle form of commodification, which Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche called "spiritual materialism," occurs when adopting a style or accumulating empowerments or teachings from many teachers becomes a way of impressing others, a "credential."

For instance, many Americans who received tantric empowerments from Tibetan lamas had not done the practice at all, had abandoned it after a short time, or had made changes to it without the authorization of the initiating lama. This can easily occur because no real teacher-disciple relationship exists for many students; they have only a relatively anonymous and brief contact at the time of the initiation, after which the lama leaves town and the student can do as he or she pleases.

A Tibetan American Aesthetic?

How will Americans transform the aesthetic of Tibetan Buddhism? The "sound" has already changed considerably in the sense that much of the dharma has been translated into American English. The style of the translation changed much in just a few decades as translators found translation terms that are evocative without being inaccurate and that express the dharma in an American idiom. American teachers such as Lama Surya Das, Wallace, Thubten Chodron, and Pema Chodron, to mention just a few, are very adept at this. However, some Tibetans, notably the late Chogyam Trungpa and the Nyingma teacher Sogyal Rinpoche, creatively adapted psychological terminology and concepts to explain traditional Buddhist viewpoints. Trungpa, in particular, used exciting language: "In the case of the spiritual friend, he is your lover in the sense that he wants to communicate with your grotesqueness as well as your beauty … The real function of a spiritual friend is to insult you"; "The bodhisattva is not inhibited by conventional morality or idiot compassion"; "… the bureaucracy of ego."[35]

What about the "look" of Tibetan Buddhism? Should the exotic silk brocades, scroll paintings, brass statues, and robes of Tibet gradually give way to American forms? For instance, what would an American Buddha look like? Two intriguing examples of a new form are the statue of the historical Buddha in the huge and beautiful Great Stupa of Dharmakaya built in the Colorado mountains in memory of Chogyam Trungpa,[36] and the much smaller statue of the future Buddha Maitreya in the temple of the Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center in New Jersey. In both cases, what strikes the visitor is the statue's face. The Colorado Buddha's face is a blend of Tibetan and Caucasian features. The New Jersey Buddha has a distinctly Native American face. (It was made in Arizona.)

THE FUTURE OF TIBETAN AMERICAN BUDDHISM

Looking at general American cultural trends, it seems likely that Tibetan Buddhism will continue to grow in the United States for the foreseeable future. Americans are increasingly tolerant of and interested in Asian religions, particularly Buddhism. Although Asian Buddhism is still exotic to most Americans, the march of globalization is steadily dissipating its scent of "otherness." At the same time, Americans are increasingly aware of the physical and mental effects of the stresses of modern life and seek various ways to calm themselves and become more productive. The practice of meditation as taught in Buddhism appeals to many who seek greater peace and self-understanding.

But what will be its shape? In the near term, we can expect it to develop within the patterns already established. Lama Surya Das, in his popular *Awakening the Buddha Within,* delineated ten trends in American Buddhism, adapting a list promulgated by the Theravada Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield. We have already discussed most of them.

- It is meditation based and experientially oriented.
- It is lay oriented.
- It stresses gender equality.
- It is democratic and egalitarian.
- It is essentialized, simplified, and demystified.
- It is nonsectarian. (That is, the sorts of issues that divided Tibetans have not been embraced by Americans.)
- It is psychologically astute.
- It is exploratory.
- It is community oriented.
- It is socially and ecologically conscious.

To this list many other characteristics could be added. For instance, it is ambivalent about authority; ritual is diminished in frequency and length; it is sometimes blended with other traditions, as when Jews or Christians practice Buddhism without dropping their other identity; it is strongest in large urban areas and on the two coasts; and there is more emphasis on personal growth than on social purposes.

But we can also expect that every cultural trend or quirk will echo in Tibetan American Buddhism in ways that cannot now be predicted. We have already seen many forms. Surya Das made a playful list of some of our many "Buddhisms": monastic, lay, meditation, chanting, ritualistic, bare bones; academic, mystical, practical, therapeutic, intellectual, anti-intellectual; retreat, congregational, socially engaged, missionary, upper-middle-class; ethnic, Jewish, Christian, Hindu; health, vegetarian, pacifist, tantric Crazy Wisdom, Beat, eclectic, New Age, roll-your-own. We cannot foresee how many of these influences will profoundly shape what eventually emerges as Tibetan American Buddhism.

Here are a few more guesses regarding the future shape of Tibetan American Buddhism.

First, for better or worse, some American Buddhist teachers will become fully qualified lamas, leading sanghas, conferring empowerments, and receiving the guru devotion of their students. This extraordinary development could energize and transform Tibetan American Buddhism. It could be very problematic as well, for the same reasons that apply to Tibetan teachers—the American resistance to authority and to guru devotion, scandals that will reflect badly on all teachers, and so forth.

Tibetan teachers will continue to teach and lead sanghas, but more of them will be from a new generation that can speak English and is familiar with Western culture. Already some tulkus were educated in India or Nepal with the full intention that they be sent to the West upon the completion of their Buddhist education. Some, such as Trungpa's son, the head of Shambhala International, were raised in the United States and sent to Asia for Buddhist finishing. It may not be long before some Tibetans will receive all of their Buddhist education in the United States.

Second, significant growth will occur in two sectors related to Tibetan American Buddhism that will challenge the identity of the main traditions. The first sector is the growing phenomenon of the "Buddhayana" meditation centers. This term was coined by Don Morealle for the Buddhist centers that were a synthesis of Asian traditions rather than being identified with one in particular.[37] These appear to be growing at least as fast at those of Tibetan Buddhism. They are a very new phenomenon and are possible because of the lay orientation of American Buddhism and because for the first time in the history of Buddhism all of the various traditions of Buddhism are simultaneously present in one place. Given Americans' proclivity towards eclecticism and selectivity in religious matters, possibly more people will practice Tibetan American Buddhism at, say, the "Philadelphia Buddhist Center" than at the various Tibetan American groups around the city.

The second sector in which we can anticipate significant growth is the secular adaptation of Buddhist meditation techniques. Programs exist that train students in mindfulness techniques for personal growth and such mundane concerns as career enhancement. The way forward was pointed by two of the earliest Tibetan teachers, Tarthang Tulku and Chogyam Trungpa, each of whom established successful programs. The former's Nyingma Institute in Berkeley offers his "Time, Space, and Knowledge" and "Skillful Means" courses as ways to enhance one's life in general and work in particular, without explicit Buddhist content. It also offers continuing education programs for therapists, social workers, nurses, and attorneys. Trungpa established the Shambhala program which, while using Buddhist meditation techniques and symbols from Tibetan culture, is a self-described secular program to "foster basic sanity" for everyday life.

Tibetan Buddhist teachers have already begun to write books and conduct seminars for business people.[38] In Japan, business executives are sometimes sent to Zen monasteries for a training period to sharpen their attentiveness and develop discipline; could the same thing happen in the United States?

Buddhist meditation is used as part of a program for the relief of chronic pain and stress disorders in the division of Preventative and Behavioral Medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School where Jon Kabat-Zinn, a former monk, is on the faculty. If it becomes more widely recognized that meditation can be an important (and very inexpensive) method for the control of chronic pain, and insurance companies are willing to pay for patients to take courses, it could be a very significant area in which Tibetan Buddhism might be influential in American life. Tibetan meditation methods may also be used outside the clinic for "relaxation/stress-reduction centers" to meet the needs of people who recognize physical and mental problems with their stress levels. Many spas and gyms already offer some form of guided meditation for these purposes. Tibetan Buddhism has already played a role in psychotherapy, and it seems likely that the use of Buddhist-derived contemplative techniques will become a fairly common practice in other settings.

Finally, the Tibetan American Buddhism of the future will be further shaped by its encounters with science and with other religions. Both of these areas are increasingly active. For instance, Wallace and Victor Mansfield compared Buddhist philosophy with physics,[39] and Francisco Verela and others did the same with cognitive science.[40] The Dalai Lama took a keen interest in science, participating in several conferences on these topics and others; he has recently published a book on religion and science.[41]

He is also an eager participant in interreligious dialogue. Christianity and Judaism have, naturally, been the principal dialogue partners. Most other Tibetan teachers still have little interest in other religions, but for Western teachers the interreligious dialogue not only provides a way for them to resolve any outstanding religious issues with their own upbringing, but also constitutes a potent method for reaching many of their own students. Roger Kamanetz, a poet who teaches in Louisiana, found that his deep encounter with Tibetan Buddhism also enabled him to see something valuable in his own Jewish tradition.[42] Perhaps in addition to a more purely Buddhist Tibetan American Buddhism, we will see the rise of syncretic forms such as Jewish-Tibetan Buddhism or Christian-Tibetan Buddhism.

CONCLUSION

The last half of the twentieth century was tragic for Tibetans, bringing to their homeland much suffering, death, and the crushing of their traditional culture. But it happened to be a time when the Western world was open to new spiritual pathways, and, when Tibetan Buddhism harbored figures of great learning, compassion, and inventiveness such as the Dalai Lama, the Karmapa, Trungpa Rinpoche, Lama Yeshe, and Tarthang Tulku, Tibetan American Buddhism very quickly established itself and seems to be growing strongly. It faces a crisis of identity as it becomes "Americanized," as it inevitably will be, and as a new generation of Tibetan teachers and new American teachers become its leaders. We are seeing the meeting of the world's richest and most complex religion with the world's richest and most complex

nation, and what develops from their integration will undoubtedly be far more diverse and intricate than we can now imagine.

NOTES

1. Robert Wuthnow and Wendy Cadge, "Buddhists and Buddhism in the United States: The Scope of Influence," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 3 (September 2004): 363–380.

2. There *is* a refuge ceremony, but it is not obligatory.

3. Eve Mullen, *The American Occupation of Tibetan Buddhism: Tibetans and Their American Hosts in New York City* (New York: Munster, Waxmann, 2001).

4. The "dharma center," a place where laypeople are taught about Buddhist thought (dharma) and instructed in meditation practices, is a recent Western phenomenon that has no precedent in the long history of Buddhism. In the past, Buddhism was transmitted to new areas mainly through the establishment of monasteries. Laypeople received spiritual merit for supporting the monasteries but rarely expected instruction in the philosophy of Buddhism or in any advanced spiritual practices.

5. It should be noted that although this type of tantric practice is the *summa* for Buddhist traditions of the "new" orders, the ancient order, Nyingma, considers Dzogchen to be the highest. Dzogchen does not involve visualization practices, but rather involves attention to the nature of the mind.

6. This is one of the principal points of Geoffrey Samuel's excellent *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1993). Samuel analyzes at length what he calls two overlapping shamanic complexes, that of the folk religion and that of Buddhism. He says, "Lamas in Tibet function as shamans, and they do so through the techniques and practices of Vajrayana Buddhism" (9).

7. Various writers have proposed that as many as 25 percent of Tibetans were monastics, but Samuel's review of the evidence (582) convinces me that there was never that many.

8. *Boston Globe,* December 10, 1976. Rick Fields called his excellent history of Buddhism in America *How the Swans Came to the Lake,* 3rd ed. (Boston: Shambhala, 1992).

9. Geshe Wangyal's life is described in Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake,* 290–294.

10. Rinpoche ("precious") is a title of respect given to former monastery abbots and to those recognized as the reincarnations of important teachers. The biographies of Lama Yeshe and Zopa Rinpoche can be found on the FPMT Web site, http://www.fpmt.org/teachers/jointbio.asp.

11. The NKT has not published any substantial biography of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. The best current source of information on him is probably http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kelsang_Gyatso.

12. The Sakya Monastery in Seattle is the seat of the order in the United States, http://www.sakya.org/Lamas.htm.

13. See Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake,* 304–308. Information about the Odiyan Retreat Center, probably the most impressive setting for Tibetan Buddhism in America, can be found at http://www.odiyan.org/index.html.

14. A brief biography of Sogyal Rinpoche may be found at the Rigpa foundation Web site, U.S.A., http://www.rigpaus.org/WIR/SR/index.html. His *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992) is largely autobiographical.

15. Her official biography is at http://www.tara.org/jetsunma.htm. A book by journalist Martha Sherrill, *Buddha From Brooklyn* (New York: Random House, 2000), explores the possibility that Jetsunma has created a cult.
16. http://www.tibet.dk/karmapa_trust/seagal.htm.
17. Lama Surya Das, *Awakening the Buddha Within* (New York: Bantam, 1997).
18. Trungpa's autobiography, written when he was still in his twenties, is *Born in Tibet* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995). The most recent of a spate of reminiscences by Trungpa followers is Fabrice Midal, *Recalling Chogyam Trungpa* (Boston: Shambhala, 2005).
19. http://www.kagyu.org/.
20. http://www.drikung.org/.
21. Alexander Berzin, speaking to an audience of Tibetan lamas and geshes in India a few years ago, asserted that it was probably a great waste to send the best teachers to the West to teach; it was better that they educate young Tibetans. He advocated that a second rank of teachers be sent instead, http://berzinarchives.com/modern_adaptation_buddhism/address_monks_buddhism_west.htm.
22. Daniel Capper, "Why Do Americans Practice Tibetan Buddhism?" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2000).
23. Harvey Aronson, *Buddhist Practice on Western Ground: Reconciling Eastern Ideals and Western Psychology* (Boston: Shambhala, 2004).
24. For instance, Mark Epstein, *Thoughts without a Thinker: Psychotherapy from a Buddhist Perspective* (New York: Basic Books 1995); Jeffrey B. Rubin, *Psychotherapy and Buddhism: Toward an Integration* (New York: Plenum Press, 1996).
25. Don Morreale, who compiled the *Complete Guide to Buddhist America* (Boston: Shambhala, 1998), found that the number of Tibetan American centers doubled between 1975 and 1984 and doubled again between 1985 and 1997. However, most were quite small. Seventy percent had fewer than 50 members.
26. For a description of the program, see Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-la: Tibetan Buddhism in the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), chap. 6.
27. "Tibetan Buddhism in the West: Is it Working Here?" *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* (Summer 2001).
28. To be fair, spiritual eclecticism is rife in the United States. One of the characteristics of American religiosity found by sociologist Robert Bellah and his colleagues in their fascinating volume from the mid-1980s, Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), is the belief that it is appropriate to construct one's own private religion. Bellah called this "Sheilaism" after a respondent named Sheila identified this as her religion.
29. Aronson, *Buddhist Practice on Western Ground,* 33–34.
30. For a description and comparison of these programs, see Daniel Cozort, "The Making of the Western Lama," in *Buddhism in the Modern World,* ed. Steven Heine and Charles S. Prebish (New York: Oxford, 2003).
31. Stephen Batchelor, *Buddhism Without Beliefs* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998).
32. *Tricycle* (Summer 1997).
33. Robert Thurman, *Inner Revolution: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Real Happiness* (New York: Rider & Co., 1999).
34. Tara Carreon, "Another View on Whether Tibetan Buddhism is Working in The West," http://www.american-buddha.com/tib.bud.working.htm.

35. These quotations are from Chogyam Trungpa, *The Myth of Freedom* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 1976), 133–134, 115, 6.

36. This photo was found at http://www.frontrangeliving.com/family-health/Shambhala.htm.

37. Although it has only a few centers in the United States, the U.K.-based Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, which blends various Buddhist traditions including Tibetan, is the type of organization that may do well in the United States in the long run.

38. For instance, Geshe Michael Roach, who by profession was a diamond dealer in all of the years he spent studying for the geshe degree, has written *The Diamond Cutter: The Buddha on Managing Your Business and Your Life* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

39. B. Alan Wallace, *Choosing Reality: A Contemplative View of Physics and the Mind* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1996); Victor Mansfield, *Synchronicity, Science and Soulmaking* (Chicago: Open Court, 1995).

40. Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).

41. Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality* (New York: Morgan Road Books, 2005).

42. Roger Kamanetz, *The Jew in the Lotus: A Poet's Rediscovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India* (San Francisco: HarperSanFransisco, 1995). The title is a pun on the traditional symbol of the conjoining of wisdom and compassion, the jewel in the lotus.

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The Unification Church/Movement in the United States

Michael L. Mickler

The Unification Church/Movement (UCM) is one of several New Religious Movements (NRMs) that became prominent in the United States during the 1970s. It was originally founded as The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) in Korea by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon (b. 1920) and four followers in 1954. Since then, it has grown into a global movement, consisting of religious, cultural, educational, media, commercial, and industrial enterprises worldwide. The UCM was founded to unite Christian denominations throughout the world, bring unity among all major religions, and, on that basis, build the Kingdom of God on earth, or "Cheon Il Guk."[1] Movement efforts in pursuing these objectives have been vigorously opposed. Derided offensively in the West as "Moonies," the UCM has contended with intense and sustained reactions worldwide and in the United States, rendering it, quite possibly, the most controversial NRM of the latter twentieth century.

HISTORY

UCM history in the United States divides into four relatively discrete phases. They are as follows: (1) a period of transplantation during the 1960s when the movement began missionary activities in the West; (2) a period of evangelization and counter-evangelism, mainly during the 1970s, when the movement gained the bulk of its core membership but also provoked widespread opposition; (3) a period of institutionalization during the 1980s when the movement constructed an elaborate infrastructure of organizations through which it intended to influence opinion leaders and other societal elites; and (4) a period of messianic proclamation, dating from the collapse of communism in the early 1990s, when the movement publicly acknowledged its messianic premises and as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification launched an ambitious program of "world peace and unification."

Transplantation

The UCM began its mission to the West in 1959 when its first missionaries arrived in the Pacific Northwest. The movement's "early mission" extended through the decade of the 1960s to the arrival of Rev. and Mrs. Moon in 1971. This period was a time of sowing. While the society around the movement exploded in protest and rebellion, the movement grew by translating its core theological texts into English, establishing important patterns of community life, and developing characteristic ways of relating to the wider culture. In these endeavors, the UCM benefited from a small group of unusually qualified and credentialed missionaries.

Young Oon Kim (1914–1989) was the first to arrive, in Eugene, Oregon, in early 1959. She was a graduate of the Methodist seminary at Kwansei Gakuin University in Japan, a United Church of Canada scholarship recipient at Emmanuel College at the University of Toronto, and former professor of New Testament and Comparative Religion at Ewha Women's University, Seoul. David S.C. Kim (b. 1914), the second to arrive, was a former Republic of Korea (ROK) government official and deacon in the Presbyterian Church who had been a United Nations scholar at Swansea University College, Wales. Colonel Bo Hi Pak (b. 1930), a graduate of the Korean Military Academy who trained at Fort Benning, Georgia, was the third Unification missionary to the United States. He returned to the United States in 1961 as a diplomat, serving as assistant military attaché at the Korean Embassy in Washington, D.C. Sang Ik "Papasan" Choi was the last of the original missionaries, arriving in San Francisco in late 1965. He was a former Holiness minister who successfully planted the UCM in Japan from 1958 to 1964.[2]

Despite their credentials or, perhaps, because of them, the chief failing of the missionaries was a lack of unity. From the beginning, there were disagreements, grievances, and squabbles over strategy as well as a tendency to proceed independently from one another. Miss Kim, as she was known, moved to San Francisco in 1960 and Washington, D.C., in 1965 from where she led a network of "centers" across the country referred to as the "Unified Family." David Kim established "United Faith, Inc." and led a string of "United Chapels" from the Pacific Northwest to Chicago. Colonel Pak set up the Korean Cultural and Freedom Foundation, which promoted American tours of the UCM-sponsored "Little Angels" Korean dance troupe, and later established Radio of Free Asia. "Papasan" Choi tapped into the communal ethos and utopian idealism of the 1960s, fashioning a communitarian experiment in San Francisco that included an "International Ideal City Project" on 600 acres in Mendocino County.[3]

The Unification Church's oral tradition holds that the missionaries' failure to unite led to an inadequate result. In fact, core membership of their separately incorporated groups stood at not much more than 300 after more than a decade of effort. However, given the vast cultural distance that the early missionaries needed to bridge, their accomplishments were probably equivalent to or greater than success rates of other overseas missionary movements in the first decade of activity.[4] At the same time, activities in the United States were peripheral to the mainstream

Unification movement, which was centered in Korea and, to a lesser extent, Japan. Not until the 1970s did developments in the United States assume a central role as a consequence of Rev. Moon's decision to shift the focus of his work to the West.

Evangelization and Counterevangelization

The UCM emerged as a national movement in the United States between 1972 and 1976. During this period, the earlier missionary groups merged, national membership multiplied ten times to more than 3,000, and the movement attained widespread visibility. Nevertheless, a good portion of its visibility turned to notoriety as the UCM's rapid growth provoked negative reactions. Increasingly, questions about the movement's religious and organizational legitimacy led to organized efforts to stop it. Prior to addressing these conflicts, it is important to understand "how a small, faltering and obscure movement of the 1960s was able to achieve rapid growth, stability and prominence in the 1970s."[5] In general, this development was the result of changed conditions in American national life, the movement's organizational initiatives, and the presence of Rev. Moon.

Alienated youth, disillusioned both with American society and the political protests and drug culture of the 1960s, contributed to a broad constituency of religious seekers who joined the UCM and other groups during the 1970s. The Unification movement took advantage of this market opportunity by reconfiguring itself from bickering, loosely organized, low-impact missionary groupings into a unified, tightly organized, high-demand NRM. The UCM began this process with a three-year period (1972–1974) of "total mobilization" during which it held "pioneer" training programs, conducted a succession of impressive and expensive "Day of Hope" evangelistic crusades (culminating in a September 18, 1974, Madison Square Garden event), sent out mobile bus teams, appointed state leaders and itinerary workers, and set up mobile fundraising teams. This was possible because of the unifying and energizing presence of Rev. Moon. His activity solidified a common identity, highlighted his central role, established the UCM as a high-demand movement, garnered widespread publicity, and brought in overseas missionaries and money.

If Rev. Moon provided a focus for the movement, he also provided a focus for movement opponents. His Asian origin, presumed connections to the Korean government, alleged lavish lifestyle, and even his name attracted the hostility of enemies who derided followers as "Moonies" and the movement as a "cult." More serious than name-calling were efforts to deny the UCM tax-exempt status, to deny its foreign missionaries entry to the country, and to forcefully extract members from the movement through kidnapping and "deprogramming" (see "Controversies"). By 1976, a broad-based anticult movement designated the Unification movement as a primary target. Their actions put the movement on the defensive, caused it to spend millions of dollars in litigation costs, sparked government investigations, and produced widespread public hostility. The movement's later bicentennial "God Bless America" rallies at Yankee Stadium and the Washington Monument in 1976,

intended to close out the proclamation phase of Rev. Moon's ministry, unfolded within a climate of increased negativity.

Rev. Moon expected the movement to increase its core membership to 30,000 by 1978 in order to have a significant impact in the United States. However, this goal proved to be exceedingly elusive. Hostility toward the UCM, as part of a more generalized negativity toward NRMs, was greatly stimulated by the murder/mass suicides of Peoples Temple devotees in late 1978. In addition, by the 1980s, middle-class youth were less idealistic than in the early 1970s. Rather than religion, they pursued career paths and high-paying jobs. In the face of these realities, the UCM experimented with new witnessing strategies: video and book distribution, festivals, service projects, a "home church" method that did not require converts to move into centers, and occasional "total mobilizations." The "Oakland Family," a remnant of the UCM's earlier communal experiment in the San Francisco Bay Area, was the movement's most successful witnessing center, achieving 90 percent of the movement's results. Nevertheless, due to alleged deceptive and high-pressure recruitment tactics, the Oakland Family also was a lightning rod for UCM opposition.[6] Inadequate or mixed results forced the movement to alter its strategic objectives.

Institutionalization

The UCM continued witnessing and evangelizing efforts during the 1980s. However, it was apparent that the UCM did not have a sufficient number of core members to be an effective grassroots movement. As a result, the movement shifted its strategy, diversified, and began to develop an organizational infrastructure that expanded its ability to exert influence in the United States. Some institutionalization emerged naturally as a consequence of members' maturation. For example, in 1982, the UCM conducted a record-setting wedding or "Blessing" for 2075 couples (4,150 individuals), which eclipsed the previous record of 1,800 married by Rev. Moon in Korea in 1975.[7] With this event, the UCM evolved from a movement of primarily single people to one of married people, virtually overnight. Married life and children introduced new complexities, including the necessity of families finding viable means of financial support. Still, the movement directed the bulk of its resources and energy toward reaching intellectual and societal elites in ways consistent with its vision of

- unity in the realm of religion and culture;
- "co-prosperity" in the realm of economics; and
- ideological armament in the realm of politics.

Movement opponents were still active, and the movement experienced setbacks along the way, most notably Rev. Moon's indictment, conviction, and imprisonment on tax evasion charges (see "Controversies"). However, the UCM was far more influential at the end of the 1980s than it was before.

The movement's main goals in the realm of religion and culture were harmony between religion and science, or at least promotion of a value perspective within the sciences, and ecumenical and interreligious cooperation. Beginning in 1972, the movement sponsored annual International Conferences on the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS), which grew to include more than 900 participants, including several Nobel laureates, by 1981. By then, the movement had established active chapters of the Professors World Peace Academy (PWPA) and Paragon House, which served as a publishing outlet for ICUS and PWPA-related scholars. The UCM followed a similar trajectory in its ecumenical and interreligious outreach. Unification Theological Seminary, established at Barrytown, New York, with an entirely ecumenical faculty, in 1975 hosted "theologians conferences" that led to the creation of the New Ecumenical Research Association in 1980 and the International Religious Foundation (IRF) in 1983. Hundreds of scholars of religion participated in conferences on "Unification theology" and an annual "God Conference." Related initiatives such as the Youth Seminar on World Religions further expanded the movement's ecumenical and interreligious network and involved religion scholars of the highest rank.[8]

The movement based its vision of "coprosperity" on two ideals. The first was the necessity for the "equalization of technology" and "technology transfers" from the advanced to the developing world. This underlay the UCM's efforts to develop Tong-il Industries in South Korea. During the early 1980s, the movements bought several large German machine tool plants, attempting to set up Saeilo Machinery as a worldwide distribution network for Tong-il and West German lines. The UCM's industrial investments were highly publicized and controversial in West Germany but received little, if any media coverage in the United States. The same could not be said about the UCM's involvement in American fishing industry-related enterprises. After 1976, the UCM invested in a plethora of fish-related businesses along the South Korean *chae-bol,* or conglomerate model, acquiring shipbuilding yards, commercial and charter fishing fleets, fish processing plants, and a distribution network consisting of wholesale and retail fish companies, restaurants, markets, and groceries.[9] All of this was driven by the UCM's companion ideal of solving the problem of world hunger.

Work with scholars and business enterprises was a long-term endeavor. The UCM was able to attain more immediate influence in pushing its agenda for ideological armament. Rev. Moon was often portrayed as a fervent anticommunist in the popular press. Nevertheless, his outlook differed significantly from the world view of reactionary rightists in that he criticized selfishness and confusion in the Western system of values, promoted internationalism, and preached racial inclusiveness. Still, Rev. Moon forcefully opposed atheistic communism and regarded it as the chief barrier to God's work in the world. This was a tough sell during the years of President Jimmy Carter's administration (1977–1981), but the presidency of Ronald Reagan (1981–1989) afforded fresh opportunities. The UCM acted decisively, establishing *The Washington Times* in 1982 as a counterbalance to the "liberal" *Washington Post.* The *Times* faced hazing from many quarters and was controversial from the beginning, but became a darling of the New Right and reportedly the newspaper of choice

within the Reagan White House. The *Times,* in turn, maintained a strong advocacy for a broad range of administration initiatives including support for the Nicaraguan Contras and the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Ironically, as the Reagan years came to a close, the UCM became more rather than less active in the public square. The UCM-related American Leadership Conference and the American Freedom Coalition convened "American Leadership Conferences" for civic leaders, distributed more than 30 million pieces of literature during the 1988 Bush-Dukakis presidential campaign, including highly effective "voter scorecards," and in 1990 conducted "Desert Storm" rallies in all 50 states. The PBS series, *Frontline,* concluded in 1992 that "whether they know it or not, Americans should realize Rev. Moon is a force in their political lives."[10]

Messianic Proclamation

The UCM's messianism was well-established, at least since the 1970s. In addition to being typed as an industrialist and anticommunist, media accounts commonly referred to Rev. Moon as a Korean messiah. However, the movement was not willing to concede publicly that he was anything more than a contemporary prophet "crying out in the wilderness of the twentieth century." All this changed during the early 1990s. With the downfall of communism, regarded by the UCM as the chief obstacle to establishing God's sovereignty in the world, Rev. Moon began speaking more explicitly about his identity, and in 1992 eliminated any doubt by declaring that he and Mrs. Moon were "the True Parents of humanity … the Savior, the Lord of the Second Advent, the Messiah."[11] The following year, he announced the transition to a whole new historical epoch, which he termed "the Completed Testament Age." Although details as to the precise nature of the new epoch were sketchy, it involved a fundamental shift in the order of salvation from the individual to the family. It also rendered all previous religious expressions, including that of the Unification Church, obsolete.[12]

During the early 1990s, the movement was optimistic about prospects for immanent, substantive world peace and unification. To some extent, its perspective mirrored that of secular idealists who in the wake of the West's Cold War victory proclaimed "the end of history."[13] Optimism and idealism were put to the test during the post-Cold-War era. However, the movement as a whole stayed the course, pursuing an ambitious three-pronged program of world salvation. The first component was dialog. Rev. Moon remained convinced that interdisciplinary, intercultural, and interreligious exchange was essential for world peace. Therefore, the UCM continued to sponsor a broad array of conferences. However, the defining characteristic of this development was the establishment of numerous "federations" for world peace. Just as the victorious nations created the League of Nations after World War I and the United Nations after World War II, the conclusion of the Cold War required the creation of a new institution, perhaps derived from the UCM's federative network, or so the movement reasoned. Short of that, the UCM hoped to

introduce a religious component, possibly a senate of distinguished religious leaders, into the existing United Nations.[14]

The second component of the UCM's program was forgiveness and reconciliation. Some issues, notably vicious hatred among ethnic, national, racial, and religious groupings, transcended the problem-solving capacity of rational discourse and social idealism. These, in fact, became more pronounced during the post-Cold-War period when they were no longer held in check by competing superpowers. Any program for peace, therefore, had to go beyond interpersonal relations and address issues of forgiveness and reconciliation. Here, the movement took its cue from Rev. Moon. Though widely regarded as a virulent anticommunist, it was less well known that prior to communism's demise, he began altering his persona from that of Cold War warrior to that of "peacemaker and unifier."[15] In particular, he sought reconciliation and developed relationships with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev (b. 1931) and the late North Korean premier, Kim Il Sung (1912–1994). Out of these personal encounters, he derived the inspiration to pursue forgiveness and reconciliation on broader levels. He encouraged marriages between partners from former or current enemy states and sent out members from adversary states as missionary teams. During the 1990s, he pursued these measures in a programmatic way, working with the UCM-backed Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) to sponsor large-scale "Sisterhood Ceremonies," first among more than 200,000 South Korean and Japanese women in 38 separate ceremonies in 1994 and later among 4,000 Japanese and American women in eight ceremonies in 1995.[16]

The sanctification of families through "International Marriage Blessings" was the third prong of the UCM's agenda for world peace and unification. Sanctification in the Unification context related to the family and family formation. The gateway to the sanctification process was the Blessing, which became a major point of emphasis for the UCM during the middle and late 1990s. Sanctification was an important complement to movement-sponsored dialogs and reconciliation efforts. The first two prongs in its program essentially dealt with conflict resolution. The third prong, the sanctification of families through the Blessing, was understood to eliminate the root cause of human conflict and division (see "Practices"). Prior to the beginning of the "Completed Testament Age," the Blessing was a narrow gate, restricted almost exclusively to core Unificationists. However, after 1993, Rev. Moon stated his intention of blessing hundreds of thousands and even hundreds of millions of couples before 2000. The UCM sponsored a succession of five Blessings between 1995–2000 in major arenas (three in Seoul Olympic Stadium in Seoul, South Korea, one each in RFK Stadium and Madison Square Garden in New York City). With satellite hookups to Blessing venues worldwide, the movement claimed that it sanctified more than half a billion families.[17]

By 2000, Rev. Moon, now in his eighties, was as hard-driving and as driven as ever. Ongoing programs continued and new ones began, notably a Middle East Peace Initiative involving an array of Christian ministers, Jewish rabbis, and Muslim imams. Nevertheless, the UCM remained suspect in American society and coped

with formidable internal pressures to routinize. In the years ahead, the movement will face ongoing challenges in sustaining its messianism, relating to its external environment and managing its complex inner workings (see "Issues").

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Core beliefs of the Unification movement are contained in *Wolli-Kang-ron* (1966), its primary doctrinal and religious text, translated from Korean into two official English edition texts, *Divine Principle* (1973) and *Exposition of the Divine Principle* (1996).[18] These texts express aspects of the "new truth" or "Principle" revealed through Rev. Moon. Though employing familiar Christian theological categories (creation, fall, Christology, resurrection, predestination, Trinity, providential history, and eschatology), the Principle interprets Christian doctrines in ways that highlight the movement's overriding emphasis on the family. God, as parent, is understood to be the source of both masculinity and femininity, and the Principle specifically identifies the Holy Spirit as the feminine aspect of the Godhead. The text similarly propounds a family-based interpretation of original sin, locating the human fall in adulterous and premature sexuality, which the texts maintain is communicated through the symbols in the biblical book of *Genesis.* Humankind's original ancestors supposedly became false parents who perpetuated a fallen lineage and fallen history.

If humankind's loss of original parents was the result of sin, salvation from the perspective of Unification theology hinged on the restoration of "True Parents." This fed directly into the movement's understanding of the person and work of Christ. Jesus essentially came to earth as the second Adam with the mission to find a bride, or second Eve, with whom he would establish a true family, true lineage, and true history. Unification theology, consequently, regards Jesus's crucifixion as a tragic mistake that frustrated God's plan, ushering in a secondary course led by the resurrected Christ and Holy Spirit (in restored Eve's position) who, as "spiritual" True Parents, offer rebirth. Unification theology understands the past 2000 years to be a "prolongation" of God's providence until the coming of the third Adam who will restore a bride, establish a new lineage, and consummate human history. The Principle claims that humanity at present is in the Last Days, that Christ will come again, born in the flesh on earth, and that the nation from which Christ will come is South Korea.

For Unificationists, these core beliefs have the force of revelation. As stated in *Divine Principle,*

> This new, ultimate, final truth … cannot come either from any … synthetic research in the scriptures, or from any human brain … This truth must appear as a revelation from God Himself. This new truth has already appeared![19]

Two additional texts, *Unification Thought* and *Communism: A Critique and Counterproposal,* apply the teachings of Unification theology to philosophy and politics.[20] Together with *Divine Principle,* they provided the theological and ideological foundation for the UCM's initiatives in evangelism, ecumenism, academic pursuits, and public advocacy.

An oral tradition, consisting mainly of Rev. Moon's sermons and speeches, exists alongside the official doctrinal texts. Many of them are more forthcoming about the Second Advent arriving in the persons of Rev. and Mrs. Moon and their family. As noted, Rev. Moon declared publicly in 1992 that he and his wife were "the True Parents of humanity … the Savior, the Lord of the Second Advent, the Messiah," and in 1993 he announced the transition to the "Completed Testament Age." These proclamations marked the beginning of a shift in Unification beliefs since all previous religious expressions, including that of the Unification Church and presumably Unification theology, were understood to be obsolete. The Principle, in its earlier published versions, was seen as preoccupied with issues relevant to restoration, especially with untangling Christian doctrinal matters, rather than with God's original word. Now that the Completed Testament Age had dawned, members increasingly turned their attention to "original" thought. Rev. Moon encouraged this development and in 1998 announced that his words, collected in several volumes of his speeches, were to be the authoritative Completed Testament Age canon. By 2004, a new authoritative set of Rev. Moon's words, known as the *Cheon Seong Gyeong* or "Heavenly Scripture" was prepared. It ran to more than 2,000 pages.[21]

In terms of its practices, the UCM is best known for its joint marriages, referred to by the media as mass marriages and by the movement as International Marriage Blessings. The Blessing, as understood by the movement, is a process through which men and women come into union with each other, engraft to the True Parents, are reconciled with God, and thereby, according to the movement, reconstitute themselves as a new humanity. This process has important internal and external components. Internally, the Blessing cleanses couples and their progeny from the taint of original sin. Externally, "blessed couples" exemplify world peace and unification. Thus, the movement encourages international, intercultural, and interracial—or what it terms "exchange" marriages—in large-scale ceremonies dedicated to "World Peace Through Ideal Families."

As previously noted, the Blessing was a narrow gate, restricted almost entirely to Unification Church members before 1992. After 1993, "open" Blessings and the "globalization of the Blessing" affected movement practices and eventually members' thinking about the rite. Previously, core adherents endured lengthy preparation periods that extended from the time they joined until they were blessed. During this time, they were celibate and fulfilled regular membership duties as well as special conditions associated with the Blessing, such as bringing three new converts ("spiritual children") to the movement and completing a seven-day fast. All candidates were "matched" by Rev. Moon and required official permission to "start their families" after separation periods of varying lengths. When beginning married life, members followed ritual procedures established by the church.[22] After 1993 these conditions did not apply to the overwhelming majority of those being blessed since they were not Unification Church members. For most couples, there was no formal preparation at all.

For Unificationists, the Holy Wine Ceremony was the centerpiece of the Blessing. It signified the cleansing of original sin or, in Unification terms, the "change of blood

lineage." Members attempted to preserve the integrity of this ceremony. However, as adherents conducted marriage rededications, "blessing" couples in living rooms, on beaches, at county fairs, and elsewhere, adaptations and eventually innovations that bore only a faint resemblance to the original tradition emerged. For example, some couples refused wine. In these cases, grape juice, referred to as "holy nectar," sufficed. Others had reservations about accepting drinks from strangers. In these instances, sniffing the wine or dipping one's finger into the cup was sufficient. As movement goals for the number of blessed couples increased into the millions, enterprising members distributed "holy lemonade" to thirsty beach goers or downtown pedestrians, usually with little or no explanation of its benefits. Others distributed holy candy with printed blessing affirmations. Rev. Moon expressed dismay at these practices, but also adapted, stating that those born after his holy matrimony in 1960 or after he began his public ministry in 1945 were already blessed.[23]

The discrepancy between the Blessing as a narrow or wide gate was symptomatic of a more pervasive tension in the movement's spiritual practices between heroic and conventional religiosity. For most of the UCM's history, members attempted to emulate the spirit if not the actual accomplishments of Rev. Moon who, according to *Divine Principle,* "endured suffering unimagined by anyone in human history … fought against myriads of satanic forces … and finally triumphed over them all."[24] Following his pattern of heroic religiosity, members sought to become "small Sun Myung Moons." This became institutionalized in a "formula course" that included three-and-one-half years of fundraising and three-and-one-half years of witnessing as a "foundation to receive the messiah" and be blessed. After the blessing, followers endured marital and family separations for the sake of mission, sometimes lasting years at a time, and continued to make sacrificial financial donations, on occasion, to the point of bankruptcy. Members in the United States were requested to make a "Total Life Offering" of $16,000 several years ago. In Japan, the requested amount was substantially higher. Members maxed out credit cards and even sold off ancestral properties.

Members made sense of these offerings within Unification spirituality, whose core was "to liberate the suffering heart of God." Understanding that God's heart or *Shimjung* was broken by the human fall and Christ's crucifixion, Unificationists' foremost desire was to comfort God. Again, Unificationists took their cue from Rev. Moon who, regarding his incarceration in a North Korean labor camp, supposedly said,

> I never prayed from weakness. I never complained. I was never angry at my situation. I never even asked for His help, but was always busy comforting him and telling him not to worry about me. The Father knows me so well. He already knew my suffering. How could I tell Him about my suffering and cause His heart to grieve still more. I could only tell him I would never be defeated by my suffering.[25]

"Cherished stories" such as these established "theocentric, self-sacrificial love" as the most notable virtue in members' estimation of Rev. Moon's character.[26] Accounts of Rev. Moon's *Shimjung* in the face of misery and deprivation solidified bonds

among members, particularly as they located their stories within the founder's exemplary story.

However, the heroic pattern of Unification religiosity demanded more than spiritual conquests. It mandated world transformation. Unificationists saw themselves in a struggle to reclaim God's sovereignty. In this battle, members exuded a certain militancy in singing of "Heavenly Soldiers," cheering "Mansei" ("Ten Thousand Years"), and in utilizing "crusade" and "commander" designations for evangelistic activities and leadership positions. Rev. Moon encouraged competition among the movement's national groupings. He also continually rotated leaders, shifting them among widely varying assignments and locales, and on occasion declared "emergency mobilizations," thereby creating a committed, seasoned Unification vanguard. For Rev. Moon, no one should settle down prior to global restoration, or at least prior to the establishment of a "restored" nation.

Despite the primacy of the heroic, a pattern of conventional religiosity also emerged and within its first generation, the UCM took on trappings of an organized religion. The movement, in fact, fought to obtain legal recognition as a *bona fide* religion with rights to tax exemption privileges and missionary visas. The Unification Church purchased numerous church buildings and established congregations with regular Sunday worship. The tradition proliferated holidays, known as "holy days," and followed a full church calendar. There also were well-defined rituals and traditions associated with birth, the passage to adulthood, marriage, and death.[27] Married life and progeny, in particular, introduced significant responsibilities. Since such a large percentage of Unificationist couples were paired interracially, interculturally, or internationally, spousal relationships required attention and effort previously dedicated to world salvation. Some couples took family and career as a cue to redefine their church commitments, in many cases, taking conventional jobs and leading seemingly conventional lives.

Given strong internal pressures to routinize, the UCM tried to balance heroic and conventional patterns of religiosity among its core membership. One strategy was to channel the movement's radical demands into defined settings and limited time periods. Thus, members with jobs and families offered "forty-day conditions"—to conduct workshops in the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States in the early 1990s, to help pioneer New Hope Farm in the Brazilian outback during the mid-1990s, to attend ancestor liberation ceremonies in South Korea during the late 1990s, or to participate in peace pilgrimages to the Middle East after 2002. The movement undertook the same strategy with its second generation youth in developing a two-year "Special Task Force" program reminiscent of the Mormon mission. By encapsulating radical demands within relatively controlled settings and limited periods of time, members balanced movement commitments with family, career, and education.

The movement also balanced heroic and conventional patterns of religiosity among its core membership by turning inward, finding resources for hope and renewal in the life of the spirit. Members once again took their cue from Rev. Moon. According to the movement's core theological text,

> For many decades he [Sun Myung Moon] wandered in a vast spiritual world in search of the ultimate truth … Knowing that no one can find the ultimate truth to save mankind without going through the bitterest of trials, he fought alone against myriads of Satanic forces, both in the spiritual and physical worlds, and finally triumphed over them all. In this way, he came into contact with many saints in Paradise and with Jesus, and thus brought into light all the heavenly secrets through his communion with God.[28]

In the face of rejection by the world, members looked to heaven and found reassurance or, alternatively, explanations for their struggles. The movement's shamanistic background and involvement with spiritualism, which included "channeling" or even marrying discarnate spirits, was mostly overlooked until the late 1980s when a young Black Zimbabwean member, claiming to be the "returning resurrection" of Rev. Moon's deceased second son, led a worldwide movement revival. His name was Cleophas Kundioni, and his revival, which consisted mainly of "forgiveness" sessions, ran on four continents (Africa, Europe, North America, and Asia) for a little over a year's duration, 1987–1988. They were marked by increasingly eccentric behavior and violence. Rev. Moon finally directed him back to Africa, a directive that he disobeyed. At this point he lost all credibility. There was a consensus among Unificationists that Heung-jin Nim's (Rev. Moon's son) spirit had left the embodiment and an evil spirit had taken over. Cleophas subsequently turned against the church and drew out a substantial portion of the UC in Zimbabwe into a new sect. In the mid-1990s, a fresh spiritual revival of even broader scope and longer duration impacted the movement, this time led by the "embodiment" of Mrs. Moon's deceased mother Soon Ae Hong (1914–1989). In addition to banishing "evil spirits," members were given the chance to "liberate" and "bless" their ancestors. In fact, in 1999, 56 billion spirits were reported to have been blessed, including 65 Old Testament figures, 27 New Testament figures, 57 popes, 26 Byzantine emperors, and 28 emperors of the Holy Roman Empire. In 2002, the movement published "Cloud of Witnesses" ads in major American newspapers, which included testaments to Rev. Moon from deceased American presidents. By testifying to spiritual phenomena of this sort, members managed external rejection and maintained hope even as they lived out their everyday lives.[29]

CONTROVERSIES

As stated, the UCM, aka "Moonies," sparked intense and sustained reactions worldwide and in the United States, rendering it, quite possibly, the most controversial NRM of the latter twentieth century. Much of this was due to the movement's global spread and its founder's longevity. Other NRM claimants to the mantle of "most controversial" may have made more indelible imprints on the twentieth century psyche as a result of spectacular, self-destructive apocalyptic conflagrations. However, for the breadth and longevity of controversy, the UCM was probably without peer. Controversies over the UCM derived from the movement's messianism, from misunderstandings and fear as to the UCM's political goals and from

suspicions as to its apparent wealth. This section will highlight selected controversies in each of these areas.

The UCM was a key player in the so-called "cult wars" of the 1970s. The seemingly sudden proliferation of NRMs, many of them exotic and high-demand, provoked panicked reactions from parents who "lost" children to one or another of these groups. Convinced that their children were "brainwashed," some hired the services of "deprogrammers" who forcefully abducted adherents and subjected them to "deprogramming," in which they confined clients and used various techniques to pressure them to renounce their beliefs. "Deprogrammed" ex-members and apostates (those who willingly leave a religious group) subsequently contributed to public hysteria and the rise of a loosely organized "anticult movement" (ACM). The ACM maintained that the UCM and similar movements were not "true" religions but "pseudo religions" or "cults" utilizing manipulative tactics (so-called "coercive persuasion") to induce sudden personality changes. Hence, for ACM sympathizers, cults were not subject to the privileges or protections afforded conventional religions.

The UCM was "public enemy number one" according to Ted Patrick (b. 1930), the decade's most well-known deprogrammer. Patrick claimed UCM recruiters practiced "on-the-spot hypnosis" and the same brainwashing techniques as practiced by the North Koreans when they "brainwashed" American POWs during the Korean Conflict. Members were "robots" or "zombies" who needed to be taken out "bodily."[30] The courts clamped down on Patrick's illegal kidnappings and deprogramming, but a new form of "legal deprogramming" followed in which sympathetic judges granted temporary conservatorships or guardianships so that parents could legally remove adult children from the movement and turn them over to paid deprogrammers or "deprogramming centers." The courts also clamped down on conservatorships, but not before more than several hundred UCM members were subjected to illegal or legal deprogramming.

The UCM spent millions of dollars defending itself during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Apart from the deprogramming controversy, it was denied tax-exemption privileges, and its foreign members were denied the right to enter the country as missionaries. Through near-constant litigation, the UCM reversed these handicaps and obtained gradual recognition as a *bona fide* religion with tax exemption privileges, public solicitation rights, and access to missionary visas. It also was able to extend constitutional protections to members. Still, the movement lost the one case that was the most highly publicized, most costly, and most important. Rev. Moon's conviction and imprisonment on tax evasion charges dominated press coverage of the movement at the time and continued to be a point of reference in accounts of the Unification Church in the 1980s (see below). Nonetheless, by 1985, the UCM had vindicated its position and existed on solid legal footing in the United States.

Although the Unification Church attained recognition as a *bona fide* religion in the eyes of the government, it faced opposition from Jewish and Christian leaders. In 1976, the American Jewish Committee charged in an official report that *Divine Principle* revealed "an orientation of almost unrelieved hostility toward the Jewish

people." Citing specific references, the report asserted that whether discussing the Israelites of the Hebrew Bible or the Jews of the New Testament period, "Rev. Moon portrays their behavior as reprobate, their intentions as evil (often diabolical), and their religious mission as eclipsed." The report elicited an official "Statement on Jews and Israel" signed by Rev. Moon, which repudiated anti-Semitism and pledged support for the state of Israel. Subsequent movement rejoinders pointed out that most of the offending passages were direct citations from the New Testament. Nonetheless, relations between the UCM and Judaism remained strained, in part because the public assumed that a disproportionate number of movement adherents were Jewish.[31]

Shortly thereafter, the Commission on Faith and Order of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (NCC) followed suit by releasing to the press and other interested persons "A Critique of the Theology of the Unification Church as Set Forth in *Divine Principle*." The 11-page "official study document," issued "to clarify the claim to Christian identity made by the Unification Church," admitted to "diversity in Christian belief and … thus, internal disagreement." Nevertheless, the Commission determined that the Unification Church "is not a Christian Church" and that its claim … to Christian identity cannot be recognized." The Roman Catholic hierarchy in the United States took no official stance. However, Japanese bishops issued a statement saying that the movement "has nothing to do with Catholicism, not even with Christianity, and is not an object of ecumenism."[32]

Rebuffed by Judeo-Christian officialdom, the UCM set about developing its own ecumenical and interreligious network (see above). It also began the process of carefully building bridges back to the religious mainstream. However, this was not easy given the movement's messianism. In 1992, Rev. Moon offended some allies by declaring at a UCM-sponsored interreligious gathering that he and Mrs. Moon "are the True Parents of all humanity … the Savior, the Lord of the Second Advent, the Messiah." The implication of the Completed Testament Age superceding "Old" and "New" Testament ages was not a boost to rapprochement any more than Rev. Moon's statement that unlike "American leaders, prominent Christians, and other leading figures of the world" who have "only a faint understanding of the forces that shape the future … I know the direction that humankind must go, and I, with the help of God, will lead the world there."[33]

However, fallout over messianic proclamations was minor compared to the controversy that erupted over Roman Catholic Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo's participation in a Unification-sponsored "International Marriage Blessing of Religious Leaders" at the New York Hilton in May 2001. Milingo, 70, was the archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia, from 1968 until he resigned under pressure in 1983 for conducting faith healings and exorcisms. Assigned to the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples in Rome, Milingo continued faith healings and exorcisms until quietly forced to retire in 2000. His decision to marry Maria Sung, a 43-year-old acupuncturist from South Korea, in a ceremony officiated by Rev. and Mrs. Moon, precipitated a chain of highly charged events. The Roman Catholic hierarchy, fearful of a schism in Africa where Milingo retained a following, demanded that he renounce the marriage or face excommunication. Milingo met Pope John

Paul II, who persuaded him to return to the fold and sequester himself for reflection. Denied access to her husband, Maria Sung began a hunger strike on St. Peter's Square. This led to a meeting with Milingo after which the couple agreed to terminate the marriage.[34]

Another initiative, integral to Unification theology, sparked religious controversy in 2003 when Rev. Moon and the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification called upon Christian clergy to remove crosses from their churches. As noted above, Unification theology treats the crucifixion as a tragic mistake that frustrated God's providence. Moreover, the cross as a symbol was understood to perpetuate separation with Judaism and conflict with Islam. In response to this call, 123 supportive clergy took down their crosses on Good Friday in ceremonies intended to mark an end to the era of bloodshed and sacrifice and the beginning of a new era. Not surprisingly, this provoked negative reactions. Many clergy who attended Unification meetings or supported the movement lost their congregations or were stripped of their positions.[35]

Misunderstanding and fear as to the UCM's political goals were additional sources of controversy that separated it from other NRMs. Unlike most NRMs, the UCM articulated civic themes, took stands on public issues, established what it termed "educational" or what its opponents termed "front" organizations, and engaged elected officials. The UCM insisted that it had no political ambitions. However, given its "victory of communism" activities, and its support for the Republic of Korea, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and an array of right-wing causes, Rev. Moon and the UCM were at various times labeled by critics as fascist warmongers and tools of the South Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA). Critics also accused the movement of advocating theocracy, thereby threatening the classical Western dichotomy between the secular and the sacred.[36]

These issues first surfaced in 1973 when Rev. Moon launched a "National Prayer and Fast for the Watergate Crisis" (NPFWC) and published an "Answer to Watergate" statement in leading newspapers throughout the United States. Rev. Moon stated that "God's command at this crossroads in American history" was to "forgive, love, and unite." He further claimed that "God has chosen Richard Nixon to be President of the United States" and "Therefore, God has the power and authority to dismiss him." From the movement's standpoint, the NPFWC added a prophetic dimension to its tradition, or a willingness to risk unpopularity to convey its understanding of God's word. In fact, the action earned it the enmity of American liberals. In addition, to speak of God's will in politics or public life crossed the church-state divide for many Americans.

In the post-Watergate era, the UCM became entangled in "Koreagate," South Korean influence buying on Capitol Hill. The United States House Subcommittee on International Organizations, chaired by Rep. Donald Fraser (D-MN), launched a probe into Korean-American relations, particularly KCIA activities, and attempted to establish a link between the KCIA and the Unification Church. In its investigation, the Subcommittee leaked several confidential, unevaluated intelligence documents, which led to press reports that the church "was founded by the Director of

the Korean Central Intelligence Agency in 1961" or that it emerged "from its origins as a small-time Korean sex cult into a worldwide organization operated by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency." These allegations were false, as the Subcommittee's final report admitted. Although concluding that the "Moon Organization was not an agent of influence for the ROK Government," the Subcommittee called on the federal government to form an "interagency task force" to investigate the church.[37] No interagency task force was created. Nevertheless, the Subcommittee perpetuated a climate of suspicion in relation to Rev. Moon and the UCM.

The UCM's access and influence within the conservative Reagan administration was a matter of concern during the 1980s, and *The Washington Times* was controversial, as noted. During this period, the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), a UCM-affiliated organization, confronted leftist groups on college and university campuses. In traditionally liberal or radical campus settings, such as the University of Wisconsin at Madison, members were spat upon, kicked, and taunted with jeers of "Moonie slime" or "Moonie wimps." CARP did not back down, but after the Soviet downing of Korean Airline Flight 007 in 1983, CARP developed a revolutionary, activist élan of its own, replete with practiced chants, burnings of Soviet leaders in effigy, hard-driving rock bands, and touring martial arts groups (helpful in protecting CARP podiums from assaults). The CAUSA Ministerial Alliance, which propagated the UCM's critique of communism, made inroads among civil rights veterans and pastors to the extent that critics complained of a "rightward" shift among Black clergy.[38]

In the post-Cold-War era, Rev. Moon's increasingly frank messianism stirred new controversies, especially when it overflowed the bounds of faith and encroached upon the public. The best example of this was a "King and Queen of Peace" ceremony conducted at the Dirksen Senate Office Building on March 23, 2004. At this event, with one sitting American senator and six congressional representatives in attendance, some 100 supporting religious leaders received "Crown of Peace" awards and Rev. and Mrs. Moon, "wearing flowing robes reminiscent of Middle Ages kingly attire," were crowned "King and Queen of Peace." Initially ignored, Internet blogs discussed the event at length, charging that organizations affiliated with the UCM were pursuing "Moon's longstanding dream of merging religion and government under his authority."[39]

Suspicions as to its apparent wealth were a third source of controversy surrounding the UCM. The movement, early on, recognized that large expenditures were, in themselves, a means of attaining public visibility. Thus, movement spokespersons were not hesitant to release six- and seven-figure budget allotments for evangelistic tours. The same dynamic was at work in the movement's real estate acquisitions in high profile locales, especially, two large estates and 300 acres of greenbelt land in Westchester County, New York, the former Columbia University Club, and the New Yorker Hotel in Manhattan. In addition, Rev. Moon's calling card listed him as chairman of the board of five South Korean industrial concerns.[40]

The fact that the church had these holdings was not controversial by itself, but became so when coupled with public perception of the manner in which Rev. Moon's

alleged lavish lifestyle contrasted with the public image of followers peddling peanuts and flowers on the streets. This was a motivating factor behind a 1976 "Day of Affirmation and Protest" in which critics presented grievances against the movement to Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) and representatives of seven American government agencies. Dole, as ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, previously wrote a letter to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) stating that an audit of the Unification Church "may be warranted" and then released the letter to the press. Within days, the IRS began a tax investigation of the church. A "squad of IRS agents" took up "permanent offices in the church's downtown New York City headquarters, while a team of field agents began round-the-clock surveillance of selected church members and their telephones." After two years of investigation, the IRS did not find anything that compromised the church's tax-exempt status, but turned over to the New York District Attorney's Office "certain anomalies" in Rev. Moon's tax returns for the years 1973–1975. It was this finding, previously discussed, that led to Rev. Moon's indictment and conviction on tax evasion charges.[41]

The audit of Rev. Moon's tax returns for 1973–1975 showed a liability of $7,300, less than the $2,500 per year required by IRS guidelines for criminal prosecution. The United States Department of Justice Tax Division questioned whether there was a tax liability at all and concluded in a written memorandum that prosecution was not advisable. Nevertheless, after convening three grand juries, an aggressive prosecuting attorney for the Southern District of New York obtained an indictment and conviction of Rev. Moon. Denied on appeal, Rev. Moon served nearly 12 months in Danbury Federal Correctional Institution, Connecticut, and a month-and-a-half in Phoenix House Foundation, a halfway house in Brooklyn, New York, until August 20, 1984.[42]

The UCM contended that Rev. Moon had no tax liability but exercised an accepted and widely practiced trustee role known as corporation sole. Numerous religious bodies, including the National Council of Churches, the National Association of Evangelicals, and the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights as well as the ACLU, Spartacus League, and the states of Hawaii, Oregon, and Rhode Island, agreed and filed *amicus curiae* briefs in support of Rev. Moon. Some distanced support for Rev. Moon's religious and civil liberties from support of his theology or program. Others, especially from minority communities, viewed Rev. Moon as a fellow victim of racial prejudice and were less concerned about doctrinal niceties. The UCM deftly channeled this support into a variety of alliances, coalitions, committees, rallies, and fellowships. By 1985, even the mainstream media conceded that opposition to the government's handling of Rev. Moon's case was broad-based. In all, 40 groups and individuals representing 120 million Americans filed *amicus curiae* briefs in support of his appeal.[43]

Another problem faced by the movement was the banning of its fundraising by innumerable local municipalities and cities throughout the nation. In some cases, local governments rewrote solicitation and licensing statutes to bar the UCM. Other times, local police jailed and fined movement fundraisers. According to a November 1978 report, the church filed 62 lawsuits in federal courts across the country from

September 1977 through October 1978, 52 of them resolved in the church's favor, the others still pending. The movement eventually won hundreds of solicitation cases in succeeding years, one of which (*Larson v. Valenti,* 1982), on appeal to the United States Supreme Court, established important legal protections against unequal government treatment of controversial religious groups.[44]

Detractors continued to suspect movement expenditures. Moreover, start-up costs for *The Washington Times,* which the UCM launched as a competitor paper to the *Washington Post* in 1982, were estimated to be in the $40–$50 million range. Prior to that, the movement spent $40 million on *Oh Inchon!*, a movie release now recalled as one of Hollywood's all-time film disasters. The UCM spent $30–$50 million in marine industry acquisitions and $10–$15 million annually on nonprofits. In the early 1990s, the UCM-funded Professors World Peace Academy bailed out the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut for $50 million in exchange for a controlling interest on its board. In 1983, the UCM's South Korean business enterprises had total assets worth $198 million. However, the movement's South Korean enterprises provided only marginal funding for American operations. In reality, Japan was the economic juggernaut that powered the worldwide UCM. In 1984, two former Japanese church officials reported that the movement there sent more than $800 million to the United States over the previous nine years through a variety of businesses and donors who benefited from Japan's overheated economy. American mobile fundraising teams, which consisted of members who sold flowers, art work, candy, and other items door-to-door or in parking lots, supplemented this funding.[45]

ISSUES

The UCM faces four major issues in relation to its future development. They are the following: (1) succession, or the question of leadership once Rev. Moon is no longer present; (2) contextualization, or the extent to which the movement needs to develop a stronger sense of continuity with American religious culture; (3) socialization, mainly the challenge of retaining those born into the faith; and (4) secularization, or the extent to which the movement can maintain its transformative fervor in the face of pressures to serve its organizational self-interest.

Succession

For core movement adherents, Rev. Moon fits sociologist Max Weber's classic description of the charismatic leader as one "endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least exceptional powers and qualities." Weber held that charisma, in its "pure" form, was "a specifically revolutionary force." However, he recognized the necessity of "routinization," or the setting up of a "permanent routine structure" after the leader's death. A successful transition from "pure" to "routinized" forms of charisma is a key factor for any movement to sustain its organizational continuity.[46]

The most important organizational asset of the UCM is its common belief in the founder's exemplary character. As noted earlier, "cherished stories" were repeatedly

told within the community that established "theocentric self-sacrificial love" as the most notable virtue manifested in Rev. Moon's life. Rev. Moon was also credited with paranormal gifts and achievements. In the course of a single generation, the UCM emerged from exceedingly humble origins to become a complex, diversified, multinational conglomerate with an astonishing array of churches, educational and cultural foundations, and businesses. Clearly charismatic leadership fueled the movement's initial advance. Rev. Moon had few internal constraints in making policy decisions and allocating movement resources. However, what had been an organizational asset can, with the prophet's disappearance, become a liability.

The concentration of authority in a single individual, no matter how gifted or worthy, inevitably raises the problem of succession. The UCM survived Rev. Moon's imprisonment, and branches of the movement function with relative autonomy. Nevertheless, Rev. Moon's presence enabled the movement to survive infighting among top leaders, factionalism between departments, and historic national enmity, notably between South Koreans and Japanese. The succession problem is further complicated by a multiplicity of candidates from the same charismatic family. At various times, speculation focused on Rev. Moon's wife, eldest son, and third son (his deceased second son being regarded as "commander-in-chief" of the spirit world). More recently, elder siblings were given business functions and Rev. Moon's youngest son was given educational/religious functions, at least in the West. However, as a movement scholar points out, "It is usually very difficult for hereditary charisma to demand the same or stronger dedication from the original founder's followers … Few biographical stories about Rev. Moon's children … are likely to match the dramatic and extraordinary quality of their father's story."[47]

A silver lining in what otherwise might be a bleak succession scenario derives from Weber's insight that personal charisma survives only so long as it is "proved."[48] In other words, leaders must continually "produce" to satisfy followers. This emphasis on results energizes first-generation development but also leads to "a tendency to rely on showy, visual depictions of success." The UCM's sense of urgency in evidencing its claims led to problems: in particular, short-term thinking and pressure on leaders to succeed encouraged reports of inflated results and undermined the movement's access to accurate information. Also, since charismatic authority, at least within the Unification tradition, implied a flawless performance, interpretations that denied failures kept the movement from recognizing those failures.[49] Charismatic inspiration, minus careful research and management, led to financial losses in the millions of dollars.[50] In these initiatives, the movement may have benefited more from the founder's symbolic than actual presence. Also some followers, including those in the line of succession, probably will function more freely and productively outside the glare of a single dominant charismatic personality.

Contextualization

The UCM places considerable public emphasis on the international, intercultural, and interracial aspects of its work. Rev. Moon also declared in several of his addresses

that "The United States of America, transcending race and nationality, is already a model of the unified world."[51] At the same time, Rev. Moon and much of the movement's senior South Korean and Japanese leadership remained ambivalent toward American culture. They had a particularly difficult time fathoming such core American cultural norms as equality. For them, it was perfectly obvious that there was no equality. Rather, everyone knew their place in a secure, familial-based social order. Equally disturbing was what the movement's East Asian leadership experienced as an abrasive cultural style. Being used to more understated, deferential modes of relating, frank styles of interaction, including expressions of disagreement with scant acknowledgement of a given leader's need to save face, created distance. However, what really grated on Rev. Moon and the movement's top Asian leadership was the American air of cultural superiority: that the United States was always on the side of righteousness, or at least was the leading force for goodness in the world; that those who could not speak English were inferior; or that leadership was an American entitlement.

In the face of continued rejection and ridicule, and especially after his indictment and conviction on tax evasion charges, Rev. Moon adopted a more critical posture toward the United States and American culture. Though rarely articulated in public, Rev. Moon's frustration was increasingly apparent in his speeches to members and in his choice of leaders. As early as 1978, he decided "Westerners couldn't cope on their own," and in 1983 he appointed South Korean leaders to the posts of highest authority in the American church. In a memorable turn of phrase, he stated, "English is only spoken in the colonies of the kingdom of heaven." His criticism of American culture escalated during the 1990s and began to spill over into public accounts. The *New York Times International* noted in late 1999 that Rev. Moon was "disenchanted" with the United States and quoted him as saying, "The country that represents Satan's harvest is America, the kingdom of extreme individuality, of free sex."[52]

Most members willingly accepted criticism and denunciations from Rev. Moon. Nevertheless, some felt that tribalization, particularly the universalization of Korean cultural norms, was an internal peril facing the UCM. The movement's East Asian leadership relied on Western members to interface with officials, and leadership of its major cultural affiliates was largely vested in Western intellectuals or professionals. However, these were strategic concessions that the movement's leadership was convinced they would not have to make once the center of global civilization shifted to the Korean peninsula. Apart from the universalization of Korean cultural patterns, heavy accretions of shamanistic ritual practices, numerology, and cosmic declarations were off-putting for some, especially in the West. Under these circumstances, these adherents argued that the movement needed to develop a stronger sense of continuity with American religious culture. Many of them concluded that the movement was too deviant, too Korean, or too Japanese. Alien standards, in their estimation, contributed to a loss or stagnancy in membership, financial problems, and a loss of moral authority.[53]

Socialization

Transmitting religious identity to the next generation is an exceedingly relevant issue for core Unificationists. Religious education and effective socialization of those born into the faith is a priority for most religious traditions, but especially so for the UCM given its emphasis on blood lineage and its investment of theological capital in the ideal of "sinless" children. As noted earlier, movement adherents understood the Blessing as a process through which men and women came into union with each other, engrafted to the True Parents, were reconciled with God, and, thereby, reconstituted themselves as a new humanity. Crucial to this understanding was the belief that children born of marriages "blessed" by Rev. and Mrs. Moon were free from the taint of original sin. Failure to resolve intergenerational issues and transmit its faith traditions to the succeeding generation, therefore, posed a more heightened threat to the UCM than it might to other movements.

The socialization of "blessed" children (BCs) raised a variety of nature/nurture issues. On the "nature" side of the question, the movement articulated certain qualifications in its definition of sinlessness. For example, though the Blessing severed the root of sin, it was freely conceded that BCs still retained greater or lesser degrees of ancestral, national, and individual sin. That is, they were subject to the influences of their parents, family tradition, culture, and numerous environmental factors. They also needed to overcome their own wrong actions. In addition to this, the movement distinguished between sinlessness and perfection. BCs, though their path may be open, as never before, still had to remain faithful through a growth process toward oneness with God. In order to do so, they must be properly raised, educated, and socialized in faith. Here, questions of nature crossed over into issues of nurture.

The UCM supported a broad array of educational and religious identity-transmitting options. These ranged from abstinence education and service-learning programs to movement-run or affiliated day cares, as well as elementary, secondary, undergraduate, and graduate schools. The movement also maintained a broad campus ministry, a two-year missionary-training program, regular Sunday schools, summer camps, and a second generation department. Effective socialization, for most Unificationists, necessitated that the next generation (1) maintain their sexual purity before marriage, and (2) be matched and blessed either directly by Rev. Moon or by their parents with another "blessed" child. School and career success, though desirable, were secondary. There were a few indications that impediments to BCs marrying non-BCs could lessen. Rev. Moon, in several recent cases, matched BCs to first-generation converts. The movement also made some accommodations for BCs marrying outside the faith. In addition, Rev. Moon declared on a couple of occasions that anyone born after 1960 or 1945 could be considered "second generation" according to the "merit of the age." These statements may provide a theological rationale for intermarriage. Nevertheless, the Blessing still stands as a dividing- line between Unificationism and the world.

Secularization

In the future the UCM will face the challenge of maintaining its zeal as a "world-transforming social movement, i.e., one that seeks total, permanent, structural change of societies across all institutions."[54] In fact, the movement may be reaching what American sociologist of religion Rodney Stark termed "the crisis of confidence that awaits most new religious movements as the founding generation reaches the end of their lives." According to Stark, "the record of new faiths suggests that unless the movement reaches a persuasive appearance of major success within the first generation, the founders will lose hope and turn the movement inward—adopt a new rhetoric that deemphasizes growth and conversion." Stark defined success as a "variable based on the degree to which a religious movement is able to dominate one or more societies," that is, "to influence the behavior, culture and public policy in a society."[55]

Given its numbers and resources, the UCM boasts of accomplishments in the United States worthy of groups several times its size. However, it has not attained any type of dominance. Evidence suggests that the movement influenced American governmental policy, particularly during the Reagan years. Still, the UCM was far from being a dominant majority. In reality, the movement's negative public image had not changed by the end of the twentieth century. The Unification Church obtained recognition as a *bona fide* religion, and the UCM's organizational components operated as legal entities. Still, Rev. Moon and the movement were considered suspect. Far from being a dominant majority, most members' experience was that they had only recently risen to the status of being an accepted minority.

The movement's core membership in the United States did not grow substantially from the 1970s. This downturn in the United States was balanced by growth spurts elsewhere in the world and by progress in influencing societal elites. Nevertheless, the public "face" of the movement, as reported by the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer,* was becoming one of "middle-class, middle-aged, multi-ethnic moderation."[56] Given this reality, will the movement of the future be primarily concerned with preserving what has been gained, seeking accommodation, and carving out a denominational niche within which it might self-perpetuate? The UCM created a formidable institutional infrastructure. Whether it maintains its transformative fervor while serving its legitimate organizational interests, or whether its organizational interests become primary, remains to be seen.[57]

NOTES

1. Cheon Il Guk is an abbreviated version of the longer Korean phrase "Cheon Ju Pyeong Hwa Tongil Guk" meaning "nation of cosmic peace and unity." There are additional variant meanings based upon the Chinese characters, such as "heaven and earth becoming one" or "man and woman becoming one." It is the movement's current operative phrase for the Kingdom of God.

2. Each of the original missionaries played significant roles in the movement's subsequent development. Young Oon Kim was Professor of Systematic Theology at Unification

Theological Seminary (1975–1988) and the movement's leading theologian, authoring *Unification Theology and Christian Thought* (New York: Golden Gate Publishing Co., 1975, 1976); *World Religions,* 3 vols. (New York: Golden Gate Publishing Co., 1976); and *Unification Theology* (New York : Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1980). David Kim was President of Unification Theological Seminary (1975–1994) and a leader in the movement's ecumenical work. Bo Hi Pak was Rev. Moon's personal assistant and translator as well as president of the Washington Times Corporation (1982–1992). San Ik Choi (b. 1925) initiated a pattern of community life and witnessing that brought exceptional results for 15 years in the San Francisco Bay Area.

3. For a more detailed description of the UCM's early mission, see Michael L. Mickler, *Forty Years in America: An Intimate History of the Unification Movement, 1959–1999* (New York: HSA-UWC, 2000), 8–36; and Michael L. Mickler, *A History of the Unification Church in America, 1959–74: Emergence of a National Movement* (New York: Garland, 1993), 3–172. For an early sociological account of Miss Kim's group in the San Francisco Bay Area, see John Lofland, *Doomsday Cult: A Study of Conversion, Proselytization and Maintenance of Faith* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966). Lofland was a doctoral student at the University of California at Berkeley who wrote his dissertation, "The World Savers: A Field Study of Cult Processes" (1964), on Miss Kim's group. Despite his use of pseudonyms, his work was not appreciated nor acknowledged by her group. However, the theory of conversion advanced in the book and in an earlier article coauthored with Rodney Stark, "Becoming a World-Saver," *American Sociological Review* 30 (December 1965): 862–874, has the distinction of being the most widely cited model of conversion in the sociology of religion.

4. See Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 4–21.

5. John Lofland, "Moonies in America: From Rag-tag Band to Streamlined Movement" (lecture given at the University of California at Davis, June 5, 1979).

6. See David Bromley and Anson Shupe, *Strange Gods: The Great American Cult Scare* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), 104–105, 115–127.

7. The *Guinness Book of World Records* listed the 1,800 couple wedding as the largest mass wedding in history. The 2,075 couple wedding was soon eclipsed by a 6,500 couple wedding performed by Rev. Moon in Korea in October 1982. These totals were regularly eclipsed by movement-sponsored "International Marriage Blessings" during the 1990s (see "Practices").

8. Huston Smith, author of *The World's Religions* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), and recognized as one of the country's foremost authorities on world faiths, cochaired the first two Youth Seminars and served as chairperson of the fourth God Conference.

9. For comprehensive coverage of enterprises, see *The Ocean Providence: The First Twenty Years* (New York: The Ocean Providence Twentieth Anniversary Planning Committee, 1994). For controversy surrounding the UCM's maritime initiatives, see Scott Cramer, "Why Moonies Catch More Tuna," *Yankee* 44 (November 1980): 127–33*ff.*; Geoffrey Moorhouse, "Moonies Invade Gloucester," *Harpers* 278 (January 1981): 46–52; and Calvin Trillin, "U.S. Journal—Bayou La Batre, Ala.," *New Yorker* 54 (March 27, 1978): 99–104.

10. Frontline, "The Resurrection of Rev. Moon," January 21, 1991.

11. Sun Myung Moon, "Becoming Leaders and Building a World of Peace" (speech delivered at the International Culture and Sports Festival, Seoul, Korea, August 24, 1992).

12. Sun Myung Moon, "True Parents and the Completed Testament Age" (speech delivered at the Women's Federation for World Peace Rally, Seoul, Korea, June 1993). The UCM reconfigured itself as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) during the

1990s. The FFWPU was understood to supercede the Unification Church. However, as of this writing, this had not occurred and the Unification Church, formally The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) still exists as a core movement corporate entity.

13. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (Summer 1989). See also *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

14. Chung Hwan Kwak, "New Directions for Interfaith" (speech delivered at IRFWP conference on Realizing the Interfaith Ideal: Action Beyond Dialog, Washington, D.C., December 18–20, 1998).

15. This effort was apparent in a glossy volume published by the movement, *Reverend Sun Myung Moon: Peacemaker and Unifier* (McLean, VA: International Peace Foundation, 1990). While pursuing "Victory Over Communism" activities, the UCM simultaneously cultivated contacts within the socialist world. The UCM-affiliated World Media Association feted hundreds of Western journalists on "fact-finding" trips to Russia and other Soviet republics between 1982 and 1989. In 1988, at the Seoul Olympics, the UCM made special efforts to welcome Soviet and Eastern bloc athletes, providing them with gifts and invitations to cultural events. Julia Moon, Rev. Moon's daughter-in-law and prima ballerina for the UCM-funded Universal Ballet, became the first South Korean ballerina to perform with the Kirov Ballet in 1989. The UCM won approval to invest in an automobile plant in China and established an engineering college at Yongmyung University in the ethnic Korean region of Manchuria.

16. The sisterhood ceremonies in the United States were high profile events that included speeches by such luminaries as William Bennet, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Barbara Walters, Christopher Reeve, Coretta Scott King, and most prominently, President and Mrs. George W. Bush who accompanied and spoke in support of WFWP with Mrs. Moon on a six-city speaking tour in Japan.

17. These figures were impossible to verify. However, the UCM claimed to have blessed 360,000 couples in 1995, 3.6 million couples in 1997, 36 million couples in 1998, 360 million couples in 1999, and the first stage of 400 million couples in 2000. The Associated Press estimated there were 28,000 couples or 56,000 participants at the main venue in RFK Stadium, Washington, D.C., for Blessing '97. Blessing '98 filled New York's Madison Square Garden and included a 2,000-voice gospel choir.

18. Sun Myung Moon, *Divine Principle* (New York: HSA-UWC, 1973); Sun Myung Moon, *Exposition of the Divine Principle* (New York: HSA-UWC, 1996).

19. Moon, *Divine Principle,* 15–16.

20. These texts exist in several editions and under varying titles including *Unification Thought* (New York: Unification Thought Institute, 1973); *Explaining Unification Thought* (New York: Unification Thought Institute, 1981); *Essentials of Unification Thought* (Tokyo: Unification Thought Institute of Japan, 1992); *Communism: A Critique and Counterproposal* (Washington, D.C.: The Freedom Leadership Foundation, 1973); and *The End of Communism* (New York: Unification Thought Institute, 1985). These works were authored by Dr. San Hun Lee (d. 1997), a former medical doctor and director of the Unification Thought Foundation.

21. The *Cheon Seong Gyeong* has not yet been translated into English. Rev. Moon's complete speeches run to some 400 volumes in Korean.

22. See James H. Grace, *Sex and Marriage in the Unification Movement: A Sociological Study* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1985); and George D. Chryssides. *The Advent of Sun Myung Moon:*

The Origins, Beliefs and Practices of the Unification Church (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 131–148.

23. This was consistent with the doctrine of the merit or benefit of the age. See Moon, *Divine Principle,* 173.

24. Ibid., 16.

25. Martin Porter, *Father's Life* (unpublished manuscript, circa. 1975).

26. Yoshihiko Masuda, "Moral Vision and Practice in the Unification Movement" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1987), 176.

27. See Chung Hwan Kwak, *The Tradition, Book One* (New York: HSA-UWC, 1985) for an insider overview of Unification rituals and traditions. Chryssides, *The Advent of Sun Myung Moon,* 149–164, provides an assessment from a history of religions perspective.

28. Moon, *Divine Principle,* 16.

29. For an overview of Unification spiritualism, see Mickler, *Forty Years in America,* 386–392, 397–401, 550–560.

30. Ted Patrick, with Tom Dulack, *Let Our Children Go* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976).

31. See James A. Rudin, *Jews and Judaism in Rev. Moon's Divine Principle* (New York: American Jewish Committee, December 1976); Sun Myung Moon, *Statement on Jews and Israel* (New York: HSA-UWC, August 10, 1976); Andrew Wilson, "A Unification Position on the Jewish People," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 20 (Spring 1983): 191–208.

32. See Commission on Faith and Order, *A Critique of the Theology of the Unification Church as Set Forth in the Divine Principle,* An Official Study Document (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., June 1977). For a Unification rejoinder, see Jonathan Wells, "Theological Witch-Hunt: The NCC Critique of the Unification Church," *Journal of Unification Studies* 1 (1997): 23–39. The Japanese Roman Catholic bishops' statement is summarized in "Vatican Takes Exception." *The Christian Century* 102 (January 2–9, 1985): 9–10.

33. Moon, "Becoming Leaders in Building a World of Peace" (1992) and "True Parents and the Completed Testament Age" (1993). See *True Family and World Peace: Speeches by Reverend and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon in the Completed Testament Age* (New York: Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, 2000). Distributed by HSA Publications, www.hsabooks.com.

34. Comprehensive media coverage is available on Archbishop Milingo's Web site. See www.archbishopmilingo.org.

35. Michael Jenkins, "123 Clergy Took Down the Cross Over Easter Holiday," www.familyfed.org, April 22, 2003. See also Jeff Johnson, "Christian Churches Should Stop Using the Cross, Group Says," CNSNews.com, August 22, 2003.

36. See Irving Horowitz. "Sun Myung Moon: Missionary to Western Civilization," in *Science, Sin, and Sponsorship: The Politics of the Unification Church* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978), xiii–xviii. See also Thomas Robbins et al., "The Last Civil Religion: Reverend Moon and the Unification Church," *Sociological Analysis* 37 (Summer 1976): 111–125.

37. United States Government, *Investigation of Korean-American Relations,* Report of the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations, United States House of Representatives (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978).

38. Prominent civil rights veterans Wyatt T. Walker, Ralph D. Abernathy, Joseph Lowery, and James Bevel, all close associates of Martin Luther King, Jr., attended UCM-sponsored meetings and expressed support. See Glen Craney, "CAUSA and the Black Clergy," *Christianity and Crisis* 47 (April 6, 1987): 115–120.

39. "Sun Myung Moon Crowned 'King of America' at Senate Office Building," *Church & State* (May 2004).

40. These were Tong-il Industrial Company, Ltd., a manufacturer of machine parts; Il Hwa Pharmaceutical Company, which produced ginseng tea; the Ilshin Handicraft Company, which produced stone vases (marketed in Japan); and two titanium companies, producers of paints and coating materials.

41. For an exhaustive assessment of Rev. Moon's tax case, see Carleton Sherwood, *Inquisition: The Persecution and Prosecution of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1991).

42. Sherwood, *Inquisition;* Mickler, *Forty Years in America,* 284–294.

43. Herbert Richardson, Constitutional Issues in the Case of Rev. Moon: Amicus Briefs Presented to the United States Supreme Court (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984); Mickler, *Forty Years in America,* 298–304; see also Alfred J. Sciarrino, "United States v. Sun Myung Moon: Precedent for Tax Fraud Prosecution of Local Pastors?" *Southern Illinois University Law Journal* 2 (1984): 237–281.

44. *Larson v. Valente,*102 S.Ct. 1673 (1982), *aff'g* 637 F.2nd 562 (8th Cir. 1981); see Mickler, *Forty Years in America,* 282–283.

45. For a helpful study of UCM finances, see David G. Bromley, "Economic Structure and Charismatic Leadership in the Unification Church," in *Money and Power in the New Religions,* ed. James Richardson (Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 335–364.

46. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Free Press, 1964), 398.

47. Masuda, "Moral Vision and Practice in the Unification Movement," 375–376.

48. Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building,* ed. S.N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 52.

49. Bromley, "Economic Structure and Charismatic Leadership in the Unification Church," 355; see also 336, 340–341.

50. Mention already has been made of *Oh Inchon!* A "Panda" automobile project in mainland China, to which the UCM committed $250 million over 25 years and for which it spent millions in constructing a plant, was a total loss as was the movement's multimillion dollar investment in German machine-tool factories. The UCM purchased millions of dollars' worth of land in the South American outback, much of which lays idle or is threatened by government takeovers.

51. Sun Myung Moon, "America and God's Will" (address delivered at Washington Monument Rally, September 18, 1976).

52. Mickler, *Forty Years in America,* 532, 536–537, 589–591.

53. Ibid., 533–534.

54. David G. Bromley and Anson D. Shupe Jr., *"Moonies" in America: Cult, Church and Crusade* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1979), 22.

55. Rodney Stark, "How New Religions Succeed: A Theoretical Model," in *The Future of New Religious Movements,* ed. Rodney Stark (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 13, 21.

56. Mickler, *Forty Years in America,* 535.

57. See Michael L. Mickler, "When the Prophet Is Yet Living: A Case Study of the Unification Church," In *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements,* ed. Timothy Miller (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), 193.

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The Bahá'ís of the United States

Robert H. Stockman

INTRODUCTION

The Bahá'í Faith was first publicly mentioned in the United States in 1893 when a Presbyterian missionary spoke about its founder, Husayn-'Alí of Núr, titled Bahá'u'lláh (1817–1892), in a talk at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago.[1] Bahá'u'lláh was born in northern Iran to an aristocratic Shiite Muslim family. A religious prisoner and exile for 40 years, he wrote extensively. In 1863 he stated his claim to be God's latest Manifestation (messenger). His extensive writings—15,000 texts are extant—define his religion's teachings and form the core of its scripture. At the time of his death the religion had been established in a number of places in the Middle East, Russia, India, and Burma.

His son and successor, 'Abbás Effendi, titled 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844–1921), oversaw the expansion of the Bahá'í Faith, especially in western Europe and North America, where—freed from imprisonment in Palestine—he traveled between 1911 and 1913. He began to develop the religion's organization, its communal activities, and its international spiritual and administrative center. His writings and authenticated talks—some 16,000 are extant—interpreting and elaborating on his father's teachings are also part of the sacred scriptures of the Faith.

In his *Will and Testament* 'Abdu'l-Bahá appointed Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (1897–1957), his Oxford-educated grandson, to be his successor and Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith. Shoghi Effendi oversaw the establishment of the Bahá'í system of organization worldwide. His 36,000 letters and essays are part of the Bahá'í authoritative texts, but are not considered scripture.

After Shoghi Effendi's unexpected passing in November 1957 twenty-seven *Hands of the Cause of God,* consultants and advisors whom he had appointed and termed "chief stewards" of the Faith, temporarily headed the Bahá'í Faith. In 1963 the Hands oversaw the election of the *Universal House of Justice,* the nine-member international governing body called for by Bahá'u'lláh.

The Bahá'í Faith teaches the unity of God and the unity of God's Manifestations. It sees all of the major world religions as divinely founded and part of the progressively developing religion of God. The imperative in this day, it teaches, is the recognition that humankind is one and must forge a global civilization. The principle of the oneness of humanity stresses equality of all peoples, equal rights and opportunities for women, and the need for everyone to be educated. The Bahá'í concept of the spiritual development of human beings emphasizes acceptance of God's Manifestation, living by his teachings, daily prayer, development of one's virtues, creation of strong marriages and families, service to humanity, and continued progress of the soul in the next world after death. Bahá'í communities are organized by elected nine-member councils; the Faith has no clergy and virtually no communal ritual. Teachings related to the establishment of global unity include the need for a world governing system that can end war, as well as preserve and develop the earth's resources for the benefit of everyone, and an economic system that assures justice and the eradication of the extremes of wealth and poverty.

A Bahá'í community began in the United States in 1894 when a Bahá'í immigrant of Lebanese Christian background began to convert Americans to the Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá traveled across the United States and Canada for nine months in 1912 to establish the religion firmly and to proclaim its teachings. Inspired by him, American Bahá'ís were in the forefront of spreading their newfound religion to western Europe, southern Africa, Latin America, Hawaii, Japan, China, and Australia, a process that accelerated under the guidance of Shoghi Effendi. Using North America as the principal laboratory for developing nine-member local Spiritual Assemblies and a nine-member national Spiritual Assembly, Shoghi Effendi also focused attention on the construction of a Bahá'í temple outside Chicago, the first in the western world. Authorized by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1903, the temple was completed in 1953.

Americans have played a leading role in the expansion and development of the Bahá'í Faith since its early days. The American Bahá'í community, with 155,000 members in 2006, is one of the larger communities in a worldwide religion numbering more than five million. A major center of Bahá'í publishing, it remains a center of innovation.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

The Báb and the Bábí Movement

The Bahá'í Faith arose out of the Bábí Faith founded by 'Alí-Muhammad (1819–1950), a merchant from the city of Shiraz in southern Iran. In 1844 he announced to his first follower that he was "the Báb" ("the Gate"). A distinctive aspect of his claim was his assertion of divine revelation, which was hinted at in his earliest writings and proclaimed boldly in his later works. For the next six years, hundreds of works, from letters and prayers to mystical commentaries on verses of the Qur'an and theological treatises, poured from his pen. His young followers boldly proclaimed His teachings

and claims, and in consequence the Báb soon became the locus of a highly controversial movement. Its main teachings were messianic:

- The Báb was a divine Manifestation succeeding the prophet Muhammad.
- God's day of reckoning had come, but the apocalyptic last judgment was understood symbolically rather than literally.
- An even greater Manifestation was coming in nine or 19 years.
- The Muslim shariah law was abrogated and replaced by a new law that, among other things, rejected the traditional status of women.[2] This point was driven home by Tahirih, the Báb's most prominent female disciple, who appeared unveiled at a gathering of Bábí leaders and recited millennial verses from the Qur'án.

The Báb quickly attracted a following from among many students studying for the Shiite clergy, the urban merchant and artisan classes, and certain urban and rural minority groups. Iran's growing exposure to European ideas and its integration into a global economy caused social tensions that may have enhanced receptivity to the Faith.

While a few clergy accepted the Báb, many opposed him strongly and persecuted the Bábís. The Bábí neighborhoods in the cities of Nayríz and Zanján were assaulted by mobs and militias, valiantly defended, and eventually destroyed, resulting in the deaths of hundreds or thousands of Bábís. The Iranian government imprisoned the Báb, had him tried by the clergy for blasphemy, and executed him by firing squad on July 9, 1850.[3] Many Bábís were publicly tortured and executed.[4]

Bahá'u'lláh (Husayn-'Alí of Núr)

An early convert to the religion of the Báb was Husayn-'Alí of Núr. His father had been a provincial governor and prominent official in the Shah's court. When Bahá'u'lláh became a Bábí in 1844 he was 26, happily married, a new father, a highly respected citizen, and devoted to helping Tehran's poor. He soon became a prominent Bábí. He sheltered some leading Bábís and used his influence with the court to ameliorate their persecution. In 1848 Husayn-'Alí took the title of Bahá'u'lláh, the "Glory of God."

In August 1852 three Bábís unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate the Shah, triggering a wave of persecution. Bahá'u'lláh was thrown into the Black Pit, a former underground water cistern that had been converted into a vermin-infested prison for 150 men. Confined four months in semidarkness amid the waste of the prisoners, a heavy chain around his neck, his feet in stocks, Bahá'u'lláh experienced the first revelations in his ministry:

> During the days I lay in the prison of Tihran, though the galling weight of the chains and the stench-filled air allowed Me but little sleep, still in those infrequent moments of slumber I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipitateth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty

> mountain. Every limb of My body would, as a result, be set afire. At such moments My tongue recited what no man could bear to hear.[5]

Bahá'u'lláh was released from the Black Pit once it was clear that he had no involvement in the assassination plot, but all of his property was confiscated and he was exiled for life from Iran. He settled in Baghdad in April 1853. The disunity of the demoralized Bábí community caused him to leave for the mountains of Kurdistan for two years.

Early Writings and Teachings

Returning to Baghdad, Bahá'u'lláh composed the first of his important works: the *Hidden Words,* a short collection of ethical and mystical aphorisms; the *Seven Valleys,* a description of the seven stages of the journey of the soul that followed the literary structure of Attar's *Conference of the Birds;* the *Four Valleys,* a description of the spiritual quest of four different personality types; the *Gems of Divine Mysteries,* a longer work about the journey of the soul; and the *Book of Certitude,* a 250-page treatise.[6] The latter work, a response to a series of questions posed by an uncle of the Báb, was dictated in 48 hours.[7] Collectively, the works defined the nucleus of Bahá'u'lláh's theology:

- God is an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-just, but unknowable essence.
- God's qualities are manifested in all created things, which reflect divine attributes, and through the Manifestations, rare, perfect human beings who serve as the mouthpiece of revelation.
- Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and the Báb were previous Manifestations.[8]
- The religions of the world were established on divine revelations fitted for each time and place, but human interpretations have confused some of their core teachings and obscured their ultimate unity.

Bahá'u'lláh's Claim to Prophethood and His Further Exile

In 1863 Iran's Shah asked the Turkish government to move Bahá'u'lláh farther from Iran in order to lessen his revitalization of the Bábí movement. The Sultan ordered Bahá'u'lláh to Istanbul. On the eve of his departure from Baghdad, in late April 1863, Bahá'u'lláh declared to his followers that he was the promised Manifestation the Báb had announced, the messiah figure prophesied by all the world's religions. He named 12 days of rejoicing—April 21 to May 2—the Ridván Festival, which became the new religion's first annual holy period.[9]

Bahá'u'lláh, his family, and some followers, about 70 altogether, remained in Istanbul four months, then were abruptly exiled to Edirne in European Turkey, where they resided four and a half years. From Edirne, Bahá'u'lláh sent numerous *tablets,* as his writings are often called, to the Bábís in Iran, announcing his claim to be a divine messenger. Bábís came to Edirne to meet him and returned to Iran as Bahá'ís; by 1870 the vast majority of Bábís had accepted him. Apologetic, even

polemical, works defended his claims against the dissent of a few Bábís. Bahá'u'lláh also wrote some of his most beautiful prayers during this period. Several tablets spoke of the spiritual capacities and potential of his eldest son, 'Abbás (1844–1921).[10]

Bahá'u'lláh utilized diplomatic contacts made in Istanbul to dispatch tablets to Queen Victoria, Napoleon III, Kaiser Wilhelm, Pope Pius IX, Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria, Tsar Alexander II, the Shah of Iran, the Turkish Sultan, and various Ottoman officials. The tablets stated his messianic claim; he told the Pope that he was the return of Jesus Christ. He prophesied the end of many of their reigns, called on them to observe justice, admonished them to care for the poor and weak, urged them to reduce their armaments, and exhorted them to establish a collective security system. Copies of the tablets circulated widely among the Bahá'ís.[11]

The rapid conversion of the Bábí community was viewed with increasing alarm and jealousy by Mírzá Yahyá, Bahá'u'lláh's half brother and the titular head of the Bábí movement. He had accompanied Bahá'u'lláh to Edirne. He plotted against Bahá'u'lláh, precipitating a split of the community. The Ottoman government grew increasingly suspicious and distrustful. Finally, in mid-1868, it exiled Bahá'u'lláh and most of his followers to the prison city of Akka, in northern Palestine, while Mírzá Yahyá and most of his much smaller following were sent to Famagusta, Cyprus.

Imprisonment and Exile in Akka

For two years Bahá'u'lláh, his family, and close followers, numbering 67, were confined in a group of cells under primitive conditions. Many became ill, two died of dysentery, heat, and malnutrition, and Bahá'u'lláh's younger son, Mírzá Mihdí, died in an accident. Subsequently, the Bahá'ís were allowed to rent houses within the walls of the prison city. Bahá'u'lláh's confinement gradually eased, and he moved to a series of houses just outside Akka. He also was able to receive Bahá'í pilgrims from Iran.

During Bahá'u'lláh's 24 years in Akka (1868–1892) he wrote some of his most important works. The first five years saw a continuation of the themes of the Edirne period, including a second tablet to Napoleon III. In 1873 Bahá'u'lláh composed the *Most Holy Book* (Kitábu'l-Aqdas in Arabic), which defined his religion's practices of obligatory prayer and fasting; enumerated most of its holy days; established its laws of inheritance, marriage, divorce, and eventual civil penalties for arson, theft, and murder; banned such practices as slavery, asceticism, and mendicancy; abolished the priesthood and priestly ritual; forbade gambling, the use of opium, and the consumption of alcohol; obligated Bahá'ís to engage in a profession, exalting it to the rank of worship; and enjoined strict obedience to government.[12] The book defined the *houses of justice,* councils of trustees that would organize the Bahá'í community; the *mashriqu'l-adhkár* or house of worship; and the *huqúqu'lláh* or "right of God," a 19 percent tithe Bahá'ís pay on their surplus assets after essentials such as housing, food, clothing, and other necessities are accounted for. It foreshadowed appointment of *Hands of the Cause of God,* individuals Bahá'u'lláh selected as advisors and consultants but who had no authority to enforce or require actions. Bahá'u'lláh stated that

after his death the Bahá'ís were to follow his son, 'Abbás, as his successor, and he foreshadowed the later institution of the *Guardianship.* Finally, the book addressed various kings and rulers, both individually and collectively, including the "rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein."[13] It called on them to choose a single universal auxiliary language. The provisions of the *Most Holy Book* were gradually introduced to the Bahá'í community over the next decade.[14]

In a series of tablets Bahá'u'lláh later expanded on the themes of the *Most Holy Book.* Bahá'u'lláh stated the principle of the oneness and wholeness of humanity: "the earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."[15] He called for the convening of a summit of the world's kings and rulers to end war and reduce armaments. He praised a constitutional republican form of government such as Britain's. He established consultation—a system of practices of collective truth seeking and decision making—as a fundamental principle of his faith. He warned against materialism and libertinism. He emphasized the importance of religion in creating a peaceful and just society.[16]

Three works stand out in Bahá'u'lláh's last years. His *Book of the Covenant* stated that his eldest son, 'Abbás, was his successor, the interpreter of his teachings, and must be obeyed. The *Tablet of Carmel* mystically addressed Mount Carmel (near Akka, in what is today northern Israel) and prophesied its future greatness as a sacred center of the Bahá'í Faith. Finally, the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* addressed one of the most fiendish persecutors of Iran's Bahá'ís, condemned his crimes, and called on him to repent. Bahá'u'lláh used the epistle as an opportunity to compile some of his most distinctive passages and teachings.[17]

Bahá'u'lláh's corpus includes over 15,000 extant works. The genres include poetry, prayers, the epistle, the scriptural commentary, and the theological treatise. Most were short tablets to individuals, in Arabic, Persian, or in a distinctive mix of the two. Nearly all were dictated in the presence of a secretary, who recorded them; then Bahá'u'lláh proofread and corrected them before a messenger carried them to Iran. The majority are addressed to individuals, often in response to their questions, and deal with nearly every imaginable subject. All of Bahá'u'lláh's writings are regarded by Bahá'ís as divine revelation and therefore as scripture.

Bahá'u'lláh dispatched teachers to consolidate existing Bahá'í communities or open new territories to the Faith. The vast majority of the early Bahá'ís had been Bábís of Iranian Shiite background. Under Bahá'u'lláh's encouragement Bahá'ís settled in many Ottoman cities, where Sunnis began to convert. Iranian Bahá'ís fleeing persecution established communities in Russian Central Asia and the Caucasus. Iranian Bahá'í merchants took the Faith to India, where Muslims and Zoroastrians became Bahá'ís, and possibly as far east as China. Two traveling Bahá'í teachers established the Bahá'í Faith in Burma in the late 1870s—possibly converting the first Buddhists to the religion—and took it as far east as Jakarta and Sulawesi in the early 1880s. In Iran, Jews and Zoroastrians entered the Faith; it is estimated that as many as ten percent of Iran's Jews became Bahá'ís by the early twentieth century. Notably less successful were efforts to reach Christians. Scholars have estimated that by

1892 there were as many as 100,000 Bahá'ís, the vast majority of whom resided in Iran.[18]

European travelers also encountered Bahá'ís; Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University even interviewed Bahá'u'lláh. He published books and articles on the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths, lectured about the religion in England, and translated Bahá'í scripture into English, starting in the 1880s. His translations of Bahá'í terms such as *Manifestation* and his system of transliteration set standards that later Bahá'í communities in the west largely followed.[19]

The Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá ('Abbás Effendi)

Bahá'u'lláh died peacefully in his home outside Akka on May 29, 1892, aged 74. His eldest son, 'Abbás, then 48, succeeded him as head of the Faith and took the title of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Servant of Bahá." Because of the clarity of Bahá'u'lláh's writings about succession, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's leadership was immediately accepted by all Bahá'ís. But his half-brother Muhammad-'Alí, described by Bahá'u'lláh as next in the line of succession, soon claimed 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not qualified to be Bahá'u'lláh's successor. Only a handful of Bahá'ís accepted his arguments, but Muhammad-'Alí was able to instill suspicion in the Ottoman government, which ordered 'Abdu'l-Bahá back inside Akka.

An early priority for 'Abdu'l-Bahá was further development of the Faith's organization. In 1896 'Abdu'l-Bahá told the four Hands of the Cause of God whom Bahá'u'lláh had appointed, all of whom resided in Tehran, to select a group of distinguished Bahá'í men in the capital to serve as electors to choose the members of a Bahá'í governing body. Thus was born the Central Spiritual Assembly, which served simultaneously as the organizing body of the Bahá'ís of Tehran and of all of Iran. Throughout 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry its responsibilities grew and it appointed numerous committees. An early responsibility was the Tarbiyat School, a Bahá'í school in Tehran to educate boys.

During the first few years of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry the Bahá'í community in Ashgabat in modern Turkistan printed both Bahá'í scriptures and a periodical. The community began to build the world's first Bahá'í house of worship in the fall of 1902. Cairo also became a strong Bahá'í community.

Introduction of the Bahá'í Faith to North America

The Bahá'í Faith spread to the United States when a Bahá'í of Lebanese Christian background, Ibrahim Kheiralla (1849–1929), arrived in New York in December 1892 to pursue economic opportunities. He had converted in Cairo in 1888 and knew little about Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. Kheiralla was interested in magic and Middle Eastern folk religion; in the United States he read popular books about the Bible and learned about Theosophy and reincarnation. He encountered Browne's Bahá'í publications, but used them sparingly.[20]

In 1894 Kheiralla moved to Chicago, where he established a healing practice using the laying on of hands and the smoking of water pipes. His contacts, however, soon were more interested in his religion. They were either middle-class professionals and white-collar workers of Anglo-Saxon background or first-generation German or Scandinavian immigrants, often blue-collar workers. Some heard of Kheiralla through the Oriental Order of the Magi, an esoteric Masonic group. Others were students of alternative religions and philosophies, interests stimulated by the recent Parliament of the World's Religions. Unlike American sympathizers of Buddhism and Hinduism, the Chicago Bahá'ís did not come primarily from the upper classes.

By mid-1894 at least five people became "Behaists." Their circle of friends became attracted, and in 1895 the "First Assembly of Beha'ists in America" purchased a seal. In 1896 Kheiralla organized his teachings into two public lectures and 13 private lessons covering the purpose of existence, metaphorical interpretation of the Bible and its prophecies, and the unity of the world's religions. The last three lessons noted that the Millerites, who expected Christ's return in 1844, were correct; that was the year the Báb began his mission. The lessons described Bahá'u'lláh as the biblical return of the Father and 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the return of Christ.[21]

In the summer of 1897, Kheiralla gave his lessons to an audience of Swiss-German immigrants interested in vegetarianism, Populism, Socialism, and Christian Science in the small central Kansas village of Enterprise. In the fall blue-collar workers of Scandinavian and German background in Kenosha, Wisconsin, an industrial city 70 miles from Chicago, invited Kheiralla to give the lessons there. Chicago Bahá'ís who had moved to New York and New Jersey had Kheiralla give the lessons in New York City starting in January 1898. The result was a community of 200 Bahá'ís, mostly white-collar professionals of Anglo-Saxon background and Episcopal leanings. Other Chicagoans returned home to Philadelphia and Ithaca and taught their relatives. Expansion continued in 1898 to Racine, Wisconsin, the San Francisco area, Boston, Washington, D.C., and in 1899, to Cincinnati. By the fall of 1899 an incomplete list of Bahá'ís included 1467 names in 60 localities in 25 states, the District of Columbia, Ontario, England, and France.

Kheiralla responded to the growth by converting his lessons into a book, *Behá'-U'llah.* As it neared completion, Phoebe Hearst, mother of William Randolph Hearst, became a Bahá'í and decided to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and she was willing to pay Kheiralla's travel expenses. The party left the United States in September. Most visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá for only three days, but Ibrahim Kheiralla and two American Bahá'ís, Edward and Lua Getsinger, arranged to stay in the household for six months.

The Akka Bahá'ís were shocked by Kheiralla's mix of Bahá'í, Theosophical, and evangelical Protestant ideas, coupled with false Arabic etymologies, bizarre interpretations of history, and two prayers allegedly by Bahá'u'lláh that Kheiralla had, in fact, written himself. Their efforts to reform his views made little headway. Kheiralla tried to prevent the Getsingers from discovering his modifications of the Bahá'í teachings, but an English-speaking Persian Bahá'í arrived and Lua Getsinger began to learn Persian.

When Kheiralla returned to the United States in May 1899 he offered moving descriptions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wisdom and spirituality. But he warned that the Getsingers poorly understood the Bahá'í Faith. They arrived a month later, turned the other cheek, praised Kheiralla for his service to the Bahá'í Faith, and concentrated on describing 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his teachings, an effort brought alive by a photo of him and wax cylinder recordings of his voice. Edward was aware of Bahá'u'lláh's teaching about the formation of Houses of Justice and in the fall of 1899 helped the northern New Jersey Bahá'ís establish a "Board of Counsel." Such action undermined Kheiralla's de facto authority and exacerbated the situation.

Kheiralla accused Edward of seeking to be the head of the Bahá'í movement in America. Concerned about Kheiralla's ambitions, Phoebe Hearst sent an Arab Bahá'í, Anton Haddad, to seek 'Abdu'l-Bahá's advice. When Haddad returned in late December 1899, he reported that 'Abdu'l-Bahá said there were to be "no chiefs" in America and emphasized the humility of teachers. Haddad also apparently spoke about Houses of Justice, for in March 1900 the Chicago Bahá'ís elected their first governing body, of ten men.

His hopes for a leadership position dashed, Kheiralla supported Muhammad-'Alí's accusations and began to question 'Abdu'l-Bahá's spiritual station. The American Bahá'í community split into three groups. Perhaps a quarter remained loyal to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, including most prominent teachers and elected community officers. A smaller number followed Kheiralla, especially in Kenosha where the community secretary supported him. About half the Bahá'ís, who were either too geographically isolated to know much about the crisis or were repulsed by the conflict, remained uninvolved. Some abandoned the religion altogether; others were integrated back into the Bahá'í community later.

Recovery and Consolidation, 1900–1912

In 1900–1901 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent four Persian teachers to the United States to bring Kheiralla back into the fold and rebuild the Bahá'í community. They were accompanied by young Persian Bahá'ís who knew some English. Negotiations with Kheiralla were unsuccessful, and he was declared a covenant breaker, someone who violated Bahá'u'lláh's covenant with the Bahá'ís, which included the obligation to obey 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He established his own Bahá'í group, which splintered, dwindled to a few dozen members, and eventually disappeared.

Membership in the American Bahá'í community, which had been about 1500 in 1899 and plunged to a few hundred in 1900, rebounded to 1200 by 1906.[22] The quick recovery in membership was precipitated by several factors:

- The Persian teachers gave talks (later published) that clarified Bahá'í beliefs.
- Two young Persians remained in the United States and collaborated with Americans to translate some of Bahá'u'lláh's most important works.
- A steady flow of American pilgrims visited Akka and returned full of devotion for 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Bahá'í Faith. They published their memories as pilgrim's notes. One work,

Some Answered Questions—a series of 84 answers 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave over lunch to questions by an American Bahá'í and her French husband—was edited and approved by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and became a part of Bahá'í scripture. As a result, texts rejecting astrology and reincarnation, qualifying the Bahá'í view of evolution, forbidding involvement in strikes, interpreting various biblical verses and Christian doctrines, and explaining the station of certain Manifestations of God were added to Bahá'í doctrine.

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá corresponded extensively with individual American Bahá'ís, reinforcing their devotion and answering their personal questions. As many as half of his 16,000 extant tablets were penned to westerners.
- Americans developed their own cultural expressions of the Bahá'í Faith. They often worshipped on Sunday mornings in rented halls and sang hymns to piano accompaniment. The first Bahá'í hymn book, published in 1903, consisted of Protestant hymns such as *Nearer My God to Thee* that had no references to Christ or to such doctrines as original sin, the crucifixion, or atonement. But in 1904 a 34-page book of original Bahá'í hymns, often consisting of Bahá'í scriptural passages set to music, was published in Chicago.[23]
- 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged the American Bahá'ís to perform the daily obligatory prayer. The medium obligatory prayer was first translated into English in 1899 the short obligatory prayer in 1905; the long obligatory prayer became available a decade later. Each believer is free to choose which prayer to say. It is performed in private.
- American Bahá'ís began to observe the Bahá'í Fast (no food or drink from sunrise to sunset, March 2–20) as early as 1901. A description of fasting practices was circulated by the Chicago Bahá'ís in early 1903.
- Bahá'í Holy Days were observed in the United States as early as 1900. By 1909 the Gregorian dates of eight of the nine had been determined.
- American Bahá'ís began using the Bahá'í calendar, with its 19 months of 19 days, as early as 1901, when the Chicago Bahá'í women's auxiliary began to hold a regular "Nineteen-Day Tea."[24]
- In 1905 'Abdu'l-Bahá told pilgrims gathered in Akka to observe the *Feast* as a gathering for worship and socializing on the first day of every Bahá'í month. One pilgrim made it a personal crusade to travel across the United States, establishing the Feast in every community.[25]
- 'Abdu'l-Bahá filled the leadership vacuum left by Kheiralla's disaffection by encouraging the election of local councils. The Chicago Bahá'ís elected a House of Justice in May 1901. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked them to change the body's name to *Spiritual Assembly,* however, so that its purpose would not be misconstrued by non-Bahá'ís.

Organizing the American Bahá'ís proved to be difficult because many had consciously abandoned organized religion. Electing a council became a contentious issue in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco; hence 'Abdu'l-Bahá began to stress that unity was more important than organization. No new local Bahá'í councils were formed between 1910 and 1918.

The introduction of so many changes—one could say an entirely new religion, compared to what Kheiralla taught—in a mere six years strained the existing community, in which some adopted most of the new teachings and practices while others

adopted few or none. Bahá'ís from evangelical church backgrounds were usually more willing to adopt the Faith's distinctive teachings and practices based on adherence to its scriptures, while Bahá'ís coming from Theosophy, Christian Science, and the metaphysical milieu more often emphasized voluntary acceptance of them, a stance that has been called epistemological individualism.[26] The latter groups argued the Faith was a reform movement meant to permeate and leaven the churches, opposed segregating Bahá'ís into their own Sunday worship meetings, and rejected organization. The fracture was not resolved until the 1920s.

In spite of the conflicts, however, the community soon had resources for new tasks. The Chicago Bahá'ís petitioned 'Abdu'l-Bahá for permission to build a Bahá'í House of Worship (or temple) in 1903, and he made it a national project, but little was done until 1907, when a search for land began. A site was purchased in the suburb of Wilmette, and in 1909 a convention of delegates from across North America elected the nine-member Bahai Temple Unity Executive Board to oversee construction. The temple project consumed much of the American Bahá'ís' energy and money until it was completed in 1953. The annual convention and the Board became proving grounds for the establishment of Bahá'í organization.[27]

The American community soon produced capable teachers. In 1904, 'Abdu'l-Bahá directed an American on pilgrimage to travel to India and Burma with a group of Persians, lecturing and demonstrating their religion's teaching of the unity of the races. Two Americans traveled to Iran in 1908; one remained and became headmaster of the Tarbiyat Bahá'í School for Boys. Iran's need for women physicians prompted Dr. Susan Moody, a Chicago Bahá'í, to settle in Tehran in 1909. She was followed by another woman physician and two nurses in 1911. The American Bahá'í women were a constant reminder to the Iranians that the Bahá'í principle of equality of men and women was understood very differently in the west. In 1910 a picture of a group of unveiled Iranian Bahá'í women was published in an American magazine *Baha'i News,* which had a significant circulation in Iran. American Bahá'ís incorporated the Persian-American Educational Society that year to funnel western textbooks, scholarships, and ideas to Iran. The Tarbiyat School for Girls was established in 1911.[28]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Visits to Europe and North America

In 1908 a revolution overthrew the Ottoman government and freed all political prisoners, including 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Even though he was old, in poor health, knew no western languages, had never spoken to a public audience, and had little familiarity with occidental customs, he resolved to travel. He first visited Egypt in 1910, then went west to Paris and London in 1911, then sailed to North America in 1912. In eight months he went from New York to Los Angeles and was greeted everywhere by crowds and largely favorable newspaper publicity. In Chicago, he laid the cornerstone of the Bahá'í temple. He gave at least 185 talks to a combined audience of perhaps 40,000 people; his venues included six universities (Columbia, Howard, New York University, Northwestern, Stanford, and Worcester Polytechnic), the NAACP

annual convention, Hull House in Chicago, the Bowery Mission in New York, 12 Unitarian churches, 12 mainline Protestant (mostly Congregational and Episcopal) churches, 11 Theosophical or metaphysical groups, and three synagogues.[29] Scores of meetings were in Bahá'ís' homes. He offered innumerable personal meetings with hundreds of people and was the subject of hundreds of newspaper articles. In his public talks he proclaimed Bahá'í principles attractive to a western audience such as the unity of God, unity of the religions, oneness of humanity, equality of the sexes, harmony of science and religion, individual independent investigation of truth, world peace, and economic justice. He rarely emphasized Bahá'í distinctives such as obligatory prayer and fasting. Unlike Swami Vivekanada and Dharmapala, who had lectured on Hinduism and Buddhism, respectively, some 15 years earlier, he rarely criticized others. He did not stir controversy except in his insistence that all his meetings be open to all races. He personally encouraged Louis Gregory, an African American lawyer, and Louisa Matthews, an Englishwoman, to marry, resulting in the first Bahá'í interracial marriage.

While many children of Bahá'ís came to regard 1912 as the year they became members, only a handful of new people entered the Bahá'í community. Because 'Abdu'l-Bahá often presented the Bahá'í Faith as the culmination of the highest ideals, Bahá'ís who did not see the Bahá'í Faith as an independent religion continued their view. But 'Abdu'l-Bahá had the Chicago and New York Bahá'í governing councils reelected, and He attended the annual Bahai Temple Unity convention, which affirmed the importance of organization. He expounded on the Bahá'í covenant and expelled two persons from the Bahá'í community as covenant breakers for continuing to associate with Kheiralla's dwindling band. Thus, he ultimately strengthened the hand of those who understood the Bahá'í Faith as an independent religion. His visit also made hundreds of contacts and friends for the Faith that proved valuable in subsequent years.

1913–1921

'Abdu'l-Bahá left the United States for Europe in December 1912. Not long after he returned to Palestine in December 1913, World War I cut off most of his communications until 1918. The American Bahá'ís had to handle their problems on their own. Chicago went through a period of disunity when a metaphysically oriented group of Bahá'ís opened a "Reading Room" downtown, rejected the authority of Chicago's elected Bahá'í council, and sent their own delegates to the 1917 annual convention of the Bahai Temple Unity, which refused to recognize them. In 1918 the Bahai Temple Unity appointed a committee to investigate the Reading Room group. It found them in violation of many Bahá'í teachings and disloyal to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Because of disloyalty, the chief members were declared covenant breakers, a decision 'Abdu'l-Bahá later endorsed.[30]

Reestablishment of communications with 'Abdu'l-Bahá permitted him to guide the community anew. A series of 14 tablets he penned to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, the *Tablets of the Divine Plan,* became the focus of the 1919

convention. Their urgent call to the American Bahá'ís to take their religion to the entire earth—the tablets listed hundreds of nations, territories, and significant islands to open to the Faith—stimulated an outpouring of activity reminiscent of many Protestant missionary enterprises.[31] Those who saw the Bahá'í Faith as a distinct religion were the ones inspired to act. Martha Root left the convention and went to South America, becoming the first Bahá'í teacher to cross that continent. She continued traveling for the Faith for 20 years. Hyde and Clara Dunn moved to Australia and established the Bahá'í Faith there. The Bahai Temple Unity appointed four regional committees to coordinate the dissemination of the Faith across the United States. Fazel Mazandarani, an erudite Persian Bahá'í, became the first Iranian to travel the United States and Canada to teach the Faith since 1904.

The new emphasis on organization stimulated Chicago to reorganize its governing board and Cleveland to elect one, the first new local Bahá'í council formed in a decade. In conformity with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's request, the Bahai Temple Unity appointed a committee to review Bahá'í publications in order to stem the flow of inaccuracies promulgated by Bahá'ís. The 1920 national convention selected a design for the Wilmette temple.

The Passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Beginning of the Guardianship

On November 26, 1921, 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away at age 77, plunging the Bahá'í world into mourning. But he composed a *Will and Testament* in which he made provisions for the future.[32] He appointed his grandson, 24-year-old Shoghi Effendi Rabbani,[33] his successor and *Guardian* of the Bahá'í Faith. He stated that Shoghi Effendi was infallibly guided to interpret the Bahá'í teachings and protect the unity of the Bahá'í community and thus had to be obeyed. The Guardian was authorized to appoint Hands of the Cause of God, who were to "diffuse the Divine Fragrances, to edify the souls of men" and "to promote learning."[34] He was to choose the next Guardian from among the male descendents of Bahá'u'lláh, and his choice was to be ratified by a body of nine appointed by the Hands of the Cause.

'Abdu'l-Bahá also stated (in his will and in other tablets) that national communities were to hold conventions of locally elected delegates who were to elect their national House of Justice, and all the members of the national Houses of Justice were to serve as electors of the Universal House of Justice. The Guardian was to be a lifelong member and chairman of the Universal House of Justice. The Universal House of Justice's sphere of authority included legislating on matters about which the writings of Bahá'u'lláh were silent; as such it complemented the sphere of authority of the Guardian, who interpreted the meaning of those writings.

Shoghi Effendi thus had a complete plan for Bahá'í organization. He focused the first 15 years of his Guardianship (1922–1937) on the construction of what he called the Bahá'í Administrative Order. He wrote dozens of epistles explaining the nature and purpose of Bahá'í administration; emphasizing the spiritual nature of Bahá'í elections, which proceed to the voting after a round of prayers without any

nominations, campaigning, or mention of names; and defining the practical day-to-day policies of operation.[35]

One of Shoghi Effendi's first letters to the Bahá'ís of America called on the Bahá'ís to elect nine-member Spiritual Assemblies in any locality where nine or more adult Bahá'ís resided. With a clear mandate from the head of the Faith, American Bahá'ís obeyed, electing 42 local spiritual assemblies in the next four years.[36] The Bahai Temple Unity immediately reorganized itself as the national Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, but Shoghi Effendi did not consider the reorganization complete until 1925. He recognized the formation of other national Spiritual Assemblies as well: the British Isles (1923), India and Burma (1923), Germany and Austria (1923), Egypt and the Sudan (1924), the Caucasus (1925), Turkistan (1925), Iraq (1931), Iran (1934), Australia and New Zealand (1934).[37]

The creation of Bahá'í Spiritual Assemblies further diminished the epistemological individualism in the American Bahá'í community, but not without conflict. *Reality* magazine, established in 1919 to promote "liberal" approaches to the Bahá'í Faith, wrote scathingly against Bahá'í organization starting in 1923, then ceased writing about the Faith in 1926 because of market pressures.[38] One American Bahá'í, Ruth White, was so shocked by the establishment of organization that she sought evidence 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Will and Testament* was a forgery, despite the fact that hundreds of Persian Bahá'ís were intimately familiar with his handwriting and accepted its authenticity. Ultimately she was declared a covenant breaker. Ahmad Sohrab, a prominent Persian Bahá'í living in New York, came into increasing conflict with the city's local Spiritual Assembly and with the national Spiritual Assembly, refused to obey them, and was declared a covenant breaker. Archival records suggest that while these events disturbed many Bahá'ís, very few resigned their membership over them.[39]

One reason was the advantages of organization. Elections required voting lists, created a definition of community membership, and fostered Bahá'í identity. Establishing new local Spiritual Assemblies became a goal for committees and traveling teachers. The number of American Bahá'ís, which had hovered at about 1,500 for two decades, doubled by 1936.[40] Recruitment was also stimulated by the Great Depression, which apparently increased receptivity to the Bahá'í teachings among middle-class whites.

Strengthening the community was a richer Bahá'í literature. John Esslemont, a British Bahá'í, published *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* in 1923. It gave the Bahá'í world a common introductory textbook. New translations of Bahá'u'lláh's writings by Shoghi Effendi—whose English, honed by an Oxford education, was excellent—provided the Bahá'ís with a far clearer understanding of their scriptures. A series of letters and essays by Shoghi Effendi published as *Bahá'í Administration, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, The Advent of Divine Justice,* and *The Promised Day is Come* clarified and interpreted important teachings.[41] Dozens of collections of Shoghi Effendi's letters—his corpus eventually reached 36,000—were published. His consistent insistence on the Bahá'í principle of racial equality and unity stimulated a series

of race amity conferences in the United States and teaching efforts appealing to African Americans.[42]

The enlarged American Bahá'í community began construction of the superstructure of the Bahá'í temple in 1930. The community's growing strength throughout the 1930s coincided with the destruction or weakening of three other communities. Nazi Germany banned the Bahá'í Faith in 1937 and imprisoned some Bahá'ís. Stalin abolished all Spiritual Assemblies in the Soviet Union, confiscated the Bahá'í temple in Ashgabat, deported about 1000 Bahá'ís back to Iran, and shipped most of the rest to prisons and gulags, where hundreds perished. Survivors were scattered across Siberia, where a few were found as late as the 1990s. In the 1930s Iran's government placed many new restrictions on the Bahá'ís there, including closing all Bahá'í schools (which by then numbered several dozen) and banning the printing of Bahá'í literature. Many Iranian Bahá'ís were arrested.

The First and Second Seven Year Plans, 1937–1953

In 1937 Shoghi Effendi gave the North American Bahá'ís a Seven Year Plan, the first systematic implementation of the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* in the Bahá'í world. It had three goals: the completion of the superstructure of the Bahá'í temple, the election of at least one local Spiritual Assembly in every state of the United States and every province of Canada, and the introduction of the Bahá'í Faith to every country in Latin America and the Caribbean. In spite of the grave hardships caused by World War II, all three goals were achieved, and 4,900 North American Bahá'ís greeted 1944—the centennial of the Báb's declaration—with a sense of victory.[43] The Seven Year Plan inspired the other existing national Spiritual Assemblies to adopt plans of their own.

Shoghi Effendi gave the American Bahá'ís a two-year rest. In 1945 the American national Spiritual Assembly sent two observers to the United Nations founding conference in San Francisco; subsequently the Assembly was recognized by the U.N. Department of Public Information as a nongovernmental organization qualified to be represented by an observer.

In 1946 Shoghi Effendi launched a second Seven Year Plan. Its goals included the completion of the interior of the Bahá'í temple and its dedication to public worship; election of a separate national Spiritual Assembly for Canada and of two regional Spiritual Assemblies for South America and Central America, respectively; and further growth on the home front. The political and cultural conditions of postwar Europe made it possible to establish or reestablish the Bahá'í Faith in ten western European nations, an effort aided by an outpouring of American and Persian pioneers (volunteer Bahá'í teachers who move to another place to help establish a Bahá'í community). In 1948 the Bahá'í International Community was recognized as a nongovernmental organization by the United Nations and represented by an American Bahá'í. At the end of the plan, the United States joined with other national Spiritual Assemblies to spread the Bahá'í Faith in Africa. All the goals were achieved. A national Spiritual Assembly was reestablished for Germany and Austria

and a new one was elected for Italy and Switzerland, raising the total number worldwide to 12.[44]

In January 1951 Shoghi Effendi announced the appointment of the International Bahá'í Council, the forerunner of the Universal House of Justice, and assigned it responsibilities related to Bahá'í matters in Israel. A year later he appointed 19 Hands of the Cause of God, including six Americans. He gave the Hands "deputies, assistants, and advisers" when he authorized them to appoint Auxiliary Board members in 1954.[45] The Auxiliary Board members served as consultants to local and regional Bahá'í communities, briefed Bahá'ís about the goals of the plans, encouraged them to set local goals, reported to the Hands about local developments, and carried out special assignments requiring someone with experience and tact.

The Ten Year Crusade, 1953–1963

In April 1953 Shoghi Effendi launched an ambitious Ten Year Crusade. He gave goals to all 12 national Spiritual Assemblies to introduce the Bahá'í Faith to several hundred additional nations, territories, and significant islands—almost all the places mentioned in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan.* More Bahá'í pioneers than ever before were needed. In 1953 five of the nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States moved overseas, inspiring perhaps five percent of the American Bahá'ís to follow their example.

Cultural conditions strengthened Bahá'í efforts to teach their Faith. In the United States membership grew about five percent per year, from 7,000 in 1953 to 11,000 in 1963. In India, Bolivia, Uganda, and the Mentawei Islands of Indonesia, illiterate rural people were readily attracted to the Faith and enrolled by the thousands, though consolidating the resulting communities proved difficult. Overall, the decade saw the number of localities in the world where Bahá'ís resided triple to 11,000.

While none of the goals behind the Iron Curtain could be achieved, 56 of the 57 anticipated national Spiritual Assemblies were elected. Virtually every country in western Europe and Latin America acquired an assembly. Regional Assemblies covered Africa, the South Pacific, and much of Asia. Alaska elected its own national Spiritual Assembly in 1957.[46]

Shoghi Effendi's Passing

In October 1957 Shoghi Effendi raised the number of the Hands of the Cause of God to 27, further described their station and responsibilities, and referred to them as "Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth."[47] The message proved prescient. On November 4, 1957, his heart stopped, plunging a shocked Bahá'í world into sudden grief and deep perplexity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Will and Testament* said that every Guardian had to appoint a successor from among the male descendents of Bahá'u'lláh. But there were no male descendents of Bahá'u'lláh who were Bahá'ís, posing for Shoghi Effendi a situation not covered by Bahá'u'lláh's texts and therefore requiring legislation by the as-yet nonexistent Universal House of Justice. He left no will or instructions.

After the funeral, 25 of the Hands of the Cause assembled in their first conclave.[48] They shared no common language; only two were able to translate between English and Persian. They decided that as "chief stewards" it was their responsibility to complete Shoghi Effendi's Ten Year Crusade, which still had five and a half years to go. They had no authority to interpret the Bahá'í texts or legislate, so they declined to answer questions involving those powers. Because Shoghi Effendi had been establishing national Spiritual Assemblies so that they could elect the Universal House of Justice, and because he had hinted that 1963 would be an auspicious year to form that institution, they called for its election at the end of the Ten Year Crusade. They also disqualified themselves for election to that body.[49]

Initially all Bahá'ís worldwide accepted their authority. But in 1960, an 85-year-old American Hand of the Cause, Charles Mason Remey, suddenly announced that he had been appointed to succeed Shoghi Effendi as the second Guardian. Since Remey's declaration had no basis in the Bahá'í authoritative writings, he was immediately rejected by the Hands of the Cause. He was eventually declared a covenant breaker. The majority of the members of one national Spiritual Assembly—France—accepted him, but the other national Assemblies reasserted their loyalty to the Hands of the Cause. He acquired 100 followers in the United States, some dozens in Pakistan, and a score in Europe. While the Bahá'í community was disturbed by his claims, soon few people thought much about him.

Remey's Orthodox Bahá'í Faith split on his death in 1974 when two individuals produced letters from Remey appointing them the third Guardian.[50] Another group separated under the leadership of Leland Jensen and formed the Bahá'ís Under the Provision of the Covenant, based in Missoula, Montana. Their frequent retreats into atomic bomb shelters became the focus of research by University of Montana sociologists interested in cognitive dissonance. The Remey movement continues to this day as two or three groups that maintain little contact with each other, are active on the World Wide Web, and probably comprise a few hundred members collectively.[51]

Election of the Universal House of Justice and the Nine Year Plan, 1963–1973

In April 1963 delegates representing 56 national Spiritual Assemblies gathered in Haifa to elect the nine-member Universal House of Justice. The House of Justice ruled that it was not possible to appoint future Guardians or Hands of the Cause. It spent its first year developing a Nine Year Plan (1964–1973) to systematize the next phase of growth.[52] At the end of that year, in April 1964, Hawaii elected its own national Spiritual Assembly.

The American Bahá'í community was given a major role in the international goals, which included more than doubling the number of national Spiritual Assemblies to 113. Within the United States, the number of local Spiritual Assemblies was to increase from 331 to 596, with at least two existing in each state; 866 were achieved.[53] Bahá'í marriage ceremonies were to be legalized in every state. Efforts

to teach the Faith to African Americans, American Indians, and Spanish-speaking people were to be increased.[54]

All the goals were achieved in a period in which the American Bahá'í community saw its fastest growth in history. From 12,000 in 1964, membership increased to 23,000 by 1970, an annual increase of over 10 percent. Then teaching the Faith on college campuses increased even more, the popular musical group Seals and Crofts provided free Bahá'í meetings after each concert, and Bahá'ís began to go door-to-door to teach the Bahá'í Faith to rural African Americans in the South. By 1971 the number of Bahá'ís nearly doubled to 40,000; by 1972 it increased to 59,000. Door-to-door or "mass" teaching accounted for about half of the expansion. But the huge membership increases proved unsustainable, many of the new Bahá'ís drifted away, and the net growth rate dropped to an annual average of 4 percent for the rest of the 1970s.

The international situation mirrored developments in the United States. In Western Europe, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand thousands of youth became Bahá'ís; Latin America, Africa, and India saw the influx of large rural populations. The Bahá'í world went from 400,000 in 1963 to three million in 1979.

Development of the Institution of the Counselors

In 1968 the Universal House of Justice established a new institution, the Continental Boards of Counselors, to continue the functions of the Hands of the Cause for the protection and propagation of the Bahá'í Faith. To coordinate the Counselors and extend the work of the Hands residing at the Bahá'í World Center, in 1973 the Universal House of Justice established the International Teaching Centre, whose members consisted of certain Counselors and all living Hands of the Cause.[55] On the advice of the International Teaching Centre, the Counselors appointed and oversaw the work of the Auxiliary Board members, who in October 1973 were authorized to appoint assistants. In 1979 the Universal House of Justice set the term of appointment of Counselors at five years.

Additional Plans, 1973–2006

After a one-year respite, the Universal House of Justice launched the Five Year Plan (1974–1979) beginning on the first day of the Ridván Festival (April 21). It was followed by a Seven Year Plan (1979–1986), a Six Year Plan (1986–1992), a Holy Year commemorating the centenary of the passing of Bahá'u'lláh (1992–1993), a Three Year Plan (1993–1996), a Four Year Plan (1996–2000), a Twelve Month Plan (2000–2001), a Five Year Plan (2001–2006), and a Five Year Plan (2006–2011).

The new plans focused more on development of the Bahá'í community than its expansion to new places because the dissemination of the Faith to every part of the world, based on the *Tablets of the Divine Plan,* was largely accomplished. (The exception was to the countries in the former Soviet Empire; they acquired Bahá'í communities in the early 1990s.) The major institutions of the Bahá'í administrative

system had been established; hence improving their functioning became a focus. Local Spiritual Assemblies were called on to establish such efforts as adult and child educational programs, youth groups, community dawn prayers, women's activities, and outreach projects; national Spiritual Assemblies were asked to develop their public relations and external affairs efforts and in 1986 were given responsibility to develop their own goals within the frameworks set by the plans. The Bahá'í world, tremendously excited and gratified by the expansion it had seen, also strove to solve the problems caused by rapid expansion.

Managing Growth. In the United States, the Bahá'í membership grew from 59,000 in 1972 to 82,000 in 1980 (4 percent annual growth), 114,000 in 1990 (3 percent annual growth), 141,000 in 2000 (2.4 percent annual growth), and 155,000 in 2006 (1.5 percent annual growth).[56] The number of Bahá'ís with accurate street addresses—necessary to maintain voting lists—grew more slowly, partly because the addresses of mass-taught Bahá'ís often could not be updated. The number of local Spiritual Assemblies peaked at 1,785 in 1986 and declined to 1,150 by 2006. Three reasons for the decline can be identified: there was a decreased emphasis on setting goals to form assemblies and on encouraging Bahá'ís to move to establish them; there was a decreased emphasis on visiting rural Bahá'ís taught via door-to-door teaching to help them elect local Spiritual Assemblies; and the Universal House of Justice said all local Assemblies had to be elected on the first day of Ridván rather than any time during the 12-day festival.

Door-to-door teaching efforts, common in the 1970s, became fewer in the 1980s and rare in the 1990s because it was difficult to deepen the new believers' understanding of the Faith systematically. In order to reach the thousands of new Bahá'ís in rural South Carolina, the Louis G. Gregory Bahá'í Institute was founded; it established a radio station, WLGI, in 1982. The Native American Bahá'í Institute was founded on the Navajo Reservation to strengthen the new Bahá'í communities there. Public meetings and "firesides"—informal meetings to teach the Bahá'í Faith usually sponsored by individuals in their homes—attracted fewer inquirers in the more conservative 1980s and 1990s. The percentage of American Bahá'ís who were youth declined, and more and more of the youth were children of Bahá'ís rather than new converts. The median age of the Bahá'í community rose from the twenties to the forties. The international situation was similar: the number of Bahá'ís worldwide grew from three million in 1979 to five million in 2006; the number of local Spiritual Assemblies went from 17,000 in 1973 to 33,000 in 1986 and then to 12,000 in 2005.[57]

The Universal House of Justice initiated a series of changes starting in 1996 to strengthen Bahá'í community life, individual initiative, and Bahá'í institutions. It became apparent that some form of organization above the level of the local Spiritual Assembly but below the national Spiritual Assembly was needed. First, after various experiments, in the late 1990s the Universal House of Justice authorized some national Assemblies to divide their country into regions, where Regional Bahá'í Councils would be elected annually by the members of all local Spiritual Assemblies. The United States was divided into the four regions mentioned in the *Tablets of the*

Divine Plan (northeast, central, south, and west) in 1997. In 2005 the west was split into northwestern and southwestern regions, and the number of regional Councils increased from four to five.

Second, National Spiritual Assemblies were asked in 2001 to divide their country into *clusters* based on demographic and natural geographic factors.[58] The average Bahá'í community in the United States has 15 to 30 members and is limited in the services it can provide, but clusters could have hundreds of Bahá'ís and thus are better able to handle expansion and consolidation activities such as child education, media relations, and adult Bahá'í education. Clusters can have their own coordination teams and host periodic *reflection meetings* to which all Bahá'ís are invited to consult about local activities. In some cases cluster-wide responsibilities are rotated among the local Spiritual Assemblies in the cluster.

Finally, the House of Justice authorized dividing large cities (like Los Angeles, with over 2,000 Bahá'ís) into *sectors.* The city still elects one local Spiritual Assembly, but activities at the neighborhood level have become common.

The creation of additional administrative levels was also accompanied by an increased emphasis on decentralization. In 2001 the new Five Year Plan emphasized the development of three *core activities* in every cluster worldwide: *devotional programs, children's classes,* and *study circles.* While a few Bahá'í communities had been holding regular devotionals for years, the new goal was to establish not just community devotionals, but to give Bahá'ís the skills to host personal devotionals in their homes and invite their friends and neighbors. Children's Bahá'í classes, similarly, had been organized by Bahá'í communities for over a century, but now Bahá'ís were to supplement them with individually initiated neighborhood classes. To acquire the skills and confidence to create these activities, a series of seven books called the Ruhi Curriculum was developed in Colombia and soon became the standard curriculum for study circles worldwide. While firesides and deepenings (informal classes to study a Bahá'í text or subject) continued, the emphasis shifted to inviting inquirers to attend study circles, participate in systematic study of the Bahá'í Faith, and acquire skills to initiate more core activities. Clusters were rated as D, C, B, and A based on the expansion of the core activities; the American Bahá'ís set the goal of having 50 A clusters (out of 970) by Ridván 2006. Once a cluster reaches "A" status, it can initiate short-term plans intended to attract new inquirers to existing activities, thereby increasing the number of activities and people with the skills necessary for yet another cycle of expansion.

Enriching Bahá'í Studies and Bahá'í Literature. Perhaps one new Bahá'í book appeared in the United States per year in the mid-1960s. But because of the expansion in the 1960s and 1970s, there were many more Bahá'ís to buy books and magazines, causing the volume to increase. A quarterly magazine, *World Order,* began publication in 1966, and book publishing increased to a dozen titles per year by 1980. The Universal House of Justice began a major effort to translate more Bahá'í scripture into English. By the beginning of the new millennium a push to produce books for the trade market in the United States increased the number available in bookstores.

The establishment of the Association for Bahá'í Studies in Canada in 1977 (its jurisdiction expanded to include the United States in 1980) provided an organization in the Bahá'í community to stimulate study of the Faith. It founded the *Journal of Bahá'í Studies* and began to publish scholarly books, especially on applied topics (such as the relationship of Bahá'í principles to racial equality). A number of Baby Boomers obtained doctorates in religious studies, history, and Middle Eastern studies in the 1980s and began to apply academic methodologies to the study of Bahá'í scripture and history, enriching Bahá'í literature and sometimes advocating new ways of thinking about the Faith.

The Bahá'í Faith increasingly was studied at universities. A course on the Bahá'í Faith was taught in 1973 at Yale University; by the new millennium a university course on the Faith was taught somewhere in the United States every two or three years. The national Spiritual Assembly established the Wilmette Institute in 1995 to offer noncredit university-level courses on Bahá'í subjects, and in 1998 it began to deliver courses over the World Wide Web.

Increasingly in the 1990s, religious studies textbooks included short sections or chapters on the Bahá'í religion. A few articles by sociologists also appeared.

Involvement in the Life of Society. Bahá'u'lláh calls on Bahá'ís to be "anxiously concerned" about the needs of the society around them.[59] In Iran and Ashgabat, institutions that benefited wider society flourished, such as schools, clinics, and hospitals. But in the West, other than small projects—like classes in Kenosha to teach women and girls useful work skills about 1905—the Bahá'ís organized few social improvement efforts before the 1960s, when many young Bahá'ís got involved in nonviolent, legal efforts to support the civil rights movement. Starting in the 1940s and accelerating in the 1970s, in developing regions such as India, Africa, and Latin America, Bahá'í communities began to found schools, programs to educate women, and institutes for rural development. In 1983 a message by the Universal House of Justice encouraged Bahá'ís to undertake social and economic development projects.[60] Local Bahá'í communities in the United States began to support soup kitchens, contribute to food drives, organize literacy classes, and participate in other efforts, depending on their resources. In some areas large long-term projects were started, such as an effort in the San Francisco Bay area to provide free voice-mail services to homeless people, enabling them to apply for jobs and apartments.[61]

Artistic Developments. The considerable increase in the size of the American Bahá'í community in the late 1960s resulted in a corresponding increase and broadening of the forms of its cultural expression. Bahá'í hymnody, which had largely disappeared when Sunday worship meetings died out in the 1920s, underwent a modest revival. Some Bahá'í rock and classical music appeared. The Second Bahá'í World Congress in New York City in 1992 was a cultural watershed because significant resources were devoted to creating an artistically rich program for the 27,000 Bahá'ís who attended. An *Oratorio for Bahá'u'lláh* was composed by rewriting several popular musical pieces for professional voice and orchestra. But the most important development was the debut of professional-quality Bahá'í gospel music, which has continued to grow in

popularity. In 2006 a Bahá'í piece won a national gospel music award in the United States.

Public Relations and External Affairs. Bahá'ís have long used the media to proclaim Bahá'í principles, but the 1970s saw a quantitative increase in effectiveness in the United States. Bahá'í intercommunity media committees coordinated the use of television, radio, print, and billboard media in many large metropolitan areas and created campaign materials, complete with slogans such as "One Planet—One People—Please." In the 1970s and 1980s, several series of taped radio and television programs were produced for use on locally rented media outlets. In the 1990s a national toll-free information number was set up and coordinated with the purchase of cable television time for special Bahá'í advertisements. The informational ads were designed with the input of focus groups to ensure they were conveying the information and impressions that were intended. Informational Web sites were developed.

The 1970s saw Bahá'í relations with the federal government develop as the American national Spiritual Assembly established an Office of External Affairs. The Office has put much of its energy into human rights work, such as the ratification of the United Nations Convention on Torture and CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), but it has also focused on sustainable development and joined several national interfaith organizations. The Office's expansion was strongly stimulated by the need to combat the persecution of the Iranian Bahá'í community. As early as 1901 American Bahá'ís were informing government diplomatic channels about particularly serious incidents, but the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran brought persecution of a systematic and enduring sort not seen since the mid-nineteenth century. Entire Spiritual Assemblies across Iran were arrested and their members executed, sometimes after trials for apostasy, sometimes after torture. Three successive national Spiritual Assemblies were arrested and martyred. Bahá'í organization in Iran was legally banned in 1983. The Bahá'í hospital in Tehran was confiscated. Thousands of Persian Bahá'ís were imprisoned and over 200 executed for their beliefs; all suffered severe discrimination. Official (though secret) government policy called for extinction of the Iranian Bahá'í community through suffocation and attacks on its institutions and prestige outside Iran. Bahá'ís were not allowed to leave the country so that they would not strengthen the religion elsewhere.[62]

About a tenth of Iran's 300,000 Bahá'ís managed to flee the country anyway, sometimes via dangerous routes, and about 12,000 settled in the United States. They were mostly educated and articulate professionals who escaped with some of their savings. Everywhere they settled, they assimilated into the economy and culture fairly well and reasonably quickly. In the United States they became pillars of the American Bahá'í community, often intermarrying with European American or African American Bahá'ís. Their stories, told to the media and in Congressional hearings into the persecution, served to publicize the plight of the Bahá'ís remaining in Iran. The United States Congress passed seven resolutions condemning the persecution.[63]

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Bahá'í Faith regards unity in diversity as its most important principle. Unity is not a perfect state the Bahá'í community can attain as much as an ongoing process that starts with prayer, consultation—that is, democratic principles involving active listening, seeking wide input, and judging ideas on their merits rather than on the person originating them—and collaboration on tasks that advance the Bahá'í community or humanity as a whole. Informing the unity process is the extensive guidance in the Bahá'í sacred and authoritative texts—67,000 documents by Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi and the ongoing authoritative determinations of the Universal House of Justice—and the accumulated experience of national and local Spiritual Assemblies and the institution of the Counselors. To protect the unity of his followers Bahá'u'lláh established a covenant with them that requires them to follow and obey 'Abdu'l-Bahá and subsequent heads of the Faith. The covenant was renewed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his *Will and Testament,* which made Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice his successors and requires Bahá'ís to obey them.

Because of the Faith's clear lines of authority, many potential controversies are avoided entirely; after initial discussion or debate between individuals, matters have often been referred to the head of the Faith, who either resolves the question or says Bahá'ís are free to believe as they wish.[64] When Bahá'ís feel confusion, even anguish about some aspect of the Faith, they may write to the Universal House of Justice to express their concern and receive replies that encourage them and help explain the principle or problem. They can also meet with a Counselor or Auxiliary Board member.

Historically, there have been two sources of tensions in the Bahá'í community. The first is the nature of authority in the community, a matter that was raised particularly when one head of the Faith succeeded another. As a result of clearly written instructions about succession, individuals who sought leadership—such as 'Abdu'l-Bahá's brother Muhammad-'Alí, Ibrahim Kheiralla, Ahmad Sohrab, and Mason Remey—could not successfully legitimize their claim using Bahá'í scripture. Consequently, they were able to attract relatively small numbers of followers: dozens, scores, sometimes a few hundred. Recruitment of new followers required rejection of all or part of the succession texts, a subject of little interest to non-Bahá'ís, and the prohibition on Bahá'ís having social contact with covenant breakers cut off the potential supply of converts from the Bahá'í community.

The result is a sharp contrast to other religions: Christianity has 20,000 sects and the Roman Catholic Church can claim the allegiance of about two-thirds of all Christians; the Mormon movement has a dozen sects, and the largest one, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, embraces 90 percent of all Mormons; but of the approximately five million people who consider themselves Bahá'ís, there are only two or three groups, with a total membership of several hundred, who are separate from the mainstream, and these groups have tended to dwindle rather than grow over time.

The second historical source of tension arises when the Bahá'í teachings are at variance with cultural norms. For example, when the Bahá'í Faith arrived in the United States a century ago, its practices of obligatory prayer and fasting appeared foreign or Muslim to some. In the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere, its teachings about equality of men and women shocked some, and its democratic organization appeared western. Changes in cultural norms can alleviate tensions, as has happened as American attitudes have moved closer to the Bahá'í principle of racial equality and unity, or can exacerbate them, as has happened with attitudes toward homosexual activity (which is not permitted to Bahá'ís).

In the American Bahá'í community, the conversion of social activists and intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s inevitably brought to the fore a wide range of issues, some of which have been the subject of argumentation in the years since: for example, the Bahá'í teachings on avoidance of partisan politics (which some saw as limiting Bahá'í involvement in short-term social change); obedience to government (which prevents Bahá'í involvement in nonviolent civil disobedience); exclusion of women from service on the Universal House of Justice, although they serve equally in all other institutional capacities (which some saw as a departure from the principle of equality of the sexes and questioned on exegetical grounds)[65]; and the continued but temporary requirement that all manuscripts written by Bahá'ís on the Bahá'í Faith be reviewed for accuracy before publication (on the grounds that it limits freedom of expression). The discussion, framed by a few dozen Bahá'ís as "liberalism," represented a revival of the epistemological individualism of the early twentieth century, although many of the issues were different. In the late 1980s a short-lived periodical, *dialogue,* championed their discussion.

Beginning in the early 1990s the advent of the Internet and LISTSERVS allowed Bahá'ís to advocate and oppose such matters actively in cyberspace. Ultimately a half-dozen American Bahá'ís resigned their membership, and one was deprived temporarily of membership privileges. The Universal House of Justice chose to remove three from the Bahá'í membership rolls. One ex-Bahá'í wrote unflatteringly about the Bahá'í community in academic venues.[66] It should be noted that, like similar controversies in the Catholic and Mormon churches, the vast majority of members are only dimly aware of overt controversy around these issues. Bahá'ís generally may openly raise questions about issues of any kind that concern them, but they regard adversarial approaches as counterproductive ways to resolve disagreements or to advance understanding.

THE FUTURE

The Bahá'í Faith is 162 years old and has been present in the United States for 111 years. The depth of its roots in American culture can be measured in several ways:

- There are now fifth generation adult American Bahá'ís. Unlike most American Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Sikhs, only a small percentage of American Bahá'ís were born outside the United States.

- The American Bahá'í community is ethnically diverse, indicating that it has multiple avenues of attraction.
- The Faith has already had a small but significant impact on American culture through such Bahá'ís as Alain Locke, the dean of the Harlem Renaissance; Mark Tobey, a renowned abstract painter; Robert Hayden, the poet; Dizzy Gillespie, the famous jazz trumpeter; and Robert Abbott, publisher of the *Chicago Defender.* Significantly, four of the five were African Americans.

The American Bahá'í community has experienced rapid growth in times of social crisis (such as the Great Depression and the 1960s) and slower growth at other times. There is no reason to assume it has yet reached a limit in its size.

CONCLUSION

The Bahá'í Faith offers various windows into the study of the phenomenon of religion. Like Mormonism, it is an older example of a New Religious Movement. It can also be viewed as a faith that has moved into that elusive category of a "world religion" in terms of its roots in multiple global cultures (according to the *World Christian Encyclopedia,* the Bahá'í Faith is present in more countries and significant territories than Islam—218 versus 204—and only Christianity, in 238, is more widespread).[67] Its trajectory from a "heterodox and seemingly negligible offshoot of … Shí'ah Islam"[68] to a world religion has been little studied. The role of Bahá'ís of western Christian background in asking questions of the head of the Faith and thereby eliciting responses in dialogue with western and Christian concerns has received little attention; even less research has been done on the indigenization of the Faith among the native communities in Latin America and Africa or the rural population of India, or the role of the Bahá'í teachings in fostering economic development in Third World countries. Within the United States, the attraction of African Americans, especially in rural South Carolina, and American Indians on reservations has been the subject of scant literature.[69]

Heretofore most research has been done by Bahá'ís, who are more interested in understanding their community than in considering it as a case study of universal religious phenomena. Hence, opportunities abound for researchers interested in learning what the Bahá'í Faith has to tell us about religion, scripture, and religious community.

NOTES

1. Note about terminology and spelling: The word *bahá* is Arabic for glory or splendor; the superlative form is *abhá,* most glorious or most splendid. From this root is formed *Bahá'u'lláh,* "the glory of God," the title taken by the founder of the Faith, and from it comes *Bahá'í,* a word used as a noun to refer to a follower of Bahá'u'lláh and as an adjective to refer to things pertaining to the Bahá'í Faith. Grammatically, the word "Bahá'í" functions identically to the word "Christian." While some academics have used the term "Bahaism," it is not used at all in Bahá'í authoritative texts or literature in English and most Bahá'ís find it offensive. The standard term is "Bahá'í Faith" (with a capital F, indicating it is part of a proper name).

A standard transliteration system for Arabic and Persian words was adopted by the Bahá'í Faith worldwide in 1923. Academics and dictionaries have transliterated Bahá'í terms according to various systems or dropped transliteration altogether. This article adopts the Bahá'í system, which has far more currency than any alternative.

2. The ministry of the Báb has been described by Hasan Balyuzi, *The Báb: The Herald of the Day of Days* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1973); and by Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

3. First-hand accounts of the persecution of the Bábís were collected and converted into a narrative by a contemporary chronicler, Nabíl-i-Zarandí, and have been published in *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation,* ed. trans. Shoghi Effendi (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1932).

4. Many of the European accounts of the martyrdom of Bábís have been compiled and edited by Moojan Momen in *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981).

5. Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf,* trans. Shoghi Effendi, rev. ed. (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1953), 22.

6. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words,* trans. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1939); Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys,* trans. Marzieh Gail and Ali-Kuli Khan, 3rd ed. (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1973); Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán: The Book of Certitude,* trans. Shoghi Effendi, 2nd ed. (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1950).

7. Original correspondence describing the revelation of the Kitáb-i-Íqán has been published in Ahang Rabbani, "The Conversion of the Great-Uncle of the Báb," *World Order,* 30, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 19–38.

8. To this list 'Abdu'l-Bahá added Buddha and Shoghi Effendi added Krishna and the founder of the Sabean religion. Elsewhere Bahá'u'lláh appears to refer to Zoroaster as a Manifestation. He also suggests the qur'ánic prophets Sálih and Húd may have been Manifestations.

9. The best summary of Bahá'u'lláh's declaration in the garden of Ridván and its implications may be found in Nader Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization: Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 2000), 242–254.

10. Bahá'u'lláh's life is ably summarized in Hasan M. Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh: The King of Glory* (Oxford, George Ronald, 1980).

11. Extracts from Bahá'u'lláh's tablets to the kings are published in Bahá'u'lláh, *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh,* trans. Shoghi Effendi (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1972); and in Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh,* comp. trans. Bahá'í World Centre (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002).

12. This summary of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is based on Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944), 213–216.

13. Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book,* trans. Bahá'í World Centre (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992), par. 88.

14. The revelation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and its subsequent reception are described in Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh,* vol. 3: *Akka: The Early Years, 1868–77* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1983), 275–399.

15. Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas,* trans. Habib Taherzadeh (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), 167.

16. Ibid., 165, 93, 168, 113, 93, 63.
17. Ibid., 219–223, 3–5.
18. Peter Smith, "A Note on Babi and Baha'i Numbers in Iran," *Iranian Studies,* 17 (1984): 295–301.
19. Many references to Bahá'u'lláh and the Bahá'í Faith by European contemporaries can be found in Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844–1944.*
20. A summary of Kheiralla's life and teachings may be found in Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Origins, 1892–1900,* vol. 1 (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985), chaps. 2–7.
21. 'Abdu'l-Bahá later made it repeatedly clear that he was not the return of Christ.
22. Growth of the American Bahá'í community in the first decade of the twentieth century is summarized in Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Early Expansion, 1900–1912,* vol. 2 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1995).
23. Bahá'í Sunday worship and hymn singing declined in the teens and twenties and soon became a rarity; see R. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* (Los Angles: Kalimat Press, 1987), 3–117.
24. The Bahá'í calendar of 19 months of 19 days, with a four-day intercalary period, was established by the Báb and modified only slightly by Bahá'u'lláh.
25. A summary of American Bahá'í adoption of the obligatory prayers, the Fast, Bahá'í Holy Days, and the Feast is given in Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America,* 27–28, 108–109, 244–256.
26. Peter Smith applies the term "epistemological individualism" in Peter Smith, "*Reality* Magazine: Editorship and Ownership of an American Bahá'í Periodical," in *From Iran East and West: Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History,* vol. 2, ed. Juan Cole and Moojan Momen (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1984), 145.
27. Construction of the temple is summarized in Bruce W. Whitmore, *The Dawning Place: The Building of a Temple, the Forging of the North American Bahá'í Community* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984).
28. The involvement of American Bahá'í women in the Iranian Bahá'í community is summarized in R. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram, "American Bahá'í Women and the Education of Girls in Tehran, 1909–1934," in *In Iran: Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History,* vol. 3, ed. Peter Smith (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1986), 180–210.
29. The audience is the author's estimate based on the known size of crowds at certain venues. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to North America has been chronicled in Allan L. Ward, *Two Hundred Thirty-Nine Days: 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey in America* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979).
30. The Reading Room affair is summarized in Peter Smith, "The American Bahá'í Community, 1894–1917: A Preliminary Survey," in *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History,* vol. 1, ed. Moojan Momen (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1982).
31. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan,* trans. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1977).
32. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,* trans. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944).
33. Shoghi is his first name and is how he signed most communications to Bahá'ís; Effendi is an honorific title similar to "Sir" or "esquire" and is used by Bahá'ís when talking about him; Rabbani was his family name and was rarely used.

34. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944),13.

35. Shoghi Effendi's principal early messages about administration were published in Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages, 1922–1932,* 7th ed. (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974).

36. *The Bahá'í Yearbook: Volume One—April, 1925–April, 1926* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), 102.

37. Eunice Braun, *From Strength to Strength: The First Half Century of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Era* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1978), 7.

38. *Reality* has been studied in Smith, "*Reality* Magazine: Editorship and Ownership of an American Bahá'í Periodical," in *From Iran East and West,* ed. Cole and Momen.

39. The Ruth White and Ahmad Sohrab episodes are recounted in Adib Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1992), 347–349, 343–347.

40. Determining the numbers of Bahá'ís in the period 1894 to 1936 is complicated by the lack of a definition of membership. The United States government census conducted religious censuses in 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936 via surveys sent to local congregations; the Bahá'í numbers reported were 1280, 2884, 1247, and 2584. The large 1916 figure, however, included sympathizers who were not members per se, as demonstrated by membership lists drawn up for internal purposes in 1920 and 1922, with 1234 and 1368 Bahá'ís, respectively. The 1926 and 1936 statistics used a narrower definition of membership based on adults on voting lists (which did not exist in 1906 or 1916). For details, see Robert H. Stockman, "The Bahá'í Faith and American Protestantism" (Th.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1990), 26–34.

41. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice,* 3rd ed. (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971); Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters by Shoghi Effendi,* 2nd rev. ed. (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974).

42. For a survey of race unity efforts in the United States, see Gayle Morrison, *To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982).

43. All membership data in this paper comes from Robert Stockman, "United States Bahá'í Membership and Enrollment Statistics, 1894–2003" (unpublished paper). Some membership data came from the Bahá'í National Teaching Committee, which combed records from the 1970s through the 1990s; some were provided by the National Bahá'í Archives; and some were gleaned from the pages of *Bahá'í News* or the annual reports of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States.

44. The first and second Seven Year Plans are summarized in Braun, *From Strength to Strength,* 25–27, 33–42.

45. Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World, 1950–57* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), 7–8, 18–21, 59.

46. Braun, *From Strength to Strength,* 45–52.

47. Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World,* 127. One of the new Hands was an American, and an American had been appointed as a Hand when another one had died a few years earlier, hence eight of the 27 Hands were Americans.

48. Two of the 27 were too old and infirm to attend, but they signed all official conclave documents.

49. The messages of the Hands of the Cause of God issued during the "Interregnum" (1957–1963) have been collected together in Ruhiyyih Khanum, *The Ministry of the Custodians* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992).

50. The history of Remey's Orthodox Bahá'í Faith and its split on Remey's death is described in Vernon Elwin Johnson, "An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Bahá'í World Faith" (Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1974), 342–375.

51. A study of the development of the Bahá'ís Under the Provision of the Covenant was published as Robert W. Balch, John Domitrovich, Barbara Lynn Mahnke, and Vanessa Morrison, "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy: Coping with Cognitive Dissonance in a Baha'i Sect," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements,* ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 73–90.

52. Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1985: The Third Epoch of the Formative Age,* comp. Geoffry W. Marks (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996), 14, 44, 31–34.

53. Universal House of Justice, *Nine Year Plan, 1964–1973, Statistical Report, Ridván 1973* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1974), 42.

54. Universal House of Justice, *Analysis of the Nine Year International Teaching Plan, 1964–1973* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1964), 14, 16, 17, 32.

55. Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986,* 130–134, 246–248.

56. These statistics are based on data in Stockman, "United States Bahá'í Membership and Enrollment Statistics, 1894–2003."

57. One reason for the sharp drop was because Spiritual Assemblies should be formed according to existing civic boundaries; in the developing world this was often difficult and each village in a district formed its own assembly; later redistricting according to civic boundaries often combined several Bahá'í communities into one.

58. International Teaching Centre, *Building Momentum: A Coherent Approach to Growth,* in *Ocean,* a free software system available at http://www.bahaieducation.org.

59. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh,* trans. Shoghi Effendi, 2nd rev. ed., pocket-sized ed. (Wilmette, IL: Bahái Publishing Trust, 1990), 213.

60. Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice,* 601-04.

61. A recent summary of social and economic projects sponsored by the American Bahá'í community can be found in National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, *In Service to the Common Good: The American Bahá'í Community's Commitment to Social Change* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2004).

62. The latest summary of the persecution of Iran's Bahá'ís in Bahá'í International Community, *Closed Doors* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2005).

63. Resolutions condemning the persecution were also passed by various United Nations organs, the European Parliament, and some national legislatures.

64. From the point of view of many Bahá'ís, even the term "controversial issues" is a misnomer; they would regard such subjects as "challenging issues" worthy of discussion, exploration, scholarly study, and elaboration.

65. The Bahá'í authoritative texts give no explanation for why women cannot serve on the Universal House of Justice. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said it was because of "wisdom of the Lord God's, which will ere long be made manifest as clearly as the sun at high noon" ['Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,* comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), 80].

66. Juan R.I. Cole, "Race, Immorality and Money in the American Baha'i Community: Impeaching the Los Angeles Spiritual Assembly," *Religion* 30 (2000): 109–125, with responses to Cole by Robert H. Stockman and Mike McMullen in Ibid., 133–139 and 141–47, respectively.

67. David B. Barrett and Todd Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World,* 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), vol. 1, 4.

68. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By,* xii.

69. Some notable exceptions: William Garlington, "Bahá'í Conversions in Malwa, Central India," in *From Iran East and West,* ed. Cole and Momen; Joseph O. Weixelman, "The Traditional Navajo Religion and the Bahá'í Faith," in *World Order* 20, no. 1 (Fall 1985): 31–51; Sandra Santolucito Kahn, "Encounter of Two Myths: Baha'i and Christian in the Rural American South—A Study in Transmythicization" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Santa Barbara, 1977).

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Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America

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Edited by Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft

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Introduction

Although new or alternative religious movements, or New Religious Movements (NRMs), have always been part of the American religious landscape, they have not always received broad public attention. Most often, their formation, attraction of members, and growth or decline have occurred beyond the harsh glare of prolonged public scrutiny. In some striking cases, however, a new or alternative religious movement has dominated the news for a period of time, usually because the movement itself, or some of its members, became involved in something that was widely perceived to be illegal, immoral, or simply destructive. For example, in the wake of the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Minister Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam became notorious for his comment that Kennedy's murder meant "the chickens had come home to roost." In the 1970s saffron-robed members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, also known as Hare Krishna, became so well known for seeking donations and engaging strangers in conversations in public that they were easily lampooned in the comic film "Airplane." In the 1980s, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, leader of the Unification Church (or Moonies), was found guilty of tax evasion by diverting church funds for his personal use. More recently, in 1993, the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms staged a raid on the home and church of a small group of Bible students outside of Waco, Texas. In addition to the ten lives lost in the botched raid, the 51 day standoff between the students of David Koresh, a group widely known as the Branch Davidians, and agents of the federal government, particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation, culminated in the loss of 78 lives in a fire that consumed the Mount Carmel Center where the Branch Davidians lived. In 1997 followers of Marshall Applewhite, forming a group called Heaven's Gate, joined him in committing suicide so that they could all progress to what they viewed as "the evolutionary level above human." The list of such incidents could easily be multiplied.

In the late twentieth century as new and alternative religious movements continued to receive public attention for elements of their practice or belief that were highly controversial, a dominant image of such groups began to solidify. That image was

fostered by the activism of groups of former members, their families, some professionals in social work and psychology, and various other volunteers. When the opposition to new or alternative religious groups originated with more or less secular individuals, those opponents were generally called anticultists. When opposition originated with Evangelical Protestant Christians, those opponents were usually called countercultists. The tireless work of such activists, anticultist or countercultist, quickly produced a standard understanding of new and alternative religions that united a wide variety of groups under the umbrella category of "cults." In the perceptions of their anticult opponents, cults posed serious threats to vulnerable individuals and, ultimately, to the stability of American society itself. Anticultists and countercultists believed that cults had three prominent characteristics. First, they were led by unscrupulous, manipulative, and insincere individuals who sought only to increase their own power, wealth, and/or sexual enjoyment. Second, cults preyed upon unsuspecting, confused, and vulnerable individuals, often using sophisticated and virtually irresistible tactics of influence. Third, participation in a cult would surely bring harm to individual participants and might also lead them to commit any number of antisocial actions that threatened the public good. The stereotype of the "destructive cult" was aggressively marketed by the loose coalition of anticultists, particularly when disturbing news about any new or alternative religious movement became public. Thus, on the one hand, while a variety of events created a broad interest in learning about individual religious groups, their practices and beliefs, organizational structure, leadership, and many other topics, on the other hand, the predominance of the cult stereotype inevitably skewed the information available, attributed the perceived faults of any one group to all of them, and created expectations that any group labeled a cult must necessarily be worthy of suspicion, scorn, and vigorous opposition. Despite their prodigious efforts at educating the general public, the various anticult and countercult activists have, in fact, promoted much more misunderstanding than accurate understanding of the religious lives of some of their fellow citizens. Consequently, they have helped to create a very hostile environment for anyone whose religious practices do not fit within a so-called "mainstream." The personal and social costs of such religious bigotry may actually be higher than what the activists fear from cults themselves.

This set of volumes on "New and Alternative Religions in America" intends to rectify that situation for the general reader. It aims to present accurate, comprehensive, authoritative, and accessible accounts of various new and alternative religious movements that have been and are active in American society, as well as a set of essays that orient the reader to significant contexts for understanding new and alternative religions and important issues involved in studying them. The presentations are predicated on a simple but fundamental assumption. It is that accurate description and understanding must precede any judgment about the truth, validity, morality, or trustworthiness of any religious group or person. Accurate description demands that the group be presented in terms that it could itself recognize and acknowledge as being at least close to the way it understands itself. Providing an accurate description of the history, organization, practices, and beliefs of a particular group does not, in

any way, constitute an endorsement of that group, but it does provide an indispensable baseline for any further discussion. Such a baseline has often been lost in the public discussions of new and alternative religious movements, because their most bizarre, threatening, or even humorous aspects have been exaggerated. What is missing from such caricatured presentations is a sense of how any person could find such apparently ludicrous, lethal, or laughable groups worth joining. Simple dismissal of new or alternative religions as absurd, erroneous, or pernicious misses the social influence that they can have and demonstrably have had. Whatever an outsider's perception of new and alternative religions might be, many clear-thinking and well-intentioned individuals, throughout American history, have associated themselves with such groups. This set is founded on the idea that members' or participants' reasons for their decisions and their accounts of their experiences form the primary data for understanding new and alternative religions. Both hostile and approving accounts of new or alternative religions from outsiders provide a different sort of data, which reveals the social location and often-controversial careers of new and alternative religions. But neither approval nor criticism by external observers should take precedence over the self-understanding of each group as articulated by its members in establishing a baseline of descriptive accuracy.

Readers of this set of volumes will thus encounter both information and analytical frameworks that will help them arrive at an informed and appropriately complicated understanding of new and alternative religious movements in American history and society. Volume 1 provides a set of analytical perspectives on new and alternative religions, including the history of such movements in the United States, the controversies in which they have often become embroiled, the roles of leaders within the groups and the processes by which individuals become members and also leave their groups, the legal and global contexts in which new and alternative religions function, and a variety of prominent themes in the study of new religions, including roles of gender, children, and violence.

The four volumes that follow generally present accounts of individual groups, many of them well known but some much less so. Each chapter presents information about the origin and subsequent development of the group in question, its internal organization including the predominant type of leadership, its most important practices and beliefs, and controversies that have put the group in the limelight. Volume 2 focuses on groups that have developed out of the broad biblical tradition—Judaism and Christianity—and have achieved such a distinctive status as to be considered, at least by some observers, as independent religious groups rather than simple sectarian variations of more mainstream Jewish or Christian traditions. Volume 2 accordingly raises most acutely the problems of definition that are involved in using the admittedly malleable categories of "new" and "alternative" religions.

The description of a religious movement as *new* or *alternative* only begs further questions. Novelty can be in the eye of the beholder, or in the mind of someone claiming to be innovative. That is, religious movements are judged to be new, alternative, or anything else only in particular contexts and by certain audiences. They may claim, for example, to retrieve and correctly interpret or represent past beliefs

and practices, which have been neglected or forgotten. But their opponents might view the same claims as dangerous and deviant inventions. New religions themselves often manifest a pronounced ambivalence about their own novelty. A fundamental dynamic in new and alternative religions is that they strive to present themselves as both new and old, as unprecedented and familiar. The novelty of new religions cuts both ways; it can just as easily excite the interest of potential adherents as it can strain their credulity. As they spread their messages to those whose interest, approval, and even acceptance they hope to secure, NRMs proclaim both their challenging novelty and their comforting familiarity.

In their sectarian forms, these movements attempt to recapture the lost purity of an idealized past. Sects typically have prior ties to larger religious organizations from which they have intentionally broken off. They aim to return to the pristine origins of the tradition and reestablish its foundations. Sectarian forms of Christianity frequently exhort their partisans to get "back to the Bible"; contemporary Islamic sects similarly yearn for the purity of the times of the prophet Muhammad. Even the Church of Satan, founded by Anton Szandor LaVey in 1966, has spawned sectarian groups that accuse the original Church of Satan of having abandoned its initial commitments and emphases. Sects thus define themselves both in relation to the broader world and in relation to their specific tradition, both of which are perceived to threaten their purity of belief and practice.

In their typology of responses to secularization, Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge contrast cults to sects. Rejecting the polemical definition of cults spawned by their cultural opponents, they define cults as independent religious traditions. Cults may be imports from another culture or independent products of the society in which they develop. Like sects, cults often find themselves in tension or conflict with broader society, simply by virtue of being new and different. Because they, too, want to locate themselves in relation to an authoritative past, cults also lay some claim to previous tradition. What separates cults from sects in their relation to previous traditions is that cults typically do not have a history of institutional conflict and eventual separation. Cults are marked from their beginnings as new entities. Both sects and cults, then, simultaneously declare their novelty and sink their roots in the past. In order to avoid confusion about the term "cult," which has such negative connotations in contemporary American society, this set will keep to the designations of new and alternative religions, which are widely employed by many scholars even though they are somewhat imprecise. The choice of which groups to include in Volume 2, as with the other volumes, is a judgment call. The guiding principle was not only to provide a representative sample of new and alternative religious groups throughout American history, but also to present the groups in sufficient detail to enable the reader to form a complex understanding of them.

Volume 3 investigates groups in the occult or metaphysical tradition, including nineteenth century Spiritualism, the Theosophical Society begun by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in the late nineteenth century, and the contemporary New Age movement. Like the groups discussed in the second volume, those in Volume 3 are part of a broad tradition that has deep roots in

antiquity. For example, in *The Secret Doctrine* Madame Blavatsky included the ancient Vedic sages of India, the Buddha, and a collection of ancient Greek philosophers among the ancient teachers whose wisdom about the nature of human beings and the nature of god was being given its fullest expression in Blavatsky's modern Theosophical system.

The religious movements discussed in Volume 3 typically present a different organizational profile from those in Volume 2. The groups in Volume 2 have made substantial efforts to maintain boundaries between themselves and their surrounding social environment, demanding exclusive allegiance of their members; vesting authority over practice, doctrine, and group life in charismatic leaders; and offering new and improved interpretations of familiar texts already acknowledged to have broad cultural legitimacy. In contrast, the movements in Volume 3 center on individual teachers who attract shifting groups of students with varying degrees of commitment for varying lengths of time, leave the ability to determine the authority or validity of any pronouncements in the hands of individual seekers, and claim to bring to light extraordinary wisdom from previously unknown or underappreciated sources.

Many of the religions that have appeared to be innovative developments in American religious life have actually been transplanted from other cultures where they have often enjoyed long histories. The openness of the United States to immigrants has always been an important factor in promoting American religious diversity. The 1965 repeal of the 1924 *Asian Exclusion Act,* for example, permitted a variety of Eastern religious teachers to extend their religious activities to the United States. Late in his life, for example, Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, made the United States the focus of his efforts to awaken love for Krishna in as many people as possible. Military personnel returning from service abroad, often with spouses from countries where they had been stationed, also helped to introduce new religious practices and movements to the United States. This was the case, for example, with the form of Japanese Nichiren Buddhism known as Soka Gakkai. Even where it is difficult to provide independent corroboration of claimed international ties, they can nonetheless be claimed. A dramatic example here was the assertion that the elusive figure at the origins of the Nation of Islam, W.D. Fard, arrived in Detroit, Michigan, in 1930 from Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The movements in Volume 4 show clearly that religious innovation in the United States always needs to be considered in a broader, global context. That is no less true of the groups discussed in other volumes as well. For example, Ann Lee's small band of Shakers began in Manchester, England; David Koresh gathered Bible students from Australia, England, and other foreign countries as well as the United States. Theosophy's Madame Blavatsky was a Russian émigré. Finally, the Church of Scientology, like many other new religions that have begun in the United States, conducts a vigorous international missionary program.

The frequent movement of individuals, practices, and ideas across national borders could make a focus on new and alternative religions solely in the United States vulnerable to a myopia that could distort the nature and significance of those movements. That caution holds equally for homegrown and imported religions. Few

religions in the contemporary world, no matter what their age or relation to a mainstream, are confined within a single set of national boundaries. Nonetheless, the focus of this set remains on a selection of religions that have had, for one reason or another, a significant impact on religious and social life in the United States. Prominent in that selection is a group of religions that have been independently founded in the United States. For example, although the contemporary revival of Paganism can be traced to the career of Gerald Gardner in England beginning in the 1930s, many influential Pagan thinkers and teachers, such as Z Budapest, Starhawk, and Isaac Bonewits have flourished in the United States. Similarly, the Church of Satan and its subsequent offshoots owe their inspiration to Anton Szandor LaVey, who produced *The Satanic Bible* and other fundamental texts in San Francisco, California, in the 1960s. Also, beginning in the 1950s the prodigious literary output of L. Ron Hubbard gave rise first to the therapeutic system known as Dianetics and then, as his purview broadened, to the Church of Scientology. Other founders of NRMs in the United States, like Marshall Applewhite of the Heaven's Gate group, attracted far fewer adherents than the Church of Scientology but nonetheless carved out a place for themselves in American religious history through their dramatic, and sometimes tragic, actions. Volume 5 thus focuses on both new developments in international movements within the United States, such as the rise of Neo-Paganism, and the conscious construction of new religions, such as the Church of Scientology, by American teachers and organizations.

As this overview suggests, the definition of what counts as a new or alternative religion is frequently open to argument. Many groups that appear dramatically novel to external observers would claim that they are simply being faithful to ancient traditions. Joseph Smith, for example, claimed that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, was a restoration of primitive Christianity. Groups that claim to be innovative often express their messages in the form of fresh interpretations of ancient texts, as with Swami Prabhupada's effort to present the ancient Indian classic, the Bhagavad-Gita, "as it is"; or Rael's contention that the mentions of "Elohim" in the biblical book of Genesis actually refer to extraterrestrial beings who came to earth in space ships. Because of the subjective nature of the categories —new to whom? alternative to what?—it will always be difficult to delimit precisely which groups definitely do, and do not, "count" as new or alternative. Moreover, in popular discourse, where the category cult is frequently used but appears devoid of anything other than emotional content, and in interreligious arguments, where cult easily expands to include "virtually anyone who is not us," attempts at substantive definitions give way entirely to polemics. Discussion of new and alternative religions in the United States thus always refers to a shifting and vigorously contested terrain where categories like "alternative religion" or "cult" and implicit comparisons like those implied by "new religious movement" are used to establish, reinforce, and defend certain kinds of individual and group identities, even as they threaten, compromise, or erode other kinds of individual or group identities.

No mapping of such terrain can hope to be definitive. Too much is in flux. Those who enter the terrain need trustworthy and experienced guides. The essays in these

five volumes provide just such guidance. Experienced, authoritative, and plainspoken, the authors of these essays provide both perspectives on some of the most prominent general features of the landscape and full descriptions of many, but by no means all, of the specific areas within it. Those who want to explore the terrain of new and alternative religions in the United States will find in this set multiple points of entry. They may want to focus on a specific local part of the larger area, such as the Theosophical tradition, the Branch Davidians, or Heaven's Gate. On the other hand, they may want to investigate the characteristic dynamics of the broader field, such as the processes of conversion into and defection from groups or the interactions between new and alternative religions and their cultural opponents. There is much to explore—much more than can even be covered in these five volumes. But this set aims to equip the would-be explorer with enough tools and knowledge to make the exploration rewarding and worthwhile.

PART I

The Nation of Islam

Nora L. Rubel

In 1959, journalists Mike Wallace and Louis Lomax copresented a two-part television special entitled, "The Hate that Hate Produced." Claiming to document the "story of the movement for black supremacy among a growing and well-organized minority of American Negroes," this special report introduced the Nation of Islam to Americans.[1] Branding the movement's leaders as "crafty, resourceful men" and its followers as "Negroes who find in the cause of black supremacy an answer to centuries of persecution," Wallace and Lomax described a militant, antiwhite movement developing in American cities.[2] Despite this televised introduction, the Nation of Islam was no brand-new black political faction; the movement had been growing in the black community for three decades. Both radical and reactionary, the Nation sought to create religious, political, and economic independence for African Americans.

The broadcast of black Muslim ministers putting the white man on trial spread alarm through much of white America, while also ironically resulting in an immediate increase in membership for the Nation.[3] "The Hate That Hate Produced" provoked much attention, both popular and academic, for the Nation, but until recently the public assumption has been that the Nation of Islam was "neither legitimately religious nor authentically Islamic."[4] Plagued by scandals, rivalry, and FBI surveillance, the Nation nonetheless garnered respect for its attempts to uplift the black community, as well as increasingly developed a relationship and identification with the greater Muslim world. This essay provides a history of this indigenous American Islamic movement, examines its theology, world view, and practices, and discusses its religious leadership and organizational structure, as well as its ongoing process of Islamization.

EARLY BEGINNINGS

The Lost-Found Nation of Islam[5] in the Wilderness of North America came into being as a movement led by the mysterious figure W.D. Fard (1891?–1934?) (also

known as Wallace D. Fard and later as Fard Muhammad) in the early 1930s. His teachings were propagated by his disciple and successor Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975) and popularized by the Nation's best known minister, the charismatic and controversial Malcolm X (1925–1965). Like the genesis of the Nation of Islam, Fard's personal history is shrouded in mystery. When delving into his past, one encounters an interesting blend of legend, mythology, and rumor. No one could quite agree on Fard's nationality; he cloaked his personal life in mystical metaphor. He claimed that he had been born on February 26, 1877 in Mecca.[6] He also professed to be a direct descendent of the prophet Muhammad's tribe, Koreish. According to one of his first converts, he introduced himself as W.D. Fard from the Holy City of Mecca and professed mysteriously: "More about myself I will not tell you yet, for the time has not yet come. I am your brother. You have not yet seen me in my royal robes."[7] Historians continue to debate his background as either African American or Middle Eastern. Early converts believed that he was of Arab, possibly Palestinian, descent, for he had a light coloring.[8] He first appeared in 1930 after the 1929 demise of Noble Drew Ali, the founder of the Moorish Science Temple. Fard later claimed to be the reincarnation of Noble Drew Ali (1886–1929).[9]

A door-to-door peddler, Fard used his sales technique to sell more than just his wares: he was promoting a new way of life for African Americans. With the aid of the women with whom he came into contact while hawking his line of goods, Fard's words of salvation were passed around the Paradise Valley community of Detroit, Michigan, in 1930. Fard introduced a new theology, new ritualized practices, and a new world view to African Americans in Detroit during the Great Depression. He started with dinner. Using his door-to-door wanderings to get himself invited for a meal, he would eat everything placed in front of him, but after the meal was completed he would explain how the family should eat to lead a healthy and spiritually fulfilling life. "Now don't eat this food. It is poison for you. The people in your own country do not eat it. Since they eat the right kind of food they have the best health all the time."[10] Early converts described the eagerness with which they listened to his description of their "home country" and the ways they could be freed of illness and physical pains.

Fard's teachings included philosophies drawn from the black nationalisms of Marcus Garvey (1887–1940)[11] and Noble Drew Ali, principles from the Qur'an and the Bible—specifically the Book of Revelation, as well as some very distinctive traditions of Fard's own.[12] He taught that the blacks of North America were not "negroes," but "Asiatics" from the Original Tribe of Shabazz in East Asia. They lived in Paradise, spoke Arabic, and ruled the world. And as Muslims, they were privy to the "hidden truth" that black people and white people do not come from the same god.

This hidden truth that Fard revealed explained that the black race was the original race and that the white race was a race of devils maliciously created by a mad black scientist named Yakub. Steeped in the scientific language of the period from which the myth emerged, Fard Muhammad described the way that Yakub had grafted the

color from some members of the Original Black Nation, the Original Tribe of Shabazz. Over a period of 600 years, using the anachronistic philosophy and methods of (modern) eugenics, Yakub proceeded to create a lighter and lighter race of people. This painstaking process of hybridization resulted in the red and yellow peoples of the world, and ultimately, the white race.

Stripped of their color, and subsequently their humanity, this white race of devils was created to oppose the Original Tribe of Shabazz.[13] Predestined by Allah to dominate the earth for 6,000 years, this white race was genetically weaker, but brilliantly devious. Pale in flesh and brittle of bone, whites lived a hellish, animalistic existence in West Asia, while the original black race lived in Paradise. Allah sent this race a prophet in 2000 BCE, Musa (also known as Moses). Only a few of the whites accepted the call to righteous behavior; these were the Jews. Otherwise, the white devils continued their debauchery unchanged.

Two thousand years later, Allah and the Original Tribe took pity on this race again and sent them the (nondivine) prophet Jesus, but they were so evil that they killed him. In a last ditch effort, a third prophet emerged in the seventh century, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, and while he developed a following, he too could not bring righteousness to the devil.

Through what Fard termed "tricknology," white Europeans brought the Original people to the wilderness of North America, where they were enslaved, fulfilling Allah's promise of 400 years of servitude.[14] During this time, the Original Man forgot himself, his language, and his religion. In an attempt to alleviate his suffering, he turned to drink and even to the evil slaveholder's religion of Christianity. But as Allah prophesied, in the year 1914, coinciding with the Great Migration of hundreds of thousands of blacks from the South to Northern cities, blacks began to reclaim their superior position as the Original Man. In order to do so, they discarded the behavior of their former selves by rejecting Christianity and reclaiming their identity as righteous Muslims, and unshackling themselves from the white devils. According to Fard's ideology, the black race was approaching a messianic age when they would again be elevated to the superior, dominating race of the world.

It is this "hidden truth" that non-Muslims and other Muslims took most objection to, the idea that blacks and whites are fundamentally different in nature, that black people are inherently righteous and white people are devils by design. While this racial separatism is the first thing that non-Nation Muslims point to as a sign of the Nation's Islamic illegitimacy, contemporary scholars have pointed out that traditional, color-blind Islam is partially mythological as well.[15] Despite this controversial narrative of Yakub, Fard's reversal of the influential Nordic myth of racial hierarchy held tremendous power in creating a religious community identity.[16]

Cornel West writes of the Nation's "obsession with white supremacy." The Nation sought to counter white supremacy with black supremacy, but this still left African Americans "captive to the supremacy game—a game mastered by the white racists opposed and imitated with his black supremacy doctrine."[17] Although the Nation of Islam was a separatist group, and racist in philosophy, it was by and large not *physically* active in its racism in the ways groups like the Ku Klux Klan were. With

the exception of a few early incidents, there was no targeting of white people with violence; there was more of a desire to be left alone.

Fard frequently employed the Book of Revelation, as well as the Book of Ezekiel, in his meetings, describing the imminent war of Armageddon as a final race war between blacks and whites. In this final battle, a terrifying wheel-shaped space ship known as the Mother Plane would eliminate the white race. Built by Allah (Fard) in Japan, it would drop a fiery bomb on the United States, resulting in the nation's demise in a lake of fire.[18] He claimed that the only way for blacks to emerge unscathed and triumph in this war was to return to their natural religion of Islam.[19]

Implicit in Fard's theology was a harsh critique of black Christianity, and particularly black ministers. Ironically, while biblical themes were frequently exploited, the Bible itself was met with great suspicion, because Fard claimed it had been tampered with. And while Fard often drew parallels between himself and Christ, he served as a corrective to the prolific images of a blond-haired, blue-eyed Jesus, who offered a reward only in the afterlife. The Nation of Islam offered a gift to the black people of the United States; it offered the knowledge that they had had a religion before slavery gave them Christianity. Fard's theology, and the controversial tales of Yakub and the Mother Plane, served as narratives explaining the black situation in the United States, as well as the potential for an earthly redemption.

This racialized theology was used to enforce the separatist ideology advocated by the Nation. This separatism was necessary in order to create a united front among black people. Muslims were encouraged to shed the "devil's" names that they were given in slavery and adopt an X. The X had a dual meaning: ex, meaning that followers of the Nation no longer belonged to the "dead" world, and X, as in a mathematical equation signifying the unknown quality (because African Americans cannot trace their roots exactly).

Whoever Fard was, and this is still a matter of some controversy, his ability to sense that urban blacks in cities like Detroit were ready to open their hearts and minds to Islam was at the core of the success of his movement. Adhering to traditional Islam was not the goal. Fard's (and later Elijah Muhammad's) primary objective was to reconstruct African American identity and to introduce blacks to what he understood to be Islam.[20]

A NEW MOVEMENT

With his theology rooted in the Bible, the Qur'an, and modern scientific language, Fard slowly built a following and began to introduce a rigorous regimen that the members were to follow. Meetings were held in private homes, and word of his teachings spread throughout the community. Early perceptions of the Detroit movement were sensationalized in the wake of violence perpetrated both by and on members of the group. The Detroit police department nicknamed the group the "Voodoo Cult," a name popularized in the first scholarly treatment of the community by Erdmann D. Beynon.[21]

Fard established Temple No. 1 in Detroit and gained one devoted convert who would go on to change the trajectory of African American religion in the twentieth century. Fard named Elijah Poole, of Saundersville, Georgia, Chief Minister of Islam. According to Nation of Islam tradition, Elijah Poole recognized that Fard was no mere prophet; he was Allah made manifest on Earth. Muslims critical of the Nation of Islam are quick to point out that this act of identifying a human as God is considered one of the greatest sins a person can commit in Islam. Muslims also criticize Christianity for having committed this sin of *shirk.*[22] While Muslims accept Jesus as a prophet, they chastise Christians for mistaking the prophet for God. But among African Americans—as seen in Garvey's African Orthodox Church and Father Divine's Peace Mission—the idea of a black man as God was a very powerful and seductive image at a time when blacks in the United States faced horribly depressing conditions.

Fard Muhammad gave Poole the Islamic name of Elijah Karriem. Karriem later adopted the name Elijah Muhammad and took over the Nation after Fard's mysterious disappearance in 1933.[23] After Fard's disappearance—and in the face of rival Muslim violence—Muhammad, along with other followers, moved to Chicago, Illinois, in 1934 and established Temple No. 2, seeking to spread the word. It is at this time that Elijah Muhammad became the sole spokesperson for Fard's revelations, and a creed for the Nation eventually evolved to reflect that relationship: "There is no God but Allah, Who came to us in the Person of Master Fard Muhammad, and the Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad is His Messenger." This is a revision of the traditional Muslim *shahada,* the declaration of faith, which states: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger."

RITUAL AND PRACTICE

Under Elijah Muhammad, Fard's revelations became institutionalized. Those who converted now led a life of strict discipline in which their every move was rigorously dictated. This comprehensive religious world view addressed not just morality, but diet and dress. Cleanliness, both internally and externally, was a must. These standards were maintained in order to reach a level of self-respect, both for individual African Americans and for the race as a whole. If these laws were disobeyed, the dissident would attend a Muslim trial in which he could be sentenced to periods of isolation from the community. In *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad,* Claude Andrew Clegg III writes, "Muslim conception of morality added order and a sense of dignity to the lives of African-Americans who had consumed tobacco, burglarized neighbors, and fornicated."[24] The Nation therefore prohibited the aforementioned behavior, as well as "movie-going, dating, sports, long vacations from work … lying, stealing, discourtesy (especially towards women), and insubordination to civil authority, except on the ground of religious obligation."[25] This reformed behavior would create an earthly paradise for black people.

In addition to righteous behavior, the Nation demanded strict observance of temple regulations. Members were required to attend at least two meetings at the temple

per week. Men were also obligated to proselytize to non-Muslim African Americans, also known as the "dead." Muslims also prayed five times a day, towards the East.

Dietary restrictions were enforced, in addition to strict personal hygiene regulations. Pork strictly was forbidden, as it is in orthodox Islam, but in addition to pork, corn bread and collard greens also were prohibited. While prohibition of these foods had no basis in the Qur'an, they were forbidden as a way of denying the traditional African American slave diet and affirming that "there are no slaves in Islam."[26] Elijah Muhammad also had many changing ideas on nutrition. During his leadership, Muslims were strongly encouraged to eat only one meal a day and were required to fast several days a month. As Elijah Muhammad grew older he began to suggest only one meal per two-day period and longer periods of fasting. He ultimately introduced a month-long fast in December, based on the traditional Muslim fast in the month of Ramadan. As well as increasing the Nation's ties to traditional Islam, this December fast also had the benefit of serving as a rebuke to the excesses of the Christmas season.

The first sign that one was speaking to a man or woman from the Nation of Islam came not from obvious religious affiliations but from personal appearance. In addition to having an appearance of overall neatness and cleanliness, men wore black suits and bow ties, and women wore long dresses and covered their hair. For many women, donning traditional Muslim clothing was a political move in itself, particularly in the age of the miniskirt. There are other religious communities, such as the Amish or Mennonites, who express their theological difference from mainstream American society through personal attire. The difference between those communities and the Nation of Islam is that the mainstream does not usually come into contact with the Amish or the Mennonites at work or at school. The Nation grew in an urban setting, and there it remained, causing it to have more in common with Jewish ultra-Orthodoxy, also an urban phenomenon.

Today the *hijab*[27] and other modest dress of the women in the Islamic faith is beginning to take on a deeper meaning than the modesty rules perhaps intended. Many women are speaking out against the traditional standards of female beauty. If one cannot see a woman's figure, she cannot be judged by it. Outsiders often tend to see the veil as a symbol of Muslim women's forced servitude to men. Many Muslim women claim, however, that the veil is a sign of a woman's power in a contemporary society in which women too often are judged on the basis of their appearance. Within the Nation, Muslims used this dress code to create independent businesses (and new fashions) in their own community. Modest clothing did not necessarily mean *drab* clothing, and women even occasionally held "Shabazz Fashion Shows."

Elijah Muhammad also pushed for economic self-sufficiency. His "Build Black, Buy Black" agenda was one of the first successful efforts of its kind—far more lucrative than any of Garvey's and the Universal Negro Improvement Association's (UNIA) ventures, which were plagued with mismanagement from the beginning.[28] Muhammad made his people realize how passively black people were behaving when they bought products from stores that would not hire them. The Nation of Islam soon opened chains of bookstores and health food stores that catered to their own communities.

Ultimately, one of the most distinctive features of the Nation of Islam was its new world view for African Americans. Betty Shabazz (1936–1997), Malcolm X's widow, stated that "This was the first time I heard the word *racism* used. I began to see why people did certain things. I began to see myself from a different perspective."[29] And it was this perspective that led to the success of the movement internally, as well as its effects on the larger black community.

THE PROBLEM OF AFRICA

The Nation of Islam gave African Americans a tie to Africa, to a past before the era of slavery. This tie to Africa is problematic, however, since the culture that the Muslims embraced is primarily of Middle-Eastern—or Arab—tradition. Memories of West African experience had little or no place in the Nation's embracing of "Africa," at least in the early days of the movement. Muhammad's description of black American's roots as Asiatics, as well as his history of their evolution from the Tribe of Shabazz to the wilderness of North America, led to contradictory attitudes toward Africa, attitudes that reflected the deeply ingrained racism of the period. One source that demonstrates the Nation's views toward Africa was its highly influential weekly, *Muhammad Speaks.*

Founded in 1960—mainly through the efforts of the Nation's most visible minister Malcolm X— *Muhammad Speaks* grew out of the weekly column "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," which appeared in such black newspapers as the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Amsterdam News.* The mouthpiece of the movement, this newspaper served as an independent forum for the Muslims, as well as a bridge to the non-Islamic black community. *Muhammad Speaks* prospered as an institution within the Nation of Islam and reached a wider audience than any black newspaper before. Members of the Nation were required to buy and distribute a certain number of issues, ensuring the profit of the paper. This paper also had far-reaching implications outside the Nation, as it challenged the superficial and escapist nature of the traditional black press by covering political and social problems in the black community and in the world at large.[30]

Muhammad Speaks presented radical views regarding global politics, which seemed ironic for several reasons. First, the Nation of Islam was, for all intents and purposes, a right wing, reactionary program in most other areas. Their economic platform was fiscally conservative, and their behavioral code was even more conservative, sometimes to the point of seeming puritanical. Second, this was a "nation within a nation," and members were strongly discouraged from political involvement. However, despite this lack of actual participation in politics, the Nation held strong political views, and *Muhammad Speaks* was their outlet for these views. For example, *Muhammad Speaks* was militantly opposed to the Vietnam War and openly expressed this position in the pages of the newspaper. The paper also kept tabs on political activity in African nations.[31]

On the front page of every issue, *Muhammad Speaks* displayed the following: "Dedicated to Freedom, Justice and Equality for the so-called Negro/ The Earth

Belongs to Allah." *Muhammad Speaks* contained articles glorifying accomplishments of Africa and Africans, as well as the early great civilizations of that continent. Articles such as the one entitled "Who is the Original Man?"[32] served to prove the Nation's claim of life beginning among black peoples in Africa.

The Nation of Islam often praised Garvey's UNIA movement in their pages.[33] Muhammad, like Garvey, also called for emigration as part of his program. The back page of every issue had two ten-point platforms: "What the Muslims Want" and "What the Muslims Believe." Number Four on the first platform called for repatriation, asserting "we believe our contributions to this land and the suffering forced upon us by white America, justifies our demand for complete separation in a state or territory of our own."[34] But unlike Garvey's platform, the Muslims wanted a territory in North America to be given to African Americans as reparation for slavery. This demand for reparations continues to be a consistent part of the Muslims' platform, as part of the fulfillment of a strong black nation within a nation.

Yet within Muhammad's praise of blackness, when it came to Africa he taught a contradictory doctrine that incorporated all the old stereotypes of Africa as an uncivilized, savage place. Elijah Muhammad—like Fard Muhammad before him—taught that black people were not "Negroes" but Asiatics, from "East Asia." Muhammad claimed that whites, in order to construct barriers between people of color in Asia, created the term "Africa." When describing the Original Tribe of Shabazz, Muhammad depicted a people who phenotypically resembled Egyptians—"a black-skinned, straight-haired people whose features were 'soft and delicate, fine.'"[35] The Tribe of Shabazz ruled over a magnificent civilization in North Africa and the Middle East, and only after a tragic decline did any of the Original People move into the "jungles" of Africa. Here their physical characteristics began to change; "their hair, which had been straight, coiled and became kinky; their thin lips swelled, and their noses became broader."[36] Over the next thousands of years, the black man and woman became weaker versions of themselves. This grotesque, racist imagery can be seen in *Muhammad Speaks'* political cartoon images of blacks who were not Muslims. These so-called Negroes are horribly stereotypical, showing grossly enlarged lips, caricatured noses, and kinky Afros.

This issue of Africa as a place of origin within the Nation of Islam is a tricky one. Muhammad challenged the predominant Christianity of African Americans by claiming an innate, Islamic heritage. At the same time, by claiming a quasi-Middle Eastern heritage, Muhammad denied and somewhat denigrated West African origins. Buying into racist attitudes toward Africa, this theology shows how ingrained and internalized racism can become—even among those attempting to eliminate feelings of inferiority. The Nation of Islam advocated a separate state for blacks, and migration to Africa was considered an option. However, an all-black state in North America was preferred, and no one in the Nation seemed interested in migrating to Africa. The place for the Nation seemed to be located in the West, as seen by their symbol of Islam, the star and crescent that faces East in orthodox Islam and faces West in the Nation of Islam. In the end—probably for a great number of

reasons—Elijah Muhammad, despite lip service to the contrary, never tried very hard to make emigration happen anywhere.[37]

Despite these contradictory attitudes toward Africa, Muhammad succeeded in appropriating the politics of Islamic religious identity among black Americans, becoming "a kind of godfather of modern black nationalism."[38] Hardly an exaggeration, the Nation of Islam—and especially Malcolm X—had tremendous influence on subsequent black nationalist organizations.

MEMBERSHIP

Men and women entered the Nation of Islam for different reasons, they were promised different things, and different behavior was expected of them. By welcoming Fard Muhammad into their homes to preach his theory of redemption over dinner, essentially black women invited Fard Muhammad into the black community. Women were prominent among the first zealous converts to the Nation of Islam, hoping for a means of social mobility and a better life. The Nation of Islam originally comprised the black working and underclass and intentionally attempted to move its followers to a middle-class level, an undertaking at which the movement was somewhat successful.

Under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, many in the black community came to respect the Nation as a means of self-help, even by those who rejected their views on racial separatism. Muhammad's ministers visited prisons, pool halls, and bars to recruit new members. A majority of converts found their way to Elijah Muhammad through experiences in prison. Malcolm X, perhaps the most famous convert to the Nation, remembered in his widely read memoir, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X,* that had it not been for Islam, he would have become "a dead criminal in a grave, or, if still alive, a flint-hard, bitter, thirty-seven-year-old convict in some penitentiary, or insane asylum."[39]

The many conversions to Elijah Muhammad's movement that occurred in prison signify what the movement promised. Black people awakened to the fact that the prison wardens, the guards, and the police officers who arrested them were all white. Muhammad's "white devil" propositions began to take on more meaning. When black men left prison, they rarely were ushered into Christian churches.

Women were introduced to the Nation of Islam mainly by girlfriends or family members who already had converted. The women who converted were attracted by the Nation's ability to provide self-help, a way to be religious, and a way to be political. Many claimed that they were impressed by changes in the people they knew. Other women discussed how their conversions led them to stable family lives and marriage. Education was also a potent means of bringing them into the movement. Women were pushed to exhibit high moral behavior because "a Muslim can rise no higher than his women."[40] Many women went to college after converting; most of these women claimed that until they found Islam, college was not an interest.[41] Those women who had little or no education were taught to read and write by female officers in the Temple.[42] Women were more likely to remain in the Nation if they

had family members who were also Muslims. This familial bond led to even stronger commitment to the Nation.[43]

John R. Howard refers to these particular converts as "Protestant Ethic Muslims." He claims that the "common denominator for all the Protestant Ethic Muslims was exposure during childhood to a socialization process placing some degree of emphasis on self-help."[44] Their positive experience relies on the self-determination taught by the Nation. Many men and women were also drawn to the Nation because of its emphasis upon family and child-rearing.[45] Like many conservative religious movements, large families were encouraged. In *Message to the Black Man,* Elijah Muhammad proclaimed that "The woman is man's field to produce his nation."[46] Birth control was severely discouraged.

The Nation held specific political ideals, yet members were forbidden to participate in political activities such as voting. They were a nation within a nation. Muslims were ordered to obey the letter of the law and therefore did not involve themselves with the civil disobedience activities of the civil rights movement. They also had little to do with the other nationalist groups of the time. Cornel West writes that the Nation possessed both a "blacker than thou" mythology and ideology than most of its contemporaries, but also succeeded in "producing discernible results in the personal, organizational and financial life of its members and the black community."[47]

Under Elijah Muhammad's leadership, the Nation attracted much attention, at one point boasting of about 100,000 members in the 1960s, a number that was noticed by reporters such as Louis Lomax and repeated in scholarship on the Nation. According to Clegg, this number was likely never more than 20,000, but the Nation was known for its transitional nature, so the numbers of those who passed in and out of the movement may be much higher.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Nation's structure was determined by Fard Muhammad and remained constant throughout Elijah Muhammad's reign as Chief Minister of Islam. While the Nation advocated racial separatism outside the organization, members practiced gender separatism within the Nation. The Nation of Islam consisted mainly of men, in both body and power structures. While women were given the pretense of being very important, they often were blamed for the cultural emasculation of black men. Malcolm X, even though he later expressed contrition for his remarks about black women, was often relentless in his disparagement of black women. At one point, he went so far to say "that 'the closest thing to a woman is a devil.'"[48] Elijah Muhammad received widespread criticism for his words on women in his *Message to the Black Man in America.* Men were told "to 'keep women from the streets,' because they are 'given to evil and sin while men are noble and given to righteousness.'"[49]

Relations between men and women in the Nation were dictated by specific, divinely inspired roles for each sex. While "the man is the God, the Maker and the Owner and the Father of Civilization," the "woman is the Mother of Civilization

[and] the nature of the man and the woman are different."[50] Much lip service was paid to the importance of women, but many Muslims emphasized the submission of women in Islam. Not all women viewed submissiveness as a negative condition. Many women asserted that they were content to play a subservient role, confident in the knowledge that they were giving their husband his manhood back (refuting the image of African American women as castrators), claiming that "There are many ways women can influence men without being out there, up front."[51] And while many women accepted that Islamic law placed the man at the head of the household, this acceptance did not mean that inside the house husband and wife were not on equal footing. What went on between men and women privately was hidden behind a united front for the outside world.

Publicly, however, men and women were separated in the temple. Most temples seated men in the front and women in the back. Some temples separated them down the middle—men on one side of the room, women on the other—with a single row of the Fruit of Islam, the Nation's security order, next to the women. The Fruit of Islam reportedly sat there for protection, to keep men from looking at them, particularly at "the 'dead' women who would come to hear the teachings [and who] wore short skirts. By putting the Fruit up there, that kept anybody from looking up their legs."[52]

The Fruit of Islam was the vanguard of the men's organization and was mainly a security order, while the women's association contained the Muslim Girls Training (MGT) and General Civilization Class (GCC). The GCC was originally a junior version of the MGT for young women between 15 and 19 years of age. The MGT and GCC were named by W. D. Fard and spoken of in the Nation's guide book, *The Supreme Wisdom.* The MGT taught women "how to keep house, how to rear their children, how to take care of their husbands, sew, cook and, in general, how to act at home and abroad."[53]

Women in the MGT and the GCC were instructed to follow a set of precepts known as the "Laws of Islam." These laws prohibited makeup, certain hairstyles, high heels, as well as pork and adultery.[54] The ban on cosmetics later was lifted due to pressure by temple women. It is now optional, but women rarely use it when involved with temple functions.[55] The rules of the Nation were strict, but many members praised the results of such rigidity.

OUTSIDER'S PERCEPTIONS

Feared by white America for its militant speech and antiwhite rhetoric, the Nation of Islam was accepted by a majority of African Americans, even if its message was not shared by all. Black leaders denounced Elijah Muhammad as a racist, but the masses remained silent. Lomax interviewed the wife of a black newsman who stated, "Of course I disagree with Malcolm [X]. But I disagree with a lot of other religions, too. If he teaches hate, so do they; what's the difference? I wonder why the white people are after him. Could it be because he is colored?"[56]

While the majority of African Americans remained overwhelmingly Christian, there was far less objection to the Nation among blacks than among whites. While critical of the theology, many understood the need for their separatist beliefs. *Muhammad Speaks* enjoyed printing celebrity endorsements from non-Muslims such as the celebrated black actress Ruby Dee, who stated that the Nation was "another one of the cries in Negro America that say, 'I wanted to love you so much and you wouldn't let me! And now, I am going to tell you, I don't like you for that. And I'm going to say even more than that: I am going to say, I hate you for that. So there!'"[57]

The Nation's message was not only heard within the Muslim community. Many Christians loved to hear its ministers speak, such as this Harlem woman: "Honey child, you *know* those Muslims are telling the truth about the white folks. I'm not joining up, but I'm not against them either."[58] The Nation became known for its eloquent spokesmen, particularly the fiery orator Malcolm X.

MALCOLM X (1925–1965)

A child of Garveyists, Malcolm X, was born Malcolm Little. Drawn into the underworld of New York City at the age of 16, he became involved in prostitution and drug rings, as well as burglary. His involvement in theft led to his eventual incarceration in 1946. During his six-year stint in jail, Malcolm became aware of the Nation of Islam through one of his brothers who had already converted. Malcolm began a self-education process as well as a spiritual conversion with the help of Elijah Muhammad, whom he corresponded with during the remaining years of his sentence.

In 1952, Malcolm was paroled and given his "X" by Elijah Muhammad. By 1953 he served as Minister of Temple No. 11 in Boston, Massachusetts. Malcolm eventually became Muhammad's Chief Minister and was responsible for greater visibility, as well as greater membership, for the Nation. In the 1950s, the Nation of Islam built 49 new temples. A charismatic and popular speaker, Malcolm was sought after by college campuses, radio, and television.

A devoted disciple of Elijah Muhammad, he spread the Nation's message passionately. A gifted lecturer, he successfully articulated the thoughts that African Americans shared, particularly the perplexing images of Christian subordination and nonviolence in exchange for police brutality. In response to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, Malcolm rejoined, "I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don't see any American Dream; I see an American nightmare."[59]

After a rather public, but privately complex, falling out with Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm defected from the Nation in 1964. He embraced Sunni Islam and took on the name El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. He started his own organization, the Muslim Mosque, Inc. He declared that the "political philosophy … will be black nationalism, the economic philosophy will be black nationalism, and the social philosophy will be

black nationalism."[60] He later committed himself to the civil rights struggle in America, which the Nation had shunned.

Assassinated on February 21, 1965, his impact was felt by both black Muslims and non-Muslims. In his controversial book, *Soul on Ice,* former Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver (1935–1998) wrote on Malcolm's appeal:

> When [Malcolm] spoke under the banner of Elijah Muhammad he was irresistible. When he spoke under his own banner he was still irresistible. If he had become a Quaker, a Catholic, a Seventh-Day Adventist, or a Sammy Davis-style Jew, and if he had continued to give voice to the mute ambitions in the black man's soul, his message would still have been triumphant: because what was great was not Malcolm X but the truth he uttered.[61]

Cleaver, like many others, became a Muslim because of his admiration for Malcolm X, and followed Malcolm when he left the Nation.

CONTROVERSIES AND SCANDALS

As much as relations between people in the Nation were reserved for insiders, there was one scandal that even the Fruit of Islam could not protect. On July 3, 1964 nearly every major newspaper carried the story of Elijah Muhammad's less than divine behavior. The day before, Lucille Rosary and Evelyn Williams filed paternity suits against him in Los Angeles Supreme Court. These two women each formerly had worked as Elijah Muhammad's secretary and had borne his illegitimate children. They had been subjected to degrading Nation trials for committing the sin of fornication. Elijah Muhammad had presided over these trials and had "ruled that 'they didn't know'" who the fathers of the children were. Since this judgment suggested promiscuity, which was a violation of Islamic law, the two women had been expelled from the Nation.[62]

Malcolm X dealt with this issue of Elijah Muhammad's infidelity extensively in his autobiography. He claimed that he had heard rumors for years that Elijah Muhammad did not have the same moral fiber that he demanded of his followers, but Malcolm had refused to believe anything negative about the man who was responsible for his personal salvation. Malcolm also claimed that the denial came to an end when the paternity suits were filed, but historians now believe that it was impossible for Malcolm not to have been aware of Muhammad's behavior, considering the intimate relationship he had shared with Elijah Muhammad. It is also thought that Elijah Muhammad's indiscretions were known by many within the Nation and kept quiet with a "tradition of 'Those who know don't say; and those who say don't know.'"[63]

In the next few years, and especially after Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975, justification for Elijah Muhammad's actions were found in the Qur'an. Nation members claimed that he actually had married these women under Islamic law, for polygamy long has been condoned by Islamic tradition, and the prophet Muhammad was said to have had four wives. The passage in the Qur'an that is always pointed to is Surah 4:3, which states that men may marry up to four women. The law was

originally a reformation of polygamy. At the time of the writing of the Qur'an, there were often villages where the women greatly outnumbered the men due to casualties of war. Polygamy was the norm, and men often had more than four wives. Jewish reformers suggested that the number of wives a man could have should be limited to four, and Muhammad took it a step further. A man could have four wives, but only if he would be able to treat them all equally ["if ye fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only)"]. If this equality was impossible, then he was allowed only one wife.[64]

SUCCESSION IN RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Warith Deen (1933–)

The Nation of Islam experienced dramatic change in the 1970s. According to Nation tradition, Elijah Muhammad's son Wallace D. Muhammad (later known as Warith Deen) had been predestined by W. D. Fard as the successor to Elijah Muhammad. Ironically, this son was the one with whom Elijah Muhammad had the most difficulty. Wallace had been excommunicated from the Nation on several occasions due to theological differences, the most controversial being his refusal to accept the Nation's doctrine of the divinity of Fard Muhammad.[65] Wallace Muhammad had studied Islam independently at al-Azhar University in Egypt and subsequently had rejected many of the Nation's teachings in favor of Sunni tradition.[66]

The early 1970s saw considerable violence and rivalry among black Muslim splinter groups. With this intense backdrop, Elijah Muhammad gave in to his son's desire to preach Sunni (or what he called Orthodox) Islam after 14 years of theological disputes. In 1974 Elijah began the procedure for Wallace's succession. During this transfer of power, he became ill. On February 25, 1975, Elijah Muhammad died at the age of 76 and Wallace Deen became the Chief Minister of the Nation of Islam.[67]

With the death of Elijah, his son was free to reform the organization in ways he saw fit. Wallace's reformation was, in fact, more of a rapid dissolution of the Nation. Within this first year, the Nation of Islam was completely transformed. He discarded all rules and regulations that did not conform to mainstream Sunni Muslim practice. He first changed the name of the Nation to the "American Bilalian Community." This name honored the tie to the United States, as well as Bilal (an African friend of the prophet Muhammad).[68] The movement's periodical *Muhammad Speaks* was renamed the *Bilalian News.*

Wallace lifted the ban on nonblack membership, and he again changed the name, this time to "The World Community of al-Islam in the West." He dropped all mention of a white devil philosophy. Most radically, he reinterpreted both Fard's and Elijah Muhammad's places in the tradition as divinely inspired men who introduced the Qur'an to many people, but not as divine in nature. In 1976 he disbanded the Fruit of Islam, instituted formal Muslim *salat* (prayer) services, and introduced the fast of Ramadan. All temples were renamed mosques, and later masjids. Ministers

were renamed imams. In 1980, Wallace changed the name yet again, this time to the American Muslim Mission, and the *Bilalian News* became the *American Muslim Journal.* He also changed his own name to Warith Deen and suggested that his followers adopt Muslim or African names.

Imam Warith Deen also did much for women in his new regime. He explained: "[I]n our religion, we cannot make any distinction between men and women in terms of intelligence, spirituality or moral nature. Women are equal with men and they are not to be treated any differently."[69] Warith Deen allowed women to wear pants, in addition to only having to cover their hair during temple activities. Women held high administrative positions, and the nature of the MGT changed. Emphasizing the importance of equal education for women, the classes dealt more with intellectual pursuits. Elijah Muhammad had spoken highly of education for women, but after that education the woman was to be relegated to home and childbearing. His son encouraged women to follow their interests to their full potential.

In 1985, Warith Deen officially disbanded the American Muslim Mission and continues to serve as an imam of a Chicago masjid, enjoying the respect of much of the world-wide Muslim community (or *ummah*). He explained that his father's teachings were necessary in order to restore the self-respect to African Americans before true Islam could be revealed to them.[70] This reformation of Warith Deen's led to the acceptance of his community by Muslims throughout the world. But there was a price to be paid. Malcolm X had once said, "If you make a sharp turn, left *or* right, don't bother to look back because nobody will be behind you."[71] In Warith Deen's case, this remark rang true. For followers of the Nation of Islam, faith was not casual. This dramatic transformation led many members to reevaluate their faith. Sociologist C. Eric Lincoln explains that, "Membership in the Nation meant *belonging* to the Nation—body, mind, and spirit.… Practically all of the men and women who were attracted to the Nation of Islam were in search of "scarce values" not available elsewhere in their experience of life in America."[72]

Warith Deen explained his reason for abandoning his father's teachings: "If you design a revolution to bring people out of their condition into another condition, you cannot continue to always put emphasis on revolution.… Today we have arrived at our goal and the trip was successful."[73] But there were some that would argue that African Americans had not arrived at their goal of liberation. While many stayed with Warith Deen, others did not like his changes and left the community.

Louis Farrakhan (Louis X) (1933–)

While there have been quite a few attempts to restore Elijah Muhammad's Nation, the most infamous—and most successful—defector was Louis Farrakhan. Born Louis Eugene Walcott, he is part of Elijah Muhammad's dynasty by marriage and in many ways sees himself as the true spiritual heir of Elijah Muhammad. Farrakhan felt that Warith Deen's reforms "caused a decrease in financial holdings and created a lack of discipline among the members."[74] He left Warith Deen's *ummah* in order to

reestablish the Nation of Islam in 1978, and he returned to Elijah Muhammad's teachings because they had been so successful in uplifting African Americans.

Unlike Warith Deen's movement, which is now firmly middle-class, Farrakhan's Nation still appeals to lower classes. He publishes the newspaper *Final Call,* modeled after *Muhammad Speaks* (in its original incarnation). A controversial but popular speaker, he has been frequently accused of anti-Semitism. He also has been disavowed by many in the wider Muslim world, and a derogatory term for his movement by Muslims is "Farrakhanism."

Women's roles under Farrakhan remained consistent with Elijah Muhammad's teachings at first, but the changes Warith Deen had introduced could not be ignored. Even Farrakhan had to move with the times, and he appointed Sister Ava Muhammad, an attorney from New York, to the position of Minister. He then set up study groups for other women wishing to follow in her footsteps.[75] The emphasis in Farrakhan's movement is on African American uplift and unity rather than the wider *ummah,* although due to recent engagement with African Muslims, more traditional Islamic obligations are being adopted.[76] The Chicago Mosque Maryam follows orthodox prayer structure, and other mosques have followed suit.

In addition to developing a greater relationship and identification with the larger Muslim world, both Farrakhan and Warith Deen's followers are involved in politics. No longer content to sit idly by on election day, Muslims have become increasingly involved in the public square. Farrakhan sees himself as a prophet to the United States, and in 1995, he held the Million Man March in Washington, where hundreds of thousands of black men joined together to pledge commitment to rebuilding the family. Looking toward his place in history, he never seems to call for the establishment of a separate state, although that is still number four on the Muslim Program. Less concerned with separating from white America, Farrakhan emphasizes education for all Americans—not just African Americans. The Million Man March was a message directed toward black men, but this March was also a message for all of American society: Let the rest of the world see how our people are taking responsibility, and let them see us as a light unto the nations.

FUTURE AND CONCLUSION

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, media attention has again focused on Islam, leading American Muslims to assert their loyalty to the United States. This sudden awareness of Muslims in the United States has concentrated on Muslims of Arab descent, who account for only one quarter of American Muslims; a larger number can be found in the African American community. While the overwhelming majority of black Muslims practice the Sunni traditions advocated by Warith Deen Muhammad, it is impossible to ignore the impact that the teachings of Fard Muhammad and Elijah Muhammad had on the spread of Islam among African Americans. Although non-Nation Muslims have repeatedly criticized the Nation as un-Islamic in doctrine, many recognize that this homegrown Islamic movement was responsible for turning many black Americans toward Mecca for the first time.

NOTES

1. Louis E. Lomax et al., "The Hate That Hate Produced," in *Newsbeat* (WNTA-TV, 1959).
2. Ibid.
3. Karl Evanzz, *The Judas Factor: The Plot to Kill Malcolm X* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992), 76.
4. Edward E. Curtis IV, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming), 7.
5. The name Nation of Islam is referred to in official Nation writings as the "Lost-Found Nation of Islam in the Wilderness of North America."
6. February 26 is celebrated by followers of the Nation of Islam as "Savior's Day."
7. Erdmann Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult Among Negro Migrants in Detroit," *American Journal of Sociology* 40, no. 3 (May 1938): 896.
8. C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America,* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1994).
9. The Moorish Science Temple was a religious tradition started by Timothy Drew (also known as Noble Drew Ali) in Newark, New Jersey, in 1913. This movement was the first introduction of Islam to African Americans. After his death in 1929, his followers split into two factions: one followed John Givens El to Chicago (and eventually fizzled out), and others followed W.D. Fard to Detroit.
10. Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult," 895.
11. Garvey was a West Indian who came to the United States during World War I and established a nationalist organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). He touted the idea of pan-Africanism, the notion that all blacks would eventually move to a yet-to-be-established state in Africa. Garvey was deported in 1927, but his nationalist ideas continued to exert great influence on the black community.
12. Clifton E. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims: The Transition from Separatism to Islam, 1930–1980* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1984), 2.
13. Claude Andrew Clegg III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 51.
14. Ibid., 58.
15. Richard B. Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).
16. Ibid., 157.
17. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 100.
18. Clegg, *An Original Man,* 65–66.
19. Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience,* 150.
20. Ibid., 158.
21. Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult."
22. *Shirk* is the greatest of all sins in Islam. This sin is what Muslims criticize Christians as having committed. Muslims accept Jesus as a great teacher, but they chastise Christians for making the mistake of worshipping the prophet that they had been sent.
23. Evanzz, *The Judas Factor,* 142–146. The FBI renewed its investigation of Fard's disappearance in 1957 and discovered that Fard was really Wallace Dodd Ford from California, with a lengthy criminal record. He had been born in Hawaii on February 25, 1891. His mother was Polynesian, and his father British (which accounted for his exotic appearance). The FBI eventually gave up trying to find him, for all leads led nowhere.

24. Clegg, *An Original Man,* 102.
25. E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 15.
26. Elijah Muhammad, *The Supreme Wisdom: Solution to the So-Called Negroes' Problems,* vol. 2006 (Chicago: Muhammed Mosque of Islam, 1957), 21.
27. The hijab refers to veiling of women that has been seen in both Eastern and Western Islamic tradition. The hijab is not required of women in the Qur'an, but chapter 24:31 does require *modest* dress. The tradition of hijab is usually linked to that of *purdah,* seclusion (which is also not required by the Qur'an).
28. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism,* 39.
29. Evanzz, *The Judas Factor,* 72.
30. Keith S. Peterson, "U.S. Black Newspaper Coverage of the UN and U.S. White Coverage, 1948–1975," *International Organization* 33 (Autumn 1979): 534.
31. "Egypt, China See End of Science Monopoly in West," *Muhammad Speaks,* November 29, 1964; "Zambia to Help Free Her Black Neighbors," *Muhammad Speaks,* November 29, 1964.
32. "Who Is the Original Man?," *Muhammad Speaks,* May 1962.
33. "Back to Africa Movement Scores Gains in West Indies," *Muhammad Speaks,* May 1961.
34. Under Elijah Muhammad's leadership, the Nation of Islam produced two platforms entitled, "What the Muslims Want" and "What the Muslims Believe." Both were published on every last page of the NOI's newspaper *Muhammad Speaks* and continue to be published in Louis Farrakhan's *Final Call.*
35. Clegg, *An Original Man,* 45.
36. Ibid., 47.
37. Ibid., 151.
38. Ibid., 239.
39. Alex Haley, ed. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), ix.
40. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America,* 123.
41. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism,* 115.
42. Walter D. Abilla,. *The Black Muslims in America: An Introduction to the Theory of Commitment* (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1977), 13.
43. Ibid., 35.
44. John R. Howard, "Becoming a Black Muslim: A Study of Commitment Processes in a Deviant Political Organization" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1965), 87.
45. Ibid., 85.
46. Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter; the Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), 318.
47. Cornel West, *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 284.
48. Michael Dyson, *Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 97.
49. Giddings, *When and Where I Enter,* 318.
50. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America,* 123.
51. Aminah McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 157.
52. Peter Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 84.

53. *The Supreme Wisdom: Lessons by Master Fard Muhammad to his servant, the honorable Elijah Muhammad for the lost found Nation of Islam in North America,* 14; Muhammad, *The Supreme Wisdom: Solution to the So-Called Negroes' Problems.*
54. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims,* 61.
55. Lomax et al., "The Hate That Hate Produced," 70.
56. Ibid., 67.
57. "Greatest Actress' Candid Comments," *Muhammad Speaks,* October 11, 1963, 21.
58. James H. Cone, *Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 182.
59. Richard Polenberg, *One Nation Divisible: Class, Race and Ethnicity in the United States in 1938* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 232.
60. Malcolm X, *By Any Means Necessary* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1992), 5.
61. Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York: Ramparts, 1968), 59.
62. Evanzz, *The Judas Factor,* 167.
63. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America,* 261–262.
64. Adib Rashad, *Elijah Muhammad and the Ideological Foundation of the Nation of Islam* (Hampton, VA: U.B. & U.S. Communications Systems, 1993), 30.
65. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims,* 90.
66. Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience,* 224.
67. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims,* 91.
68. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America,* 265.
69. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims,* 116.
70. McCloud, *African American Islam,* 74.
71. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America,* 259.
72. Ibid., 266.
73. McCloud, *African American Islam,* 73–74.
74. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims,* 97.
75. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America,* 271.
76. McCloud, *African American Islam,* 81.

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Alternative to "Religion" in an African American Islamic Community: The Five Percent Nation of Gods and Earths

Kathleen Malone O'Connor

INTRODUCTION

New and alternative forms of African American Islamic community have been evolving in North America for almost a century, from the establishment of Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple early in the twentieth century, growing and developing in the great urban centers of New York City, Chicago, Illinois, and Detroit, Michigan. Beyond the later growth of African American Sunni converts as a result of the presence and influence of Sunni immigrants and expatriates in North America, "sectarian" Muslim communities enjoyed considerable success in converting African Americans to Islam (such as the early mission of the Ahmadiyya Community[1] to the African American community just after the rise of the Moorish Science Temple, in 1913).[2] Perhaps the most publicized of new and alternative Muslim communities in the early twentieth century was the Nation of Islam (NOI), founded by W.D. Fard (or Fard Muhammad), and led by its revelator/prophet, Elijah Muhammad (Elijah Poole) in the early 1930s. This movement generated significant offshoots and parallel forms during the civil rights era (the early to mid-1960s), which share a commitment to an Islam grounded in a black theology that incorporated uniquely American forms of Black messianism and apocalypticism. Two interrelated but distinct and independent African American Islamic communities centered in the New York City area (Brooklyn and the Bronx), evolving out of Black Muslim[3] theology in the mid-1960s. These were the Five Percent Nation of Gods and Earths (NGE), led by ex-NOI minister Clarence (13X) Smith, and the Ansaaru Allah Community, led by Isa Muhammad (Dwight York), which developed a new "Kemetic" (ancient Egyptian) identity as Nuwaubian Nation of Moors (NNM) in the twenty-first century.

The study of these two new indigenous Islamic communities (which were not offshoots of any recognizable Islamic immigrant/expatriate community) has engaged deeply held academic and devotional assumptions about the nature and parameters of Islam, of religion in the United States, religion and popular culture, and African

American identity. Among the most significant and rarely addressed issues in the scholarship on these communities is the problem of what anthropology, and other ethnographic disciplines such as sociology and folklore and folklife, has called the etic versus the emic view, that is, the outsider's or scholar's versus the insider's or "believer's" perspective.[4] Categories and frames of reference long accepted in the Western academy, and particularly the academic study of religion, itself growing out of the study of the Bible and Christianity in the West, are grounded in concepts either irrelevant or inimical to the members of such communities. In the study of African American culture, the academy has been dominated (until quite recently, and regarding these communities still is) by a Eurocentric, postcolonial, print-oriented definition of authoritative truth. In relation to the language, life experience, and world view of the African American community as a whole, and these communities in particular, the discourse of the academy is meaningless and in many ways offensive and completely overlooks the creativity and power of its oral-based culture in North America.[5]

Rarely addressed is the difficult initial hurdle of finding a common language with which to present an accurate and emic description of these new or alternative Islamic communities. The most important of these issues includes such basics as what constitutes the field of inquiry, and how to relate these communities to world religious communities, as well as specific problems such as what to call members and how to access and express their perspective and experiences. The field of inquiry regarding these communities has been for the most part defined by "sect" or "cult" theory, which, grounded as it is in the study of Christianity, is neither suitable nor helpful for the study of Islam as a whole and these alternative Islamic communities in particular. Neither is the term "religion" useful since both the Five Percent Nation and the Ansaaru Allah Community, now called the Nuwaubian Nation, reject the word and others they associate with frequent monotheistic assumptions about God, afterlife, sin or judgment, mystery or unknowability, mysticism or esotericism, and metaphysics. For communities in which even the words "religion," "god," and "belief" are suspect, what terms are left? Because these groups were pejoratively labeled by both scholars and the American Sunni majority as "cults," the Five Percent Nation and the Ansaaru Allah (or Nuwaubians) have long been sensitized to the politics of terminology. These groups prefer the terms "community" or "nation," which function not in the purely sociopolitical meaning most commonly ascribed to them of "Black nationalism," but rather the nonkinship based brotherhood and sisterhood of the Islamic *umma.*[6] These two groups and the Nation of Islam before them reject the word "religion" and, as a result, lose the protection under the law that that word can give under the criteria of freedom of religion, as well as the ability to demand recognition and constitutional protection as a Nation within the nation. They do not claim to be part of Islam as a religion, and thus are not within the protecting embrace of the *umma.* They call themselves, instead, an "Islamic culture" or "community" or "nation." What both communities share is a growing commitment to their own understanding of scientific truth, preferring the terms "teaching" and "truth" to "belief" or prophetic "charisma." They reject esotericism, mysticism, metaphysics,

and the occultism of religious professionals and hierarchies ("priests, ministers, blood suckers of the poor")[7] for the everyday knowledge and the common sense of popular science. Finally, they absolutely reject, as the Nation of Islam did before them, the transcendent "God" concept (as Elijah Muhammad put it, "the mystery God")[8] and redefine utterly their understanding of the ultimate, creative, self-referential reality that "god" represents to them. The Five Percenters affirm "there ain't no mystery god," while simultaneously affirming the NOI teaching that the "Blackman is god."[9] Thus, the word "god" is extremely problematic and elusive in this context and requires extensive exploration among the membership and the communities' textualities (both written and oral lore) to provide new emic parameters for that crucial word. Both these communities "show and prove"[10] the truth of the statement the "Blackman is god" with their "word"[11] and their lives. That is, perhaps, the greatest mystery to the scholar and outsider, and the one that requires reopening of the mind and tenacity to begin to comprehend.

For the most part, membership in these communities and participation in the cultures they generate is a life-affirming opportunity, particularly for young people searching for a way to belong, for the path they want to tread, and for their own unique sense of self as young men and women. The process of conversion to these communities needs to be understood outside of the all-too-common model of cult, which implies negative experience from which the convert must be rescued, "deprogrammed," or otherwise forced to separate themselves for "their own good." Rather, the engagement of individuals with these two African American Islamic communities has been, historically, a benign experience in which they can give active witness and testimony (and do) to their own identity and empowerment. The self-understanding of members, both as individuals and as groups, emphasizes different elements than the cult approach. Social scientific disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and, above all, folklore and folklife, have increasingly affirmed the importance of entering into the world view of the ethnographic subject, what scholars of "folk," "popular," or "vernacular religion" have called "believing the believer."[12] Folklorist and religious studies scholar, Leonard Norman Primiano, has defined "vernacular religion" as "religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it."[13] It is in the area of lived religion among ordinary believers and their creative negotiations in understanding and interpretation that the study of Islam has been relatively inattentive. Given the oral nature of teaching and learning in both these communities, any attempt to understand the emic reality of their experience becoming "Gods and Earths" or "Ansaaru Allah" (i.e., "Helpers of God"), "Nuwaubian Moors," and "Etherians" requires their interactive collaboration, what folklorists and anthropologists have called "dialogic ethnography." Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of verbal expression and performance, such as sociolinguistics, ethnography of communication, ethnopoetics, and performance theory, offer a nuanced and organic sense of the verbal creativity and negotiation of meaning within profoundly oral cultures such as those among African American Muslim communities.[14] Ethnographer Glenn Hinson says simply: "We must listen closely to our consultants' words, accepting their description at face value while engaging them as colleagues in

the search for realized meaning."[15] It is not a commitment to the "charisma" of the leader that motivates conversion and maintains membership, as sociological analysis might suggest.[16] Rather it is the teachings themselves that become the center of the self-actualization process in the individual and the cohesion in the organic processes of the living community, affirming black identity and ensuring the survival and liberation of the community from the endemic effects of racism in the United States. The testimony of members of these two groups, although profoundly different in the particulars of their convictions, seems united through a joint commitment to the teachings of their founders, whether living or dead, which constitute their own distinct forms of Black "science."

"Science" is another of those words that requires careful reexamination in order to reflect the members' unique understandings. In modern Western culture, to use the word "science" is to guarantee the truth and factuality of the statement or object. It invokes perhaps the most fundamental "belief" of postmodern people, that the empirical world view is the only "real" reality and that any other view (namely all other religious views) are not really real, they are only "beliefs." This definition of science is quite recent. "Science" in the traditional Islamic context is *ilm,* which includes far more than the contemporary understanding of the word "science" allows. *Ilm* means "knowledge" in its broadest sense, as well as "learning" and the disciplines that come from study. Traditional Islamic learning is divided into the "religious sciences" (*ulum diniyya*),[17] meaning all those disciplines generated in the study, preservation, and transmission of the Qur'an and the oral lore of the Prophet Muhammad's life, the Hadith, versus "Greek," "foreign," or "philosophical sciences," referring to those disciplines outside of the revealed knowledge of Islam that encompassed philosophy, what we now think of as "hard" science (mathematics, engineering, medicine, astronomy, optics, zoology, botany, and others), and areas we now bracket as "metaphysics" (numerology, astrology, alchemy, divination, and talismanry).[18] So *ilm* included the physical and metaphysical, rational and nonrational understanding, within an Islamic cosmos that operated by both empirical and nonempirical causality. This duality to the concept and practice of science was shared by the medieval West, although its division of disciplines was somewhat different. Thus, postmodern alternative "religions" such as the Five Percent Nation and the Ansaaru Allah or Nuwaubian Nation come to the word "science" as something to be counted on, not subject to the vagaries of belief, which must be taken only on "faith," but the demonstrable, that which can be experienced, known, and communicated, shown and proved. But, like medieval "science," it seems to this researcher that there is an elusive metaphysics to their "physics." It is difficult to elucidate fully, but there are manifold depths to that which can be shown and proven through teaching, and each teacher or member lives according to her or his own ineffable and inimitable experience of the truths she or he holds and communicates those truths in a personal and unique fashion. Both movements, lacking formal hierarchies or rigid structures or institutions, but maintaining informal periodic public gatherings, allow and encourage great individual freedom of expression. Along with their commitment to the core teachings of their respective founders, members also have a sense of

individual freedom to evaluate and embrace the truth according to their own consciences and abilities.

The history of these movements is linked by their origin in the civil rights era and their quest for social justice, as well as in their experience of interference, harassment, even persecution, by the law enforcement community, ranging from local and state police, to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the courts and judiciary, and, inevitably, the prison system. There is now plentiful evidence of the FBI's concerted decades-long efforts (put into effect under J. Edgar Hoover's leadership) to discredit, misrepresent, and if possible destroy African American sociopolitical movements and, most especially, African American Muslim communities and their leaders.[19] American media have presented African American Muslim communities, and specifically those to whom the label "sect" or "cult" has been misapplied, like the Nation of Islam, the Five Percent Nation, and the Ansaaru Allah or Nuwaubian Nation, as violent, racist, misogynistic, and gang-involved. After the jihadist attacks of September 11, 2001, all forms of Islam, but particularly the Nation of Islam, the Five Percent Nation of Gods and Earths, and the Nuwaubian Nation of Moors were violently characterized as hate groups.[20] Scholarly analysis of the history of Islam in the United States from the point of view of its status in law, its struggles with public recognition, and protection under the constitution reports that much significant progress in legislation regarding religious freedom in the last 40 years has been the result of Muslims, especially African American Muslims, in the workplace, in schools, and, most of all, in prison, having to bring suit to gain the same recognition of their identity and rights as Muslims as other communities (such as Christians and Jews).

It scarcely needs mention that African Americans experience differential justice in the United States, whether in their treatment by police in their communities, the frequency and duration of their jail and prison sentences, and the severity of their treatment while in prison. These facts are compounded by their identity as Muslims. Muslims, Islam as a "religion" and a "community," and all those things identified as "Islamic," such as foodways, dress, body hygiene, and adornment with symbols, have been inappropriately targeted by American media, law enforcement, and the prison system as "un-American," as "oppressive" to women, and as "fomenting insurgency" to be shunned in the prison population. Such an a priori judgment assumes that Muslims and things Islamic are not deserving of the same toleration and mutual respect as those of other more "mainstream" groups within American society and, specifically, within the microcosm of the prison population.[21] The irony is that these expectations usually turn out to be incorrect. The work of Robert Dannin on Muslims in prison shows to the contrary that Islam is an "island in a sea of ignorance," seeming to have a quieting and stabilizing effect, and also having the best record for prison outreach and community reentry and support after release to reduce recidivism.[22] The events of 9/11 have simply exacerbated and entrenched an already existing orientation, so that Muslims in the American diaspora now must constantly defend their status as law-abiding taxpaying citizens.

Kathleen Moore describes the historical process whereby "Muslim inmates adopted constitutional norms and language to change their environment

and, ultimately, how this contributed to an overall transformation of their self-identification."[23] She cites Stuart Scheingold, who notes that "a declaration of rights tends to politicize need by changing the way people think about their discontent."[24] The Nation of Gods and Earths and the Ansaaru Allah or Nuwaubian Nation members, following in the wake of Moorish Science Temple, Nation of Islam, Hanifi Muslims, and African American Sunnis, struggle with the constitutional mechanisms available to them in "the belly of the Beast" (prison) to meet the challenge of maintaining alternative Muslim self-identification.

A great deal of public representation of these two communities, whether popular press or scholarship, has proclaimed them to be irretrievably violent and racist. A great deal of this is based on projection rather than evidence. The intrinsic blackness of Five Percent discourse has been seen as "racism" and an inappropriate distortion of the universalism and lack of racial distinction in Islam as a world religion. The existence of youth cadres dedicated to martial arts, beginning with the Nation of Islam (called there the Fruit of Islam, or FOI, with a parallel women's corps) and continuing with the rise of these later black nations, is defensive in orientation. Certainly, these black nations have not experienced internecine violence. But their group behavior and platform is aggressive only when threatened or persecuted. Individual members have committed violent acts primarily against members of other similar groups, but those acts were not sponsored or condoned by their leadership. Condemning whole communities because of the violent acts of the few is similar to claiming that Christianity is a violent religion because of the violent acts of Christian paramilitarists. As far as violence and Islam in the United States is concerned, the evidence of Muslims in prison suggests that Islam makes Muslim prisoners more self-controlled, increases a positive sense of self, and engenders a greater commitment to social good.

The question of racism and American Islam is another issue. Sunni and Shīʿī Muslims in America have frequently disavowed these Black Muslim communities because of their black theology. The perception of racism and exclusivity by the Sunni mainstream in North America has operated negatively on the African American Muslim community as a whole (no matter what their doctrinal orientation), stimulating varying degrees of separatist response, in much the same manner as the exclusion of black Christians from white churches engendered the creation of Black churches. African American Muslims would never be excluded from Friday (*jumʿa*) noon collective prayer and are welcome to all social, cultural, and religious events of the *masjid,* or mosque. They do not, however, feel that they are treated as equals by the immigrant Muslim community. To African Americans the criteria of full acceptance and socio-political equality within the American *umma* have not yet been realized. In simple terms, does the immigrant/expatriate community here intermarry their sons and daughters with African American Muslims of the same doctrinal orientation? Do African American Muslims become the *imams* in immigrant *masjids* or Islamic centers? The answers to these more subtle forms of exclusivity is, sadly, no. There is a divisiveness in the Muslim community in North America that is created by the self-protective clinging to familiar ethnicities and continues to look toward the home

country or region or the Middle Eastern Islamic heartland for leadership. This divisiveness is also due to the American Muslim community's absorption over time of the racism and classism so endemic to American society as a whole. These complex factors have made the African American Muslim community question the wholehearted welcome they receive from the American Sunnis and in many cases they have sought to perform their own *hijra* ("emigration") away from the Sunni enclave in order to establish an American *umma* without these traces of racial, social, educational, and class exclusion.[25] The greater doctrinal and ritual separation of the American Sunni or Shī'ī community and new indigenous forms of African American Islamic community has made even mutual recognition as Muslims almost impossible. Only in the past decade, with greater recourse to the Arabic culture of the Qur'an and its contents has the NOI experienced a greater level of acceptance by the world Sunni community. Indeed, its current leader Louis Farrakhan has been received on Hajj and has visited that bastion of Sunni orthodoxy, the Azhar. The Five Percent Nation and the Ansaaru Allah are still far from such rapprochement. Their mutual insistence on crucial doctrinal and ritual differences has made recognition of these alternative African American Islamic communities by the Sunni mainstream still well beyond reach, and the corresponding rejection of Sunni rights to determine who "Muslim Children" are and what kind of Muslims they should be is firmly articulated by the NGE.

The century long history of debate, struggle, rejection, rapprochement, and separatism that marks all these new or alternative communities in relation to the world Muslim *umma* (whether Sunni, Shī'ī, or Sufi) hinges on issues that are central to the study and understanding of Islam as a whole. Are these groups part of Islam, or not? Who can make this determination, and by what criteria of inclusion or exclusion? As a scholar of Islam, I have struggled in my teaching, research, and writing with Islam's diverse historical manifestations and with the emically determined parameters of Islam. Is Islam (or any community) merely the boundary of the majority, or do minority communities also have a share in the process of boundary construction? The dominant methods in the study of Islam in the West have been philological/text critical and historical, frequently discounting the spirituality of Muslim folk and overvaluing the importance of Islamic texts and formal institutions in the formation of religion. This in some sense is a response to the long-standing emic Muslim traditional emphasis on textual and institutional Islam, which over time has had a strong normatizing effect on the perspective toward the *umma,* and a centrist marginalization of lived religion and minority forms of Islam. Even when more recent scholarship, such as Jacques Waardenburg's essay classifying "popular" religion in Islam in *Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for Religious Studies,* opens the consideration of lived religion in Islam while unfortunately preserving the two-tiered model of elite and folk, normative and popular, that reaffirms the perspective that there is a hierarchical relationship in Islamic phenomena.[26] The deficits of such a normatizing and centrist view are obvious when attempting to evaluate the Islamic-ness of African American alternative communities. As a scholar of medieval sectarianism, premodern science, and religious healing systems in Islam,[27] it has always been clear to me that Islam has the capacity to look forward in order

to create, adapt, and expand its parameters, as well as preserve, maintain, and entrench them. Examples of these innovative developments in Islam range from Islamic mystical and sectarian models of cyclical time and ongoing or continuous prophecy (Shīʿī and Ahmadiyya); human manifestation or reflection (*buruz* or *zill*) of the divine image and/or qualities of divinely gifted prophets (Sufis, Shīʿī, and Ahmadiyya); internal revivalism as messianic, jihadist, and apocalyptic expectation (Jesus as the Sunni Mahdi, the Shīʿī Imam Mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad ibn Abdallah, and the nineteenth-century Sudanese Mahdiyya, West African Sufi jihadism of Uthman dan Fodio and the Sokoto caliphate); sectarian branchings off of Islam that created new religions and communities independent from Islam (the Druze, Baha'i, and the Ahmadiyya);[28] as well as new communities drawing on traditional immigrant patterns of Islam but not found elsewhere in the larger Muslim world (such as the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a new American Sufi order, who claim spiritual *nass* or teaching lineage from the line of Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani; and Rashad Khalifa's United Submitters International in Arizona, who employ a predictive and numerological *tafsir/ta'wil* or esoteric interpretation of the Qur'an, paralleling medieval Islamic mystical numerology and apocalypticism).[29] The African American Islamic communities that are the focus of these articles are only two more examples of Islam's ability to manifest new forms of itself, weaving elements of tradition into new patterns.

"BUILDING" THE FIVE PERCENT NATION OF GODS AND EARTHS

The self-identification of the Five Percent Nation derives from the teachings of their founder, Clarence Jowars Smith (1928–1969, born in Danville, Virginia), a Nation of Islam student minister (known as Clarence 13X) at Temple No. 7 in Harlem, who broke away to become "Father" to the Five Percent Nation in 1964. His name for this new Nation comes from earlier NOI Lessons and his own exegetical thrust regarding the 5 percent righteous, who have the capacity to manifest the true divine nature of the Blackman. The rest of humanity is composed of the benighted 85 percent who are the "mentally deaf, dumb, and blind," and the remaining 10 percent who are "devils" who have real knowledge but choose to keep the rest in ignorance whether they are clergy, educators, members of the government, judiciary, or law enforcement, i.e., the powers that be.[30] Five Percenters refer to the majority Muslim community as part of that 10 percent, misguided "Soon to be Muslims," which is a pun they created for the term Sunni (pronounced by them, "SOONEY") Muslims.[31]

African American membership in the Five Percent Nation, like the Nation of Islam, is not understood as a change of condition, or "conversion" to new "religion," but rather a return to their natural state.

> People consider us a religion. This does not have anything to do with religion. This has nothing to do with something which was started up in the past. This has no said birth record. That blackness that was there at the beginning that created all things in the universe was that of Islam. That's what we're dealing with. When you're saying Islam you're

> saying I-Self-Lord-Am-Master, or an Independent Source of Life and Matter. For that's showing and proving the ability to create.[32]

Felicia Miyakawa says of Nation of Islam teaching that "the natural state of the Original Man, that is, the black man" is "the 'natural' way of life—Islam—lost to them through the centuries. Adherence to Islam is thus not a conversion for the black man, but a return to his original self."[33] The study of African Muslims in early America and the "residual memory" of Islam as a religion of the African ancestors within the African American community into the mid-twentieth century enriches consideration of the rise of the alternative African American Islamic communities and their contention of Islam as their "natural" religion.[34]

In this early phase of the community, "Father" (known also by the Five Percent community as simply "ALLAH") along with an early companion, called Justice, elaborated the new exegetical system of symbolic meaning of letters and numbers, called the Supreme Alphabet and Supreme Mathematics.[35] These systems resonate strongly with medieval Islamic number-letter mysticism, known as *jafr, simiya',* and *'ilm al-huruf,* and parallel systems, which developed somewhat later historically in Jewish mystical exegesis, called *gematriya* and *notarikon.*[36] The new teaching that became the core of Five Percent life and thought revolved around the seventh of nine principles, originally under the heading, "What We Teach," by the NOI's newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks:* The Blackman is God and his proper name is Allah.[37] The English transliteration of the Arabic word for God in the Qur'an is *Allah*, or A-L-L-A-H, and is manipulated in Elijah Muhammad's exegesis: "The Holy Qur'an teaches us that the God of Islam is called Allah, which is His most proper Name, because Allah covers it all. As far as the Name goes, I am Allah and you are Allah … We are *all Al*lah."[38] One of the most important Five Percent exegetical methods is "breaking down" words, or elaborating the meaning of a teaching term by an associated acronym. For example, the proper noun "Allah" is understood as the acronym "Arm Leg Leg Arm Head"—which generates the Five Percent version of Leonardo Da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* verbally and visually. In their 1990 album, *One for All,* in the rap "Dance to My Ministry," Brand Nubian offers their take on the name of God, ALLAH, showing Five Percent understanding of the 120 Lessons and the Supreme Alphabet, in order to educate others to true self-awareness, or "each one, teach one":

> Hey, yo, come! It's in my laboratory. I'm gonna take you on a tour. An Ankh is the key, and the key is Knowledge which unlocks my lab's door. Careful as you enter. Each generation finds a center. Lord Jamal's the inventor. Production of black packs put onto a black wax. I got a lot to say, so just stack. To the right is where my fuel [is], the Qur'an and 120 Lessons.… Alpha and Omega, the *A*rma *L*egga *L*egga *A*rma *H*ead [ALLAH]. And like jam, these facts will spread over the thoughts of the white bread.[39]

James Spady and Joseph Eure report that rapper Prince Akeem amplifies the literal and common sense nature of this trope of ALLAH: "Why in the hell do they call this an Arm, a Leg, a Leg, an Arm, and a Head? I ask them that [i.e., the 85 percent who still follow the mystery god]. Extend your right or your left, either way you look

at it, you spell A-L-L-A-H. The knowledge is clearly cut, but we don't want to believe it."[40]

The letters of the English alphabet are multivalent with a diverse system of associated acronyms. Yusuf Nuruddin's groundbreaking scholarship on the Five Percent Nation includes interviews with two Five Percent members, Sincere Allah and King Allah, who elaborate several examples of letters associated with key words that themselves are acronyms.

The letter "F," for example, is strongly associated with the word, "Father," one of the founder's titles: "If you 'break-down' 'Father' you get Fat-her … I could fat a man and I could fat a woman. When I say I could fat a man, that means I can give him proper knowledge of self; that means I'm fattening him, you know, to show and prove that he's the Almighty True and Living God."[41] The letter "I" stands, of course, for "Islam," the ninth letter or "Born-degree," in which a new member is "born into Islam" by "breaking down" or recognizing the acronymic truth that "I-Self-Lord-Am-Master" or "ISLAM." "The Sacredness of Our Culture and that Divine Culture is Islam."[42] A third letter related to black godhood is the letter "K," which can "break down" to "King" or "Kingdom." "For surely I'll be the King of my Kingdom. The Planet earth, in all reality, is my Kingdom but I gave it to the devil for six thousand years. The way you break down 'King' is 'King I Now God' which means that 'I am the King who now acknowledges myself as being God.'"[43]

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A "GOD"

The life path of the Gods of the Five Percent Nation, according to their self-understanding, is not in the hands of a deity or an impersonal fate. Five Percenters live outside of the motivations of heaven or hell, without any concepts of original creation or ultimate destruction or last judgment, but they are grounded in a sense of moral action and its consequences that harkens to an almost Buddhist sense of *karma,* in that human destiny and the unfolding of one's true self and potential is ultimately in one's own hands. As consultant King Victory (K.V.) put it, having been asked if there is a Judgment or Last Day in Five Percent teaching: "Judgment is every day."[44] A "god-ly" life would manifest what Five Percent teaching calls "build powers," or positive forms of self-actualizing of potential that leads to true self-knowledge, i.e., knowledge of your own divine nature, what Five Percent Nation members have described as "mining [one's] own hidden talents," "achieving mastery of [one's] own inner powers," "creating [one's] own destiny:" "A God is one who has applied this self-transformative knowledge,… one who can 'show and prove' that he is God."[45] The opposite to build powers also exists, of course. "Destroy-powers" refer to those self-defeating characteristics, circumstances, or outside persons or influences that prevent people from actualizing their potential, from exercising their creative abilities, or ultimately from realizing their true self. Human potential, in Five Percent terms, exists in this dynamic moral tension of "build-destroy."

In fall 2005, over the course of the month of biweekly interviews I conducted with local members of the Five Percent Nation at the University of South Florida in

Tampa, Florida, I gathered comments that help to further define Five Percent understanding of "God/ALLAH" and the teaching methods that they used in their own lives to create meaning. In this ethnographic context, they tried to share with me, making me a small part of their "each one, teach one" cycle of learning. The concept of "God"/ALLAH was my central focus in these talks, and their responses included everything from the nature of individual identity, to the role of gender in godhood, to the responsibility of being a god within the family, the community, and the Nation (i.e., Five Percent Nation). Divine Justice (D.J.), the local leader of a small group of Five Percenters, a recent graduate of the University of South Florida, said that "being a God" was also "being part of the Nation," it could not be lived in isolation outside of the community. D.J. went on to explain that the original split of the Five Percent Nation off of the Nation of Islam was precisely over the question of "God/ALLAH." "During the 1960s, the NOI said that the original Blackman was God, but they were still praying to Allah (outside us) [i.e., the mystery god]."

According to D.J., since NOI teachings rejected the mystery god, this inconsistency sparked questions in the Father and caused him to create and inspire a whole new movement, the Five Percent Nation. My consultants seem to stress the simplicity, common sense, and rational nature of their teachings and the exegetical methods they use to assimilate and disseminate them. D.J. referred to the dictionary to begin to define what "God" means. Many of the classic deistic names of attribution such as "creator," "master of universe," "king or ruler," "giver of life and death" are, in his understanding, aspects of true human potential. We "create" thoughts, inventions, children. We are "masters" of our own personal universes; we have "dominion" in our own homes. We give life procreatively, but also give it symbolically by awakening others or facilitating their awakening. We give death by eliminating ("killing") false consciousness, poverty, and hatred. D.J. also offered dictionary definitions of relevant adjectives, "divine," and its related noun, "divinity," being "like, of, or from God." D.J. says "I am '*of* God.' 'Of' being 'of the same tree,'" the same lineage or genus, organically the same. He asks: "As a human, why look elsewhere when all the answers are within your Self?" He elaborated that "divinity is our relationship to the universe."

"God" is associated scripturally in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam with a series of attributes that Five Percent teaching identifies with the truest and most elevated human potential. In this sense, it seems clear, that "God" for Five Percenters does not claim any metaphysical status for humanity, there is no magic or mystery involved. So, it is not *shirk,* or heretical Islam, in the conventional Islamic sense. Perhaps, it comes closer to saying it is *kufr,* or total denial of God, since Five Percent teachings deny the reality of metaphysical, mystical, supernatural, or transcendent deity, a more radical separation from the monotheistic fold than just claiming human divinity. The Five Percent universe is empirical, grounded in the physical and in immediate human experience. "Thought is chemical, physical. Knowledge of the brain and knowledge of the universe is *shown and proven.* It can be manifested through the five senses. It is accountable, not to be taken on faith, but witnessed/experienced. It is applicable to life in the day to day."[46]

I was assured again and again that Five Percenters do not talk about "beliefs," nor is the polite generic term for them "believers." To them, "belief" is about "faith," that is, those things that are beyond proof and, therefore, not real. However, Five Percent exegetical methods are profoundly esoteric, metaphoric, and even occult. The use of numbers and spoken language and its visual components, letters, are part of the public discourse of this community and the primary ways in which it creates meaning, called in the teachings of its founder, the Supreme Alphabet and Supreme Mathematics. The core discipline of the 120 Lessons is available to the world and yet also kept hidden from it, since it is reserved for initiate access only through direct interactions between the God and the God-in-training down the "conscious line" or teaching lineage from master to disciple within the community. After considerable wrangling with my interviewees over a desire to get direct access to an original and authoritative text of the 120 Lessons, which I had assumed would be an important first step for an in-depth analysis of the community's core teachings, I began to realize that I would have to learn those teachings through interpersonal communication. Without the training represented by the "conscious line" and contextual explication from the insider's perspective of experiential "overstanding," the mere text of the 120 Lessons, according to my consultants, would be not only meaningless, but potentially "dangerous," that is, liable to serious distortion and misunderstanding.

My other Five Percent consultant, K.V., had significant remarks to make about the nature of the "divine" and the "sacred": " 'Divine' is something sacred, like my way of life. Being a Five Percenter is divine.… 'Sacred,' well, I just say it means a lot to me. It's 'sacred' to me, so you know, it means *everything* to me. My culture, you know? The teachings [of] Allah, the Father [Clarence Smith], *not* what the NOI taught, or *not* what Elijah Muhammad taught.…"[47] One of the distinguishing marks of African American Muslim sectarian communities is their inclusive exegetical approach to sacred texts. The Five Percent Nation has its own view of and approach to the scriptural legacies of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in relation to their own teachings of the 120 Lessons. Victory stated the case as follows: "Those Lessons are 'sacred' to us, they are 'divine.' We're the only ones who put those Lessons into practice [i.e., the NOI does not teach them, but keeps them secret]. *Not* the Koran, *not* the Bible. Those aren't sacred to us. Those are just books—and *they're* almost expired." Victory goes on to explain the proactive approach of the Five Percenter to any outside scriptural authority, i.e., that the ultimate interpretive authority is one's own informed exegesis. "We write our own history. We write our own Koran and Bible. So when we write history. We write according to the path we've 'built,' the way we live. We don't just follow the Koran and Bible; we take the best part of it.…" Divine Justice expanded on the "jewels" to be mined within scriptures and other sacred texts: "The Qur'an and the Bible, even texts from Judaism … They all have *jewels.* And they all have things in them that are good common sense, are grounded in good value … But not *all* of it. You know, we read all of those texts (which most of us do) … and like he said, we take the best part out of it."[48] This exegetical freedom is the hallmark of membership in the community.

THE NGE COMMUNITY: BUILDING THE FAMILY OF SUNS, EARTHS, AND STARS

The community is connected via online and print media in a North American network of city and rally locations, each having a coded name using aspects of the Supreme Alphabet and common speech.[49] New York City and its environs is the point of origin and the heart of the community: Harlem is "Mecca," the "Root of Civilization"; Brooklyn is "Medina"; and the Bronx is "Pelan." Each urban center and neighborhood where members live and gather has its own name: "*L*ove *A*llah" for LA (Los Angeles, California; "New Heaven" for New Haven, Connecticut; "Allah's Garden" for *A*tlanta, *G*eorgia; "*S*elf *B*orn" for *S*outh *B*end, Indiana; "Rich Mind" for Richmond, Virginia; and "*T*rue *C*ipher" for *T*oronto, *C*anada, or *T*oronto, *O*ntario (O = cipher). Members have the opportunity to meet through NGE sponsored gatherings, rallies and parliaments, throughout the country, as well as through correspondence contacts established through the community newspapers that often act as a Five Percent town meeting, voicing issues of self, community events, and items of recent interest to the Nation.[50]

> We are a beautiful God Centered people whose path to God is Cultural rather than religious. The way we give honor to I God is so unique that others don't have the right words to define us, but that is no longer a problem. The solution is in our continuing to teach our truth to the Human families of the planet earth. This way all will know from our point of view who we are and what to call us. This year [2005] we have made it clear that we will not be called a religion, gang, group, organization of anything except what we say we are. No internet idiots, no JDL, DOC, gang or government websites will be allowed to defame this Nation unchallenged. We have our own Media vehicles, the *Five Percenter* and the *Son of Man* to adequately define us.[51]

The members of this new Nation of the Five Percent righteous are self-named "Gods," or men, and "Earths," or women. Every male "God's" duty and chief context of learning is the dissemination of their core principles, through "showing and proving" his knowledge on the street, at Allah Schools, and in his public life. Each God's directive is "each one, teach one." Every female "Earth's" power comes directly from her African heritage (and in this regard she can be called "Queen"), carrying and preserving authentic culture, teaching the next generation, and being literally the "ground" of the black family, the home, and the community. Each Earth's directive is to be fertile and give life. Allah B, who "got Knowledge-Of-Self (K.O.S.)" [became Five Percenter] in 1964, reported recently that the Father (Clarence Jowars Smith) said at "the Sermon on The Mountain" that "in making babies, we'll eventually take over the world."[52]

Thus, the highest value within the community, or "building" the nation, is manifested at the personal level by each individual God's commitment to passing on his own "seed" by building his own family, with his own Earth. As Gods, said D.J., "we are the creator and giver of life and death." "Children, community, thoughts"—all are creations, all are manifestations of being a "God," being "divine." In his plus degree (personal interpretation of teaching), D.J. explained that your

divine "essence" is, in this sense, "your seed, your children." The "God" is creator not in the religious or metaphysical sense of monotheistic genesis, but rather in the sense of biological creation, and creation of "self" through teaching one's children proper "knowledge of self."

Conversely, the "Earth" gives life to all things, the relationship, the child, the family, the community. She cultivates and nourishes at many levels, reflecting the light of the teachings and turning that light into life (exactly as every plant turns the light of the sun into nourishment and new life and growth). The cosmology of the NGE family is the "Sun," shedding light on the Earth, surrounded by his "Stars" or "Planets," the way the planets rotate around the physical sun.

> There exists a homeostasis between the Sun and the Earth, a natural systematic relationship governed by the laws of mathematics. The Sun can exist without the Earth, however, she complements his greatness and radiance by taking that light and turning it into life.… He provides her with that environment that is conducive to the growth and development of life on her [planet] as she submits herself to him and endlessly revolves around him, bearing witness that he is the foundation of her existence.[53]

The bond between a God and Earth is also cosmic, each orbiting in their natural sphere, but creating a "civilized" space for each other to share. The national newspaper of the NGE, *The Five Percenter,* features frequent letters, poems, and other communications from the membership that qualify as "plus degrees," not core teachings, but rather the reflections and understanding of individuals in the Nation. The following poem is an individual God's love song, a testament to his bond with his Earth, quoted from the December 2005 issue:

> I Love Myself Some You!
> Black Queen, It seems as though for sho
> You acknowledge the Supreme Being, the all eye seeing
> It's obvious that you are in agreement with Law & Order.
> Planted my seeds in you fertile soil.
> You have willfully toiled to bring forth Suns & Daughters
> We met trillion of years ago along the "Nile Valley"
> We finally conversant a few years ago at the rally
> Slurs of verbs and you were gravitated by the Magnetic attraction of Truth
> We bonded like Boaz and Ruth
> Truth remains, no mind games, simple and plain.…[54]

The poet, although speaking for himself, has at the same time encapsulated several important elements of Five Percent heterosexual bonding, first that transmitting one's "seeds" is important and in an almost biblical or qur'anic sense should not be wasted, but rather "planted" and be fruitful. NGE relationships and familial bonds are personal commitments that include children that must be supported, educated, and raised in the Nation, but "marriage under government" was during the early community an ambivalent issue and is still under debate within the Nation.[55]

Members tend to avoid legal ties and entanglements with the State and all its "devilishments," as D.J. terms those things that can bring a person down, the evils and snares of living in North America. Part of the purpose of such gatherings is to introduce potential partners to each other in a teaching-oriented environment, so like-minded and committed partners can find each other. The poem continues to extol the need to establish a substantive relationship and avoid the dating and mating games typical of youth in American society, which engage the players in emotionally and physically at-risk behaviors. He concludes with a Five Percenter ode to the NGE family, a "village" in its own right, which sends out civilizing waves that "build" the Nation (and the world).

> Thoughts compiled I envision our own village,
> Civilized living love,
> Respect and giving,
> Lets keep building,
> I Love Myself Some You.[56]

The Nation began under the Father's leadership as a youth outreach effort to get young people out of the gangs, to give them a positive purposeful sense of self, and to provide them with a way to become functional, contributing members of their own communities. This "teenage" profile of the early movement, while often still true of the initial affiliation process, reflected in Nuruddin's description of the group in 1994 as "A Teenage Nation of Gods and Earths," is now no longer true. The NGE today is filled with people ranging in age from young adulthood to midlife, since those members from the early days of the community (the mid-1960s) would be in their fifties now. The strongest social commitment, however, remains to the cultivation of the young. To give youth a culture and a community that will support them in the process of "building" their knowledge of self is the first priority, creating healthy young minds and bodies that can withstand the hostile environment they have to deal with in contemporary American society. Raising sons and daughters to know their true nature, i.e., that they are all gods, and giving them the interpretive tools (lessons, supreme alphabet, and supreme mathematics) as and when they are able to comprehend—these goals are served through a variety of teaching and learning contexts, "building" first at home with their mothers (as Earths they have responsibility to raise "civilized" self-aware "seed"), and later, in the streets, in Allah's "schools" established in various urban centers throughout the United States,[57] and in their families and with other adult members of the Nation at regional rallies and parliaments (usually held in public facilities like public schools, community centers, and public parks). The national newspaper, *The Five Percenter,* gives regular photographic evidence of children's gatherings and the socialization of young people, which is the first task of Allah's Schools wherever they are. Particular mention is given to the "Root," Allah School in Mecca (Harlem), which was created by the founder with assistance from the New York City mayor's office.

Several efforts over recent years have been made by various public agencies of New York City and the Harlem Commonwealth Council to rezone, foreclose, or otherwise shut down Allah School in Mecca, and reassume ownership of the half-block of property on Adam Clayton Powell Blvd. (7th Avenue between 126th and 127th Street). Presumably the city and commonwealth believe the property could be "developed" to further advantage if it were sold. *The Five Percenter*[58] has recently documented the history of their resistance to this process and, along with the national Five Percent Web site, has been campaigning for Five Percent community support, sending out a continuous "S.O.S.," or "Save Our School," and fostering a national effort to collect sufficient funds to rebuild Allah School in Mecca from a modest and somewhat down-at-heel single story storefront building to a seven story youth center (which would be safe from city attempts at closure). Allah Schools, and especially the "Root," Allah School in Mecca, are crucial to the history, ongoing identity, and generational continuity of the community. Through gatherings, Five Percent men and women, children and elders, can participate freely in "building" the Nation, "showing and proving" their own experience, and learning from one another the "lessons" that constitute their personal and collective guide, and transmitting their unique African American culture through narrative, through the use of symbols, and especially through music.

TEACHING VENUES OF THE FIVE PERCENT NATION: ISLAMIC RAP AND GOD HOP

The Five Percent Nation does not teach primarily through written venues, although it has had several periodicals that have circulated within the community. The Five Percent Nation primarily teaches orally, as "God-talk," with the male duty identified as teaching and "building" by expounding and living the "word," and female duty as nurturing and "building" the family and society, although both have complementary duties of education toward the young. "Gods" build through a diversity of live teaching contexts, on the street, and in "schools," which are what they call their centers found in urban neighborhoods close to where members live and work. A lesser path of teaching, although perhaps more universally accessible and of larger public influence is that of rap music and video, usually known in this specialized sense as "message rap," "Nation conscious" rap, and "Islamic rap,"[59] and within the larger culture of hip hop, and by Five Percent rappers, as "God Hop."[60] The Gods (and Earths) of the Five Percent Nation, whose rap is a teaching vehicle, offer to youth what the Islamic tradition as a whole has always offered, a comprehensive way of life encompassing a viable response to worldly needs, social justice platforms, the sanctity of the family and community, as well as identity formation through lofty personal goals and aspirations. I consider here three well-known Five Percent male rap groups and discuss Five Percent women rappers afterward. Poor Righteous Teachers, Brand Nubian, and Wu Tang Clan discuss the concepts of God or ALLAH, drawing on the legacy of Moorish Science Temple and Nation of Islam terminology as it is embodied in Five Percent teachings.

Poor Righteous Teachers (P.R.T.), one of the classic Old School message rap groups, produced a number of albums in the 1990s, which were almost exclusively dedicated to ideological teaching. Their very name is a synonym for the Five Percent Nation. Initially, the Five Percent distinguished themselves from the Nation of Islam as a community that had kept its message pure and occupied the moral high ground of simplicity, a kind of voluntary poverty, or "strictly ghetto." P.R.T. espoused living life genuinely as the Five Percent righteous, manifesting your true divine nature, and using the vehicle of rap to accelerate the Five Percent goal of "each one, teach one." In their 1990 album, *Holy Intellect,* P.R.T. offers the classic definition of black divinity, in the rap "Speaking Upon a Blackman": "Many felt the coming of the law and the Lord came from Self.… Black people stop and look at where you're at.… We must come together as a people. Teach each as an equal about the right way to go. Yo, take off your cross, black, because it's crossin' up your mental … I'm kickin' it to ya straight from the Divine land. Speakin' upon a god, I must be speakin' upon a Blackman."

In 1991, P.R.T. came out with the album, *Pure Poverty,* and the rap "Each One Teach One"[61] addressing the white god of mainstream American Christianity, asking: "Who's that mystery god? Does he exist? You show no proof.… You tell them, God is that of a spook, symbolic to that of Casper [the Ghost, i.e., similar to the Holy Ghost].… [This] just ain't the fact. Why, God is true and livin'. Listen, Jesus Christ was Black!" Jesus is important to a number of Muslim rappers, as a figure of triumphant suffering. In Five Percent terms, the majority of people of color worldwide are outwardly oppressed and inwardly impoverished of their true identity as gods. Jacket acknowledgements are made by P.R.T. members Wise Intelligent, who offers "Peace to that 85% of the population who are subject to poverty, trials, and tribulations enforced by the devil in hell, who are slaves from mental death and are ignorant of the facts of life," and Culture Freedom, "All those who dis the Gods and Earths are dissing the future of Black People as a whole. (But hey, Peace to you all anyway)."

Brand Nubian, another Five Percent group, in their 1990 album, *One for All,* elaborate a NOI wordplay in "Wake Up, Sunshine" using "dog" which spelled backwards is "god," similar to the verbal practice of adopting and elevating a denigrating term, like "Nigga," in everyday speech. "As I proceed to civilize the uncivilized, word and wisdom to the groove [the record] from the wise [the Five Percent]. I guess I'd like to verbalize for the fact I'm moving blackwards, this Asiatic Blackman [Moorish Science Temple term] is a 'dog' spelled backwards. The Maker, the Owner, the Cream of the Planet Earth, Father of Civilization, God of the Universe." My local Five Percent consultants confirm that these qualities (Maker, Owner, Cream, Father, Civilizer, Universe) are all manifestations of godhood. Miyakawa's masterly analysis makes the "Science of Supreme Mathematics" embedded in the refrain of "Wake Up" clear with a chart that visually decodes the words that stand for numbers in this associative system.

And put our *wisdom* before us (murderer) [wisdom = 2]
That makes it *wisdom knowledge* (murderer) [wisdom = 2, knowledge = 1]

So we need *knowledge wisdom* to bring forth [knowledge = 1, wisdom = 2]
the *understanding* (murderer) [understanding = 3]
Culture freedom (murderer) [culture or freedom = 4]
Power refinement (murderer) [power or refinement = 5]
Equality god build destroy born's our *cipher* [equality = 6, god = 7, build or destroy = 8, born = 9, cipher = 0]

Thus, at the end of verse 1 of "Wake Up" the refrain represents all the verbal markers for the numbers 1–10, ending with the number 10 with the whispered counterrefrain ("murderer") which represents both self [1]-destruction[0] as well as the 10 percent who destroy by deception and by keeping the truth from the people.

The function of the rapper as God or ALLAH is to call to those as yet unawakened to their true divine nature, and to send the coded message confirming that truth to those already in the know. From Wu-Tang's 1997 album, *Wu-Tang Forever,* includes the rap, "Wu-Revolution": "We are original man, the Asiatic black man, the maker, the author, the cream of the planet earth. Wanna be free, yeah. Father of civilization and daughter of the universe. Wanna be free, oh yeah … Take the devil off your plane. Take him off your mental mentality. Take him off your brain.… Who is all wise and know who the true and living god is, And teach that the true and living god *is,* Supreme being black man from Asian, Otherwise known as civilized people, Also Muslims, and Muslim sons."

Ghostface Killah, a solo artist from Wu-Tang, in the rap "Black Jesus," from his 1996 album *Ironman,* explains the Five Percent's unique concept of the god within: "Some people don't have no directions, God, because they don't know the science of theyself. See, the science of life is the science of You [in supreme alphabet, the letter "U"], all the elements that it took to create You. 'Cause everything in the universe [also letter "U"], God, that created the universe is within you." From that truth, the authority of every informed, self-aware individual to teach others about his or her inherent divinity is manifest.

From the period of the late 1980s through the 1990s, that interrelationship between Nation teachings (whether NOI or Five Percent) and the subgenre of "message" rap cannot be overstated. The RZA, of Wu-Tang, in his recent popular text, *The Wu-Tang Manual,* describes his initial exposure to Five Percent teachings and learning how to rap, emphasizing the intimate linkage between the Five Percent and hip hop. "The first thing you have to do is to memorize 120 questions and answers.… You can get tested on these questions and answers at any given moment by any person.… A cipher [Arabic *sifr,* or "naught" or "zero," whose orthography is a circle, meaning the totality of the universe] was held by the brothers standing in a circle testing you—you had to show and prove. The word 'cipher' in hip-hop comes from that. So does slang like 'droppin science,' 'break it down,' and even the expression 'word.' That's what you say when someone expresses a deep truth: Word.… About 80% of hip-hop comes from the Five Percent … in a lot of ways, hip hop *is* the Five Percent."[62]

Traditionally, it is the duty of the Gods to teach and the Earths to nurture in the Five Percent social scheme. But Earths also teach in the public culture of God Hop and Nation rap. The influence of Islamic teachings, whether Five Percent Nation, Nation of Islam, Sunni Islam, or some combination of these, can be found in the rap voices of women from the 1980s into the twenty-first century. Some of them reflect an emphasis on nurture, such as the Black Muslim antiswine discourse on health and foodways, as other male rappers have done, like KRS-One of Boogie Down Productions, in "Beef" (*Edutainment,* 1990); Brand Nubian's classic rap video "Wake Up, Sunshine" (*One for All,* 1990), shown on BET Network's *Rap School* program, visualizes White America as an enormous white porker divided into portions on a platter for Black consumption and contamination; and Gravediggaz' "three little pigs" swine story in "Fairytalez" (*The Pick, the Sickle and the Shovel,* 1997); and Ludacris raps "Oink, Oink, PIG! PIG! Do away with the POORRK-uh/Only silverwuurrr [silverware] I need's a steak knife and FOORRK-uh!" (*Word of Mouf,* 2001).[63] The issues of authentic self, being true to the teachings, surviving in a Afro-hostile environment, and trying to keep family and community not just alive but intact are themes that Nation conscious hip hop women have addressed with zeal and style. Black British rapper, Money Love's passionate track, "Swiney, swiney" in her 1990 album, *Down to Earth,* presents the food prescriptions of Elijah Muhammad's two-volume holistic health manual, *How to Eat to Live.* Erykah Badu's song of praise to the NGE, "On and On," from her 1997 album, *Baduizm,* comments on Black Nation foodways. She raps to the 360 degrees of Five Percent teachings and says that White American diet starves Black people of true nourishment, true self, and true culture: "Don't feed me yours Cause you food not endure." Health conscious as well as Nation conscious women teach, through rap, that the nutricidal[64] effects of the food provided and promoted to the Black community are destructive to both mind (i.e., awareness of Self) and to body (self and communal preservation).

But in a much larger sense, the Earths or Queens, who rap for themselves and the needs of Nation conscious women in spite of a predominantly male discourse and industry include both soloists, like Queen Latifah, Nefertiti, Monie Love, Sister Souljah, Bahamadia, MC Lyte, and Erykah Badu, and members of mixed groups, like Lauryn Hill (of Fugees, now recording solo) and Ladybug/Mecca (of Digable Planets). The staunch "raptivist," Sister Souljah, in her classic message-laden 1991 rap video, *The Final Solution: Slavery's Back in Effect,* and 1992 rap album, *360 Degrees of Power,* is the quintessential "word warrior," who takes the battle to the streets.[65]

> You thought I was a noun, but no way I'm a verb
> An action word
> A secret for centuries but now the cat's out of the bag
> Strong Black woman you should be glad
> You have 360 degrees of power girl, you bad!
> No adjective can describe my objective
> Original cradle rocker, positive conquers the negative

Sister Souljah rattles down the male ego while rejecting the dominant sexual themes of much of popular hip hop culture and the passive role often assumed for women in it.

> Don't mean to intimidate, relax while I insulate
> Your children and your entire Nation
> No buck whilin', no misbehavin'
> Powerful but won't misuse it, take advantage or abuse it
> Keep in mind before you go, it's what you need, if you're
> Gonna grow.[66]

Strong women of the Hip Hop Nation keep the men from complacency and from taking them for granted. Clearly, what might devolve into the battle of the sexes is enlarged to include the wider struggle for self and nation.

Above and beyond the particulars of individual rappers and groups, and the Nation teachings they convey, is the oral performative reality of rap itself. H. Samy Alim, sociolinguist and Five Percent Hip Hop analyst, provides some of the most acute conceptual frames within which to understand this extraordinarily rich communicative medium. Brand Nubian, in their 1992 album, *In God We Trust,* begin the first track with the opening phrase of the Muslim call to prayer, the *adhan,* which repeats over and over the Arabic phrase, *Allahu akbar* ("God is most great") into fade-out and the beginning of the lyrics. It brings into sharp focus the ritual aspect of God Hop in the oral performance of the rhythmic, rhymed prose of message rap and the oral performance (in prayer or *salat,* or formal recitation or *tajwid,* or rhythmic chanting or *dhikr*) of the rhythmic rhymed prose (*saj'*) of the oral message of the Qur'an.[67]

> Through dozens of ethnographic interviews with hip hop artists in the United States, it became clear to me that Muslim hip hop artists were making new connections between hip hop lyrical production and the method and means by which Allah revealed the Qur'an to the Prophet.… Rapper Mos Def, who is a member of the Sunni Muslim community, discussed the reasons why he believes hip hop lyrics can be an effective medium in educational practice.… "You learn *Al-Fatiha* [the opening chapter of the Qur'an]. And you learn it and recite it. And you learn it and you recite it. Then one day you're reciting it, and you start to understand !… Hip Hop has the ability to do that—on a poetic level."[68]

In setting the context of rap production within the framework of the first Muslim community and each successive generation who preserves the message orally through memorization and rhythmic and melodic recitation, Alim and the rappers themselves see their discourse as establishing a new *umma,* a new Nation, with all the resonance of struggle for the "faith" (*jihad*) that that implies.[69] He views God Hop artists as "verbal *mujahidin*" and their verbal experiences represent a "discursive struggle against oppression" expressed not through classical Islamic religious language, but through the language of the streets, a "Black Language" he sees as a powerful "weapon of mass culture."[70]

WITNESSING (SHAHADA) BEING GODS IN PRISON: OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE, THE STRUGGLE OF JIHAD

One of the most startling aspects of the *jihad bil-lisan,*[71] or "verbal *jihad,*" of Gods and Earths of the Five Percent Nation is the role played by their public witness to being God or Allah. Both NOI and the Five Percent Nation have had significant success in attracting African American prisoners and giving them a new identity and a rehabilitative sense of personal and social purpose. But the Five Percent Nation stands out in this regard for the persecution and double loss of freedom they frequently experience when they declare their "godhood" in prison. It is reminiscent of the public furor and persecution of medieval Sufi and Shīʿī mystics, who were imprisoned, exiled, and even put to death for making statements of human divinity in public, a genre that came to be known as *shath,* or words of unitive ecstasy. What separates these two examples is that the statements, obviously, have opposite meanings. Sufis claimed to be speaking from within unitive experience with God, as in al-Hallaj's (d. 309 AH/922 CE) famous "*Ana al-Haqq*" ("I am 'the Truth,'" one of the names of God in the Qur'an), or Ruzbihan Baqli's (605 AH/1209 CE) explanation of the process of *shath* as *iltibas,* or "clothing of the human with the divine."[72] Shīʿī hadith has its share of ecstatic statements attributing divine qualities to the primordially perfect and charismatic Imams, or the leaders of Islam who descend from Prophet Muhammad's family line, through his son-in-law, Ali, and his daughter, Fatima. The first Imam, Ali [d. 40 AH/661 CE], reports: "I am the dot under the letter b of *bismallah* [meaning "in the name of God," the opening phrase of each chapter of the Qur'an]. I am the Pen. I am the Guarded Tablet, I am the Throne, I am the Chair, and I am the seven heavens and the earths." And the sixth Shīʿī Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148 AH/765 CE) is reported as saying of the Imams: "…We are the Kaʿaba [center of the great mosque of Mecca around which Muslim pilgrims circumambulate], we are the *qibla* [the direction of Muslim prayer toward Mecca and God's house, the Kaʿaba], we are the face of God, we are the signs and we are the clear signs."[73] Sufis and Shīʿīs both, though for different reasons, identify with the persecution and even martyrdom of those who speak in this way, believing them to be singled out by God to experience union with the divine, however ephemeral. Five Percenters, on the other hand, do not believe or understand their experience as unitive with any transcendent deity, since they do not accept the existence of any deity. However, they do understand being persecuted for their witnessing to their own understanding and experience.

Among the strange and fascinating parallels between Five Percenters who publicly declare themselves "Gods," both male and female, and medieval Sufi mystics are accusations of madness, irrationality, and the marginalized status of the holy fool. Medieval Muslim mystics and Five Percent Gods and Earths in the "belly of the Beast" can in some way be equally identified as *shawāhid* ("martyrs" and "witnesses") who "prove God" and "testify to mankind" and, as Ruzbihan says, are "clear signs (*ayat*) in the breasts of those to whom knowledge was given" (Q.29:49).[74] Five Percent Gods and Earths who openly declare their "godhood" to prison officials or the

police upon arrest have been put in the mental ward and involuntarily given psychiatric medications. The founder of the Five Percent Nation, Clarence Jowars Smith, found that after declaring "godhood" he was incarcerated in the Mattawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane in March 1966, following arrest and conviction for minor drug and assault charges in June 1965. Psychiatric and drug treatment, not conventional imprisonment or activity restrictions, are the modern equivalents to medieval heresy trials and executions that silenced the Muslims who publicly performed *shath.*[75]

Fiver Percenters in the federal or state correctional system have suffered from the discriminatory restriction of Five Percent literature and emblems, having been consistently misrepresented and labeled as an "unauthorized organization, i.e. a gang." Lord Natural Self Allah, in a Web article "The Five Percent Dilemma," available under the NGE Web site link called "Prison Outreach," reports that this type of discriminatory treatment has been documented since the mid-1990s in New York State, North and South Carolina, Ohio, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Georgia. "South Carolina and New Jersey have gone so far as to create 'indoctrination programs' where known 5%ers and other 'gang members' are placed in a special unit where they remain locked in cells for 23 hours per day with one hour of recreation (most often chained and shackled), no contact visit, and limited telephone [calls] and showers until they renounce their affiliation as being 5%ers."[76]

The national *Five Percenter* newspaper has a regular column called "Your Prison and Institution Reporter." In the October 2005 issue, entitled "Who is that Mystery God?," questions of freedom of identity while incarcerated are addressed by a letter to the editor from a "True Brother in the Struggle," speaking about a whole new type of *jihad.*

> The True and Living [Gods] have always refused to use the Freedom of religion clause of the constitution to gain our freedom [to be ourselves, i.e. Gods].… When the religious land use and institutionalized persons act (RLUIPA) was passed; Institutions could no longer lawfully discriminate against us. All institutionalized persons have the right to embrace God as they see him. Using RLUIPA, we proved that our Cultural perspective is as valid as their religious one [i.e., 1st amendment protection under "freedom of religion"].… We have the right to be who we are, free from religion and persecution.… It was then, I knew the beast [judiciary or prison system] could be defeated in the legal arena.… I learned that no one, no government arm or agency under the jurisdiction of the constitution could stand as an obstacle to persons or nations on their path to God.… I never mentioned religion, but I always talked about God in the person of the Blackman, namely myself. I learned whether he agreed with me or not, I have the right to be God in the free cipher [world] or prison.[77]

All Five Percent Nation goals are not yet achieved in this *jihad,* "we still cannot congregate in prisons and this is a battle that we still have to win.…"[78] Still the struggle goes on with equal efficacy whether the member is in prison or released: "There is no longer a division between the free cipher and the penal cipher, Gods. If you are doing the work of the Father, you are one of the True and Living period. This is fact regardless to your being in prison. Though we build for the time when none of us

can be called a prisoner, this Nation must first count those True and Living that still are as family."[79] Thus, as long as the Nation continues to effect the transformation of the "penal cipher" through the commitment to manifest the inner *jihad* (struggle to be true to Self, to your own godhood): "God remains God; regardless to where he is. An injustice to a God anywhere is an injustice to God everywhere. The phrase 'the devil gets the wicked' has incorrectly been translated into describing the Gods in prison. This is an internal argument [within the Nation] that has led many to ignore the plight of our incarcerated masses. However, it uses too broad a brush and cannot be applied to the True and Living who are not wicked, but still happen to be imprisoned."[80] The "rehabilitation" of the incarcerated, in this Nation view, can be accomplished by reforming the penal system from within through the Five Percent *da'wa* (mission to speak out about the truth of self as god and the NGE), which simultaneously maintains self-awareness, strengthens self-development, and furthers the universal duty of "each one" to "teach one."

CONTROVERSIES IN CONCLUSION

Clearly, this alternative community is not a "religious" community, since it firmly disavows the word "religion." It does, however, perform many of the functions that "religion" performs: identity formation, gender socialization, sociopolitical ideology, "ritual" activity, and collective purpose. The Five Percent Nation denies as well the reality of any "mystery god," who is a "spook," i.e., a spirit, or noncorporeal being beyond empirical proof and demonstration, and refuses to take anything on "faith" without empirical evidence or grounding in experience. It is, however, by its own definition, a "culture" and a "society," with a strong moral center, distinguishing right and wrong, cultivating ethical behavior and shunning context and persons that lead to what they would call "devilishment."

When asked if the Five Percent Nation is racist, because of its black "theology," both Father/ALLAH and his later "children," D.J. and K.V., reply: "We don't teach pro-Blackness, or pro-White. We teach *pro-Righteousness and anti-Devilishment*."[81] This seems a close parallel to traditional Islamic ethos of "enjoining the good and forbidding evil" (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*), founded upon the Qur'an [9:71].[82] In Spady's 1991 interview with Wise Intelligent, a member of Poor Righteous Teachers, he describes the overall commitment of the Nation as teachers and civilizers of all human beings:

> Indeed, Poor, righteous, teachers, the statement itself defines those Black men who gained knowledge of themselves and then take it as their duty or obligation to teach and resurrect the poor … We know who the true and living God is, and we teach that the true and living God is the Son of Man, supreme being Black man from Asia, teaching freedom, justice, and equality to all the human families of the planet earth.[83]

Another controversy that keeps these alternative Islamic communities in the public press is the persistent media, law enforcement, and governmental representation of them as violent hate groups who are gang related. The Nation of Islam, Nation

of Gods and Earths, and Nation of Nuwaubian Moors have all disavowed this portrait. In the words of Five Percent Nation representative, Dumar Wa'de Allah: "We are not that type of people; we are civilized. We are not a violent people. We are not a hate group.… We are here to stop violent behavior that is taking place among our young people."[84] The irony is that despite media and governmental misrepresentation of these communities, the Nation of Islam, the Five Percent Nation, and the Ansaaru Allah or Nuwaubian Nation collectively espouse a lifestyle of peaceful, industrious, self-supporting, service oriented action, which has operated in the case of these latter-day communities for 40 years as alternatives for young Black Americans to gang membership, the drug culture, and the no-win cycle of poverty and violence in the streets.[85]

The disadvantages to even those Muslims who are recognized by the state and the correctional system as members of a religious community that is entitled to constitutional protection regarding their right to freedom of religion while incarcerated have been well documented. The Islamic culture and community of the Five Percent Nation is doubly disadvantaged regarding recognition of their status as "Muslim children" or their entitlement to "religious" literature, the services or visitation of their own "chaplain," and the allocation of appropriate space for "worship," i.e., teaching and practice. Since it could not claim the status of a "religion," it was not entitled to constitutional protection under the First Amendment. However, more recent legislation, particularly the RLUIPA (2000), with its provision for the freedom of "religious" exercise, has begun to protect Five Percenters' rights to community literature, access to a teacher of choice, and appropriate space for teaching and practice. But even more fundamentally, it has opened the category of "black divinity" to recognition and protection from forcible psychiatric confinement and "treatment." In the New York State correctional facilities these issues have already been put to the test, and, as incarcerated members are testifying and the community newspapers are witnessing, members are no longer being threatened or coerced into disavowing their identity as gods, nor their affiliation in their respective Nations (whether Nation of Islam, Nation of Gods and Earths, or Nation of Nuwaubian Moors).

These alternative cultures and societies are not within the formal bounds of Sunni Islam, neither bound by Islam's principles of belief nor pillars of practice, but are—in uniquely African American ways—associated with Islam, inspired by Islam. The Five Percent Nation, quite literally, exists "In the Name of Allah," which is the subheading of their community logo, the Circle 7, displayed proudly over the door of their New York headquarters and the first of its national "schools" of Allah, and heading its current national newspaper, *The Five Percenter.* As Elijah Muhammad once wrote of the early twentieth-century development of the Nation of Islam, long at odds with the immigrant Muslim community in America, over doctrinal and ritual differences:

> The Orthodox Muslims [i.e., the Sunnis] will have to bow to the choice of Allah. Allah will bring about a new Islam … The devils [white Christians and Jews] oppose this change, and the Orthodox [Sunni Muslims] join them in opposing us because of their desire to carry on the old way of Islam. Allah will place those of His choice in authority

> in the making of the new world, and others must obey whomever He puts in authority or find themselves fighting against the power of whomever they hold to be on their side and in their favor. We must have a new world. We accept for a new nation completely.[86]

The Gods and Earths have formed such a new nation arising out of but independent from the Nation of Islam. It remains to be seen how this new nation and the Muslim *umma* will interact or continue to ignore or dismiss each other in the twenty-first century.

Alternative Islamic communities in the United States present unfamiliar questions to the Sunni Majority of North America and Islam as a world religion and community. Are communities such as the Nation of Islam and its outgrowth, the Five Percent Nation, part of the natural evolution of Islam and the *umma* in a new culture zone and ethnicity? I ask my students in Islamic studies in the twenty-first century what issues might Islam have chosen to address if it had arisen in twentieth-century America instead of seventh-century Arabia? Would not the New World themes of racial injustice and oppression and ongoing intolerance and marginalization be its natural moral ground? As Islam originally chose to address the disenfranchised and abused (women, slaves, the weak, and the unprotected) within Arabian society, so alternative African American Islam addresses the disenfranchisement and marginalization of African Americans (and through them all people of color) in a country in which the racial issues of the Civil War are still unresolved. Finally, if "building" the Nation redeems the future, how will such examples of Islamic diversity and cross-directional influence (between Sunni and non-Sunni African Americans) affect the possible future unity of the North American *umma,* which is still very much divided?

NOTES

1. Michael A. Köszegi and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Islam in North America, a Sourcebook* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 133–141, 145–149; and chapter on the Ahmadiyya Community of North America in Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith, *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993), 49–78.

2. Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York: Routledge, 1995), chaps. 1–2, see especially charts of African American early communities (1990–1960), 10, and contemporary communities (1960 to present), 41–42. Köszegi and Melton, *Islam in North America,* 184–208, 291–396, give a preliminary bibliography on the diversity of new African American Muslim communities that, although now dated, is still useful for its survey of the devotional periodical literature of these communities and for an extensive directory of Islamic organizations and centers in North America. An interesting approach to this material is taken by Peter Lamborn Wilson, who approaches Islam from a minoritarian Sufi and Shīʿī point of view in *Scandal, Essays in Islamic Heresy* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1988), and applies that to the Moorish Science Temple in *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 1993).

3. C. Eric Lincoln coined this term in his then groundbreaking study of the Nation of Islam, *The Black Muslims in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), as a way of distinguishing alternative African American Islamic communities, such as the Nation of Islam whose

members he called "Black Muslims," from Sunni or other mystical or sectarian forms of Islam in the North American diaspora or in the larger Muslim world.

4. What I.M. Lewis, *Religion in Context: Cults and Charisma* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986), studying spirit possessions, witchcraft, and shamanism in African Islam is calling the "new ethnography;" James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and the chapter on "Ethnography and Interpretive Anthropology," in Marcus and Michael M.J. Fischer's *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Lynn Wilson, "Epistemology and Power: Rethinking Ethnography at Greenham," in *Anthropology for the Nineties,* ed. Johnnetta B. Cole (New York: The Free Press, 1988); Felicitas D. Goodman's classic *How About Demons? Possession and Exorcism in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: a Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); and ethnopoetics and ethnomethodology in Charles L. Briggs, *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

5. See discussion of Black language and poetry as oral truth in hip hop in James G. Spady, "'IMA PUT MY THING DOWN': Afro-American Expressive Culture and the Hip Hop Community," *TYANABA Revue de la Société d'Anthropologie* (December 1993): 93–98; James G. Spady, "The Centrality of Black Language In The Discourse Strategies and Poetic Force of Sonia Sanchez and Rap Artists," *BMa: The Sonia Sanchez Literary Review* 6, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 47–72; and H. Samy Alim, "360 Degreez of Black Art Comin at You: Sista Sonia Sanchez and the Dimensions of A Black Arts Continuum," *BMa: The Sonia Sanchez Literary Review* 6, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 15–34.

6. Ansaaru Allah texts, like *360 Questions to ask the Orthodox Sunni Muslims,* bring into sharp relief the terms of discord or lines of defense between different Muslim groups and the Sunni majority in the United States who assume the right to evaluate all other Muslims according to their own theological and ritual parameters and either embrace or reject communities whom they feel are not part of the real *umma.*

7. "Bloodsuckers of the poor" is a reference to the original NOI Student Enrollment Lessons #14–16 cited in Yusuf Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters: A Teenage Nation of Gods and Earths," in *Muslim Communities in North America,* ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane I. Smith (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 116–117.

8. Elijah Muhammad's refutation of the "mystery god" comes into Five Percent teaching as the Lost-Found Lesson No. 2, Questions 9–13, see Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters," 116–117, 131 n.9. This Five Percent teaching circulates through rap, as in Brand Nubian's "Ain't No Mystery," *In God We Trust, Knowledge Side* (1992), and continues to be a staple Nation issue, as in "Who Is That Mystery God?" *Five Percenter* 10, no. 4 (December 2004).

9. Ansaaru Allah or Nuwaubian and Five Percent teachings agree that the "Blackman" or "Nubian" is God. See Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters," 117–118; and Isa Muhammad declares throughout his corpus that the Nubian is "god," "Messiahs/Christs," and "Eloheem," who are divine in nature and supraterrestrial in origins; see *The Final Messenger: Christ the Final Word*, ed. no. 87 (Monticello, NY: Original Tents of Kedar, 1991); *The Truth: Who Do People Say I Am?* special edition (Atlanta, GA: Tents of Nubia, 1992); and *The Truth: The True Story of the Beginning*, ed. no. 10 (Atlanta, GA: Tents of Nubia, 1993). See also my discussion of the divinity of the Nubian, "The Islamic Jesus: Messiahhood and Human Divinity in African American Muslim Exegesis," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66,

no. 3 (1998): 511–513; see 511 n.15 on the relationship of Ansaaru Allah teachings on Black divinity to similar but distinct teachings on Black divinity in the Nation of Islam and Five Percent Nation.

10. Five Percenters "show and prove" their "overstanding" or experiential and initiant knowledge of the teachings. See Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters," 117–118, 123–124; and see Isa Muhammad's use of "overstanding" in Ansaaru Allah or Nuwaubian teachings.

11. "Word" is identified as originating in Rastafarian discourse and connected by Alim with Sufi Islam or the ritual practices of *dhikr* (rhythmic chanting of divine names and formulas or verses of the Qur'an) and *sama'* (listening to music and/or voices with possible rhythmic body gestures or dance as a meditational or ecstatic exercise), which he calls "Word-Sound Power." Berkeley hip hop group Zion I describe the word-sound power in a way that would be entirely familiar to a Sufi performing ritual *dhikr* or *sama'*: "when one speaks, the entire universe is effected … it is best to cast a vibration that is uplifting to the universe in order that when the echo returns to sender, the self can be uplifted as well." Alim, "360 Degreez of Black Art Comin at You," 29.

12. Ethnographic methodologies and ethnographies of belief studies that illuminate vernacular religion and popular culture in America: David Hufford, *The Terror That Comes in the Night: An Experience Centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); Don Yoder, "Definition of Folk Religion," *Western Folklore* 33 (1974): 2–15; Henry Glassie, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Margaret Kruesi, "Symptoms, Signs and Miracles: Narratives of Illness and Healing at the St. John N. Neumann Shrine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1995); Bonnie Blair O'Connor, *Healing Traditions: Alternative Medicine and the Health Professions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Diane E. Goldstein, *Once Upon a Virus: AIDS Legends and Vernacular Risk Perception* (Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, 2004).

13. Leonard Norman Primiano, "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife," *Western Folklore* 54 (1995): 37–56. See also his earlier study, "Intrisically Catholic: Vernacular Religion and Philadelphia's 'Dignity'" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1993).

14. Pioneers in sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication have focused attention on oral performance and expressive culture, such as Dell H. Hymes and John J. Gumperz, eds., *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972); Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1977); Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, eds., *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Dell H. Hymes, *"In Vain I Tried to Tell You": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); Charles L. Briggs, *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Briggs, *Competence in Performance.* Oral culture, sociolinguistics, and ethnography of communication studies among African Americans Muslims that have informed this study include the following: Spady's interview trilogy, James Spady and Joseph Eure, *Nation Conscious Rap* (Philadelphia: PC International Press, 1991); James Spady, Stefan Dupres, and Charles G. Lee, *Twisted Tales in the Hip Hop Streets of Philly* (Philadelphia: Black History Museum Umum/Loh Publishers, 1995); James Spady, Charles G. Lee, and H. Samy Alim, *Street Conscious Rap* (Philadelphia: Black History Museum Umum/Loh Publishers, 1999); the works of H. Samy Alim, especially "A New Research Agenda: Exploring the Transglobal

Hip Hop Umma," in *Muslim Networks from Hajj to Hip Hop,* ed. Miriam Cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); H. Samy Alim, "Hip Hop Nation Language," in *Language I the USA: Themes for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Edward Finegan and John R. Rickford (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); H. Samy Alim, "We Are the Streets: African American Language and the Strategic Construction of a Street Conscious Identity," in*Black Linguistics: Language, Society and Politics in Africa and the Americas,* ed. S. Makoni, G. Smitherman, A. Ball, and A. Spears (New York: Routledge, 2003); H. Samy Alim, *You Know my Steez: an Ethnographic and Sociolinguistic Study of Styleshifting in a Black American Speech Community* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press for the American Dialect Society, 2004); and H. Samy Alim, *Roc the Mic Right: The Language of Hip Hop Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006). Alim's work on hip hop language has been preceded by formative studies on African American speech and oral creativity by Geneva Smitherman, from "The Power of the Rap: The Black Idiom and the New Black Poetry," *Twentieth Century Literature,* October 1973, 259–274; *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986/1977); *Talkin That Talk: Language, Culture and Education in African America* (New York: Routledge, 2000). See also *Africanism in Afro-American Language Varieties* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993); *The Elack Street Speech: Its History, Structure and Survival,* 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983); Edith A. Folb, *Runnin' Down Some Lines: The Language and Culture of Black Teenagers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); William Labov, *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972); Roger D. Abrahams, *Talking Black* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House Pubs, 1976).

15. Glenn Hinson, *Fire in My Bones: Transcendence and the Holy Spirit in African American Gospel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 328.

16. As in Max Weber and S.N. Eisenstadt, *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building; Selected Papers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam, A Critical Study* (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1974); and Toby E. Huff and Wolfgang Schluchter, *Max Weber & Islam* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1999).

17. Ahmad von Denffer, *Ulum al-Qur'an, An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1994); George Makdisi, *The Rise of the Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).

18. Kathleen O'Connor, "The Alchemical Creation of Life (*takwin*) and Other Concepts of Genesis in Medieval Islam" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1994); Ignaz Goldziher, "The Attitude of Orthodox Islam to the 'Ancient Sciences,'" in *Studies on Islam,* ed. and trans. M. Swartz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 1978).

19. For FBI disinformation against the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam, Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 85–92; Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pt. 2, especially notes pp. 260–275; Claude Andrew Clegg III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997), see the notes and text to chaps. 7–9; and Felicia Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap: God Hop's Music, Message, and Black Muslim Mission* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 16–19, 151 nn.57–61.

20. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap,* 4–5, 145–146 nn6–9.

21. See Kathleen M. Moore, *Al-Mughtaribun: American Law and the Transformation of Muslim Life in the United States* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), chap. 4, for

differential treatment and religious discrimination against Black Muslims as well as other Muslims in the justice system and prison administration.

22. See Robert Dannin's article "Island in a Sea of Ignorance: Dimensions of a Prison Mosque," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, ed. Barbara Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), and his expansion on it in his more recent book, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), for three Islamic themes (*hajj* or "pilgrimage," *hijra* or "emigration to start a new umma," and *da'wa* or "mission to teach"), which inform Muslims' lives in the United States and which can redirect Muslim prisoner's sense of positive purpose while in prison and lower recidivism upon release into the community. See also Larry A. Poston, "Da'wah in the West," in *The Muslims of America,* ed. Yvonne Yazbeck (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), for more on the third of these Islamic themes as it operates in the Muslim diaspora in general and America in particular.

23. Cited in Moore, *Al-Mughtaribun,* 74. See legal studies on prison reform regarding constitutional protection of prisoner's rights to freedom of religion and recognition of identity (CRIPA—Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act, 1980; RFRA—Religious Freedom Restoration Act, 1993) and the struggle for equal treatment and representative facilities for Muslims (RLUIPA—Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons, Sect. 3, "Protection of Religious Exercise of Institutionalized Persons," 2000), e.g., hiring Muslim imams as chaplains, establishing masjids or worship spaces in prison—see Robert Dannin's article "Islands in a Sea of Ignorance," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe,* ed. Metcalf, especially when they belong to "alternative" or "Black Muslim" communities, in the works of Moore, *Al-Mughtaribun,* chap. 4, and her earlier articles on Muslims in American law in *The Muslims of America,* ed. Haddad; Michael W. Suleiman, ed., *Arabs in America: Building a New Future* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999); and in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, ed., *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). For earlier history of constitutional issues of religious recognition and Muslim prisoners' rights, see "Muslim Faith Is a 'Religion' within the Constitutional Provisions as to the Freedom of Religion" (*Fulwood v. Clemmer,* 206 F.Supp. 370 [1962] at 373); William Bennet Turner, "Establishing the Rule of Law in Prison: A Manual for Prisoners' Rights Litigation," *Black Law Journal* 1 (1971); Comment, "The Religious Rights of the Incarcerated," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 125 (1977); William Oliver Jones, Jr., "The Black Muslim Movement and the American Constitutional System," *Journal of Black Studies* 13 (1983): 417–437; James B. Jacobs, *New Perspectives on Prisons and Imprisonment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983). For the most recent federal prisoners' rights measure regarding religious exercise, see Web sites www.usdoj.gov/crt/housing/housing_rluipa.htm for the act itself and www.rluipa.com under the heading "Scholarship" for applications and theoretical explorations of the RLUIPA's religious exercise for prisoners provision (accessed February 11, 2006).

24. Stuart Scheingold, *The Politics of Rights: Lawyers, Public Policy, and Political Change* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), cited in Moore, *Al-Mughtaribun,* 74.

25. See examples of this process of Black Sunni separatism in the Dar ul-Islam movement, the Masjid al-Mutkabir community, and others in Haddad and Smith, *Muslim Communities in North America;* and McCloud, *African American Islam.*

26. Jean Jacques Waardenburg and P.H. Vrijhof, *Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for Religious Studies* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979).

27. See my studies of medieval Islamic alchemy and religious healing systems in Islam: "The Alchemical Creation of Life (Takwin) and Other Concepts of Genesis in Medieval Islam";

"Prophetic Medicine and Qur'anic Healing: Religious Healing Systems in Islam," in *Essays in Middle Eastern Health,* ed. Joseph W. Brown and Robin Barlow (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies, University of Michigan, 1999); and "Popular and Talismanic Uses of the Qur'an" and "Amulet" in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an,* ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000–2005).

28. The Ahmadiyya, a nineteenth-century northern Indian movement named after the teachings of its founder, Ghulam Ahmad, have an internal split between the Lahori branch, led by Muhammad Ali, who favor Islamic missionizing by translation and dissemination of Islamic primary sources in translation, and the Qadiani branch, who follow the charismatic teachings of the founder, which include ongoing cycles of prophecy and revelation reminiscent of the Shi'a, divine manifestation, and Jesushood or messiahhood. The status of this community has been radically changed in relation to the Sunni mainstream in its home country, Pakistan, since the state declared the Ahmadiyya Community and its teachings anathema in the 1980s. Since that time the missionizing activity of both branches of the community has occurred only outside its country of origin. While both branches maintain that they are true expressions of Islam, they are categorically denied in the Islamic society of Pakistan. So from a Pakistani Sunni point of view, one would have to say that the Ahmadiyya Community is a new religion outside the boundary of Islam, and from the Ahmadiyya point of view they are, at most, only a new expression or direction in traditional Islam. See Yohanan Friedmann's *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) for an assessment of the Ahmadiyya's place in the theology and history of Islam, and my article, "The Islamic Jesus," 497–503, for the impact of the Ahmadiyya in African American Islam.

29. A sample only of the huge body of scholarship: Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shī'īsm* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981); Henry Corbin, *Cyclic Time and Ismailian Gnosis* (Boston: Kegan and Paul, 1983); Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); David Westerlund and Eva Evers Rosander, eds., *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters between Sufis and Islamists* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1997); Haim Shaked, trans., *The Life of the Sudanese Mahdi: A Historical Study of Kitāb sa'ādat al-mustahdī bi-sīrat al-Imaām al-Mahdī [The Book of the Bliss of Him who Seeks Guidance by the Life of the Imam the Mahdi] by Isma'īl b. 'Abd al-Qādir* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books and Shiloah Center, Tel Aviv University, 1978); Saïd Amir Arjomand, "Islamic Apocalypticism in the Classic Period," in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism,* eds. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins, and Stephen J. Stein (New York: Continuum, 2003); Shahzad Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: the Nurbakhshīya between Medieval and Modern Islam* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003); Haddad and Smith, *Mission to America,* chaps. 2–3 on the Druze and the United Submitters International; and see Andrew Rippin, "Numbers and Enumeration," in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an,* ed. MacAuliffe, vol. 3, 553, for discussion of the USI's exegetical association of the number 19 with the Qur'an, and its traditional Islamic association with Q.74:30; Haddad and Smith, eds., *Muslim Communities in North America,* chap. 4 on the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship.

30. NOI terms of reference for the black man who has forgotten his true self and origins include "mentally deaf, dumb, and blind" and "white devils," in Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America* (Philadelphia: Hakim's Publishers, 1965), 65–66, 134.

31. Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters," 129.

32. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap,* 31, quoting from Joseph Eure and James Spady's interview of Wise Intelligent, of the Five Percent rap group, Poor Righteous Teachers, in *Nation Conscious Rap* (1990): 65–66.

33. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap.*

34. See Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and earlier works, Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); and Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Translatantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (New York: Routledge, 1997), which is a much shorter version of his original work, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York: Garland, 1984).

35. Interviews with Divine Justice and King Victory, at University of South Florida (hereafter USF), Tampa, August–September 2005.

36. For Islamic numerology, number and letter mysticism, its use in magic and talismanry, and the *abjad* order of letter values, see Daniel M. Varisco, "Numerology," in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an,* vol. 3, 554–555 and Table 1; and "*Hurufiya,*" and "*Jafr,*" in Cyril Glassé, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam*, rev. ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001). For the use of *hurufiya,* or letter mysticism, in Sufism, see Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origins du lexique technique de la Mystique musulmane* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1954). For a late medieval Islamic discussion of Islamic numerology and number and letter mysticism, see Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima: An Introduction to History,* trans. Franz Rosenthal, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967/1930), 422–446. For Islamic numerology, its use in alchemy, and overlaps between Arabic and Hebrew systems, see A.J. Festugière and A.D. Nock, *La Révélation d'Hermés Trismégiste,* vol. I (Paris: Lecoffre, 1950), 337–339; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Hermes and Hermetic Writings in the Islamic World," *Islamic Studies, Essays on Law and Society, the Sciences, and Philosophy and Sufism* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1967); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 1978), 210–211; and O'Connor, "The Alchemical Creation of Life (*takwin*) and other concepts of Genesis in Medieval Islam," 125–126 n.28, 128 n.44, 128–129 n.45, 187 n.2, 187 n.4, 188 n.16, 189 n.24. For Jewish *gematriya* and *notarikon,* see Charles Ponce, "The Numbers, Names, Letters & Computations of God," *Kabbalah* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1973): 169–197. For the use of the divine/Hebrew letters in the creation of the *Golem,* see Gershom Scholem, "The Idea of the *Golem,*" *On Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1987), and Moshe Idel, "*Ha-Sefirot she me'al ha-Sefirot,*" *Tarbiz* 51, no. 2 (January–March 1982): 239–280; and *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), chaps. 5, 7.

37. Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters," 113.

38. Quoted from the posthumous publication of Elijah Muhammad's teachings, by the then national secretary of the Nation of Islam, Abass Rassoull, *The Theology of Time, by the Honourable Elijah Muhammad* (Hampton, VA: U.B. & U.S. Communications Systems, 1992), 133–134.

39. Brand Nubian, "Dance to my Ministry," *One for All* (New York: Elektra Entertainment), Cassette tape 60946-4.

40. Eure and Spady, *Nation Conscious Rap,* 293.

41. Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters," 119.

42. Ibid., 120.

43. Ibid., 119–120.

44. King Victory interview at University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, August 24, 2005.

45. Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters," 118–119.
46. Divine Justice, interview at USF, Tampa, FL, August 24, 2005.
47. King Victory, interview at USF, Tampa, FL, September 14, 2005.
48. King Victory, in interview at USF, Tampa, FL, September 14, 2005.
49. Current list of national rally, school, and parliament locations and contact information is on the national Five Percent Web site, www.allahsnation.net.
50. Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters," 112, where he mentions the NGE newspaper, *The Word.* Through my local member contacts I have been able to subscribe to the current national NGE newspaper, *The Five Percenter,* which is also advertised on the Five Percent Web site, www.allahsnation.net, and have been informed by correspondence from incarcerated NGE members about another Five Percent journal, *The Suns of Man.*
51. "Your Prison & Institution Reporter," *The Five Percenter* 11, no. 5 (January 2006), 3. This quotation follows noting that some outside media sources have commented positively and responsibly about the Five Percent, namely, the *Source,* a rap/hip hop magazine that addressed the Nation in 2005, and *F.E.D.S.* 4, no. 17, issue on Father Allah and the 5% Nation He Built, which featured the article "5% Nation: The Love that Hate Couldn't Destroy."
52. *F.E.D.S.,* 70. See also on the issue of fertility of the nation, Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap,* 34 and 155 n.36.
53. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap,* 33–34, cited from a Web article by Earth, Sha-King Ceh' um Allah, "Social Equality?" in *National Statement* http://www.nationalstatement.com/e/she-kingAllah_pg1.htm (accessed October 14, 2001).
54. This issue is headed with the following in the code of the Supreme Alphabet as "Divine Equality Cee," which stands for the abbreviation of December (DEC), and the year is listed in code as "Wisdom Cipher Cipher Power or Refinement," which in Supreme Mathematics stands for 2005 (Wisdom = 2, Cipher Cipher = 00, Power or Refinement = 5).
55. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap,* 34.
56. "I Love Myself Some You!" by Master Sha-Allah(Shabazz), copyright 2005, quoted in *The Five Percenter* 11, no. 4 (December 2005): 9.
57. See the Allah Schools listed in the National Five Percent Web site, www.allahsnation.net, and the coded names by which these locales are known in the community, often using supreme alphabet and local speech custom in the naming.
58. *The Five Percenter* 10, no. 4 (December 2004): 4.
59. My choice of "Islamic rap" was used in earlier writings to emphasize the connections that all the message rappers have with Islamic teachings of one orientation or another, NOI, NGE, NNM, or Sunni and Sufi Islam. See "Islamic rap" and "Islamic Hip Hop" in my article, "The Islamic Jesus…," 515 n.22.
60. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap,* 2.
61. "Each one, teach one" is one of the core Five Percent teachings, drawn from Elijah Muhammad, *The Theology of Time,* 41; see also Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters," 113, and it is found on the national Five Percent Web site under "What We Teach."
62. The RZA with Chris Norris, *The Wu-Tang Manual* (New York: Riverhead Freestyle, 2005), 43
63. Kathleen O'Connor, "African-American Muslim Foodways: Nutritional Healing and the Construction of Identity," in *Anthropology and Theology: Gods, Icons, and God-talk*, ed. Walter R. Adams and Frank A. Salamone (New York: University Press of America, 2000), 273–291; Ludacris, *Word of Mouf,* 2001, is quoted by H. Samy Alim, in "Hip Hop Nation Language,"

in *Language in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-first Century,* ed. Edward Finegan and John R. Rickford (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 392.

64. For examples of African American Muslim food and health discourse, transmitting and elaborating the traditional Islamic legal injunction against pork and contact with swine, see works by Elijah Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live,* 2 vols. (Chicago, IL: Muhammad's Temple No. 2, 1967, 1972), http://www.seventhfam.com/temple.elijah_books.htm (accessed February 25, 2006); Elijah Muhammad, "Not One Hog Eater will enter the Kingdom of Heaven," in *The Theology of Time*; the founder of the Ansaaru Allah, Isa Muhammad, "Are You Still Eating Pork?" in the community journal *The Nubian Bulletin: The Truth* (1993); and the Kemetic holistic health position likely influenced by Ansaaru Allah literature on this issue; see Llaila O. Afrika, *African Holistic Health* (Brooklyn: A & B Book Publishers, 1993/1983); Llaila O. Afrika, *Nutricide, the Nutritional Destruction of the Black Race* (Beaufort, SC: Golden Seal, 1994).

65. Frenzella E. De Lancey, "Sonia Sanchez's *Blues Book for Blue Black Magical Women* and Sister Souljah's *The Coldest Winter Ever*: Progressive Phases Amid Modernist Shadows & Postmodernist Acts," in *BMa: The Sonia Sanchez Literary Review* 6, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 168; and "word warrior" is coined by Spady as in his article, "360 Degreez of Sonia Sanchez, Hip Hop, Narrativity, Ighawe and Public Spaces of Being," *BMs Sonia Sanchez Literary Review,* ix, and cited in Alim, "360 Degreez of Black Arts," 27.

66. Sister Souljah, "360 Degrees of Power," from her album, *360 Degrees of Power,* 1992.

67. Orality in the reception and transmission, later memorization and recitation, of the qur'anic message is witnessed by a number of interrelated subjects in scholarship: the early history and recension of the qur'anic text during and shortly after the Prophet's lifetime, and the subsequent ritual performance of the text through prayer, formal recitation, rhythmic chanting of divine names and formulas, and the use of music and voicing in Sufi ritual. Select sources of these rich areas of Islamic studies would include the following: William A. Graham, "Qur'an as Spoken Word, An Islamic Contribution to the Understanding of Scripture," in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies,* ed. Richard Martin (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 23–40; Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985); Constance Padwick, *Muslim Devotions: A Study of Prayer Manuals in Common Use* (London: SPCK, 1961); Earle H. Waugh, *Memory, Music, and Religion: Morocco's Mystical Chanters* (Columbia, SC: University of South Caroline Press, 2005); Earle H. Waugh, *The Munshidin of Egypt: Their World and Their Song* (Columbia, SC: University of South Caroline Press, 1989); Kenneth S. Avery, *Psychology of Early Sufi Sama': Listening and Altered States* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Regula Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Shemeen Burney Abbas, *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual: Devotional Practices of Pakistan and India* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); and Catharina Raudvere, *The Book and the Roses: Sufi Women, Visibility, and Zikir in Contemporary Istanbul* (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2002).

68. Alim, "A New Research Agenda: Exploring the Transglobal Hip Hop *Umma,*" 266–267.

69. *Jihad* is understood in the context of the larger Muslim *umma* as the greater *jihad* (or each individual's interior struggle against temptations) and the lesser *jihad* (of exterior struggle of the *umma* against outside persecution or oppression). See Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam: A Reader* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), which includes a range of source texts for both meanings of *jihad.*

70. Alim, from *Roc the Mic Right: The Language of Hip Hop Culture,* chap. 2 (London: Routledge, 2006).

71. See Alim, ibid., for his discussion of traditional aspects of meaning in the Islamic term *jihad,* particularly Five Percent rappers as practitioners of *jihad bil-lisan* ("struggle of the tongue").
72. Ruzbihan was the premier authority on ecstatic expression (*shath*) in Sufism, known for his text, *Sharh-i Shathiyat* ("Commentary on Ecstatic Expressions"). This explanation of *shath* by Baqli is quoted in Carl W. Ernst, *Words of Ecstacy in Sufism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 20.
73. Quoted in Kathleen Malone O'Connor, "The Islamic Jesus: Messiahhood and Human Divinity in African American Muslim Exegesis," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66/3 (1998): 493–532.
74. Again, Ruzbihan's *Sharh,* cited in Ernst, *Words of Ecstacy in Sufism,* 41 and 153 n.146.
75. See Ernst, *Words of Ecstacy in Sufism,* for discussions of the trials and executions for heresy of famous medieval Muslim mystics, Nuri (d. 907), al-Hallaj (d. 922), and Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadani (d. 1131), for public declarations of divine speech.
76. Accessed July 8, 2004, by Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap,* 34 n.40.
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81. Divine Justice, in interview, USF, Tampa, FL, September 1, 2005. See Clarence, the Father ALLAH's original teachings regarding the nation and its teachings being neither pro-Black, nor pro-White in Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap,* 153 n.71.
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83. Eure and Spady, *Nation Conscious Rap,* 60, cited in Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap,* 2, and see her further discussion of the "each one, teach one" philosophy of the NGE in other solo rappers and groups.
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Black Israelites aka Black Jews aka Black Hebrews: Black Israelism, Black Judaism, Judaic Christianity

Jacob S. Dorman

INTRODUCTION

Black Israelites are African Americans who practice religions based on Judaism or the belief that they are descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel. Variously known as Black Hebrews, black Israelites, or Black Jews, black Israelite movements span a range of religions from Holiness Christianity to Orthodox Judaism and have appeared from the 1890s to the present. Black Israelite movements did not begin with conversion to Judaism, and the movements are not derivative of Jews or Judaism. Rather, black Israelite movements creatively manipulate traditions and ideas gleaned from a wide range of sources: Holiness/Pentecostal Christianity, the British Anglo-Israelite movement, Freemasonry, Mind Power, Theosophy, Judaism, the occult, and African American Christianity's deep association with the ancient Hebrews of the Old Testament. African American black Israelites have no history of significant contact with Ethiopian Jews, also known as Beit Yisrael or Falashas, although New York's main body of black Israelites called themselves Ethiopian Jews from the 1930s until the 1960s. While black Israelites have never achieved large numbers, there have been several dozen black Israelite churches, synagogues, or small sects since 1889, and sect formation has followed three major waves with different characteristics in different times and places: Israelite Holiness churches in the South from 1890 to World War I, Israelite sects and synagogues of northern cities such as Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia in the 1920s, and Israelite sects in places such as Chicago, New York, and Miami from 1960 to 1980.

Black Israelites were part of a fertile alternative African American religious culture in places such as Chicago and Harlem in the 1920s, where numerous religious mystics, political radicals, root doctors, preachers, freemasons, and black nationalists congregated, shared ideas, and formed new churches, lodges, and religious organizations. Black Israelites of the 1920s arose in the same context and share influences and theological elements with early Black Muslims. By adopting Israelite or Muslim identities, African Americans were associating themselves with the "East" and thereby challenging the Eurocentric racism of the Jim Crow era.

Historically little interaction occurred between black Jews and other Jews, but there was a notable effort to integrate the Jewish communities of New York from 1964 to 1972. In recent years there has been a trend towards increasing observation of the beliefs and rituals of Judaism among the black Jews who practice Judaic rituals, while militant antiwhite black Israelites whose religions have no Judaic practices have outstripped the older movements in terms of members and notoriety.

Black Israelites led to the rise of Father Divine's (1882–1965) movement and the development of the Jamaican Rastafarian movement in the 1930s, which built on elements of their teachings. In addition, black Israelites developed an Afrocentric interpretation of biblical history that more popular Black Muslim groups incorporated into their teachings. African Americans and West Indians developed black Israelism as a transnational religion that borrowed liberally from English religious thought as well as European Freemasonry. Whereas Western thinkers since G. W. F. Hegel had claimed that Africa had no history, black Israelites placed Africa at the core of Western history and Western religious mythology by claiming that Africans and their descendents in the Americas were the progeny of the ancient Israelites. This transnational focus on Africa created transnational church networks and settlement attempts in Africa. Black Israelites settled in Ethiopia in 1930 and in Liberia in 1967. Early black Israelite churches spread their teachings to South Africa as early as 1903 and helped to create the African "Zionist" or "Ethiopian" churches that spread oppositional forms of Christianity and challenged European colonial rule.

BACKGROUND

At least four streams converged in the creation of black Israelite religions, beginning in the 1890s. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, millennial Protestant faiths among the English working class and "Anglo-Israelite" faiths among English elites innovated the basic idea that contemporary English Christians were direct descendents of the ancient Israelites. Although Anglo-Israelism originated as a European discourse justifying British imperialism, it later provided a compelling mythical narrative that African Americans were able to invert and use as an instrument of antiracism by arguing that it was they, and not the Anglo-Saxons, who were the chosen people. Second, Freemasonry helped to disseminate and elaborate these Anglo-Israelite ideas, and added its own esoteric mythology about the Israelites and the "Orient." African Americans founded their own Masonic traditions, starting with conformist Prince Hall Freemasonry, but evolving into more esoteric forms that conveyed romantic, mystical, Orientalist visions of Jewish and Islamic history. Third, Anglo-Israelite ideas entered the Holiness and later the Pentecostal movements. These movements in their inception were interracial, although they evolved segregated churches. Finally, just as oppressed English workers developed millennial religions with intense identification as the descendents of the Israelites, so too did the story of God's rescue of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage resonate in African American Protestantism. Identification with the Israelites inspired numerous slave rebellions and gave African Americans faith that God would uplift them as he had

uplifted the Hebrews in ancient times. Given how much African Americans shared with other practitioners of radical millennial Protestant faiths in the Atlantic world, it should not be surprising that theirs were not the only Israelite churches to arise in the 1890s. In 1895 Frank W. Sangfroid founded the Shiloh community north of Durham, North Carolina, and in 1903 Brother Benjamin founded the Israelite House of David in Benton Harbor, Michigan. Both were millennial Christian leaders who taught that Anglo-Saxons were the true Israelites. In summary, Anglo-Israelism, Freemasonry, the Holiness-Pentecostal movement, and intense identification with the ancient Israelites in nineteenth-century African American Christianity formed the backdrop for the rise of black Israelite faiths.[1]

LEADERS, BELIEFS, AND MOVEMENTS

The Pioneers

Bishop William Christian and the Church of the Living God

In the 1890s, the two pioneers of black Israelism, William Christian (b. 1856) and William Saunders Crowdy (1847–1908), both combined Holiness Christianity with Freemasonry and taught that the Israelites were black. Christian was a slave in Mississippi and began preaching at the age of 19 in rural Wrightsville, Arkansas. He preached for 13 years before he received a divine revelation telling him that he had been preaching the doctrine of men, not God, and then began preaching a new doctrine in 1888. In 1889, Bishop Christian founded a small group that he named the Christian Friendship Work, then the Church of God, and finally the Church of the Living God. Through these churches, and the various churches they spawned, Christian taught that the ancient Israelites were black, and that contemporary blacks were descended from the ancient Israelites. Using biblical proof texts in the same manner as the Anglo-Israelites, Christian taught that "the Adamic people, Hebrews, Jews, Israelites are black people…."[2] Christian's ability to retell biblical history and recast African Americans as the chosen people clearly struck a chord among those who had themselves experienced slavery only one generation earlier. Although Christian reserved blackness as the mark of the covenant and inverted the racial hierarchy of the Jim Crow South, he was not chauvinistic. Other races arose from intermarriage between black peoples of the covenant and lighter people outside the covenant, but anyone could rejoin the covenant by believing in his teachings. The Church of the Living God responded to segregation and the ideology of white supremacy with a courageous form of racial egalitarianism. Christian taught that Jesus was "colorless" because he had no human father and emphasized St. Paul's statement in his letter to the Galatians that "We are no longer Jews or Greeks or slaves or free men or even merely men or women, but we are all the same—we are Christians; we are one in Christ and all of God's promises to him belong to us" (Galatians 3:28). Christian's goal was to create a biracial Church, and to cement racial egalitarianism and racial harmony, he emphasized strict adherence to the Ten Commandments.

Like other Pentecostal churches, he introduced foot washing, regardless of race, into the church's ritual, violating the taboos of Jim Crow segregation.

Most of Christian's teachings and rituals resembled standard Baptist and Holiness practices, such as baptism by immersion, the use of the Lord's Prayer, and the use of unleavened bread and water for communion. The church had no Judaic ritual, but Masonic beliefs and rituals played a significant role in the church. Christian dedicated his 1916 book, *Poor Pilgrim's Work* to "all the Free Masons of the world," and believed that his own teachings were expressions of the teachings of Freemasonry. He wrote, "Free Mason religion is the true mode of religion; always was and always will be…."[3] Bishop Christian called himself "Chief," referred to his churches as "temples," and tried unsuccessfully to introduce Masonic dress among his impoverished followers. This combination of race pride, racial egalitarianism, Holiness Christianity, Freemasonry, and defiance of Jim Crow segregation was a potent mix, and Christian found himself incarcerated on several occasions. Nonetheless, the church spread rapidly throughout the South and Midwest, and by 1906 there were 68 branches and offshoots with 4,276 members in 12 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. The heart of the church was in the upper South, with 20 churches in Arkansas and 13 in Tennessee. By 1916 there were 192 churches with 11,635 members, and by 1926 there were 239 churches and 17,402 members, before declining to 215 churches and 9,636 adherents in 1936. Millinarianism, Anglo-Israelism, and Freemasonry began to decline in the twentieth century, and so Judaic Christianity no longer occupied such a central place in the popular imagination.[4]

Bishop William Saunders Crowdy

Bishop Christian's contemporary and counterpart in Holiness/Masonic/Israelite theology was Bishop William Saunders Crowdy, founder of the Church of God and Saints of Christ. Crowdy was born into slavery in 1847 in St. Mary's County, Maryland. He ran away after a fight with a white man in 1863 and joined the Union Army, serving as a cook. After he was discharged, he purchased 100 acres of land outside of Guthrie, Oklahoma, where he was a pillar of the community for 25 years, serving as a deacon in the local Baptist Church and becoming an active Prince Hall Freemason. At the time, Guthrie was the center of Prince Hall Freemasonry in the United States, and Crowdy was heavily influenced by Masonry's symbolism and eschatology. Around 1890 he moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where he worked for the Santa Fe Railroad as a cook in an employee hotel and married Lovey Yates Higgins before returning to Guthrie after the birth of their third child.

In 1893 Crowdy began to "act strangely" and to receive a series of visions and divine communications. He often did not know when people were talking to him but would sit staring for long periods of time. Sometimes his lips moved but no sounds came out, causing his wife to accuse him of drinking while she was not home and to forbid him from attending Masonic meetings. Crowdy was not inebriated, however, and had not attended his lodge meetings for some time; rather, he was

supposedly hearing the voice of God telling him to establish "the true church." These communications peaked when he was in his fields clearing ground for a new crop on September 13, 1893, and heard a voice telling him to run for his life. He fled into the forest where he fell into a deep sleep and had a dream in which there were several dirty tables covered in vomit, each inscribed with the name of an established church, such as Baptist and Methodist.[5] Then, a small, clean table with the words: "Church of God and Saints of Christ" descended from above. Later in the vision Crowdy received a set of rules, which became known as the Seven Keys, and formed the foundation of a new church based on biblical Judaism. In the final part of the vision, Crowdy was given a Bible, which he ate, signifying that the whole Bible was written in him.[6] Returning to the Santa Fe Railroad, Crowdy proselytized across the Midwest, gathering converts and founding the first tabernacle in Lawrence, Kansas, on November 5, 1896.[7] Crowdy soon established branches in New York, New Jersey, Michigan, Connecticut, and in cities like Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C., as well as many other cities before his death at the age of 61 in 1908.

Like Bishop Christian, Crowdy used biblical verses to show that the Israelites and the biblical patriarchs were black, although Crowdy included Jesus in that category as well. They both also taught that Asian and Native American peoples were descended from the wandering Lost Tribes of Israel. Both opposed racism and advocated a biracial church, and Crowdy, like Christian, taught obedience to the Ten Commandments, foot washing, and the use of unleavened bread for communion. Crowdy achieved some success in creating a multiracial church; he proselytized among whites as well as blacks, and the first Assistant Bishop of the church was a white grocer from Topeka, Kansas, named James M. Grove.

Crowdy's church acquired more Judaic practices as time passed. Prophet Crowdy believed that African Americans were descended from the ten Lost Tribes of Israel, and accordingly added Old Testament rites to Christian practices. As early as 1896, he was harassed in Chicago, Illinois, for teaching that Jesus was black and for teaching dietary laws regarding meat. By 1906 the church was observing the Jewish calendar and feast days, observing the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday, and using some Hebrew. They put special emphasis on a week-long observance of Passover, even going as far as to smear their doors with blood in commemoration of the biblical story that the Angel of Death passed over the homes of the Israelites while killing the first born sons of the Egyptians as the culmination of the plagues that God sent to free the Israelites from Egypt.[8] In Chicago, Crowdy became known as "the black Elijah" and outsiders called his followers "Black Jews."

But while the Church of God and Saints of Christ (CGSC) took on the practices of biblical Judaism based on the Old Testament, their ritual was based on interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, not on knowledge of contemporary Jewish ritual, which derives from the centuries of oral law created after the First Temple was destroyed.[9] In addition, the Church retained important elements of Christianity: new members had to repent for their sins, be baptized by immersion, confess faith in Jesus, and receive unleavened bread and water as a sacrament. As the decades progressed, the CGSC gradually deemphasized the divinity of Jesus, so that today the CGSC teaches

that Jesus Christ was a Hebrew prophet, not the Messiah; a contemporary member says, "We believe in his [Jesus's] teachings and his way of life because his religion was of the Patriarchs.… There was nothing Christian about Jesus."[10]

Crowdy's CGSC incorporated even more Masonic symbolism than did Bishop Christian's Church of the Living God, and many of Crowdy's disciples, such as H.Z. Plummer and Levi Solomon Plummer, were Masons. Crowdy was an active Mason who had a Masonic symbol placed on his tombstone. The CGSC incorporated many elements similar to Masonic ones, such as sashes, crowns, mortar boards, swords, bugles, special handshakes, greetings, and marches, as well as symbols such as the All Seeing Eye God, The Seven Keys, and the ritual use of the colors blue and brown.[11]

After Crowdy's death in 1908, the church he founded split into two sections, with the Western half splitting again in 1923. Crowdy sent missionaries to South Africa beginning in 1903, and the church established an outpost in Jamaica in 1920. The church expanded rapidly, growing from 94 tabernacles and 3,311 members in 1916 to 213 tabernacles in 27 states with 37,084 members in 1936. By 1988 there were only 60 tabernacles, yet despite the decline, Crowdy's CGSC remains one of the largest and most successful of the black Israelite sects.[12]

Ethiopianism and Israelite Pioneers

The black Israelite theology of Bishops Christian and Crowdy was changed and augmented by their successors. Many of the black Israelite churches that arose in the first decade of the twentieth century added a focus on Ethiopia as the place of origin of Christianity or the ancient Hebrews. African American Christians had long found inspiration in Psalms 68:31: "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." In the early twentieth century, Ethiopia rose in prominence in the African American imagination due to its inspiring victory over Italy in the 1896 Battle of Adowa, which preserved its status as the only African country to resist colonization. Later, Ethiopia would capture the world's imagination again with the crowning of Ras Tafari Makonnen as Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1930.

Father Edward D. Smith

In addition to Ethiopianism, the small cluster of Ethiopianist Israelite churches that arose in the early twentieth century emphasized foot washing, baptism by immersion, racial egalitarianism, and strict adherence to the Ten Commandments. The earliest was Father Edward D. Smith's Triumph the Church and Kingdom of God in Christ, started in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1902. Smith taught a Pentecostal faith of entire sanctification based on faith in Christ and baptism by the fire of spirit through glossolalia (speaking in tongues). In 1920 Smith was rumored to have left for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, leaving behind in the United States several successors.[13]

Bishop R.A.R. Johnson

Another Ethiopianist Israelite pioneer was R.A.R. Johnson, who was born in New Bern, North Carolina. Johnson was an itinerant preacher who founded a church called Abyssinia before World War I. In 1914 Johnson founded the House of God, Holy Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth, the House of Prayer for All People in Beaufort, South Carolina. The church was incorporated in 1918 and the same year spread to Washington, D.C. Soon the movement spread to the West Indies, West Africa, and even South India. Johnson played a role in the germination of Rastafarianism, which built on its black Israelite predecessors and emerged in Jamaica in the early 1930s. Johnson preached 24 principles, including baptism by immersion, foot washing, women ministers, equality of races in the church, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit in accordance with Holiness practices. The church also observed some Jewish festivals, keeping the Sabbath on Saturday and abstaining from Christmas and Easter. Women wore white, including white headdresses, from Passover in the spring to Sukkoth, the fall harvest festival.[14]

WWI–1930 The Second Wave: From Black Israelism to Black Judaism

The Great Migration saw the shift of large numbers of African Americans from the South to Northern cities, which brought African Americans in contact with European Jews and other immigrants. Large concentrations of African American and West Indian migrants in cities such as New York, Chicago, and Detroit provided fertile ground for developing new churches, consumer products, clubs, and political associations. Black nationalism thrived, and a class of mystics, root doctors, and medicine men calling themselves "Professors of Oriental and African Mystic Science" plied their wares, providing a crucial network for the creation of new forms of black Israelism, Black Islam, New Thought, and Rastafarianism. In response to these new conditions, black Israelism took on different forms: building on the Holiness-Pentecostal Judaic Christianity of the pioneer generation, the new crop of black Israelisms adopted more of the forms and symbols of European Judaism, but combined this new orthodoxy with Freemasonry, Spiritualism, New Thought, a heightened millennial eschatology, and a greater emphasis on black nationalism and Ethiopia. The second wave of black Israelite churches built upon the foundation laid by the pioneers, particularly Bishop Crowdy. Crowdy had preached in Chicago in 1896 and again in 1898, establishing a small following, and Bishop Christian's Church of the Living God also had a congregation there by 1900. Bishop Crowdy laid the groundwork for black Israelism in New York when he began preaching there in 1899, attracting 1,000 followers in only a matter of months. By 1906 Crowdy's CGSC had seven congregations in New York state with 13 more in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

George W. Hurley and the Universal Hagar's Spiritual Church

In 1919 George W. Hurley, a Georgia-born college graduate, moved to Detroit and joined Father Smith's Triumph the Church and Kingdom of God in Christ, soon rising to attain the title of "Presiding Prince of Michigan." In 1923 Hurley followed a vision and founded his own church, which was known as the Universal Hagar's Spiritual Church. Hurley's eschatology was extremely complex, integrating esoteric elements from Spiritualism, Freemasonry, Theosophy, black Israelism, Garveyism, Eastern religions, astrology, hoodoo, and the occult. He taught that all human civilization and language derived from Ethiopians, who were also the original humans, the original Hebrews, and God's chosen people. He claimed Buddha, Jesus, St. Paul, and all the biblical patriarchs as Ethiopians and taught that whites were descendents of Cain. Christianity was a fake religion that came from witchcraft and was part of white supremacy from slavery until Jim Crow. Hurley shared much in common with Black Muslims who were active in Detroit in the same years, including a reliance on Eva and Levi Dowling's Theosophical text, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ,* written in 1908. That text became the first half of Noble Drew Ali's *Holy Koran,* the foundational text of the Moorish Science Temple, the most important early Black Muslim group. Much of Hurley's rich racial mythology also presages the teachings of the Nation of Islam, which built on Drew Ali's work and emerged in Detroit in the early 1930s. Beginning in 1933, Hurley taught that he was the "black God" of the Aquarian Age, who had superceded Jesus Christ. Like many other black Israelite leaders influenced by New Thought, he taught that God resided inside him and could potentially reside inside those who believed in him. New Thought was a philosophy of positive thinking that had developed in nineteenth-century New England and taught that channeling God's spirit inside oneself would overcome troubles and guarantee salvation.[15] Hurley died in 1943, but the Universal Hagar's Spiritual Church continued to grow, from 30 congregations in 1938 to 34 in 1950 and 41 in 1965 before declining to 35 in 1980. The church is concentrated in Detroit, greater New York–New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, with a few chapters in the Southeast and West.[16]

Rabbi Horace and David ben Itzoch

The second wave of black Israelism in Chicago began with the appearance of Rabbi Horace in 1910, who said he was born in Ethiopia, but who was also reported to have been from the South or from Somalia. Horace wore long white robes and carried a staff, and he founded a church known as the Congregation of Israel. Horace used a Jewish prayer shawl, tefillin, and an Ashkenazi Hebrew prayer book and observed the Passover by eating unleavened matzah in a sukkah, an outdoor booth normally used during the fall holiday of Sukkot. He taught that Adam was black and that everyone on earth was once Jewish, but that God enslaved them for forsaking their religion. Someday God would lead the followers of Judaism out of the Egypt of American exile and back to happiness in Palestine.[17]

One of Rabbi Horace's students was named David ben Itzoch. He said he was born in Palestine and traveled widely in Africa, and he alleged that he had been discriminated against by white Jews who rejected him because of his race. He planned to start "The International Peace and Brotherly Love Movement," featuring a school that would teach languages, Abyssinian history, and Masonic subjects. Rabbi ben Itzoch taught that the Black Jews were the "right Jew," but hoped for recognition from and solidarity with the white Jew as well as the "Chinese Jew, the Japanese Jew, and the red Jew." He hoped to "give my people the religion they ought to have, that religion that our forefathers had given us by the God of the Universe." In 1914 Rabbi ben Itzoch was revealed to be Fredrick Douglass Berger, an African American from Iowa who spoke 22 languages and had been arrested for the statutory rape of a 14-year-old girl. In the ensuing scandal his plans for the school fizzled.[18]

Grover C. Redding and the "Star Order of Ethiopia"

In 1919 Chicago, Grover C. Redding and a Welsh-born associate of Rabbi Horace named R.D. Jonas founded an offshoot of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) named the "Star Order of Ethiopia." Redding used Rabbi Horace and Rabbi ben Itzoch's teaching that African Americans were, in fact, Ethiopian Jews. He taught that the words "Negro" and "Nigger" had no historical validity and that "Ethiopian" was "our birthright, our ancient honorable name." His organization was not as much religious as it was nationalistic, aimed primarily at a settlement scheme to send African Americans to Ethiopia. On June 20, 1920, a parade of the organization turned violent when Redding and a follower burned an American flag, and Redding shot a spectator who objected to the desecration of the flag. Another bystander was killed, and two more people were wounded by gunfire. Redding and a follower, Oscar McGavick, were found guilty of murder and executed on June 24, 1921.[19]

Elder Warien Roberson and the Ever Live and Never Die Society

The most popular and controversial of the WWI-era black Israelite leaders was Warien Roberson (aka Warren Robinson), who founded a black Israelite group in 1917 called the "Temple of the Gospel of the Kingdom," or the "Ever Live and Never Die Society," or simply the "Black Jews." The group's "ancient Hebrew doctrine" was "Believe in Jesus; believe that Roberson was the Messiah, the Christ; then you are saved and will never die."[20] Roberson combined the black Israelite beliefs of Bishop Crowdy's church with elements common to second-wave Black Jews: Garveyite nationalism, a focus on Ethiopia, and some Ashkenazi Jewish ritual, beliefs, and prayer.

He started as a "Holy Roller" preacher in Norfolk, Virginia, around the turn of the century, then moved to Philadelphia and New Jersey, then he was forced to flee to

Harlem to avoid a burglary conviction. He organized a black Israelite congregation in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1912, which grew to 300 members. He established another congregation in Harlem in 1917, before he was arrested and served three of the five years of his sentence on an outstanding burglary charge. Roberson taught that African Americans were descendents of Esau and had been "swindled" out of their rightful heritage by Jacob, the ancestor of modern Jews. His proof that African Americans were God's chosen people was that "we who are black worship Christ; Christ was a Jew; therefore we are Black Jews."[21] The group retained practices common to Holiness Protestantism, such as baptism by immersion. The Temple of the Gospel of the Kingdom opened up businesses in Harlem and its members tithed all their earnings to the church and lived in communal "heavens" in Harlem and Atlantic City. To save money, they slept in chairs or on the floor, and raised money by soliciting as the Relief Association of Hebrew Settlement Workers. Male members grew beards, sometimes wore long white robes and black pillbox skull caps, and sometimes carried a shepherd's crook, just like Chicago's Rabbi Horace.

Elder Roberson was released from prison and returned to Harlem as a martyred Messiah in 1923. Under his charismatic leadership, the group spread to Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, and Absecon, New Jersey, while his excesses grew. While Roberson instructed his followers in celibacy and chastity, he created a special group of young, handsome, well-educated male followers to seduce attractive and wealthy young women to join a "Virgin Class" whose members would bear his children. He created another cadre, this time of elderly men, who grew their beards and learned the "language and mannerisms of Jews" from a hired Jewish instructor in order to solicit funds from Jews. The Israelite Messiah drove a chauffeured Pierce-Arrow automobile, always accompanied by a bodyguard and several female consorts.

Roberson's heavens began to collapse when an investigation by a New York City welfare agent led to a federal grand jury indictment and the arrest of Roberson and his followers on charges of statutory rape and violation of the Mann Act, transporting women across state lines for immoral purposes. They also uncovered a "baby farm" in New Jersey, where 12 children from six months to six years of age were discovered, along with their young mothers, ranging in age from 17 to 23. Another facility was uncovered where children were subjected to horrific child abuse. Roberson pled guilty and served about a year in prison. Upon his release he realized that he was ill, and he developed a teaching that he would rise three days after he fell "asleep," or he would "rest" for 60 days before rising, destroying the earth, and founding his heavenly kingdom 99 million miles above the sun. His true believers, the "saints," would witness the destruction of those who had rejected Roberson as the messiah while bathing in the "Seas of Heavenly Rest." Elder Roberson passed away on June 18, 1931, and when he failed to rise, his wife, Fanny Roberson, absconded with the group's fortune, estimated at $8 million. The Live Ever, Die Never Society rapidly disintegrated, but its members entered other groups and in elements of theology, organization, and style it presaged Father Divine's movement of the 1930s and Ben Ammi's Chicago-based Black Hebrew movement in the 1960s.[22]

Bishop Hickerson, aka The Rev. St. Bishop The Vine

One of the significant ways in which the newer black Israelite movements differed from Bishop Crowdy's earlier movement was that the 1920s Harlem Israelite movements, like Father Hurley's movement in Detroit, often centered around the New Thought idea that God dwells inside every individual. The primary exponent of the idea in Harlem was George Hickerson, a street corner preacher who also was known as "The Rev. St. Bishop The Vine" and "Bishop Eshof Bendoved." Hickerson was a Southern-born preacher in the Holiness tradition, who collaborated with George Baker, known as "The Messenger" and later as Father Divine, and Samuel Morris. In 1907 Morris took the name Father Jehovia and preached that he was God, based on a reading of 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 ("Do you know that you are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"). The trio of Hickerson, Baker, and Morris lived together and held church services in Baltimore, Maryland, from 1908 to 1912, until Hickerson and Baker decided that if God dwelled inside Morris, he could dwell inside them as well.

Hickerson went to Harlem and preached a variant of the "indwelling God" theology, becoming a critical and colorful figure in the development of Black Judaism in Harlem. He gathered a following of auxiliary gods with colorful names such as Father Paul, Father Joshua, Steamboat Bill, Father Obey, Saint Peter, and Elijah of the Fiery Chariot.[23] By 1914 Hickerson had founded The Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth in Harlem, using the same name that Christian used in 1889 and that Bishop Johnson had used in 1914. He identified himself as an Ethiopian and taught a variation of New Thought—one of his chants was "God in you, God in me, You God, I God, Everybody be God." This theology of the indwelling God became the heart of the "Jewish" part of second-stage Black Jewish theology. George Baker, the future Father Divine, arrived in New York in 1915 and studied Hickerson's teachings and organization. In the early 1930s, an anthropologist reported that Father Divine's "reputedly 'Jewish' doctrine was simply 'God is within man.'"[24] The indwelling God theology was also important in the movements of Hickerson's black Israelite students and colleagues, as we see below.

Rabbi Arnold Josiah Ford

The infusion of West Indians into Harlem after World War I brought with it two leaders who would help to establish a stream of black Judaism that, while still incorporating a heterodox mix of Theosophy, conjuring (African American folk wisdom and healing practices), and Freemasonry, had less-pronounced Christian elements and more emphasis on the rituals and worship of conventional Judaism. West Indians Arnold Josiah Ford and Wentworth Arthur Matthew each collaborated with African Americans in Harlem and attracted followers of both African American and West Indian backgrounds to their versions of "black Judaism" beginning in the 1920s.

Ford was the most erudite and in some ways the most remarkable of the second-generation black Israelite leaders. He was born in Bridgetown, Barbados, in 1877, the son of an evangelical Methodist preacher. He joined the British Navy in 1899,

and later studied music in London, England, before beginning a career as a musician in New York in 1912. He joined political causes, such as the socialist African Blood Brotherhood, and became an intimate of Garvey. He was an esteemed member of the UNIA and the leader of its choir, in which capacity he penned many Garveyite hymns.

In the Garvey movement and in his Masonic lodge, Ford met people interested in black Israelite ideas, including a Jamaican-born former seaman named Samuel Valentine, the peripatetic Bishop St. John the Vine, and a peddler by the name of Mordecai Herman. Herman spoke some Yiddish and sold Jewish liturgical items in Jewish neighborhoods in New York. He started an Israelite-Masonic organization variously known as the Moorish Zionist Movement or the Cushim Congregation in July 1921, which lasted only a year. Ford became involved with Herman as a business partner, and then they collaborated with Valentine by holding classes in Hebrew language and Israelite history every Sunday at Garvey's Liberty Hall.

Ford was expelled from the Garvey movement in 1923 amidst rumors that he mismanaged the choir's payroll, and he joined Valentine and Herman in forming a synagogue that they called the Moorish Zionist Temple. Its name is strikingly similar to Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple and indicates how closely related black Israelites of the 1920s were to their better-known black Islamic siblings. Ford took the title Rabbi and attracted the support of white Jews, while Valentine was the head of their religious school, called Talmud Torah Beth Zion. Conflict between Herman and Ford led Ford and Valentine to leave and start their own congregation in 1924, which they called Beth B'nai Abraham (BBA). The congregation flourished in the 1920s under Ford's charismatic leadership and musical guidance.

Ford's teachings were highly original—rather than teaching that the ancient Hebrews were from Ethiopia, as did many of his contemporaries, Ford preached that the Hebrews had come from Nigeria and migrated eastward through Carthage, Egypt, and Palestine. Ford claimed that his mother was Carthaginian and that when he observed Jews in Harlem he realized that he was, in fact, Jewish. He was also innovative in that he adopted many Jewish rituals and liturgical practices, such as the use of a Torah scroll, prayer shawls, skull caps, and Hebrew prayer books. He employed European Jews as religious teachers and mixed Jewish rituals with Protestant customs such as testifying. But he also included elements of Islam in his practice, writing prayers to "Allah" and observing the fast of Ramadan. There was an esoteric, mystical, and theosophical cast to Ford's teaching, and he was a spell-binding orator in addition to being a talented musician, composer, and artist.

The BBA hit troubles in 1928 amid new allegation of Ford's financial misconduct and philandering, and Valentine led a schismatic group that used Yiddish and adhered more closely to conventional Judaism. Some members of this group assimilated into the mainstream Jewish community, attending Jewish schools and joining conventional Jewish congregations. Ford, meanwhile, founded a subsidiary of the BBA in the 1920s called the Aurienoth Club whose purpose was to encourage the migration of black people to an as yet-to-be-determined Promised Land. The club attracted 600 dues-paying members in Harlem and Cleveland, Ohio, and combined

Garveyism with race-conscious socialism. After Ethiopian notables toured the United States in 1930 promoting African American emigration to Ethiopia, Ford and three followers left for Ethiopia in 1930, intent on negotiating a settlement agreement that would give his followers land, livestock, and the support of the government.

The settlement scheme went poorly—Ford was unable to deliver on his promises, efforts to farm failed, and the indigenous Ethiopian Jews rejected a Torah that Ford had brought for them, as it was written in Hebrew instead of Ge'ez. Before long, most of the 30 supporters who followed Ford to Ethiopia returned to the United States. Ford relied on his musical talents, playing dance music in the only nightclub in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and occasionally playing in Haile Selassie's palace. His home became a hub for the small African American expatriate community in the capital city. Ford died of a heart attack in September 1935, just before Italy invaded and conquered Ethiopia.[25]

Rabbi Wentworth Arthur Matthew

Rabbi Matthew founded one of the best-known and longest-lasting black Israelite traditions in 1919 and created an esoteric, syncretic faith much like Father Hurley's. Matthew was influenced by Ford, and his faith bore more outward resemblances to Jewish practices, but the content of the faith was a diverse mix of Freemasonry, Judaism, black Israelism, Theosophy, New Thought, conjuring, Jewish mysticism or cabbala, and Holiness-Pentecostal Christianity. Matthew trained dozens of other rabbis, though his movement never attained large numbers of followers or congregations. He was born in 1892 on St. Kitts in the British West Indies, although from 1937 until his death in 1972 he claimed that he was born in Lagos, Nigeria, to an Ethiopian Falasha father and a West Indian mother. As a young man he was a boxer, wrestler, and carpenter, immigrating to New York in 1913. He studied theology in Harlem and was ordained as a minister, founding The Commandment Keepers Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth in 1919. He appended the words "and the Faith of Jesus Christ" when he incorporated with the State of New York in 1921. Matthew learned from both Bishop Hickerson (aka Bishop St. John the Vine) and Bishop R.A.R. Johnson. Indeed, Hickerson claimed that he taught Hebrew to Rabbi Ford and that Rabbi Ford then taught Rabbi Matthew "everything he knows about Hebrew."[26] Like Roberson and Father Divine, Matthew subscribed to Hickerson's New Thought doctrine that God dwelled inside the individual. Matthew studied conjuring in Virginia and used the cabbalistic grimoire of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* (c. 1900) to create Hebrew spells and magical diagrams that would compel God to enter his body and fill him with God's power. This belief in God manifesting inside the individual was what was most distinctively "Jewish" about the theology of 1920s black Israelites.[27]

As the 1920s progressed, Matthew followed Rabbi Ford's example by adding Jewish rituals to the hymns and styles of Spiritualist and Sanctified (black Pentecostal)

churches. The Commandment Keepers began to use prayer shawls and skull caps, chant the *shema* prayer, and observe Rosh Hashanah, Passover, Simchat Torah, and Yom Kippur. They also used many elements not commonly found in Judaism, including foot washing, incense, special oils, and what Matthew called his "cabbalistic science," a mixture of conjuring, New Thought, and cabbala.

Like black Israelites before him, Matthew created a Masonic auxiliary of his congregation, launching The Royal Order of Ethiopian Hebrews, the Sons and Daughters of Culture, Inc., in 1924. The Royal Order used Masonic forms to transmit Matthew's black Israelite teachings, and this became an important means to increase the organization's visibility and spread its message to lodges across the country.

Matthew resisted Ford's pleas to aid him in his Ethiopian settlement effort, but Ford did manage to procure a certificate of ordination for Matthew from the Ethiopian Coptic Church. With Ford's demise and the dissolution of his synagogue, Matthew inherited most of his followers as well as the mantle of leadership of New York's Black Jews. In the 1930s Matthew's Commandment Keepers began to identify as "Negro Jews," and Matthew excised references to Jesus Christ from his "Ethiopian Hebrew Rabbbinical College." Matthew taught that all blacks were descendents of the ten Lost Tribes of Israel and that white Jews were usurpers who descended from Edom. In the 1930s Matthew had 250 active members and 650 total members in New York, with six affiliated black Israelite congregations in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. In addition to training his own students, Matthew networked with rabbis from black Israelite churches such as the CGSC, as well as with mainstream Pentecostal ministers. He often claimed to be the chief rabbi of the "Black Jews in the Western Hemisphere," yet he did not even exert dominion over all the black Jews in New York. His students and the congregations they formed did not always defer to him, and a number of black Jews sought closer ties with the white Jewish community against his wishes in the 1960s in an organization called *Hatzaad Harishon.*

In 1970, Rabbi Matthew's student L.A. McKethan, who was then using the name Rabbi Levy Ben Levy, formed an "International Israelite Board of Rabbis, Inc.," with four other rabbis. Rabbi Matthew suffered a stroke and the partial loss of his vision in the early 1970s and passed away on December 3, 1973. Levy Ben Levy, now calling himself the "Chief Rabbi," reformed the Commandment Keeper's Masonic offshoot, the "Royal Order of Ethiopian Hebrews," and used it as a means of training new clergy. By 1986 there were 34 Ben Levy trained rabbis associated with the International Israelite Board of Rabbis in the New York metropolitan area, Illinois, Mississippi, and the West Indies. In addition, there were seven nonaffiliated "Talmudic Rabbis," in the New York area, most of whom were students of Rabbi Matthew.[28]

Prince Yaakov Nasi and B'Nai Kohol Haychol Hatorah

There were other second-generation black Israelite groups independent of Rabbi Matthew's Commandment Keepers that practiced more Orientalist, less Judaic, and more militant streams of black Israelism. One such movement was B'Nai Kohol

Haychol Hatorah, founded by Prince Yaakov Nasi by the 1940s. Nasi's male followers wore turbans and removed their shoes in their place of worship. Not much is known about the inner workings of the group, but at some point they spawned an offshoot called B'Nai Zaken, which emerged in New York and spread to Chicago, contributing a masculinist ideology and an emphasis on emigration to the Chicago Israelite scene. They practiced martial arts and wore turbans and nose rings. Through their male chauvinism, their millennialism, their black racialism, and their advocacy of emigration, the B'Nai Zaken had a major influence on the third-generation movements that arose in Chicago in the 1960s.[29]

Second-Generation Israelite Movements in Philadelphia

Prophet Crowdy, Elder Roberson, Mordecai Herman, and Rabbi Matthew all attracted followings in Philadelphia, but the city also produced its own black Israelite movements. Frank S. Cherry worked as a seaman and a railway worker, and, though he was described as being a dark-skinned African American from the Deep South, he claimed to be visiting from a foreign country. After Jesus supposedly appeared to him in a vision, he founded the Church of the Living God in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1886. He arrived in Philadelphia and became a prophet and heir to Father Edward D. Smith's Triumph the Church and Kingdom of God in Christ after Smith's departure for Ethiopia in 1920. Cherry's followers became known as Black Jews, and Cherry modified the costume and teachings of Bishop Crowdy's CGSC.

He was unusual among black Israelite leaders in that he accepted the collection of Jewish law known as the Talmud as the ultimate authority on religious matters. Like many black Israelites and black Muslims, Cherry stigmatized Southern black culture, forbidding his followers to eat pork, drink heavily, or observe Christian holidays. He also separated himself from African American Christianity by forbidding pianos, public collections, emotional expression in worship, or speaking in tongues. The congregation had a 300-seat auditorium where they held services on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings, with Sabbath services lasting all day Saturday. Services began and ended with a prayer said while facing east, and the tenor of the services was similar to Holiness Christianity.

Prophet Cherry's theology was strongly millenarian, black nationalist, and idiosyncratic. He emphasized strict adherence to the Ten Commandments, and his followers believed in a square earth surrounded by three layers of heaven. He claimed that Jesus was black and would return in the year 2000 and raise all the saints who obeyed the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Prophet Cherry. Cherry denigrated white Jews as interlopers and frauds and vilified them for denying the divinity of Jesus. Cherry's Church of the Living God was also strongly nationalistic, and like Rabbis Matthew, Ford, and other African American Israelite and Islamic leaders, Cherry was a supporter of Garvey, even speaking at a meeting of the UNIA in Philadelphia. Prophet Cherry passed away in 1963 and was succeeded by his son Prince Benjamin F. Cherry.[30]

Abel Respes and "Orthodox" Black Judaism

Very few black Israelites have actually converted to conventional Judaism. Abel Respes, on the other hand, led his entire congregation through a conversion process. Respes was born in Philadelphia in 1919 to a father who was involved in black Israelite movements and the pro-Japanese Ethiopian Pacific Movement. At the age of 13 he was struck by lightening but was unhurt, and in 1948 he said that he saw men whose faces "shone like the sun" and heard God's voice in his dreams. He began taking classes at a Bible school run by Prophet Cherry's church in 1949, but soon left them, dismayed at the Christian nature of their teachings and their lack of Judaic practices. He began preaching on the street and joined a black Israelite leader named Bishop Murphy. Respes preached his black Israelite doctrine on local radio in the mid-1950s, which attracted new followers. Desiring a place to raise their children in as Judaic an environment as possible, the group purchased land in the suburbs, beginning in 1960, first at Mays Landing, New Jersey, and then in Hammonton, New Jersey. Respes' desired destination, however, was Israel. He advocated migration to Israel as early as 1952 and even wrote President Dwight D. Eisenhower requesting assistance in the endeavor. In 1970 he and a group of 17 congregants visited Israel, expressed their desire to raise their children in Israel, and offered to undergo formal conversion to Judaism if it would ease their acceptance in Israel.

Respes was unique among black Israelite leaders because he rejected all theological and ritual elements of Christianity and practiced the rituals of normative Judaism as much as possible. He rejected the concepts of the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, or the idea of reward in the afterlife. Respes spurned black nationalism and the ritual forms of African American Christianity, which lost him members who accused him of espousing a "white man's" religion. But Respes did teach a racially exclusive black Israelite history in which the original Hebrew Israelites were black, were dispersed into Africa, broke their covenant with God and were punished with slavery. White Jews were converts to Judaism, and he rejected the Talmud, the collection of law that underpins Judaism, as being of European origin. Yet no matter his historical beliefs, he believed in the unity of the Jewish people across racial lines and spoke out on the topic in the midst of tensions between black and white Jews in the late 1960s.

After the trip to Israel, Respes and his congregation came to the attention of Jewish rabbis in New York who had formed a committee to improve relations with black Jews. Respes and his entire congregation underwent a conversion supervised by Rabbi Isaac Trainin of the New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies in 1972, becoming the first black Israelite group to do so. Although they underwent the conversion process, they continued to believe and practice their own distinctive form of "orthodox" Black Judaism.[31]

Third Generation Movements: 1960–1980

By the 1960s, black Northern ghettos had changed considerably in the half century since African Americans began their northern trek during the Great Migration,

and the versions of black Israelism that they produced changed as well. Rabbi Matthew's Ethiopian Hebrew Commandment Keepers tradition continued, with its Ashkenazi Jewish-flavored ritual and liturgy, but with the exodus of white Jews from inner cities to the suburbs, the prevalence of European Jewish culture, rituals, food customs, and language that was common among 1920s black Israelite movements declined. While many of the early movements adopted some Jewish rituals and liturgy, the new movements bore little resemblance to Judaism and often centered on a man who was worshipped as a messiah. Whereas many of the early movements included some white members, the new black Israelite movements wielded their faith as a form of black militancy that was racially charged and often antiwhite. Many rejected the name "Jew" for "Hebrew" or "Israelite." Rather than adopting the yarmulkes and prayer shawls of the earlier generation, this generation was more prone to adopt turbans, robes, and other signifiers of Africa and the Bible. There also was a new hypermasculine patriarchy among the new Israelite movements, with some emphasizing female submissiveness and even polygamy. The 1960s movements saw black Israelism as a highly political answer to the racism, oppression, and hopelessness of African American inner cities, and many developed emigration programs, retreating to the countryside or emigrating to Africa and Israel in order to wait out the coming Armageddon.

The Original African Hebrew Israelites

Although Rabbi Respes abandoned his attempt to immigrate to Israel, another group did, becoming one of the most visible black Israelite groups in the process. The Original African Hebrew Israelites, now headquartered in Dimona, Israel, came from a rich tradition of black Israelite groups that arose in Chicago in the late 1930s. There were a number of black Israelite groups in Chicago composed mainly of followers of Elder Roberson and rabbis ordained by Rabbi Matthew in Harlem. Joseph Lazarus, a follower of Roberson's, had joined forces with Henry Brown, originally of Tennessee, to form the True Ethiopian Foundation in the 1930s, affiliating with Rabbi Matthew by 1938 and starting the Congregation of Aethiopian Hebrews. Brown received his ordination from Rabbi Matthew in 1947, becoming known as Rabbi Abihu Reuben, and together he and Lazarus instructed succeeding generations of Israelite movements. The black Israelite leader who adhered most closely to Jewish ritual was Rabbi Robert Devine. Devine was born in Mississippi, joined the Congregation of Ethiopian Hebrews in the late 1930s, served in the American military during World War II and studied with Rabbi Reuben before founding his own synagogue.

The South Side of Chicago is more notable, however, for being a place that supported the growth of a number of Israelite movements inspired by the teachings of the Harlem group but much less Judaic and much more militant in character. These groups also were able to cooperate with one another, creating a remarkably diverse and broad array of overlapping movements that were increasingly militant, millenarian, focused on migration in expectation of Armageddon, and centered on

charismatic leaders. This was the culture that bred the group that is now centered in Dimona, Israel.

One of these movements was the Negro Israelite Bible Class of Prophet Lucius Casey in the 1940s, which resulted in the establishment of a farming community outside of Ullin, Illinois, that still exists. Another was the House of Judah Congregation of Black Hebrew Israelites, founded in 1960 by a follower of Casey's named Prophet William A. Lewis who was originally from Alabama and created a rural settlement near Lacota, Michigan, that was bound together by strict discipline and corporal punishment. Another important figure who later became a prominent leader of the Original African Hebrew Israelites was Shaliach Ben Yehuda, born Louis Bryant in Indiana in 1927, who began preaching black Israelite ideas in 1953 after joining the Brotherhood of the Church of God in Christ. Shaliach developed a close relationship with a number of black Israelite leaders. His contacts included Prince Amazah ben Israel, born Frederick Walters, whose Hebrew School was raided in 1968, uncovering guns, ammunition, and 40 members. Another group called itself the Righteous Branch of African Hebrews, and another called The Camp of the Lost and Found Sheep of the House of Israel was led by Brother Asiel ben Israel. In addition, Brother Daniel taught Hebrew to the remnants of Prophet Casey's congregation, and Rabbi Eliahu Abraham ran the East Indian Synagogue of Ethiopian Hebrews.

The future founder of the Dimona Black Hebrews, Ben Carter, became interested in Black Judaism around the age of 24 and began attending meetings of different black Israelite groups in Chicago, receiving the name Ben Ammi from Rabbi Reuben of the Congregation of Ethiopian Hebrews. Carter saw a need to unify the dizzying array of Israelite groups in the city of Chicago, so he organized the A-Beta Hebrew Israel Cultural Center in 1963. A-Beta, or Aleph-Beta as it was sometimes known, brought together a wide range of Israelite teachers and practitioners, but the more traditional ones were soon repelled by the talk of emigration, apocalypse, and millennialism that permeated the group. Meanwhile, Carter aroused the enmity of many other black Israelite groups, who accused him of stealing their members and their secrets.

Believing the coming of the millennium would be presaged by the return of the Hebrews to the land of Israel, Ben Ammi led an exodus to the country of Liberia in West Africa, in July 1967, and by the end of the year 160 black Israelites had joined him there. The settlement soon experienced social and economic difficulties and ran afoul of the Liberian government. Meanwhile, Carter strengthened his grip on the leadership of the group and in 1968 visited Israel, scouting a possible move. In 1969 the Liberian government declared them undesirables and ordered them to leave. A total of 48 Hebrew Israelites immigrated to Israel in 1969, declaring their intention to stay under Israel's Law of Return, which grants automatic citizenship to any Jew. Despite an uncertain legal status and occasional deportations, the Hebrew Israelites flourished and multiplied in Israel, living communally, practicing polygamy, making their own clothes, providing their own health care, eating vegan food, and worshipping their messiah, Ben Ammi. The Hebrew Israelites themselves

do not allow their members to be counted, but by 1985 the Israeli government estimated that 2500 Hebrew Israelites lived in the Negev Desert towns of Dimona, Arad, and Mitzpeh Ramon. Hebrew Israelites returning to the United States developed congregations and businesses such as vegan restaurants in cities such as Chicago, Washington D.C., and Atlanta. In 1990, after they had spent 21 years in Israel on expired tourist visas, the Israeli government began a process of normalization intended to lead to full Israeli citizenship for the Hebrew Israelites.[32]

Yahweh Ben Yahweh and the Temple of Love

The largest of the third generation black Israelite movements was the Temple of Love group of Yahweh Ben Yahweh, which grew to 20,000 members and had at least $9 million in assets from its founding in 1979 until the imprisonment of its founder in 1990. Born Hulon Mitchell Jr. in Oklahoma on October 27, 1935, Yahweh Ben Yahweh is a college graduate who served in the Air Force, attended law school, and worked for the NAACP before he became a Black Muslim and a radio evangelist in Georgia during the 1970s. Towards the end of the decade, he became an admirer of Ben Ammi's Hebrew Israelites and established his own Hebrew Israelite congregation. He adopted the name Brother Moses Israel and developed virulent antiwhite doctrines. Mitchell established a national headquarters in Miami, Florida, and began an aggressive entrepreneurial enterprise, marketing hair care products, records, books, sodas, and T-shirts, under the brand name "Yahweh." The group expanded throughout the country, and followers dressed in white, making them highly visible. Simultaneously, Brother Moses taught that he was the Messiah and called himself Yahweh Ben Yahweh. While he was gaining increasing prominence and political recognition in Miami, he used tactics of murder, terror, and intimidation to facilitate the expansion of his enterprises. Former members told horrific stories of ritual murders, child abuse, and an assassination squad of "Death Angels." Ben Yahweh and 15 followers were tried for conspiracy to commit murder, arson, child abuse, statutory rape, and murder in 1992. Most charges were dropped, but Yahweh was found guilty on the conspiracy charges and given 18 years in federal prison.[33]

The Nubian Islaamic Hebrews, Ansaaru Allah Community, Holy Tabernacle Ministries

One of the most heterodox black Israelite groups has been the constantly evolving community under the leadership of Dwight York, also known as Amunnubi Rooakhptah (Faithful Informer, Soul of the Ptahites), Al Sayyid Al Imaam Isa Al Haadi Al Mahdi, Isa Muhammad, Imaam Isa, Rabboni: Y'shua, and finally, Dr. Malachi Z. York, Malichi Zodok, or Melchisedek. York's many names and his evolving teachings are fascinating because they combine a full range of black alternative religious possibilities, mixing teachings that could be described as black Muslim, black Israelite, Egyptian, and even science fiction. York's name, his teachings, and the clothing and ritual practices of his followers have evolved in distinct stages since the group's founding in the mid-1960s. Beginning as Ansar Pure Sufi, they adopted

the name Nubian Islaamic Hebrews in 1969 along with African dress and an emphasis on ancient Egypt. They began using the name Ansaaru Allah "Helpers of God" in the mid-1970s, emphasizing Islam as the true religion of black people and adopting Islamic dress for men and women. In 1992 York established the Ancient Mystic Order of Melchisedek, and his followers abandoned Islamic dress for "Jewish" dress as their leader began to emphasize the Judaism as part of a "Nubian" "Doctrine of the New Covenant." In 1994 the community moved on once again to become the Holy Tabernacle Ministries, adopting secular American dress along with a heightened interest in extraterrestrials and the apocalypse. The Ansarullah practice a "Nubic calendar" that includes Jewish festivals such as Shabbat, Passover, Sukkot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, the Fast of Gedaliah, and Hanuka. They observe Bar and Bat Mitzvah, recite the Jewish declaration of faith, the *shemma,* and use prayer shawls and tefillin (phylacteries). The Masonic emphasis on the ancient temple of King Solomon is expressed through a recreation of the cult of temple worship and sacrifice, complete with a replica of the temple built in upstate New York that is the ritual center of the secretive Ancient Mystic Order of Melchizedek.[34]

York's spiritual flexibility illustrates the kinship between diverse streams of alternative black religious traditions. While Rabbi Ford identified with Islam as well as Judaism, observed Ramadan, and penned prayers to Allah in the 1920s and 1930s, York/Imam Isa/Melchisedek has been astoundingly prolific in digesting and reinterpreting whole religious systems.[35]

Black Israelites in Africa

As early as 1903, black Israelite forms of Judaic Christianity spread to Africa, where its Holiness-Pentecostal style found fertile ground in African spiritual ecosystems familiar with prophecy, spirit possession, and faith healing. Black Israelite churches spread throughout Southern and Eastern Africa, and Israelism became an important part of many Zionist churches of the independent African church movement.[36]

The CGSC played a key role in spreading the message of black Israelism and had an international vision, establishing missions in South Africa and Jamaica around the turn of the twentieth century, spreading their Israelite teachings throughout Southern Africa and the West Indies. Africans who spent time in the United States brought the Israelite doctrine back to Africa with them, where it became a critical part of many independent African Zionist churches. A Xhosa sailor and former Baptist missionary named Albert Christian was the first to bring Prophet Crowdy's Church of God and Saints of Christ (COGSC) to South Africa. He had a dream instructing him to seek out a man in the United States, and he did so, recognizing Crowdy on a street in Philadelphia as the man from his dream and returning to South Africa under Crowdy's tutelage in 1903. Christian established a string of churches throughout the Eastern Cape and as far north as the Transvaal in the Northeast of South Africa. He was joined in his efforts by John Msikinya, a South African who had become a

follower of the COGSC while attending college at the historically black Lincoln University in Philadelphia. Msikinya's theology was increasingly millenarian and politically radical, drawing the hostility of the Cape Colony government. Enoch Mgijima inherited leadership of the church upon Misinkya's death in 1918 and intensified the group's millennial and anticolonial rhetoric, combining the Israelite teachings of the COGSC with spirit possession, Seventh-Day Adventism, and Christian millennialism. His prophecies led to a violent confrontation with the colonial state. Mgijima's followers, armed with clubs and spears, clashed with an 800-man police force armed with rifles and machine guns, leading to 163 killed, 129 wounded, and 75 arrested in what became known as the Bulhoek Massacre.[37]

There have been a handful of other black Israelite movements in Africa. John Chilembwe was a Malawian minister from an African Zionist background who led an uprising against the British in 1913. He had come into contact with black Israelism during his time at Lincoln University, and he converted it into a theology of resistance to British imperialism. Semei Kakungulu, the founder of the Bayudaya Jewish community in Uganda, led the Buganda Kingdom in subduing neighboring tribes and cooperated with the British in hopes that they would recognize him as king. When the British refused to recognize Kakungulu, he became more supportive of the radical Zionist Protestant *Bamalaki* sect. Through meditation on the Old Testament and strict interpretation of its commandments he declared himself a Jew in 1919, circumcised himself and his sons, and demanded that his followers do the same. In 1926 he learned the Hebrew alphabet and Jewish customs from a trader named Joseph and renounced the New Testament and the divinity of Jesus.[38]

A number of African independent churches have adopted elements of the Israelite creed and sometimes observance of the Passover holiday, such as the African Church of Israel and the African Remnant of Israel Church in Rhodesia, the Lost Israelites of Kenya, the Church of the Canaanites, which started in Durban, South Africa in 1916, and the African Apostolic Church of John Maranke. Finally, the Lemba people of South Africa adopted a Jewish identity within the practice of African Christianity heavily flavored by Central African practices of mediumship and belief in Jesus. The advancement of a theory of Jewish ancestry was part of the divide-and-conquer politics of the Bantustans of Northern South Africa, as indicated by the fact that Lemba in neighboring Zimbabwe do not claim Jewish ancestry. In 2000 an English scholar facilitated genetic studies attempting to prove a link between Lemba and Ashkenazi Jews, but those studies have since been shown to be flawed in methodology and execution.[39]

The African Israelite movements demonstrate that black Israelite religion has been part of a transnational discourse between Europe, African America, and Africa. African Americans brought the black Israelite idea to Africa, and the spread of black Israelite churches in Africa during the early part of the twentieth century helped African Americans buttress their identities as black Israelites in the latter part of the century.

CONCLUSION

In summary, black Israelites are members of African American and African faith traditions that teach that the ancient Israelites were black and were the ancestors of contemporary African Americans and Africans. They are not converts to Judaism, nor are they Ethiopian Jews, although many have adopted the name "Ethiopian Hebrews." Their movements have been small, with memberships measured in the hundreds and only a few measured in the tens of thousands, but their appeal has persisted over more than a century. Black Israelites developed their own versions of Anglo-Israelite faiths that had arisen over two centuries of radical Protestant identification with the ancient Hebrews among English Christians and Freemasons. Black Israelite faiths arose in at least three waves with its own particular characteristics: a pioneer generation from 1890 to 1916, a second generation from 1920 to 1930, and a third generation from 1960 to 1980. The pioneer generation was Southern evangelists who combined Freemasonry and Holiness Christianity with divine revelation, belief in the blackness of the ancient Hebrews, and esotericism. Another group created black Israelite faiths with intense Ethiopianism, teaching that the ancient Israelites had originated in Ethiopia and sometimes advocating an emigration to Ethiopia. This pioneer generation spread black Israelism to Southern Africa, with the help of Africans who traveled to the United States. American black Israelism became an important part of anticolonial African Zionist Churches. The second generation followed African Americans and West Indians into northern metropolises such as New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. These Israelite groups built upon the teachings and the members of the pioneer organizations, but featured black nationalism and mysticism, particularly the New Thought teaching that God resides within each person. The groups either developed into messianic millennial sects, with colorful messianic leaders, communal living, and much wealth, or they took advantage of the proximity to Jews in Northern cities to adopt Hebrew prayer, Jewish liturgical items, and Judaic rituals. Black Israelites were one of many African American Orientalist groups in black ghettos during the 1920s, and it was through contacts in this subculture of root doctors and alternative religious practitioners that black Israelism influenced the next decade's Black Muslims, Rastafarians, and Father Divine. Finally, there was a third generation of militant, masculinist, black nationalist, and emigrationist black Israelite groups in the 1960s and 1970s that retain Christian world views with very little Ethiopianism or Judaic ritual. They created and sustained rural communes or large, controversial organizations with successful business enterprises, intense patriarchy, and messianic leaders. Each generation's black Israelites bore the imprint of the time that produced them, as well as a link to their predecessors. At the heart of all black Israelite faiths was a radical reimagining of the black past, present, and future. It has been a religious antiracist counterdiscourse that places people of African descent at the very heart of history and civilization as God's chosen people with a unique racial mission to prepare the earth for the coming of the millennium.

NOTES

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2. Landing, *Black Judaism,* 46–50, 81.

3. Ibid., 49.

4. Ibid., 45–50; Elmer T. Clark, *The Small Sects in America* (New York: Abingdon-Cokebury Press, 1937), 120–121.

5. Similar to Isaiah 28:8, King James Version.

6. Elly M. Wynia, *The Church of God and Saints of Christ: The Rise of Black Jews, Cults and Nonconventional Religious Groups,* ed. J. Gordon Melton (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 21.

7. Details about Crowdy and the Church of God and Saints of Christ are from Wynia, *The Church of God and Saints of Christ*, and Laurie Solomon, "D.C.'s Well-Kept Secret: Prophetic Jews in Washington for 89 Years," *Washington Jewish Week,* August 12, 1993, 4, based on interviews with members of the Church of God, including the current chief rabbi, Levi S. Plummer.

8. Clark, *The Small Sects in America,* 151–152; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies: 1906,*201–202, quoted in Landing, *Black Judaism,* 53.

9. Wynia, *The Church of God and Saints of Christ,* ix–x.

10. Solomon, "D.C.'s Well-Kept Secret," 4.

11. Wynia, *The Church of God and Saints of Christ,* 48.

12. Landing, *Black Judaism,* 61; Wynia, *The Church of God and Saints of Christ,* 38–39. These membership numbers are from the U.S. Census, but may account for only one of the three factions of the COGSC.

13. E.T. Clark, *The Small Sects in America* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1949), 129; Hans A. Baer, *The Black Spiritual Movement: A Religious Response to Racism* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 83; Landing, *Black Judaism,* 65–66.

14. Sherry Sherrod DuPree, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of African-American Holiness-Pentecostals, 1880–1990* (Washington, D.C.: Middle Atlantic Regional Press, 1989), 136; Sherry Sherrod DuPree, *African-American Holiness Pentecostal Movement: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1996), 141, 148.

15. Richard Weiss, *The American Myth of Success: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 144–145, 172–188; Jill Watts, *God, Harlem, USA: The Father Divine Story* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 21–24.

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17. Landing, *Black Judaism,* 92–94.
18. Ibid., 94–96.
19. Ibid., 99–107.
20. Ibid., 178; Dupree, *African-American Holiness Pentecostal Movement,* 358; Sherry Sherrod DuPree, "Wholesale Arrests Made in Absecon, N.J., and in New York City of 'Never Die' Cult Members," *New York Amsterdam News* (February 24, 1926): 3.
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23. John Hoshor, *God in a Rolls Royce: The Rise of Father Divine, Madman, Menace, or Messiah* (New York: Hillman-Curl, 1938), 34.
24. Landes, "Negro Jews in Harlem," 187. On Father Divine, see Watts, *God, Harlem, USA*; Robert Weisbrot, *Father Divine and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Hoshor, *God in a Rolls Royce.*
25. Dorman, "Black Israelites," 264–310; Landing, *Black Judaism,* 129–136; William A. Shack, "Ethiopia and Afro-Americans: Some Historical Notes, 1920–1970," *Phylon* 35, no. 2 (1974): 145.
26. T.R. Poston, "'I Taught Father Divine' Says St. Bishop The Vine: 'And He is Not Doing Right by Theory,' Prophet Holds," *New York Amsterdam News* (November 23, 1932): 1. Roberson/Roberson also appears in David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin, 1979), 222–224, although he gives a stereotyped portrayal of the Black Jews as "weird" cultists and products of "religious hysteria."
27. Landes, "Negro Jews in Harlem," 187. On Father Divine, see Watts, *God, Harlem, USA*; Weisbrot, *Father Divine and the Struggle for Racial Equality.*
28. Dorman, "Black Israelites," 311–375.
29. Arthur Dobrin, "A History of the Negro Jews in America" (unpublished paper, City College of New York, microfilm, Schomburg Library for the Study of Black Culture, NYPL, 1965), 45, 51; Graenum Berger, *Black Jews in America: A Documentary with Commentary* (New York: Commission on Synagogue Relations, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, 1978), 145–146; Landing, *Black Judaism,* 283–284.
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33. Landing, *Black Judaism,* 378–382.

34. Kathleen Malone O'Connor, "The Nubian Islaamic Hebrews, Ansaaru Allah Community: Jewish Teachings of an African American Muslim Community," in *Black Zion: African American Religious Encounters with Judaism,* ed. Yvonne Chireau and Nathaniel Deutsch (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 118–152.

35. York's religious usage of extraterrestrial mythology has precedents among other practitioners of black alternative religions, including Elijah Muhammad of the Nation of Islam. See Curtis, *Islam in Black America,* 77–78.

36. Ibid., 159–173.

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Santería

Mary Ann Clark

INTRODUCTION

Santería is an African-based religion that is gaining increasing prominence in the United States. Developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by slaves and former slaves living on the island of Cuba, it is based on the religion of the Yoruba-speaking peoples of western Africa. Cuban immigrants brought Santería to the United States in two major waves, first in 1959 after the Cuban Revolution and again in the 1980s during the Mariel boatlift. In the past 40 years, the religion has expanded beyond the Cuban community so that today there are practitioners from all racial and ethnic groups and from every economic level. Although the major concentrations of practitioners are in southern Florida, the New York City area, Los Angeles, and Chicago, some variant of this religious tradition is practiced throughout the United States and around the world.

Although this religion is commonly known as Santería, many practitioners find that term derogatory and prefer to call it Lukumi (or Lucumi), Orisha religion, Yoruba Traditional Religion, or Regla de Ocha. The word "Lukumi" comes from the name commonly given to the Yoruba-speaking people and may come from a phrase meaning "my friend." Although in Africa the Yoruba-speaking people did not think of themselves as the members of a particular tribal group but rather as citizens of a particular town or region, in the Americas they became identified with their language group. The Orisha are the deities of this religious tradition and the focus of most religious practice, so the religion is often given their name. The term "Regla de Ocha" is a mixed Spanish-Yoruba construction that means the rule or order of the Orisha.

The Yoruba peoples live in the southwestern part of Nigeria on the western coast of Africa. They are today one of the largest ethnic groups of sub-Saharan Africa and one of the most politically powerful groups in Nigeria. Many Yoruba-speaking people were brought to the Caribbean and Brazil during the slavery era with the largest number arriving in Cuba in the mid-to-late 1800s. The majority of the Africans brought to Cuba were destined for the sugar mills and plantations. However, because

the Yoruba lived in urban areas and were often trained as artisans before their capture, many ended up in the cities of Cuba where they were used as domestics and tradesmen. Under the authority of the Catholic Church and according to the laws of the Spanish government, they were able to form *cabildos.* These were social clubs and mutual aid societies established to provide members with social services. The earliest cabildos were formed around African ethnic identities that brought together members with similar languages and cultures. As Afro-Cubans mated and married across ethnic lines, however, membership in the cabildos became more fluid. These cabildos also served as sites for the guided syncretism by the Catholic clergy in Cuba who hoped to bring Africans into mainstream Catholicism through cultural assimilation. Finally, the cabildos provided spaces that Afro-Cubans could use to maintain some of their own cultural traditions, including the traditions of drumming and dancing for social and religious purposes.

The basic form of religious community in Santería is the religious family. Since Santería is an initiatory religion, to become a participant one must be initiated into a religious family that becomes responsible for one's religious education and development. Each ritual requires at least two initiators called either the *madrina* (godmother) or *padrino* (godfather). Other participants initiated by one's godparents become one's religious siblings, while the godparents of one's godparents become one's religious grandparents. In this way new initiates join a community that is modeled on an extended family. The religious hierarchy is formed by the relative initiatory age of participants. One owes respect and deference to one's religious elders, particularly one's godparents. At the same time, one can expect respect and deference from those whose initiations come after one's own.

Although commonly all followers of Santería are called *santero* (for men) or *santera* (for women), technically these terms refer to those who have undergone the full priestly initiation. The term *aleyo,* a Yoruba word referring to someone living in a family compound who is not a member of the family, is often used to refer to someone who is involved in the religion but who is not a priest. Another term that has come into use in recent years, *aborisha,* is used to designate someone who participates in the religion and may have some lower initiations but has not been initiated as a priest. Priests may also be called *olorisha,* "one who owns an Orisha" or *babalosha* "father of Orisha" or *iyalosha* "mother of Orisha." Generally babalosha or iyalosha is reserved for those priests who have initiated other priests, while olorisha can refer to anyone who has received the priestly initiation whether they have initiated others or not. The term *Santerians* is an improper construction and is not used within Santería communities.

HISTORY

We know from archeological findings that as early as 500 BCE the people living in the Yoruba-speaking areas of West Africa had the technology to produce sophisticated stone carvings and that by 1000 CE the cities of Kano and Katsina had been established. However, little is known about the history of this area until the rise of

the Oyo Empire in the 1600s. As the wars between the city of Oyo and the surrounding towns it wanted to subordinate grew in intensity from the 1600s to the 1800s, more and more captives from both sides of the many conflicts were sent to the coastal cities where they were sold to the Europeans plying the waters of what was aptly called the Slave Coast.

After the Haitian Revolution in 1794 the center of the Caribbean sugar industry moved from Haiti to Cuba where increased production called for an increase in the number of laborers. The combination of more Yoruba-speaking captives available in the African slave markets and greater demand for laborers in Cuba brought the greatest influx of Yoruba peoples to Cuba in its history. By 1886 (when slavery was finally abolished in Cuba) between 500,000 and 700,000 Africans had been transported to Cuba. During the final years of the slave trade in Cuba, between 1850 and 1870, over a third of these were designated as Lukumi.[1]

Even before Columbus's voyage of discovery, the people of Spain had a history of slavery and legal codes governing both the enslaved and the slaveholders. These laws codified in the comprehensive *Las Siente Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso el Sabio* were compiled under royal direction between the years 1263 and 1265 and put into effect once Spanish colonies had been established in the Americas. Under these laws slaves had certain rights including the right to marriage and right to manumission. Manumission was the process by which a person could buy his own or another's freedom from slavery. According to *Las Siente Partidas,* a person could request that the court establish the price of his or her freedom. When someone came forward with the required amount, the person would be manumitted or freed. Although of little use to slaves working on the sugar plantations who had few opportunities to earn their own money, these laws enabled people in the cities to work together to buy their way out of slavery. It was also common for slave owners to free especially favored slaves either during their lifetimes or as part of their wills. By the middle of the nineteenth century, when there were few free blacks in the United States, over a third of the black population of Cuba was *gente de color* ([free] people of color). These were the people who developed the religion of Santería based on the beliefs and practice they, their parents, and grandparents brought from their African homeland.

From as early as 1573 free and enslaved Africans in Cuba had organized themselves, with the blessings of both the colonial and church authorities, into clubs called *cabildos.* These cabildos were social clubs where members of the same African ethnic group, called *nacíon,* could meet and socialize together. They were also quasi-political governmental bodies whose leadership was responsible to the Spanish city council for the behavior of their members. Cabildos provided a variety of services to their members, including burial for those who died, help for widows and orphans, funds to manumit members or their families, and social and spiritual guidance.

By law and custom, the members of each cabildo were members of the same African "nation" whose dances, drum types, and songs were considered ethnically significant symbols. The Cuban authorities hoped to provide a safety valve against discontent based on the members' social conditions while inserting a wedge between groups based on their different customs. However, West African religions are danced

religions. Rather than praying either silently or in unison, practitioners of these religions use drumming, song, dance, and possession trance to summon and worship their deities. To people who were more familiar with church-based religious services, these rituals probably appear more social than religious, but to practitioners of these religions these dances were intensely religious events. By encouraging the cabildos' members to maintain their drumming and dancing traditions, they were also encouraging them to reconstruct their religious traditions. Based on the importance of drumming and dancing to West African religious traditions, it is not surprising that the unintended consequence of maintaining culturally homogeneous cabildos was to provide a site for the development of new religious traditions based on the practices and traditions the members had known in their homeland. Since these activities were not recognized as "religious" by Europeans, the different African groups were able to reestablish their spiritual traditions in a relatively benign cultural context.

There was little persecution of the Afro-Cuban cabildos or their members during the colonial period. However, in the nineteenth century as the colony was moving toward independence, the authorities began (rightly) to perceive the cabildos as the breeding grounds for anticolonial and abolitionist activity. After slavery was abolished in 1886 and Cuba gained its independence from Spain in 1898, the new governmental authorities became increasingly concerned about the population of black and mulatto (mixed-race) Cubans who had expected full equality in the new administration.

In November 1906, the disappearance of a toddler named Zoila Días was blamed on three members of the *Cabildo Congos Reales,* who, it was said, wanted to use the child's blood and body parts for sacrificial or curative purposes. The tumult around this and similar cases was the beginning of a 20-year period of repression and persecution of all of the African-based religious groups in Cuba. During this period, Cubans became obsessed with the idea that the white civilized population must defend itself against the barbarianism and savagery of the black and mixed-race lower classes. The young lawyer Fernando Ortiz's *Los negros brujos,* published in 1906, outlining the rise and continuation of African-based witchcraft in Cuba, became the canonical text for recognizing such practices. In the 1920s, after learning more about the Lukumi societies in Havana, however, Ortiz become one of the leading figures in the new Afro-Cubanism movement that revalorized Afro-Cuban culture.

Afro-Cuban religions, including Santería, experienced alternating periods of repression and tolerance throughout the twentieth century. In the 1960s and 1970s the Castro government gave Afro-Cuban religions public recognition as "the people's folklore," and at the beginning of the twenty-first century they continue to regard these religions as an important part of their cultural heritage and source of tourist income.

PEOPLE

There was no single Yoruba Traditional Religion for Africans to reconstruct in the Americas. In fact, as citizens of warring towns, many of the Yoruba-speaking peoples

could be expected to be antagonistic toward one another. However, the priests and devotees of the many deities whose stories were woven together in the Yoruba mythological tradition worked together to create a new religious system that integrated their numerous beliefs and practices.

Yoruba culture has always been incorporative, flexible, and eclectic. In addition to incorporating the religious practices of the different African worship communities, Yoruba peoples in Cuba also incorporated elements from the surrounding Spanish culture. Although this is generally presented as an attempt to deceive or mislead members of the dominant culture, the incorporation of alien religious powers into their religious pantheon had long been a practice among West African peoples. By incorporating Catholic saints, iconography, and sacramentals (that is, Catholic rituals of private devotion not associated with the sacraments of the Church) into their own practices, the Yoruba peoples in Cuba were able to domesticate these powerful spiritual forces for their own use. Although this mixing may have confused outsiders, Afro-Cubans and their contemporary descendents have never been confused by the presence of these appropriated images and objects.

Contemporary santeros identify 11 African-born founders of Lukumi lineages: Efuche (Ña Rosalia, aka María Trujillo), Ainá (Ña Margarita Armenteros), Igoró (Ña Caridad Argudín), Apoto (Ña Belen González), Ma Monserrate (González), Francisca Entensa ("Palmira"), Obadimelli (Octavio Samar), José Pata de Palo (Urquiola), Los Ibeyi (the "Twins," Perfecto and Gumersindo), Monserrate Asiñabí, and Tía Julia Abonse.[2] Significantly seven of these founders are women. Women held important religious positions among the Yoruba-speaking peoples of Africa, so it should not be surprising to find that they were instrumental in the recreation of their religious practices in Cuba.

There were some santeros in the United States before the Cuban revolution. The earliest babalawo we know of was Francisco (Pancho) Mora who came to the United States in 1946. The first American woman initiated to the religion was the Cuban-born Mercedes Noble, who was initiated in 1958. The first African American initiated was Walter King, who later took the name Osejiman Adefunmi. He was initiated along with Christopher Oliana in Matanzas Province, Cuba, in 1959. Leonore Dolme, another Cuban santera initiated Margie Baynes Quiniones, the first African American priestess, in Queens in 1969. Assunta Seranno, a Puerto Rican priestess who was initiating priests in Adefunmi's temple, initiated the author Judith Gleason, the first Anglo-American priestess initiated in the United States.[3]

Although the Santería communities in the United States tend to be private and anonymous, two communities have played an important part in the public history of the religion: Oyotunji Village in South Carolina and the Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye in Florida.

After his return from Cuba in 1959, Osejiman Adefumni founded a series of Orisha-centric organizations in New York City.[4] As a Black Nationalist he felt that African Americans needed to separate themselves from mainstream American culture, so in 1970 he established Oyotunji Village in Beaufort County, South Carolina. In 1972 he was initiated into the Ifa priesthood and proclaimed the Oba (king) of

the Village. Until his death in 2005, Adefumni led the Village in the effort to create an authentically African "kingdom" within the confines of the United States. Although the actual population of the Village has been small (no more than five to nine families during the last ten years of Adefumni's life), it has had a lasting effect on the face of Orisha worship due to the large number of priests and priestesses who were initiated in their system. The religious practice that developed at the Village, although based on Santería precedents, was tailored to meet the needs of African American devotees. This lineage is often known as Orisha Voodoo since it incorporates not only the beliefs and practices of the Yoruba people as they were preserved in Cuba but also practices based on contemporary Yoruba culture and the beliefs and practices from other West African peoples.

The Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye (CLBA) was founded in 1974 in a suburb of Miami by a small group of devotees including Iyalosha Carmen Pla, Babalosha Raul Rodriguez, Oba Ernesto Pichardo, Babalosha Fernando Pichardo, and Attorney Gino Negretti.[5] In 1987 the Church celebrated the preopening of its first public location. This was a radical change from the predominate form of Orisha communities, which are home-based and very private. Immediately the Church became the center of a political uproar. The city of Hialeah eventually enacted a series of ordinances that banned ritual animal sacrifice, an attempt by the city to deny CLBA its first amendment right of free religious practice. The Church sued the city, and in 1993 the United States Supreme Court in a landmark ruling overturned the lower courts in favor of CLBA, declaring Hialeah's city ordinances were a denial of the Church members' constitutional rights. Since that time the Church has attempted to regularize Orisha worship by providing membership status to devotees across the nation and by providing a certification service for priests and priestesses. Although the Church is committed to the abandonment of syncretic retentions and the reestablishment of traditional rites and values, it has incorporated many of the outward forms of the American religious scene, including identifying the Necklaces ritual as a "baptism" and developing and performing several types of rituals not known among practitioners in Cuba such as marriages and baby naming ceremonies. By establishing a storefront "church" and developing many familiar religious forms, CLBA is on the forefront of the movement toward the "protestantization" of the tradition.

COSMOLOGY

Scholars have had a difficult time describing the sacred cosmos of the Yoruba-based traditions because they do not fit comfortably into any of our standard categories. Many descriptions are based on the work of the Nigerian scholar and churchman, E. Bolájí Ìdòwú.[6] In his classic *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief,* Ìdòwú argued that God had revealed himself to all peoples, including the traditional Yoruba. Using his knowledge of Christian theology, he describes Olodumare, the Yoruba "high god," as having all the characteristics of the God of Christianity: all-powerful, all-wise, all-knowing, all-seeing, immortal, unchanging, invisible, transcendent,

absolutely just, and benevolent.[7] However, Ìdòwú had to classify traditional Yoruba religion as a "diffused monotheism" in order to account for the many deities, or Orisha, who are the actual focus of Yoruba religious practice. Ìdòwú viewed the Orisha as the "ministers" of Olodumare who serve as mediators to humanity. Thus, Ìdòwú established a hierarchical model that placed Olodumare at the head of a pantheon that included all of the other Orisha who occupied one or more secondary positions.

Other scholars, notably Pierre Verger, have questioned Ìdòwú's basic model, suggesting instead that the Yoruba people thought of the Orisha as separate and fully functioning deities who were more or less independent of Olodumare. Verger said that Yoruba cosmology could more correctly be described as a collection of juxtaposed theisms or even juxtaposed monotheisms. Verger also suggested that traditional Yoruba thought was a type of monism in which *ashé,* which he calls "the vital power, the energy, the great strength of all things,"[8] underlies all that is. In this formulation, the force of ashé rather than a personal being (i.e., Olodumare) stands behind the multitude of visible and invisible forms. According to this monist view, Olodumare is the personification of ashé and the Orisha are nodes of the power of ashé.[9]

Both descriptions of the Yoruba world view are true in that they all provide an insight into the way the Yoruba describe the cosmos. That they are mutually contradictory warns us that our categories are insufficient to fully explain this cosmology. The Yoruba themselves describe the cosmos as a closed calabash that can be opened to reveal two halves identified as the visible and invisible worlds. According to this description, there is no "this world," and the "next world" is only a single world consisting of visible and invisible elements. In the visible half of the calabash the Yoruba see people, plants, animals, and all the natural and manufactured items that surround us. In the invisible world are Olodumare, the Orisha, and all of those who have died, the most important of which are the honored ancestors. People move between the visible and invisible worlds as they are continually reincarnated, generally into the same family lines. Reincarnation, in this view, is a positive thing, a reward for having lived a long and good life. This leads to a this-worldly and pragmatic religious tradition that promotes luck, health, and prosperity—all the good things of life—rather than a concern about some next worldly system of rewards or punishments.

Olodumare, the Great God

From the theistic perspective described by Ìdòwú, Olodumare is the great god of the Yoruba pantheon, the personification of the energy of ashé. Olodumare is the creator of the universe and of all it contains, the chief source of all power who is beyond human understanding and categories. As a transcendent or "high" god, Olodumare is beyond human comprehension, the God behind the gods, and the ultimate source of mystery and power. Although there is some evidence of Olodumare worship communities in Yorubaland, generally Olodumare is never approached directly, no shrines are erected in the name of Olodumare, no rituals are directed toward Olodumare, and no sacrifices are made to Olodumare since Olodumare is considered the

remotest of beings. At the same time, Olodumare is also an immanent deity, present in all that is. It is the breath of Olodumare that maintains the life of all beings and the energy of Olodumare that sustains the universe. We can see Olodumare not only in the grandeur of the stars and the mountains but also in the butterfly, the earthworm, and the newly born child.

Followers of Orisha religious tradition both in Africa and the Americas who have interaction with Christian and Muslim traditions often conflate Olodumare with the monotheistic God of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In Cuba and the United States, devotees have even gone so far as to appropriate two of Olodumare's Yoruba praise names, Olorun "owner of heaven" and Olofi "supreme ruler" to form an invocation trinity of Olodumare, Olorun, and Olofi.

The Orisha

Olodumare is not, however, alone. As Ìdòwú points out, it is not the worship of Olodumare that forms the basis of traditional Yoruba religion; rather it is the many divinities, called Orisha, who are the focus of the ritual attention of the Yoruba people and their religious descendents. From the monistic view, the ashé of the universe is not homogeneous; it collects and forms into nodes of power the Yoruba recognized as forces of nature (wind, ocean, and thunder), power sites (rivers and mountains), and aspects of human life (our roles as mothers, kings, and warriors). In the Yoruba traditions these forces have been anthropomorphized and mythologized into a group of beings or demigods called the *Orisha.* The Orisha are multidimensional beings that represent the forces of nature, act as archetypes, and function as sacred patrons or "guardian angels." Some, but not all, Orisha are also identified as deified ancestors, honored forebears who have been elevated to divine status.

As knowable aspects of Olodumare, the Orisha represent a level of power that is approachable though ritual action and so provide the most important focus of Yoruba religious practice.[10] The Orisha have attributes and stories similar to the stories and attributes used to describe the ancient Greek and Roman deities. Their stories tell us how the world came to be the way it is (why thunder and wind are often found together) and how to live a good life (sometimes you can persuade better with honey than with a sword). However, unlike the Greek gods, the Orisha are not remote deities living high on a mountain peak. They are living beings present in the daily lives of their followers. It is around the Orisha that most Yoruba and Santería religious activity focuses. Most of the Yoruba mythology tells of the time when the Orisha lived upon the earth.

In Africa there are countless Orisha: 201, 401, 2001—as many as you can think of —plus one more. Since they represent the forces of the universe and are elements of Olodumare, there is an Orisha associated with every natural and manufactured thing, including rivers, hills, the forest, the ocean, the crossroads, love, children, wealth, and occupations like blacksmith, farmer, and hunter, as well as natural phenomena like thunder and lightning, wind and rain. In the Americas some parts of this pantheon have maintained or gained prominence while others have become

more obscure. The most well-known Orisha in the Americas are the warriors Eleggua, Ogun, and Ochosi; the Ruler of the White Cloth Obatala; the mother of the Orisha Yemaya; Shango, the legendary fourth king of the city-state of Oyo; Oya, the whirlwind and the owner of the cemetery; Obba, the first or legitimate wife of Shango; and Oshun the youngest of the Orisha who is the guardian of love, wealth, and children.

Eleggua

All ceremonies and rituals begin with an invocation to Eleggua, who is also called Eshu. He is the messenger between the gods and men, the owner of the crossroads who must open the way for communication between the visible and invisible worlds. Eleggua is one of the most complex of the Yoruba deities. Christian missionaries, in their early encounters with Yoruba religion, tended to equate him with the Devil, but this is most unfortunate and distorts his nature.[11] Eleggua is a trickster, and a mischief-maker, the one who punishes misconduct and rewards upright behavior. He is a source of wisdom and knowledge, as well as the one who can confuse situations.[12] The Yoruba cosmology does not contain the duality of radically opposing forces such as good and evil, so Eleggua often appears ambiguous. His actions may appear evil because they test people's character as well as punish their misconduct. At the same time, it is Eleggua who rewards good character and correct conduct.

Each Orisha is represented by numbers, colors, dance steps, drum rhythms, and a myriad of natural and manufactured goods. Most of the Orisha are also associated with one or more Catholic saints. Eleggua is associated with the numbers 1, 3, and 21. His colors are red and black or black and white. His most common symbols are the hooked staff, crosses and crossroads, straw hats, toys, and candies. He is associated with a myriad of saints including Nino de Atocha (the Christ Child of Atocha), Anthony of Padua, and Anima Sola (Lonely Spirit, or the soul in Purgatory).

Ogun

Living at the boundary between town and bush is Ogun, the blacksmith, ironworker, and patron of all metals. Like Eleggua, Ogun is ambiguous. He is associated not only with surgeons, policemen, soldiers, automobiles, and railroads but also all acts of violence and war, especially those caused by metal implements (arrows, knives, and swords, and later guns and cannon). Ogun represents the triumph of technology over raw nature. According to one story, when the Orisha first came to earth they were unable to pass through the dense thicket until Ogun opened the way using his trademark machete. For this reason he is often invoked to clear the way or remove obstacles to physical, emotional, or spiritual development.

Ogun is associated with the number 3. His colors are green and black or green and white. His most common symbols are the railroad spike, anvil, sword, rake, sledge, and all iron implements. He is associated with several saints including Peter, Anthony, James the Greater, John the Baptist, and George the Dragon-Slayer.

Ochosi

Ochosi, together with Eleggua and Ogun, form the group known as *Los Guerreros,* the Warriors. He is the patron of hunters and is often represented by the tools of the hunter, particularly a bow and arrow, or prey animals like deer. In the New World he is also associated with judicial and administrative powers and is often invoked by those who find themselves in trouble with the law or facing a criminal trial. However, Ochosi's justice can be cruel. Elders tell of a time when Ochosi had killed a pair of pheasants as a gift for another Orisha. Leaving the birds in his house, he returned to the woods to continue to hunt. While he was gone, his mother visited his house, saw the beautiful birds, and decided to take one of them home, thinking that her son would not mind. When he returned to his house, Ochosi, angry at the loss of one of his birds, shot an arrow into the air commanding it to kill the thief. The arrow, impelled by Ochosi's curse, pierced his mother's breast and killed her. Thus, it is said that Ochosi's justice is so accurate that he does not even spare his own mother.

Ochosi is associated with the numbers 2 and 7. His colors are blue and gold, violet lavender and black, or blue and orange. His most common symbols are bow and arrow, deer, Native American warriors, jail, and police. He is associated with Saints Norbert and Herbert.

Obatala

Obatala, whose name means "the ruler of the white cloth," is the great Orisha who is the father of many of the other Orisha. Among the Yoruba white is the color of fine character, creativity, wisdom, and purity. It is also the "color" of ashé, the energy of the cosmos. Everything white is associated with Obatala including white birds (particularly doves), the sky, and white cloth. As the essence of "whiteness" Obatala embodies the concepts of coolness, purity, patience, creativity, the wisdom that comes with age (white hair), and spirituality.

Obatala is associated with the number 8. His color is white, and his most common symbols are the head, bones, white doves, elephant, chameleons, as well as cotton, cocoa butter, and the white chalk called efun or cascaria. He is associated with Virgen de la Merced (Virgin of Mercy) and Jesus Christ.

Shango (also known as Chango)

Shango was once a living man, the fourth *Alaafin* or king of the city of Oyo. One story says that he inadvertently caused a thunderstorm that killed his wives and children. Full of sorrow and remorse, he abdicated his throne and hanged himself. In another story he hanged himself after he was dethroned and expelled because of his abuses of power.[13] The act of contrition, represented by his self-imposed death, caused him to be raised to the level of Orisha. As an Orisha, Shango is the essence of male sexuality, the power of the male to create new life. He is also associated with

thunder and lightning as well as with the power that can be unleashed against both others and oneself. To be able to control such power is power itself. Because of his association with lightening, Shango absorbed much of the cult of the earlier lightening deity Jakuta, who was considered the "wrath of Olodumare."[14]

Shango's numbers are 6 and 12. His colors are red and white, and his most common symbols are the two-bladed axe called the *oshe,* drums, horse, turtle, fire engine, and everything associated with firemen. He is associated with Saint Barbara.

Yemaya

The female Orisha Yemaya and Oshun are said to be sisters, and they represent the complementary forces of female sexuality and maternal love and protection. The stories tell us that, in addition to her own children, Yemaya, whose name means "mother whose children are as numerous as fishes," often raised the children of others, especially those of her sister Oshun who as the goddess of love was more interested in the begetting of children than the raising of them.

But Yemaya can be a stern mother. In some stories Yemaya is the biological mother of Shango, while in others she is his adoptive mother. In one, as his adoptive mother, they are separated for a very long time, so long that the great womanizer Shango does not recognize her when they meet at a drum party. Struck by her beauty and not realizing she was his adoptive mother, he suggested that they go off alone together. She agrees and suggests they go to her home. So the queen of the ocean took the embodiment of fire on a small boat out in the middle of the water. When she caused a storm to rock the tiny boat, the great king, who did not know how to swim and was deathly afraid of water, was terrified. He was saved from her anger only when he recognized Yemaya, repented of his incestuous desires, and promised to respect both the mother who bore him and the one who raised him.

Yemaya's number is 7, and her colors are blue, crystal, and white. Her most common symbols are fish, shells, mermaid, fan, boats or ships, oars, and anything associated with the ocean or boats. She is associated with the Virgin of Regla.

Oshun (also known as Ochun)

Oshun, Yemaya's sister, is the divinity associated in the New World with rivers and fresh water. She controls all that makes life worth living, including love, marriage, children, money, and pleasure, and is the essence of female sexuality. Unlike the warrior Orisha who depend on power and weapons, Oshun uses the good things in life to win her battles. Oshun is associated with the number 5. She is the exclusive owner of yellow, the color of honey. Her most common symbols are honey, gold or brass, fan, sunflower, and mirror. In Cuba she is associated with the Virgin of Caridad, who is also the patron saint of Cuba.

According to Yoruba legend, the women of the world separated themselves from the men and formed their own town. The king called upon the Orisha to bring the world back into balance by capturing the town of women and bringing the men

and women back together. Each of the warrior Orisha tries and fails. Shango fails, and Babaluaye fails. Egungun (the embodiment of the ancestors) fails. Ogun fails. Even Oya, the woman warrior fails. Finally Oshun tries. But instead of attacking with sword and spear, she takes a gourd and string and makes a *shekere* (a type of musical instrument that has beads or shells woven around the outside of the gourd as noisemakers). Beating on the shekere, she dances into town singing, "Oshun is coming to play, Oshun does not know how to fight." Soon all the women join in the dance and follow her back to where their men are waiting. Balance is restored to the world.[15]

Obba (also known as Oba)

Among the Yoruba in Africa, Obba is the first wife of Shango, who is also married to Oshun and Oya and a host of others. In the Americas, where monogamy is the norm, she is considered his legitimate wife while the others are given the status of consorts or mistresses. As the owner of the Obà River she is the patron of wealth and commerce and is said to have invented navigation. Many consider her a great teacher, who taught all the Orisha what they know, including the techniques of warfare, metallurgy, and the like. She is also associated with marital and domestic stability. In the best known of her stories she is advised (some say by Oshun, others by Oya) to cut off her ear and add it to some stew in order to regain the love of her husband Shango whose interest had wandered. When her attempt to regain his attention fails—he's appalled to find her ear in his dinner—she leaves to live in the cemetery where she is the mistress of the grave. There she continues as the patron of all abandoned and abused women.

Obba's number is 9, and her color is pink, rust, or peach. Her most common symbols are a single earring, feather, pen, book, shield, sword, mask, and anvil. She is associated with Saints Rita and Catherine.

Oya

Oya is the embodiment of the winds and the tempest. As the wife of Shango she learned to spout fire and lightning as he does. She is a warrior Orisha and can be very aggressive in her behavior. We can see her power in the winds and lightning of the thunderstorm where she is fighting alongside her husband. She is also the owner of the cemetery and as such controls the dead. One story tells of her revenge on Shango for his dalliance with Oshun. Because of his fear of the dead, she is able to imprison him in her home by stationing a battalion of spirits around its perimeter.

Oya's number is 9, and her color is maroon or any combination of nine colors. Her most common symbols are whirlwind and copper. She is associated with Theresa of the Child Jesus (Little Flower), Teresa of Avila, and Our Lady of Candelaria.

Aganyu

Two different sets of stories are told about Aganyu. In one he is the patron of the volcano who spits fire and stones in his anger. In other stories, he is the ferryman who

takes travelers across the river. In one story that combines these two aspects, after Aganyu ferries Yemaya across the wide water, she discovers that she has no money. In payment, she agrees to offer herself to him. From this liaison is born the great Shango, who inherits his father's fiery nature. As a young man he decides that he must find his father whom Yemaya refused to identify. She, however, does give him the information he needs to recognize him. When Shango arrives at Aganyu's river, he approaches the ferryman and attempts to greet his long-lost father. Unaware of the results of his brief relationship with Yemaya, Aganyu refuses to acknowledge his son. They fight, each spurting fire from his mouth at his opponent. Finally, Aganyu realizes that only his son would have such a talent and acknowledges Shango. This story has come to explain Aganyu's love of children and his association with fatherhood.

Aganyu's number is 9, and his colors are maroon or deep red, green, and yellow. His most common symbols are the volcano and the ferryboat. He is associated with Saint Christopher.

Babaluaye

Babaluaye ("Father who rules the World") is a praise name of the Yoruba and Dahomey deity Sopona, the smallpox god. Because it was believed that saying the deity's name invoked his power—in this case the deadly disease of smallpox—devotees used his praise name instead. In Cuba and the United States, it is common to hear him referred to as Babalu or even Lazarus, the name of the Catholic saint associated with him. In Santería mythology this deity went to the land of the Dahomey after he was exiled from the Yoruba people. There he became a great king. His rituals are conducted in Fon, the language of the Dahomey people. Babalu was introduced into American culture by the 1950s musician and television star Ricky Ricardo, who often incorporated Orisha rhythms into his Latin music and exclaimed, "Babalu!" in exasperation. In the 1990s a Santería community in Hialeah, Florida, established the first Santería church, the Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye (CLBA) incorporating this powerful Orisha as their patron.

Babaluaye's numbers are 13 and 17, and his colors are purple, black, and light blue. His most common symbols are beans, popcorn, sesame seeds (all of which look like smallpox pustules), a dog, and crutches. After smallpox was eradicated in the twentieth century, Babalu became the patron of AIDS and its victims. He is associated with the Biblical character Lazarus.

The Ibeji

The Yoruba people have the highest rate of twin births in the world. But even among the Yoruba twinning is unusual enough to be considered abnormal. Although not deities per se, twins are considered especially sacred and powerful beings. If one or both twins should die, as often happened since twins are commonly born premature and underweight, the parents would commission a small statue to represent the dead child (or children). The mother treated the figure as though it were a living

baby "feeding" and bathing it when she fed and bathed her living children. Eventually the figurine was placed on the family shrine and honored for the prosperity twins typically bring their families.

In Cuba, this veneration of twins developed into a complete deification of the power of twinning. In Santería the Ibeji (the Yoruba word for twins) are represented by two small dolls dressed as a boy and girl in one of the costumes worn by adult members of the religion. The Ibeji signify the prosperity that children can bring, as well as a balance between opposing forces, the playfulness of children, and the multiplication of good luck. Although no one is initiated directly into their worship, they are among the most beloved Orisha and found on many Santería altars and thrones.

The Ibeji's number is 2, and their colors are those of Shango and Yemaya (red and white, blue and white). Their most common symbols are the twin dolls that grace their altars. They are associated with Saints Cosmas and Damian as well as the Romans Castor and Pollux.

Inle and Abata

Although Babalu is considered both the cause of and the cure for infectious diseases, Inle is the deity of medicine and health, the physician of the pantheon. Patron of the Erinlé River in Nigeria, Inle (who is known as Erinle in Africa) is a hunter and fisherman who spends the majority of his time in the forest. Thus, he is familiar with both waters and herbs, the essential ingredients of healing when antibiotics and other modern medical wonders are unknown. Abata is variously considered his wife and helpmate (nurse) or brother and is associated with the ponds and marshes deep in the forest. As such, she is sometimes described as the source of Inle's river. Some say that Inle is male during half of the year and female the other half or that he lives on land half of the year and in the river the other half (which may be the same thing since land is a "male" location while the river is a "female" one). In one well-known story, Yemaya falls in love with the beautiful Inle whom she takes to live with her at the bottom of her river (the Ògùn in Nigeria). There she shares all her secrets with him. When their relationship ends and he prepares to return to dry land, she becomes concerned about the depth of his knowledge of her realm and cuts out his tongue so he cannot tell what he has seen. Thus, in Cuba and the United States, they say that Inle does not speak in divination but depends on Yemaya to speak for him.

Inle's number is 7, and his colors are green, yellow, and blue. His most common symbols are fish, snake, and a doctor's staff. He is associated with Saint Rafael.

Olokun (or Olocun)

While Yemaya is associated with the upper reaches of the ocean, Olokun, whose name means "Owner of the Ocean," owns the depths and all the wealth that can be found there, as well as all the wealth brought by way of the ocean. Some say that Olokun is a male deity and others that she is female. It appears that in Yorubaland there were two Olokun worship groups, one made up of people who lived along the coast and worshiped Olokun as a male deity and one focused around the city of Ife, which

is in the center of Nigeria. These people worshiped Olokun not as the owner of the ocean but as the female owner of the riches of the ocean, particularly beads and shells. Which view an American practitioner has of Olokun depends upon the homeland of his or her religious ancestors. Many contemporary practitioners resolve the issue by suggesting that "no one knows what is at the bottom of the ocean" and thus no one really knows the answer to such an intimate question.

Olokun is especially important to African American practitioners because of the many African people who died during the Middle Passage and were buried at sea.

Olokun is associated with the numbers 4, 7, and 9, and the colors dark blue and white. Olokun shares many of the symbols of Yemaya including fish, ships, and their tackle, as well as the mermaid, snake, and mask. There are no saints directly associated with Olokun, although some people associate Olokun with the Virgin of Regla.

Osanyin

Herbs are very important to the practice of Santería. Although all the Orisha have particular plants associated with them, Osanyin is the Orisha associated with herbs in general. He is envisaged as a man with one leg, one arm, one big ear that is deaf, and one tiny ear that can hear insects crawling across the grass.

Osanyin's number is 3, and his color is green, the color of the forest. His most common symbols are herbs, leaves, and grasses. He is associated with Saint Joseph.

Orula (also known as Orunmila or Ifa)

Orula (who is known in African as Orunmila) is the Orisha of divination. It is said that he is present at the creation of every person, so he knows each one's complete destiny. He originally developed the divination method known as *diloggun* that uses cowry shells, but when he discovered that his wife (often named as either Yemaya or Oshun) had learned to divine with the shells he renounced them and developed a new method using palm nuts called *Ifa.* When he renounced the shells, his wife shared the techniques she had learned with all of the other Orisha. Today only priests of Orula can divine using Ifa, but all santeros can learn diloggun. Often the priests of Orula, called *babalawo,* use a chain called the *opele* to read Ifa instead of the palm nuts. Use of the palm nuts is said to be somewhat more accurate but the opele is faster and sufficient for most situations. Both diloggun and Ifa are based on a 16-digit number system, so rather than counting from one to ten, they count from one to 16. This makes 16 the highest single-digit number and the most numerically significant.

Orula's number is 16, and his colors are green and yellow. His most common symbols are the table of Ifa, the opele, and all the divination tools. He is associated with Saint Francis.

RITUALS AND CEREMONIES

In order to practice Santería, one must be initiated into the worship of the Orisha. Basic initiations include Necklaces (also called by the Yoruba word *eleke* or the

Spanish word *collares*), Warriors (also called by the Spanish term *Los Guerreros*), and the priestly initiation known variously as *Kariocha* (to place the Orisha on or in the head), crowning, *asiento,* or *hacer de santo.* In addition, before priestly initiation, one may receive a single Orisha for individual worship. Priestly initiation makes one the priest of a single Orisha (known as one's mother or father Orisha) and gives one the right to act as a priest of additional Orisha. After one has received priestly initiation, one may receive additional Orisha for whom he or she may also act as a priest.

Although many people receive the initiations of Necklaces and Warriors at the same time, they are two separate rituals. I describe them separately, although they may be performed in sequence within a single ritual event.

Necklaces

Beads and beadwork have ancient roots among the Yoruba people. As early as the ninth century CE there was a bead industry in the city of Ife in what is now Nigeria. From very early on beads were associated with trading wealth, and by the nineteenth century they permeated Yoruba culture. Among contemporary followers of the Orisha in the Americas, beads and beadwork are used to represent the Orisha and to embellish their tools and implements.

The ritual called Necklaces gives new adherents a set of beaded necklaces representing the primary members of the Santería pantheon. These necklaces are designed in strict adherence to the numbers and colors associated with each Orisha. Although there are variations among the different religious houses, generally the initiate receives the necklaces of Eleggua, Obatala, Shango, Yemaya, and Oshun. Each necklace is a single strand of beads constructed according to a distinct pattern. The exact color combinations and design are based on the Orisha guardians of the santero who is presenting the necklaces.

The ritual serves as a preliminary initiation into the worship of the Orisha. The new devotee is accepted into the religious family of the initiating priest, introduced to the five to seven primary Orisha of that household, and put under their protection. From this point on the initiating priest, who may be a man or a woman, takes on the responsibility for the religious training of the new godchild. The initiate owes the godparent respect and deference in all things religious. Since the necklaces are believed to put the godchild under the protection of their respective Orisha, sometimes a person is given a single necklace in an abbreviated form of the Necklace ritual in order to gain the protection of a particular Orisha.

Warriors (Los Guerreros)

In Yorubaland it was very common for every city and family compound and many individuals within a compound to have an image of Eshu/Eleggua to worship. In Cuba this practice was extended and enlarged to become the ritual known as *Los Guerreros* (the Warriors). Although there are many Orisha with warrior aspects, Los

Guerreros refers specifically to Eleggua, Ogun, Ochosi, along with Osun, the guardian of each individual's destiny. In this ritual icons representing these Orisha are given to the devotees. Through ritual action, the icons are imbued with the ashé of the Orisha so the devotees can worship them in their own homes.

Crowning (Kariocha)

In the ritual of priestly initiation, a devotee is crowned with the ashé of an Orisha to become the priest of that Orisha. One of the innovations devotees made in Cuba was not only to initiate an individual into the priesthood of a particular Orisha but also to give them priestly rights into a related group of Orisha. A priest's primary Orisha is known as the Orisha of the Head, or the priest's father or mother Orisha. Depending on which Orisha owns the priest's head, the initiate will also receive as part of the Crowning ritual the icons imbued with the ashé of a related group of from five to seven Orisha.

The *Kariocha* ceremony lasts seven days during which the priest-to-be, called *iyawo* (a Yoruba word meaning new wife) is sequestered in a small room together with his or her new Orisha. After that period of confinement, the iyawo must fulfill a yearlong novitiate period called the *iyawoage.* During this time the iyawo dresses entirely in white, is subject to a wide number of taboos, and is generally "in training" towards his or her eventual position as a fully certified priest. Because he or she is deemed especially vulnerable to a wide range of forces during this period, an iyawo, like a child, is protected by a number of rules and the solicitous care of his or her religious elders. It is not until the completion of the iyawo period that the initiate is accepted as a fully functioning member of the religious community, allowed to perform priestly duties, and fully integrated back into his or her previous life. At the end of the iyawoage, the new priest builds an elaborate altar honoring the Orisha and invites both members of the religious community and his or her personal family and friends to a dinner and coming-out party that signals the end of the initiation. Every year on the anniversary of the date of the actual initiation event, the priest will conduct a similar "birthday party" to celebrate his or her new birth.

Bembé

One of the most important Santería rituals is the *bembé* or *tambor* that calls the Orisha to presence in the bodies of their priests. In the bembé practitioners, using drumming, singing, and dancing, invite the Orisha to take possession of the body and consciousness of one or more of the attending priests. Possession allows devotees to speak directly to the Orisha and the Orisha to address, bless, and guide their devotees.

The bembé is a communal celebration, a party in honor of an Orisha (although all of the Orisha are invoked and invited to participate). The bembé may be held in a private home or a rented hall depending on the size of the community and the resources of the sponsor. An elaborate altar is built at one end of the room

to honor the Orisha, and an offering of fruits, pastries, cakes, and the like are placed in front of the space. The music of the bembé is provided by a set of sacred drums called *bata.* A bata ensemble consists of three two-headed drums played by highly trained drummers and a vocalist who leads the call-and-response singing. Each Orisha has a set of rhythms and dance steps that are used to call them into presence. As each Orisha's songs are sung, the priests of that Orisha, those who have been initiated and prepared for possession, dance in the open space in front of the drums.

As the heat of the drumming, singing, and dancing increases, one or more of the dancers will begin to show the preliminary signs of possession. With the help of the drummers, the singer, and the surrounding community, the Orisha is called into full presence and the consciousness of the individual departs. Although the transition between priest and Orisha may entail intense physical activity, jerky or irregular movements, and contorted or bizarre facial expressions, once the transition is complete and the embodied Orisha is fully in control all erratic and grotesque behavior stops. During the remainder of the possession event, the individual exhibits the behavior characteristic of the possessing Orisha, speaking to the people singly or in groups, blessing them, performing healing rituals, and generally providing advice and guidance to their followers.

Possession allows for a more personal level of communication between devotees and the deities than found in many other religions. During the possession event, the Orisha can speak directly to the participants, and participants can clarify any ambiguous messages or obligations. However, possession is not the method that the Orisha have for communicating with their followers. Santería also has a strong tradition of communication with the invisible world through the use of divination.

DESTINY, DIVINATION AND SACRIFICE

Like many peoples, the Yoruba and their American descendents believe that human beings are formed from a group of physical and nonphysical elements. While other Americans might name the body, mind, and soul as the components of human beings, the Yoruba would say that a person is composed of body, heart, breath, and head.[16] When they speak of "head" they mean not only the physical head (ori) but also what they call the "inner head," the spiritual head that is the bearer of each individual's destiny. According to the mythology, before one is born he or she must kneel before Olodumare and choose an ori, a destiny for this lifetime. Although each person can freely choose a destiny, that choice is made without full information so one may choose a good destiny that is solid and neat or one may choose a destiny that is beautiful on the outside but full of worms. Regardless of the destiny chosen, its details are forgotten, so that everyone is born ignorant of their destiny.

Although the general outline of one's destiny is determined before birth, the Yoruba did not believe that it was unalterable. Rather through one's actions one can soften a difficult destiny or, if one refuses to engage one's intellect and diligence, lose the

benefits of a fortunate destiny. Divination provides the method by which one can discover the outlines of one's destiny and work to improve a difficult destiny or manifest a fortunate one. Through divination one can begin to remember the agreement between one's ori and Olodumare and to make the life choices that are in harmony with that agreement.

Santería provides three types of divination. The simplest form uses pieces of coconut to get answers to yes/no questions. This so-called cocoa divination is normally used for simple questions and to confirm ritual actions. Questions or problems addressed directly to a particular Orisha use a set of cowry shells dedicated to that Orisha. The most difficult problems and questions provoked by simpler forms of divination must be brought to a *babalawo* for resolution.

Coconut divination uses four pieces of coconut meat that have not had the dark outside rind removed. When the coconut pieces are dropped on the ground they fall in one of five dark/light patterns (all white, one, two, three, or four dark sides showing). By asking a series of yes/no questions, a person can determine the will and pleasure of an Orisha and discern a plan of action. However, if one is having severe problems or if one requires a more detailed answer, one of the more complex divination systems are employed.

Each time a person is initiated to an Orisha he or she is given a set of cowry shells that are the divination set for that Orisha. These shells have a natural "mouth" on one side while the back of the shell is removed so that it will lay flat. Sixteen of the shells are cast onto a reed mat, and the resulting number or series of numbers are interpreted according to the client's problem and the Orisha whose shells are being read. Although it is a complicated system, any crowned priest, male or female, can decide to learn the verses and stories associated with the various combination of throws and be able to read the shells. However, most santeros depend on an *oriaté* who is highly trained as a diviner and ritual specialist to divine for them. Although the earliest oriate were women, until recently most were men. Several women in the United States and Cuba have begun to challenge this tradition.

Santeros, even the most proficient oriate, do not normally interpret falls with 13 or more mouths up. It is believed that those throws require recourse to a still higher level of divination that only a *babalawo,* Orula's divination priest, can perform. Using the divining chain called the *opele,* or the palm nuts, the babalawo speak the will of Olodumare through the mouth of Orula, their patron Orisha. Mythology tells us that Orula is present when each *ori* is chosen; hence, he knows each person's past, present, and future. Through Ifá divination, Orula indicates one of 265 possible *odu* or letters. Each letter is associated with a set of poems. Although the *odu Ifá* are similar to the numbers generated by the diloggun, they use a different set of sayings and poems or assign the same sayings and poems to different numeric combinations. Orisha worshippers in both Africa and the Americas believe that the solution to their problem, the secret of their destiny, is contained in these poems. It is the responsibility of the babalawo to know and interpret the poem or poems associated with the odu and to recommend a course of action to the client.

Often the course of action recommended by these various divination systems requires the inquirer to make a sacrifice or perform a cleansing or healing ritual in order to bring his or her life back onto the path of his or her best destiny. Sometimes these sacrifices are simple: the inquirer might be asked to offer natural or manufactured goods to an Orisha or enact a simple ritual. However, if the problem is serious, the inquirer might be asked to participate in a complex ritual or an initiation or to offer the blood of one or more animals to the Orisha.

Animal sacrifice is one of the most controversial aspects of Santería practice. People who have no qualms about using or eating animal products or killing small animals for sport or because they are perceived as vermin become incensed at the idea of killing in the service of ritual. However, sacrifice, the giving of natural and manufactured items to the Orisha or other spiritual beings, is viewed by santeros as essential for human happiness. Through sacrifice one restores the positive processes in one's life and acquires general well-being. One gives to the Orisha and the ancestors what they need and want in the expectation that they in turn will give what one needs or wants. This is not viewed as "bribing" or "buying off" the Orisha; rather it is the mutual exchange of *ashé* necessary to maintain the balance of the cosmos.

Many types of items are offered to the Orisha; however, when one's life is at stake or the community is celebrating an initiation, the sacrifice also includes the blood of animals. All types of sacrifice, but particularly animal sacrifice, serve to remind the participants of the delicate balance of the universe. As principally city dwellers, we forget that something must die—be it a cow or a chicken or a carrot—to make our lives possible. When the religion requires the sacrifice of an animal it is offered to the Orisha or the ancestor with respect, then it is killed quickly and with as little pain as possible. Santeros understand what the animal has given and are grateful.

In the early 1990s the city of Hialeah, Florida, passed a series of ordinances that made it illegal "to unnecessarily kill, torment, torture, or mutilate an animal in a public or private ritual or ceremony not for the primary purpose of food consumption." Since the city allowed the killing of animal for a host of other reasons "'even if you're tired of taking care of them,' as long as the purpose was not sacrifice," these ordinances appeared to be an effort to suppress the Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, a local Santería congregation. The congregation decided to fight the ordinances as a violation of their First Amendment right to freedom of religion. Ernesto Pichardo, one of the founders of the Santería church said, "Animal sacrifice is an integral part of our faith. It is like our holy meal."[17] At the hearing before the Supreme Court, Douglas Laycock, a law professor at the University of Texas, said, "The only way to show that sacrifice is 'unnecessary' to the Santería followers is to prove that Santería is a false religion."[18] However, the legitimacy of Santería as a religion was never questioned as part of the hearing. In the Court opinion overthrowing the city's ordinances, Justice Anthony Kennedy, quoting an earlier ruling,[19] said, "Although the practice of animal sacrifice may seem abhorrent to some 'religious belief need not be acceptable, logical, consistent, or comprehensible to others in order to merit First Amendment protection.'"[20]

PRIESTS, DRUMMERS, AND OTHER RITUAL SPECIALISTS

In both Africa and the Americas, the priesthood has traditionally been open to both men and women, and in many communities the majority of the priests are women. Priests take charge of ritual events and initiations, provide physical, emotional, and psychological healing, and teach new members of the community. In addition practitioners may be trained to take on other specialized roles within the community including divination priest, sacrifical priest, and drummer.

There are two types of divination priests. An *oriate* is an olorisha who has received additional training to perform the cowry shell divination and perform various types of rituals including the asiento or priestly initiation. A second type of divination priest is the babalawo (father of the mysteries) who is trained in the Ifa divination method. A babalawo, who is always a man, may or may not be initiated as an olorisha but he must limit his participation in the religion to Ifa. He does not perform any other initiation rituals except to initiate other men as babalawo. Although much of the literature on Santería suggests that the babalawo is the "high priest" of the religion, this is a mischaracterization of his position. The babalawo perform the highest form of divination, but they are prohibited from performing any of the initiation rituals so important to Santería practice including the asiento. In recent years, in an attempt to allow women to gain access to the prestige accorded to the fellowship of babalawo, an initiation similar to that of the babalawo has been developed. The *iyanifa* (mother of Ifa) can divine using the Ifa system and has many of the rights and privileges of the babalawo. Another role for women within Ifa is that of *apetebi.* An apetebi is an assistant to the babalawo. Often the babalawo's wife serves in this capacity, although he may use another woman as his assistant instead.

Although any initiated priest can perform simple sacrifices, for those involving chicken and other fowl one must receive an additional initiation known as *cuchillo, pinaldo,* or *knife* in order to sacrifice larger animals including sheep and goats. A babalawo or oriate always receives cuchillo, but other priests can also receive this advanced initiation.

Because Santería is a danced religion, drummers fulfill an important role in their communities. Often drummers have received only low-level initiations (Necklaces and Warriors) in addition to their primary initiation into Aña, the fellowship of the drums.

There are many other roles played by devotees of Santería. Every ritual requires a wide range of specialists, including those who erect the ritual displays called *tronos* (thrones), those who clean and cook the sacrificed animals as well as prepare other meals, those who are mediums and become possessed by the Orisha in ceremonies, and those who use their artistic talents to prepare all the accessories of the Orisha including necklaces and other beaded items, special clothes, costumes, and the like.

CONTROVERSIES AND ISSUES

Santería in the United States faces several types of controversies. Externally the use of animal sacrifice and the public's perception that Santería is a cult continue to plague devotees as they try to practice their religion. On the other hand, other groups, notably Spiritist groups and some Neopagans, have appropriated the trappings of Santería without participating in established communities.

As early as the 1960s anthropologists began to describe a type of *Espiritismo,* which George Brandon dubbed *Santerismo.* Espiritismo is a Caribbean variant of the Spiritism developed by Allan Kardec in the 1800s. Espiritismo calls on the spirits of the elevated dead to provide spiritual healing and advancement through mediums who can hear, see, feel, or, in some cases, be possessed by these spirits. Santerismo incorporated elements of Santería into Espiritismo beliefs and practices, including the use of beaded necklaces similar to those used in Santería, the incorporation of the Orisha in their pantheon of spirits, and the adaptation of the Santería religious kinship system, that is, identifying senior espiritistas as *padrino* or *madrina.*[21] Many Neopagan groups and other individuals are wide-ranging in the search for the divine. Thus, it should not be surprising that, as Santería gains public recognition, Neopagans begin to incorporate the Orisha into their pantheons. Many santeros find both of these developments disturbing as the requirements to work with the Orisha within the tradition are stringent and tied to the initiatory system, and outsiders who appropriate elements of the tradition are considered both foolish and dangerous.

Internally, several movements within the tradition also challenge participants. For the most part these are not challenges to the beliefs or practices of the tradition but rather organizational challenges. As the religion has moved beyond the Cuban and extended Latino communities, black and white Americans have brought their own sensibilities to the tradition. This has led to two somewhat overlapping movements. I call the one Protestantization and the other Africanization.

Protestantization is the attempt to make the tradition conform more closely to the organizational structure of American Protestant churches. This movement has led to a desire to remove all Catholic (Christian) trappings including the use of Catholic saints, holy water, and the like; the establishment of "church" organizations that can be recognized both by the local authorities and the surrounding community (for example, Church Lukumi Babalu Aye), a concurrent movement away from secrecy; and the development of a primarily male priesthood with a corresponding loss of status among female priests.

Africanization is the desire primarily among African American devotees to re-Africanize the tradition. Africanization efforts include the movement to replace Catholic and Spanish trappings with those from Africa including the use of Yoruba rather than Spanish vocabulary, the production of Africanized images to replace Catholic ones, the incorporation of Africanized dress, and the return to Yoruba communities in Nigeria to receive initiations and teachings. Along with these efforts has come the formation of religions and social communities modeled on an idealization

of Yoruba culture, of which Oyotunji Village is the most prominent example. This movement, too, had led to a movement away from secrecy and toward a more public face to the religion.

CONCLUSION

In the early twentieth century when scholars first began to seriously study Santería and its sister religions (Vodou, Candomblé, and Shango), they predicted that as the economic and educational levels of the people were raised these "superstitious" traditions would disappear. In fact, just the opposite is happening. As the religion has gained a foothold in the United States it has not only grown in absolute numbers, it has also attracted members from across the economic and educational spectrum. Today you can find practitioners in most major urban areas (and many smaller cities and towns as well). Although many of practitioners are from the lower socioeconomic classes, there are an increasing number of middle and even upper-class participants. Awareness of the religion in the general population has grown as well. It is not unusual to find these traditions included in university courses in the fields of religious studies, Latin American studies, and African or African American studies. A steady stream of books are finding their way into the big-name bookstores, and we are even beginning to see sympathetic portrayals of the religion in the popular media. You should not be surprised to discover that your neighbor, classmate, or friend is involved in one way or another with one of these religious traditions as they move into the mainstream of American culture.

NOTES

1. George Brandon, *Santeria from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 58, Table 2.
2. David D. Brown, *Santeria Enthroned: Art, Ritual, and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 99.
3. Brandon, *Santeria from Africa to the New World,* 106–108.
4. Information from the Oyotunji African Village Web site, http://www.oyotunjivillage.net/, and the Roots & Rooted Indigenous spirituality site's article about Oba Adedunmi and Oyotunji Village, http://www.rootsandrooted.org/oyotunji.htm.
5. Information about Church Lukumi Babalu Aye from the church Web site, http://www.church-of-the-lukumi.org/.
6. E. Bolájí Ìdòwú, *Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief* (New York: Wazobia, 1994).
7. Ibid., 32, 39, 53, 40, 41, 53, 42, 44, 46, 47.
8. Pierre Verger, "The Yoruba High God," *Odu* 2 (January 2, 1966):19–40, 35.
9. P.R. McKenzie, "Yoruba Òrìsà Cults: Some Marginal Notes Concerning their Cosmology and Concepts of Deity," *Journal of Religion in Africa* VIII (Facs. 3, 1976): 189–207.
10. E.T. Lawson, *Religions of Africa: Traditions in Transformation* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 57.
11. Ibid., 60.
12. Ibid., 60–61.

13. The Reverend Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: from the Earliest Times to the Beginning to the British Protectorate,* trans. D.O.e. Johnson [Lagos: C. M. S. (Nigeria) Bookshops, 1921, 1960], 34.
14. Ìdòwú, *Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief,* 93.
15. William Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries: Yoruba Divination from Africa to the New World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 413–419.
16. This description of Yoruba psychology owes much to the work of Segun Gbadegesin, especially *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities* (New York: P. Lang, 1991).
17. Linda Greenhouse, "Court, Citing Religious Freedom, Voids a Ban on Animal Sacrifice," *New York Times,* June 12, 1993.
18. Linda Greenhouse, "High Court is Cool to Sacrifice Ban," *The New York Times,*, November 5, 1992, 25, col. 1.
19. *Thomas v. Review Act of Indiana Employment Security Div.* (1981).
20. Justice Anthony Kennedy, "Excepts from Supreme Court Opinions on the Ritual Sacrifice of Animals," *The New York Times,* June 12, 1993, 9.
21. Brandon, *Santeria from Africa to the New World,* 107–114.

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Rastafarianism

Dawn L. Hutchinson

INTRODUCTION

The Rastafarian movement emerged in the 1930s in Jamaica, particularly in areas around the capital, Kingston. It was a response to the crowning of Emperor Haile Selassie in Ethiopia, a black king whom the Jamaican poor hoped would ease the social ills that plagued them. While the movement does not have a central authority that would determine doctrine, offer membership, train clergy, and regulate religious practices, all the groups do share some common beliefs. Central to Rastafarianism is the belief that Haile Selassie, former emperor of Ethiopia, was sent to completely transform the social world dominated by the white power structure, referred to as Babylon. Each of the groups condemns white oppression of the African masses, and they believe that a return to Africa will enable them to overcome this oppression. Large groups of Rastafarians began to immigrate to the United States in the 1970s, where they continue to practice the religious rituals of their Jamaican-born movement.

HISTORY OF RASTAFARIANISM

While the Rastafarian Movement began with the crowning of Haile Selassie in 1930, poor economic conditions in Jamaica and several early religious movements precipitated its beginnings. During the colonial period in Jamaica, the indigenous blacks were enslaved, and thus disenfranchised. They were penniless and dependent on their colonial oppressors. Unfortunately, emancipation, which occurred between 1834 and 1838, did not help the economic conditions of the former slaves. They were denied the right to own land, and their former owners brought in workers from India and Africa, making jobs scarce and depressing wages for the former slaves.[1] Some former slaves were able to gain access to land for a short time by squatting on government land or by working with Baptist, Moravian, and Methodist churches to purchase land.

After the colonial period, the failing plantations continued to produce meager crops, and in the nineteenth century, British and American capital allowed the rejuvenation of agricultural business ventures. The government reclaimed the land that former slaves had appropriated, leaving even more people landless and jobless. Many formerly rural people migrated toward cities, producing higher levels of unemployment and the growth of urban slums.[2] By 1930, the agricultural businesses were weakened by capitalism. Even those few who had been earning wages on plantations had to find jobs in the new factories and other city industries.[3] Most of the poor were also alienated from the political system, which concerned itself with international affairs and issues important to the British crown. There was no system in place for the government to respond to the needs of the native Jamaican people.

Finding themselves powerless, many of the former slaves began to perceive the white power structure in Jamaica as a source of evil. They saw themselves enslaved by this evil force and called it "Babylon." Babylon, for Rastas, refers to any of the evil forces in the world (systems that oppress and divide the masses of people).[4] Some blacks began to form small groups for the purpose of finding a solution to this problem of Babylon well before the official beginnings of Rastafarianism.

One of the earliest of these groups was called the Maroons. They began forming even before emancipation. For them, all whites were evil. Their solution for ridding themselves of the evil white force was to escape from their owners and establish small self-supporting communes.[5] These groups gradually grew and became a problem for the British government. They staged small resistance actions that led more people to become interested in their antiwhite agenda. This escalated into the Maroon Wars (1655–1739) between the Maroons and the British. The Maroons signed a treaty with the British after the wars in 1739, giving them some status and giving them power to help the British capture other runaway slaves and other antiwhite groups.

Another early antiwhite movement was started by Paul Bogle, a black preacher and Dean of the Native Baptist Church in Jamaica. He worked with a small group of blacks to change the colonial laws that were biased against the black masses. The ex-slaves were bitter against what they called the "White Man's Law": the way the planters and their managers maintained law and order. Former slaves also feared that the planters intended to restore slavery. Bogle led small secret groups whose long-range plans were to "drive the white man from Jamaica."[6] Many wanted the overthrow of white planter rule and the breakup of the plantation system. This general unrest among the poor led Bogle into rebellion with between 200–300 supporters. During the rebellion a skirmish occurred at a St. Thomas courthouse in 1863 later dubbed the "Morant Bay Rebellion." The governor pursued all those suspected of being involved in the rebellion. Hundreds of people were flogged, shot, or hanged. Eventually Bogle was caught by Maroons and British militia troops and was publicly hanged.

An important pre-Rastafarian figure was Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican social reformer. He formed the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), to which he devoted the majority of his life. He traveled widely around the world, noticing the poor conditions for former Africans everywhere. He is considered by many to be

the grandfather of Rastafarianism because of his message of African pride, his distrust of white power structures, his work for the improvement of blacks everywhere, and possibly his prediction of a future black king in Africa.

Eventually in Jamaica, the disenfranchised antiwhite groups looked for a black messiah to save them from their oppression and return them to Africa. A phrase began to circulate, originally attributed to Garvey, that gave the black masses hope. Garvey reportedly prophesied "Look to Africa, where a black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near."[7] While most Rastas attribute this phrase to Garvey, it was probably stated by an associate of his, the Reverend James Morris Webb, who is also known to have claimed that a black man from Africa would become the universal king.[8] Webb probably spoke this prophecy at a UNIA convention in 1924. Six years later, Haile Selassie was crowned emperor of Ethiopia; many believed him to be the black king from the Garvey/Webb prophecy.

Also not coincidentally, in 1924 a secret Bible written by Robert Athlyi Rogers of Anguilla, a Carribean island, was published, entitled "The Black Man's Bible." This book is often referred to by Rastas as the *Holy Piby.*[9] This book made its way into Jamaica in 1925 and was read by many in the antiwhite groups.

In 1930, the Ethiopian Prince Regent, Ras Tafari, was crowned emperor of Ethiopia and took the title Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the All-conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah. The crowning of a black king gave the poor and oppressed Jamaicans some hope because it appeared to fulfill the earlier prophecy of a coming black African king. Haile Selassie's ascension to the Ethiopian throne is considered the beginning of Rastafarianism. Rastas expected Emperor Selassie to instigate a transformation of the world order. They believed he would dissolve the white power structure and return all black people to Africa. The emperor himself would make arrangements for all blacks to be collected and returned to their homeland.[10]

While Garvey's earlier efforts to free Africans from their white oppressors included practical solutions such as raising funds, starting businesses run by and for blacks, and strengthening pride in African heritage, the plans of Rastafarians were for Emperor Selassie to miraculously transform the world.[11] Rastafarians formed small groups called enclaves that were communally operated. Each group was independent, holding in common the belief that Haile Selassie was the messiah who would redeem all black Africans and return them to their homeland. Rastafarians chose to wear their hair in "dreadlocks," symbolizing their pride in their African roots. They allowed their locks to grow long and did not comb them. They cite support for this practice in the Bible: "They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in the flesh" (Leviticus 21:5). This practice, and their insistence on smoking ganga (marijuana) in their ritual practice, made them social outcasts from Jamaican society.

One of the first enclaves, popularly known as Dung Hill, was renamed "Addis Abada" by the Rastas, after the place where Haile Selassie was crowned.[12] Here lived a community of bearded men who awaited the return of Haile Selassie to the throne.[13] Italy had invaded Ethiopia in 1935, leading to a five-year exile of Selassie

to Bath, England. During Selassie's exile, many of the Rastafarian groups became more involved in politics because they felt that a practical solution to the problem of Babylon was necessary. During the 1940s and 1950s, many in the Rastafarian movement chose practical steps to realize their religious beliefs. Many Rastas defied the police, stocked firearms, and organized illegal street marches.

Another well-known enclave, called Pinnacle, was begun by Leonard Howell. Howell, a major figure in the dissemination of Rastafarian beliefs, formed the Ethiopian Salvation Society in 1940. This group of about 1600 people moved to the Pinnacle commune in St. Catherine where they cultivated ganga and practiced Rastafarian rituals. Eventually Howell claimed that he was Haile Selassie, and therefore the messiah. This greatly confused many of his followers, and the membership dropped off somewhat. Police raided Pinnacle in 1954, arresting Howell. The local magistrate declared Howell to be mentally unstable and committed him to an institution for the criminally insane.[14] His followers disbanded following his incarceration.

In 1941, Haile Selassie was returned to his throne in Ethiopia and the Rastas began to await the millennium—the appearance of ships from the emperor that would return them to Africa. Much of this expectation was in response to an announcement made by Maime Richardson of the Ethiopian World Federation, an organization established by Haile Selassie to raise money and political support for Ethiopia from black nationalist groups in the west. Richardson claimed that "the Emperor Haile Selassie is now engaged in building a Merchant Navy…" and the time would come when his ships would sail to America and possibly even Jamaica.[15] Many Rastas understood this statement to mean that the Emperor was sending the long-awaited ships to return Africans to their homeland. Some migrated toward the larger port towns of Jamaica, such as Kingston, in anticipation and became victims of false prophets.

The first of these, Edward C. Edwards, a self-proclaimed prince, claimed that his church, the Coptic Theocratic Temple at Kingston Pier, would be where Haile Selassie's ships would come for his people. Edwards claimed to have heard from the emperor himself in 1943 that the Rastas should prepare for his arrival. Many people gathered at the church in 1958 in response to handbills that Edwards circulated, having sold all their possessions, and awaited the ships from Ethiopia. The restlessness of the group resulted in a mass insurrection. Police who tried to disperse the crowd were injured.[16] The group waited for a few months, but Selassie's ships never arrived.

Claudius Henry became the next prominent millennial leader. He announced that he was "God's Annointed Prophet and Repairer of the Breach."[17] Henry sold 15,000 tickets to Africa in 1959. He claimed, on authority of the Emperor, that passports would not be necessary. Many people bought tickets, sold all their belongings, and waited to be transported to Africa from Kingston. Many were left homeless and stranded when the ships, again, failed to appear. Henry was charged with fraud and disturbing the peace; he was incarcerated for six months.

Rastas became impatient in their millennial hopes. While the majority of Rastas believed in nonviolence, some chose violent ways to realize their millennial

hopes in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1958, police had to break up the group gathered by Edwards. In 1959, nine Rastas invaded the Jamaican governor's residence and occupied it for several days before being removed by police. In 1960, Henry's residence was raided and police found homemade bombs, dynamite, detonators, guns, machetes, swords, batons, clubs, and conch shells filled with cement. Also in 1960, a raid of the Red Hills Rastafarian enclave resulted in three members of Henry's church being shot and killed. Ten men were charged with felony possession of firearms and murder. Seven of these men were Americans from the First African Corps who had smuggled automatic rifles into Jamaica in refrigerators. One of the men was Henry's son, Ronald. In 1962, Rastas robbed and then burned down a gas station at Coral Gardens, allowing the black attendant to flee the scene. They then moved to a nearby hotel, killing a guest and attacking a mobile police unit, and killed a police inspector.[18] These acts of violence caused the white power structure to view Rastas as a threat, just as the Rastas saw all whites as a threat.

Also in 1962, Jamaica earned its independence from colonial rule, but maintained its membership in the British Commonwealth. They wrote their constitution that same year. The Jamaican government was a constitutional parliamentary democracy, following the model of the United Kingdom. The latter maintains a Governor General in Jamaica who is elected on the advice of the Jamaican Prime Minister. The role of the Governor General is mainly ceremonial, with the executive power of the state vested in the Cabinet, which is led by the Prime Minister.

In 1966, Haile Selassie visited Jamaica. A crowd of about 100,000 Rastas surrounded the plane when it landed, frightening the Emperor. The crowd had to be calmed by a Rasta leader named Mortimo Planno before the Emperor would emerge from his plane. While Selassie made no official comment on the Rastafarian claims made about him, a rumor circulated that he had passed a slip of paper secretly to some Rasta elders telling them to "liberate Jamaica before migrating to Ethiopia."[19] This served to calm the Rastafarian community, since the date of their departure to Africa was temporarily delayed. This also gave them a focus for immediate action —the liberation of their own country from oppressive rule. While Jamaica had been freed from colonial rule a few years earlier, Rastas felt that they were still oppressed by unfair laws against blacks, by poverty, and by the trickery of whites.

By the 1970s, many Rastas had adjusted to the wider Jamaican society and were living simply and working in cooperative industries like fishing and farming, as well as with crafts such as upholstery, shoemaking, and wood carving. Some took up peddling their wares to the public as well.[20] It was in the 1970s that Rastafarianism had more of a cultural impact, contributing to Jamaica's art and music, especially through reggae.

The musician Bob Marley's reggae music disseminated Rastafarian values and beliefs to an international audience. Marley and the Wailers wrote songs that depicted the deplorable situation of the Jamaican poor and that carried the ideology of Rastafarianism. Rastafarian beliefs were a major theme in his songs, and he made use of Jamaican and African cultural themes.

While it was not surprising that Marley and the Wailers were popular in Jamaica, their international impact was unexpected. They toured in the United States, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, West Germany, Spain, Scandinavia, Ireland, Holland, Japan, Australia, and elsewhere to sold-out shows. Through Marley, the Rastafarian message spread worldwide.[21]

Rastafarians, along with other Jamaicans, migrated in large numbers to the United States starting in the 1970s. Their religious views and culture spread among America's youth, both black and white. While most Rastas were pacifists, their antiwhite message was understood in the context of violence. Actually, only a few Rastas have committed violent acts. Most people who identified with the Rastas, identified with their message of resistance to oppression.

Since the 1980s, the Rastafarian movement has become less religiously based. Their manner of dress, their dreadlocks, their red, green, and gold symbols, and their music have been appropriated into mainstream culture. Rasta women, who once were forbidden to hold leadership roles in the movement and were often secluded from social contact, are now becoming more outspoken. Rasta men have traditionally dominated Rastafarianism, considering women to be secondary members of the social group. Rasta men considered the struggle for freedom to be a male struggle.[22] Women have become more vocal against the misogynistic practices in the movement and have even refused to cover their dreads or wear long dresses.

The majority of Rastas in Jamaica now live in small groups either on the outskirts of towns in camps or in walled city lots called yards. Some live in larger more organized communes with anywhere from 20–150 people.[23] Some of the camps are segregated by gender and are organized like monasteries. Most, however, try to reconstruct the feel of West African villages. Most believe in nonviolence and are not affiliated with larger Rasta organizations with political motivations. Rastafarianism has also spread to other areas of the Caribbean, Kenya, Ethiopia, and urban areas in the United States, England, Canada, and New Zealand.[24]

While mostly a loosely organized religious movement, some efforts have been made to organize over the years. The first such attempt was in 1958 in Kingston, Jamaica, at the first major "national" groundation. These are national gatherings of Rastas that include chanting, drumming, dancing, and smoking of ganga. This first conference was organized by Charles Edwards Emanuel and Nyahbinghi, (an orthodox faction of Rastas) members of the Rastafarian movement. During the conference, they established the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress and Church of Salvation (EABIC). Three thousand people gathered at the Nyahbinghi/EABIC Groundation. The Jamaican police eventually broke it up. In addition, the Rastafarian Centralization Organization in Kingston was organized to make the fundamental beliefs of Rastafarianism available to interested parties and to establish the "Rastafari Theocracy Government."[25] The chairman of this organization is Ras Sydney De Silva, and it was responsible for the first Rastafarian International Assembly held in Toronto, Canada, in 1982.[26] The purpose of these assemblies is to bring together members of the Rastafarian movement from around the world.

Other organizations within the movement include two formal sects, the Bobos, or the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and the larger, loosely organized "House of the Nyabingi." The majority of Rastas belong to this latter organization, which has no formal requirements for membership. It is run by an assembly of elders, who settle disputes and plan liturgical events.[27] None of these organizations has a recognized central authority responsible for training clergy, settling doctrinal disputes, or regulating religious practices.

In the United States, Rastafarians live mostly in urban areas, either with their families or in small groups in houses or apartments. Rastafarians attend reasoning sessions at community churches or in members' homes. Reasoning sessions are informal discussion sessions that encourage open dialogue on current issues, politics, culture, and religion; they are central to Rastafarian ritual. Since ganga (marijuana) is illegal in the United States, Rastafarians have had some conflicts with police. The use of marijuana in Rastafarian religious rituals, however, has been upheld in both state and federal courts. Recently, when this practice again came into question, the defendant cited the *Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993* (see below) and was eventually exonerated of criminal charges. As in Jamaica, Rastafarians in the United States are distinctive in their appearance, wearing their dreadlocks and African-inspired clothing. In the 1970s, the New York City police accused the Rastafarian community there of violence, drug and gun running, and homicide. This was in response to growing international intolerance of the religion. In fact, Dan Rather, anchor of the *60 Minutes II* television show, labeled Rastafarianism "a multinational drug-smuggling corporation that used religious beliefs to conceal its illicit narcotics-importing activity."[28] This negative public image of Rastafarianism led to many having to defend their religious practices in court.

For instance, in an Indiana court in 1988, in *Reed v. Faulkner,* Homer Reed, a Rasta inmate in a state prison filed a lawsuit against the state for being forced to cut his dreadlocks to conform with prison rules about hair length. The judge ruled against Reed, arguing that his hair was a health hazard because it could contain lice or other diseases. However, in a similar case in New York in 1986, *People v. Lewis,* the judge upheld a Rasta's right to wear dreadlocks as a religious practice.

In *U.S.A. v. Bauer* in 1993, the court indicted 26 Rastafarians for manufacturing and trafficking marijuana. Since the U.S. Congress had the *Religious Freedom Restoration Act* under review and President Clinton had already signed the Bill, the defendants argued that they should not be indicted, as marijuana was necessary for their ritual practices. While the court agreed the marijuana was for ritual use, they still ruled against the Rastas.[29]

Another contemporary issue for Rastafarians is the issue of whites who claim membership in the movement. While some believe that racism does not belong in the movement, others note that the religion exists to end white oppression of blacks. On the one hand, members cite Haile Selassie's welcome to all races: "I extend the hand of universal brotherhood to all without regard to race!" Along these lines, they believe that racism is divisive in the movement and should be a thing of the past. One member states: "Heed the word of Jah. HIM create Black, White, Yellow, and Brown

all equal in HIM eyes and all equal in HIM heart. I still say that if the I is following the teachings of Selassie I and the bible, there is no man on earth who can tell you that you are not good enough to enter thru Zion I Gates whether you White, Black or whatever color Jah make you."[30]

On the other hand, there are many in the movement who consider whites who want to be members as frauds, or worse, as infiltrators from the white oppressors. Since the movement was begun as an antiwhite religion, many blacks in the movement are suspicious of whites who want to worship with them. One member put it thus: "Why can we not have something without these 'whites' always butting in? Inviting themselves in, first on the borders, then, gradually moving in, expressing admiration, respectful, yes. Offering advise, respectfully—only suggestions … until they are in the center, defining for us what we created."[31]

These issues aside, Rastas in the United States, as in other areas of the world, practice their religion and await Haile Selassie's return, when all Africans will be free from white oppression.

PROMINENT LEADERS OF THE MOVEMENT

While many attribute the ideas of African pride and the possibility of a black African king to Garvey, he did not start the Rastafarian movement. Nor could Selassie be considered a founder, although his coronation certainly inspired the movement's beginnings. Some of the early Rastafarian activists were Howell, Robert Hinds, Joseph Hibbert, and Archibald Dunkley. Later, important leaders in the movement included Paul Earlington and Marley. These men were responsible for forming small Rastafarian enclaves and disseminating and expounding upon the belief system.

Garvey was born in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica, on August 17, 1887. He moved to Kingston at the age of 14 and found work in a print shop, learning the skills of a typesetter. Publishing was an important means of spreading his message for the rest of his life. He became involved in social reform as a result of his participation in the first Printers' Union strike in 1907. He then set up the newspaper *The Watchman.* He became aware of the conditions of the working class and began to travel, beginning with trips to Central and South America. To confront the poor conditions for blacks everywhere, he created the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). In 1920, the UNIA with its coordinating body, the African Communities League, held their first convention in New York City. This convention opened with a parade down Harlem's Lenox Avenue and attracted a crowd of 25,000 for the speakers that same night. Garvey outlined his plans for building an African nation-state, which would be the pride of all African peoples. His main message was one of pride in African heritage. He described Africa as the cradle of civilization and one of the earliest advanced cultures.[32]

Garvey also began the African Orthodox Church, which was a product of his encouraging his followers to imagine Jesus as black and to organize their own church. He began several business ventures including the Black Star Shipping Line, which

later failed. With many financial and legal difficulties, Garvey was imprisoned for five years in Atlanta and then deported to Jamaica. He spent the remainder of his life working in Jamaican politics for the rights of blacks in his home country.[33] He spent his last years living in England.

As part of his program of African pride, Garvey felt that African culture should be taught in the schools; he sponsored the production of black dolls for children; he introduced red, green, and gold clothing and accessories for people to wear; and he also promoted the idea that God was actually black. He also supported the return to Africa for many blacks.

There would not have been a Rastafarian movement without the personage of Ras Tafari/Haile Selassie. The crowning of a black king in Africa gave poor Jamaicans some hope, because it appeared to be the fulfillment of an earlier prophecy. Selassie developed a program of modernization in Ethiopia with mixed results. He secured the admission of Ethiopia to the League of Nations in 1923 and abolished slavery that same year. He oversaw the writing of Ethiopia's first constitution in 1931, which gave ordinary citizens a voice in official government policy. Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, leading to Selassie's exile. On his return to power in 1941, Selassie introduced a revised constitution that gave him more power. He also established the Organization for African Unity in 1963. His more conservative policies led to a coup attempt that resulted in his imprisonment in 1974. The nature of his death in prison is widely debated. Many Rastas believe that he is still alive.[34] Selassie never confirmed nor denied the claims that he was the Rastafarian savior. While it is likely the emperor did not believe he was the messiah, the Rastas say that "even God would not know that He is God."[35]

Howell probably was most responsible for spreading the belief that Selassie was divine and would miraculously conquer white oppressors and return blacks to their African homeland. His beliefs were made public due to his frequent conflicts with the law. In 1933, he was arrested in Jamaica for inciting blacks to resist white authority. He chose the courtroom as a forum in which to explain his beliefs. He argued that blacks were the "true descendents of the ancient Israelites who had been enslaved by whites, the agents of Babylon."[36] Ras Tafari, however, had come to abolish the domination of the white power structure and send ships to return all blacks back to their African homeland. The court sentenced Howell to two years in prison for disturbing the peace and inciting crowds. After his Pinnacle commune was raided, Howell was declared to be mentally unstable and was committed to an institution for the criminally insane.[37]

Hinds, Dunkley, and Hibbert were other prominent voices in the early development of Rastafarianism, each starting his own movement. As a result of their resistance to the white power structure, each of them met difficult ends. Hinds, an accomplice of Howell's in the dissemination of the Rastafarian beliefs, was incarcerated for 12 months in 1933 as a result of his inflammatory language. Dunkley was fined for disorderly conduct that same year and was later sentenced to Bellevue Asylum. Hibbert, the organizer of the Ethiopian Coptic Faith, was committed to Bellevue Asylum in 1938.[38]

Earlington formed a more secular branch of Rastafarianism in 1938 called the Jamaican branch of the Ethiopian World Federation. He was a follower of Garvey before he began the Federation. He asked for the support of both Dunkley and Hibbert, but failed to receive it due to differences in ideology. Earlington's branch of the Ethiopian World Federation was an extension of the larger organization established in 1937 under Selassie's direction. The emperor originally set up this organization to bring international attention to Ethiopia, and to ask for the support of foreign nations. Earlington's group, on the other hand, was used to spread Rastafarian principles.[39]

Marley and the Wailers were instrumental in transforming Rastafarianism from a Jamaican religious phenomenon to an international movement. Their reggae songs, filled with images of the struggles of the underclass, called on their brethren to praise Jah, who would save them from their strife. Their music also dealt with social concerns in Jamaica, exposing much of the disenfranchisement of the poor and oppressed.

Examples of some Rastafarian themes in Marley's lyrics include: "Get Up, Stand Up," a song on his 1973 "Burnin'" album, in which Marley wrote "Most people think, Great God will come from the skies, Take away everything and make everybody feel high. But if you know what life is worth, you will look for yours on earth: and now you see the light … We know when we understand: Almighty God is a living man." Also, in his song "Exodus" on the 1976 "Exodus" album, he talks about escaping white oppression (Babylon): "Exodus: Movement of Jah people!… Uh! Open your eyes and look within: Are you satisfied with the life you're living? Uh! We know where we're going, uh! We know where we're from. We're leaving Babylon, We're going to our Father land." In "Babylon System," from his 1979 "Survival" album, Marley likens the white oppressive system to a vampire: "Babylon System is the Vampire Sucking the children day by day … sucking the blood of the sufferers."

Marley and the Wailers signed with the Island Records label in 1972 and were distributed nationally and, soon, internationally. They sold out in their tours around the world, spreading the Rastafarian message everywhere they went.[40] While outsiders never quite understood the complexity of the Rastafarian messages in Marley's songs, his fellow Rastas did. The fact that his hidden messages were going out around the world, chastising the evil oppressors, endeared him to the Rasta community.[41] Marley was viewed as a prophet, a shaman of his people.

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Rastafarians believe that there is one God, called Jah (related to the Hebrew name for God, Jahweh). They believe that the Bible is the word of God and that there are hidden meanings intentionally withheld from people of African descent by their oppressors. Many of these secret meanings are found in the books of Psalms, Daniel, and Revelation, which speak of a messiah and a golden age in the future.

In addition to the Christian Bible, two other sources have been important historically to Rastafarians. One is the *Holy Piby,*[42] which made its way into Jamaica in

1925 and was read by many in the pre-Rastafarian groups. Rastas believed that the *Holy Piby* was originally written in Amharic, the ancient official language of Ethiopia and believed to be the original language of humankind. Rastas believe this book to be the original Bible and that later translations have been distorted by white popes to make God and his prophets Caucasian instead of black.[43]

In addition to the *Holy Piby,* the *Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* was introduced to early Rastafarians by the Reverend Fitz Balintine Pettersburgh in 1926. This text described the coming golden age in which there would be a new Ethiopian empire ruled by a black divine king. While he led his followers to believe that the text was ancient, it was likely written and published by Reverend Pettersburgh himself.[44]

Rastas believe that Jah is found in the world and in each of his children. The concept of "I and I" encompasses this belief. This expression refers to the self and the always present Jah. It also expresses the oneness of two persons: since Jah is in everyone, we are all one person.[45]

The primary belief of the Rastafarians is that Selassie will redeem all blacks from their oppression. Originally, Rastas believed he would dissolve the white power structure and return all black people to Africa. The emperor himself would make arrangements for all blacks to be collected and returned to their homeland.[46] After his death, this emphatic belief remains. Some Rastas believe that Selassie never died, while others believe that he will return to save their people from oppression. Some believe that Selassie was divine, whereas others believe that he was divinely sent.

Selassie is represented by the lion, a symbol that can be found everywhere in Jamaica: on flags, in artwork, in songs, and in poetry. The lion stands for Selassie's royalty both earthly and spiritually. The dreadlocks of the Rastas are also reminiscent of the mane of the lion. The lion represents strength, knowledge, and aggression for the Ratafarians.

The oppressive force keeping the black race down is known as "Babylon." This is an important term, because it points to Rastafarians' identification with the ancient Israelites, who were held captive in the ancient Mesopotamian city-state of Babylon. In Rastafarian usage, Babylon refers to the white power structure that has always held down the black race. Blacks have been held down physically through slavery, but more recently blacks are held down through poverty, illiteracy, disenfranchisement, and inequity. Rastafarians are to remember their proud African heritage and stand up to Babylon.

Ganga, or marijuana, has also become an important part of the Rastafarian belief system. Rastas call it the holy herb. They believe several passages in the Bible refer to it. One of these is found in Genesis: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed" (Genesis 1:11). Another is found in Revelation and describes a future golden age when a river will flow from the New Jerusalem. On each side of the river, God has planted trees with medicinal leaves "for the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nation" (Revelation 22:2).

Some Rastas believe that ganga has religious significance, while others do not.[47] Those who invest it with religious significance do not advocate smoking ganga

recreationally. It is for ritual use only. Smoking ganga at the reasoning, or discussion, sessions is at the core of Rastafarian religious practices.[48] These sessions are informal discussions that encourage open dialogue on a variety of topics. In addition, some believers use ganga as part of their meditation practices, which center the practitioner's thoughts on Jah.

The dreadlocks of the Rastas are a distinctive identifying feature of both male and female members of the movement. Rastas wear dreads to show pride in their African heritage and to identify with their savior, Haile Selassie, the lion. They also point to Biblical support for the practice of wearing dreads: "They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in the flesh" (Leviticus 21:5). Marley may have died as a result of his refusal to allow doctors to operate on his cancerous toe because he did not want to violate this same religious law against cutting the flesh.[49] The wearing of dreadlocks is also a protest against the larger Jamaican culture's belief in "proper" hairstyles, which usually imitate white fashions and preferences. In addition, some Rastas believe that their dreadlocks are like wires that transmit communications between the believer and Jah.[50]

Observant Rastas eat only what they call "I-tal" food. This is food that has no chemical processing of any kind and is completely organic. They avoid pork and scaleless fish in accordance with Hebrew scriptures. I-tal food is barely cooked and served without salt, preservatives, or condiments.[51] Most Rastafarians are vegetarians. They tend to drink anything that is herbal, such as tea. They avoid liquor, milk, coffee, and soft drinks.

The colors of Rastafarians are red, green, and gold. Garvey originally used these colors in his promotion of African pride, and they were later adopted by the Rastas. Red symbolizes blood shed by Rastafarian martyrs—those Rastas who have died while defying Babylon. Green represents the vegetation of Ethiopia, and gold represent the wealth of the promised land of Ethiopia. Sometimes black represents the color of Africans.

Rastafarians believe that each person comes to his or her own understanding of truth, hence the diverse range of beliefs. Lifestyle choices and beliefs are up to the individual. Ethical standards vary, but they have much in common. Most Rastas believe in the ideal of "one love," which means to love everyone unconditionally. In addition, most believe that one must live a life of "upful" behavior, which includes tolerance, honesty, integrity, and nonviolent resistance to oppression.[52] Many Rastas also live strictly by their interpretation of the Biblical codes found in both the Old and New Testaments.

CONTROVERSIES AND ISSUES

Clearly, as a resistance movement, Rastafarianism itself has been a controversial religious movement in Jamaica. The religion sees itself as working to end the oppression of the poor and outcast blacks in Jamaican society. This resistance has created several controversies for the religion. The two practices that have historically created

controversy for the movement are their political actions and their consumption of ganga. In addition, there has been a small internal conflict over the nature of Selassie.

While for the most part Rastafarianism considers itself to be a pacifist movement, there have been Rastas who have taken violent, or, at the very least, subversive, actions to actualize political goals. The most violent actions were taken in the 1960s before Haile Selassie visited Jamaica. While Rastas have rarely acted violently, their political awareness and activism has always been a part of their belief system and practice.

The illegal consumption of ganga in the Rasta reasoning sessions has also led to much friction between adherents and the police. While not all Rastas consume ganga as part of their ritual activity, many consider it integral to the ritual process. Since it is an illegal substance in Jamaica, police have often raided Rasta communities and set up roadblocks around the island to search drivers. In order to punish religious communities and to keep international drug trafficking to a minimum, Jamaican laws are strict for possession of large quantities of ganga or for trying to smuggle it out of the country. Punishment for possession of small amounts tends to be less severe.[53]

Laws in the United States protect the Rasta's use of ganga in religious rituals. This protection has not shielded Rastas from tense interactions with police over possession of the illegal substance, however. Ganga, or "wisdom weed," for Rastas, is given by Jah for the religious enlightenment of His people.

Another smaller controversial issue within the movement itself, is about the nature of Haile Selassie. Most members agree that he was divine, a messiah figure who will one day transform the world, crushing the white oppressors and delivering blacks to their African homeland. Other Rastas see Selassie as a human being sent by God to put these actions into motion. Since Selassie's death in August 1975, Rastas have said that Selassie will return in spiritual form to fulfill his heavenly mission. Many Rastas denied that Selassie died and insist that he went into hiding and will return when the conditions are right. Since each Rasta holds his or her beliefs individually, this discrepancy tends not to be a major issue. There are no creeds or central dogma to which Rastas adhere; they come by their beliefs through individual meditation and the reasoning sessions.

CONCLUSION

At the heart of the Rastafarian movement is a desire to reclaim their African heritage. Ernest Cashmore, a scholar of Rastafarianism, states best the intent and the reality of what it means to be African for Rastafarians: "the realization that all black men are really Africans stimulated the awareness that negroes [sic] must ultimately return physically to the fatherland; in the meantime, however, it was sufficient to proclaim their African identity and articulate their desire to return but without actually pressing any practical programmes—just wait for the millennium to take its course; when the hour of redemption did arrive Africa would welcome its children."[54]

This movement did not decline severely when Selassie died and will not likely diminish in the near future. It has never been a very large movement, but since it has spread to other parts of the world, it has grown and will likely remain for some time. What has kept the movement from growing much in size is its loose organization, its separatist viewpoint, and its controversial use of the ganga plant in its rituals. What has maintained this movement is its message of hope, its championing of the poor and oppressed, and its pride in African heritage. The spread of Jamaican culture through reggae music, religious artwork, and literature has also drawn many to take a second look at this religious movement.

NOTES

1. Ennis Barrington Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 30.
2. Ibid., 30.
3. William F. Lewis, *Soul Rebels: The Rastafari* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1993), 1–2.
4. Rebekah Michele Mulvaney, *Rastafari and Reggae: A Dictionary and Sourcebook* (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 1990), 5.
5. Ernest Cashmore, *Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979), 13–14.
6. Ibid., 14–15.
7. Ibid., 22.
8. Timothy White, *Catch a Fire: The Life of Bob Marley* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1983, 2000), 9. James Morris Webb, *A Black Man Will Be the Coming Universal King, Proven by Biblical History* (Tualatin, OR: I Press, 1995, originally published 1919).
9. White, *Catch a Fire,* 9. These primary sources are available for reading: Robert Athlyi Rogers, *The Holy Piby* (Chicago: Head Start Research Associates School Times Publishing, 2000) (full text also available at www.sacred-texts.com/afr/piby/); Fitz Balintine Pettersburgh, *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (Chicago: Frontline Distribution International, 2003); G.G. Maragh, Leonard Percival Howell, and E.S.P McPherson, *The Promised Key: The Original Literary Roots of Rastafari* (Brooklyn, NY: A&B Publishers Group, 2001); Robert A. Hill, *Dread History* (El Toro, CA: Frontline Publications, 2001).
10. Cashmore, *Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England,* 22.
11. Ibid., 24.
12. White, *Catch a Fire,* 8.
13. Lewis, *Soul Rebels: The Rastafari,* 6.
14. White, *Catch a Fire,* 14.
15. Cashmore, *Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England,* 27.
16. Ibid., 28.
17. Ibid., 28–29.
18. Ibid., 28–32.
19. White, *Catch a Fire,* 15. Planno's book, *The Earth Most Strangest Man: The Rastafarian,* is available in a full copy at http://www.rism.org/planno/.
20. Lewis, *Soul Rebels: The Rastafari,* 9–10.
21. White, *Catch a Fire,* 21–22.

22. Obiagele Lake, *RastafarI Women: Subordination in the Midst of Liberation Theology* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1998), 3.
23. John A. Johnson-Hill, "I-Sight," *The World of Rastafari: An Interpretive Sociological Account of Rastafarian Ethics,* ATLA Monograph Series, No. 35 (Metuchen, NJ, and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1995), 19.
24. Lewis, *Soul Rebels: The Rastafari,* 2.
25. Ras Sydney De Silva, Chairman of the Rastafarian Centralization Organization, http://web.syr.edu/~affellem/rco.html.
26. Leonard E. Barrett Sr., *The Rastafarians: Sounds of Cultural Dissonance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977, 1988), x.
27. Notes on organization of Rastas can be found at http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/rast.html.
28. Nathaniel Murrell, "Rastafari and Religious Freedom," in *Encyclopedia of Religious Freedom: A Religion and Society Encyclopedia,* ed. Catherine Cookson (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 359–360.
29. Ibid., 360.
30. Entry from chatroom, "righteous_dawta," http://groups.yahoo.com/group/selassiegivethanksnpraises/, Monday, October 16, 2000.
31. Entry from chatroom, "Eja," http://www.rastafarispeaks.com/ http://www.rastafarispeaks.com/, Wednesday, July 27, 2005.
32. Robert Roskind, *Rasta Heart: A Journey into One Love* (Blowing Rock, NC: One Love Press, 2001), 22.
33. E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1955, 1969).
34. Cashmore, *Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England,* 58–59.
35. Roskind, *Rasta Heart: A Journey into One Love,* 25.
36. Cashmore, *Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England,* 25.
37. White, *Catch a Fire,* 14.
38. Cashmore, *Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England,* 25, 52.
39. Ibid., 25, 52.
40. White, *Catch a Fire,* 20–22.
41. Ibid., 24.
42. Ibid., 9.
43. Ibid., 9–10.
44. Ibid., 10.
45. Mulvaney *Rastafari and Reggae: A Dictionary and Sourcebook,* 39.
46. Cashmore, *Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England,* 22.
47. Ibid., 32.
48. Lewis, *Soul Rebels: The Rastafari,* 2.
49. White, *Catch a Fire,* 3.
50. Johnson-Hill, *The World of Rastafari,* 25.
51. Ibid., 25.
52. Roskind, *Rasta Heart: A Journey into One Love,* 34.
53. Ibid., 21.
54. Cashmore, *Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England,* 236.

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Vodou in the United States: The Case of New Orleans

Ina Johanna Fandrich

INTRODUCTION

Vodou is one of the most maligned and misunderstood religions, and certainly one of the most misunderstood New Religious Movements (NRMs) in the world. Most Americans do not even know that it is a religion. Rather, they consider it to be a particularly vicious form of witchcraft.[1] The English term "Voodoo," the Anglicized version of *Vodou,* usually conjures up images of infamous, dark-skinned Voodoo sorcerers or sorceresses endowed with evil occult powers, sticking pins in grotesque-looking Voodoo dolls to inflict pain, misfortune, or even death upon innocent fellow citizens. Visions of such sinister characters have haunted the imagination of the American public ever since the Haitian Revolution more than 200 years ago. *Vodou* practitioners, both male and female, are believed to be in league with the devil and are hence considered to be manipulative, unscrupulous, and dangerous. Hollywood's filmmakers have promoted these common stereotypes, eternalizing them in big-screen productions such as the unforgettable movie *Angel Heart,* starring Robert DeNiro as the devil. This film plays, of course, in New Orleans, Louisiana, the city known to be the Voodoo Capital of the United States.

These stereotypical views are gross misrepresentations. They stem from racist perceptions that go back to the deplorable and cruel past of slavery in American history. The extreme economical exploitation of the enslaved African work force included not only a dehumanizing assault on their physical bodies and their psyches, but also entailed an insidious attack on their African cultural and religious heritage. After all, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was morally justified by the assumption that Europeans had the right to oppress the Africans because the Europeans' Christian faith was presumed to be superior to African so-called "heathenism" and "fetish rites." Conveniently, the rationale of the colonial slaveholding forces did not take into account that many of the enslaved Africans, especially people from the Kongo region in western Africa, had already converted to Christianity centuries before they were captured and deported to the New World. It was also inconceivable for the slaveholders that

the peoples of Africa, regardless of whether they were Christians or not, had highly evolved societies with sophisticated philosophies, complex ethics, and profound religious beliefs and practices. Moreover, it is no coincidence that New Orleans is associated with Voodoo like no other place in the United States. The Crescent City was the center of the American slave trade during the antebellum period and had been under a strong African cultural influence from its founding days on.[2] More often than not, the city had a black majority. In fact, until hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005, dispersing the city's population, it had the highest percentage (about 70 percent) of African American population of any American metropolis.

The term *Vodou* actually refers to a cluster of mystical religions with millions of followers throughout the world, most of them in West Africa, the Caribbean, and North America. Furthermore, most *Vodou* practitioners in the New World are also simultaneously devout members of the Roman Catholic Church. Their religious beliefs and practices are creative hybrids, blending African, European, and Native American cultural and spiritual traditions. Yet, at their core, *Vodou* traditions have always remained African despite their amazing capacity to incorporate and assimilate elements from other faith traditions. *Vodou* practices everywhere are fundamentally pragmatic and vary greatly from one community of practitioners to another since there is no central authority prescribing binding regulations for everyone.

The *Vodou* traditions in the New World were born during slavery as an assertion of slave resistance. Defiantly holding on to the beliefs of their ancestors, the enslaved Africans resisted the wholesale, forced Christianization that was imposed on them. At the same time, they adapted to their new situation by integrating Christian symbolism, rituals, and prayers into their religious services. In this manner, *Vodou* enabled the transplanted Africans to formally pass as "good Christians, " and, at the same time, informally to keep their African world view and much of their religious culture alive.

Since there are so many misconceptions attached to the term *Vodou,* we need to begin with defining the multiple meanings of this word.

Definitions

Etymologically, the Haitian term *Vodou,* as well as the Anglicized version of it, *Voodoo,* and its French variety, *Vodun,* derive from the word *vodu,* which means "God," "divinity," or "divine awe-inspiring spirit" in the Fon and Ewe languages of West Africa. *Vodou* in various spellings has at least seven distinct meanings that are often confused with one another.

(1) Usually spelled *Vodun,* it refers to the traditional religion of the Fon and Ewe people residing in today's Republic of Benin, the former kingdom of Dahomey, West Africa. This religion has also been practiced in today's Ghana, Togo, and western Nigeria. As in all indigenous religions, there are considerable regional variations since there is no centralized hierarchical structure that regulates the dogma and the liturgy of the ceremonies.

(2) Spelled *Vodou,* it generally identifies the popular syncretistic Creole religion of Haiti that developed on this Caribbean island. It began to evolve in the sixteenth century when the first Africans arrived there, but jelled into its present form as a fusion of various West and Central African religions combined with French Catholicism, Taino Caribbean Native American traditions, and elements of Freemasonry in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution and War of Independence (1791–1804) during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Vodou* received its name because a large part of the Haitian enslaved African work force came from Dahomey and introduced the term to the French colonies in the Caribbean. Today, the *Vodou* tradition is deeply ingrained into all aspects of Haiti's culture and religious life. Haitians often joke that approximately 90 percent of their population is Catholic, 10 percent Protestant and other religions, but 100 percent are in *Vodou.* Haitian immigrants in the United States usually continue to serve their *Vodou* spirits either openly or secretly. The largest Haitian immigrant communities with the most vibrant *Vodou* culture, art, and religion are today in New York City and Miami, Florida.

(3) Spelled *Voudou* in the nineteenth century and *Voodoo* since the beginning of the twentieth century, it addresses the Afro-Creole counterculture religion of the city of New Orleans and Southern Louisiana. During the nineteenth century, this tradition had a ceremonial and a magical side much like similar syncretistic Creole Caribbean religions such as *Vodou* in Haiti, *Santerìa* in Cuba, or *Espiritismo* in Puerto Rico. But the sustained repression of African Americans and the complete vilification of their African religious and cultural heritage during the Jim Crow era (1880s–1960s) in the American South destroyed the vibrant ceremonial aspects of this tradition. Only the magical side survived and continued to flourish. Hidden from the public gaze, individual Voodoo "doctors" or spiritual "workers," male and female, continued to cater to their clients, selling them Voodoo charms, prayers, and herbal remedies to solve their problems. Today, Voodoo in New Orleans has blended with Haitian and Cuban practices and other Neo-African traditions. Furthermore, Voodoo has become an essential part of the city's popular culture and commerce with a football team named "Voodoo," a brewery producing "Voodoo" beer, a "Voodoo Barbeque" restaurant chain, and numerous Voodoo shops; ubiquitously one can buy New Orleans "Voodoo dolls" (most of them made in China). There is a "Voodoo Fest," a "Voodoo Musical Festival," and all year around, many local musicians are playing music in funky, syncopated rhythms with "Voodoo" themes.

(4) When *Voodoo* is used synonymously with the vernacular African American term *Hoodoo,* it refers to a system of African-based magical practices that are widespread throughout the South. Other common terms for these practices are "conjure" or "rootwork." A conjurer, "rootworker," or simply "worker"—similar to a shaman—offers magical practices and spiritual paraphernalia to his or her clients for a fee to assist them in overcoming any obstacles they may possibly face in life including love, health, and financial problems, but also job-related issues and unwanted encounters with the legal system.

(5) The American film industry created its own version of Voodoo, projecting widespread negative stereotypes about people of African descent in general and

misconceptions about Haitians and black New Orleanians in particular onto the big screen. In this context, *Vodou* appears for the most part synonymously with black magic and evil witchcraft. These Hollywood misinterpretations are leading us to the last two meanings.

(6) Spelled "voodoo," it is often used synonymously with nonsense or flawed information as in "voodoo economics."

(7) Finally, "voodoo" can refer to a lethal spiritual force that is responsible for the so-called "voodoo death." In such instances, someone who believes himself or herself to be "jinxed," "hexed," or "cursed" perishes mysteriously without any detectable physical causes. Anthropological research has confirmed that this phenomenon exists not only among Haitians, but nearly everywhere in the world. Similar to the "*placebo* effect," the "voodoo death" may be triggered by fear and thus caused by the reality creating power of the human imagination.

HISTORY

Africa

The African *Vodun* religion is said to be as much as 10,000 years old and is supposed to have its origins in ancient Egypt or Kemet. Unfortunately, at this point, we do not have sufficient archeological and historical information to verify such claims in detail. Further research is needed in order to reconstruct the exact history of this faith tradition. The first written sources about African *Vodun* in modern history date to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and refer to the West African kingdoms in the region that the European slave traders called the "Bight of Benin," a densely populated area with powerful political and spiritual leaders and remarkable, technologically advanced societies, covering roughly the territory of today's People's Republic of Benin and Western Nigeria, the homeland of the Yoruba people. The Yoruba and their neighbors have dwelled in influential large cities for hundreds of years. Most of these ancient cities had their own king, the *oba,* and their own sacred shrines for the local divinities that ruled over them like divine patron saints. For instance, *Ifa,* the divine principle of destiny and fate, was at home in the city of Ile Ife, the mythological birthplace of the Yoruba people, where, according to the Yoruba, all earthly life began. The same divinity was known as *Fa* in Dahomey. *Obatala,* the serene Yoruba divinity of whiteness, wisdom, and creativity, had his oldest and most sacred temple also in Ile Ife. The city of Oyo was the home of *Ogun,* the divine blacksmith, the spiritual force that rules iron, war, soldiers, policemen, and all technology. He was revered as *Gu* in Dahomey. Oyo was also the site of *Shango's* main shrine, the former legendary king of this city. He is the divinity of lightning, fire, magic, and represents the principle of divine rulership. Oshogbo, the Yoruba center for art and creativity, beautifully located near the mysterious Oshun River, was the home of *Oshun,* the divinity of love, beauty, fertility, and material wealth.

These mighty old Yoruba city-states not only had an exquisite culture, but also formidable armies, because they were constantly at war with one another and with their

neighbors. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Oyo Empire emerged as the dominant kingdom over all of Yorubaland. Their chief enemy was the city of Whydah, the ruling city of the neighboring kingdom of Dahomey, today's Republic of Benin. The rivalry between Oyo and Whydah lasted for several centuries. In the eighteenth century, Oyo was strong and conquered Whydah. Consequently, many Fon and Ewe speaking Dahomeyans ended up in slavery and formed a large portion of the labor force in the then-booming sugar industry of French Saint Domingue, today's Haiti. In the nineteenth century, Oyo was weak and Whydah was dominant. Hence, thousands of Yoruba people were captured and made the gruesome Middle Passage to the New World. By then, the Haitian Revolution had successfully overthrown the French regime and put an end to slavery on the island. Haiti had become the first and only independent Black Republic in the Western Hemisphere (except for some of the Maroon territories throughout the Americas).[3] The sugar industry was then flourishing in Cuba, and Yoruba people were shipped in large numbers to the sugar plantations there. The Yoruba heritage (language, culture, philosophy, and technology) thus had an enormous impact on Cuba, where in some parts of the island Yoruba dialects are still spoken today. The Afro-Cuban popular Creole religion *Santería,* though blended with Spanish Catholicism, preserved many Yoruba divinities, the *oricha,* and kept the Yoruba philosophical divinatory system of *Ifa* alive.[4] The diviner priests or *babalawos,* who are initiated and trained in the Yoruba Ifa system, are to this day essential players in Cuban social, religious, and cultural life.

The rivalry between Dahomey and Yorubaland caused centuries of war and conflict, but also created a substantial cultural exchange. When the Dahomeyans and the Yoruba did not fight each other, they intermarried, traded, and celebrated with one another. Their divinities are very similar and often have the same or similar names and share a common divination system.

Besides the people from the Bight of Benin, Africans from two other large geographical regions had substantial influence on the New World *Vodou* traditions. One group came from the vast Congo River basin, the former Kingdom of the Kongo, today's Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (the former Zaire), and the Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville). The other group was from the Senegal River basin, the Senegambian region. They included Woloffs, Bambaras, Mandingos, and other Mande-speaking groups. Many of them were rice-farming agriculturalists and hence desirable for the slave traders.

The sacred cosmology of the traditional religions of the Bight of Benin and Lower West Africa is usually three-tiered, consisting of (1) a supreme being (God, the creator of the universe, named *Olodumare* in Yoruba and *Mawu-Lisa* in Dahomey) who was beyond all human imagination, (2) a pantheon of intermediary divinities (personified forces of nature and deified ancestors) who were worshiped in elaborate rituals and ceremonies permeating every aspect of life, and (3) the spirits of the ancestors. In the Upper West African traditions of the Senegambian region as well as in the religions of Central Africa from the Kongo region, the sacred cosmology has only two tiers: (1) a remote and very sacred supreme being, and (2) the spirits

of the dead who are believed to have an active exchange with the living and thus receive much attention through rituals, offerings, and ceremonies. Many of the Senegambians were Muslims and many of the Kongolese were Roman Catholic Christians at the time that the trans-Atlantic slave trade became a booming industry.

Haiti

The Republic of Haiti received its name from the Taino Indians, who inhabited this Caribbean island for several thousand years. They called it Ayiti, meaning "land with many mountains." In 1492, sent by the Spanish crown to expand the Iberian empire, Christopher Columbus crossed the Atlantic Ocean and landed by default on this island. He named it "Hispaniola" ("little Spain") and began a reign of terror over the indigenous population. Within the first decade after the initial contact, the Spanish had killed or worked to death nearly all of the natives, forcing their king to capitulate. From Hispaniola, Spain then launched a successful conquest of other Caribbean territories such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Trinidad, as well as the large empires of the Aztecs and Mayans in Central America and the vast Inca Empire in South America, all of which were soon turned into Spanish colonies. The abuse and brutal annihilation of the indigenous populations in these new Spanish territories was so severe that the Spanish decided to replace the decimated native work force with enslaved laborers deported from Western and Central Africa in order to run the newly developing, very lucrative, large-scale, slave-based New World plantation industries.

By the seventeenth century, French pirates, the Buccaneers, began to infiltrate the western part of Hispaniola and claimed it for the French crown in the eighteenth century. They called their part of the island Saint Domingue in French (today's Haiti), while the remaining Spanish-speaking eastern part was then known as Santo Domingo (today's Dominican Republic). The French invasion was officially recognized by Spain in the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697. After that, the once restless seafaring French mercenaries settled down and turned quickly into ambitious agriculturists. By the middle of the eighteenth century, they had developed the most lucrative indigo and sugar industry in the world, making Saint Domingue the most precious holding of the king of France. The French settlers enjoyed a life of enormous luxury and leisure. Yet the time of unprecedented colonial wealth and equally unprecedented exploitation of slave labor in Saint Domingue ended dramatically when the French Revolution of 1789 spilled over into the Caribbean territories and unleashed the Haitian Independence War (1791–1804). Though poorly armed, the oppressed enslaved Africans together with the discriminated Haitian middle class of free people of color were determined to free themselves from the yoke of their oppressors. Empowered by the belief in their *Vodou* spirits, they successfully overcame Napoleon Bonaparte's well-equipped military force, the most powerful army on earth at the time. A legendary *Vodou* ceremony at Bois Caiman led by Boukman, a charismatic and rebellious *Vodou* priest that took place just before the war, was of

crucial importance for the revolting Africans. The participants of this gathering danced and sang themselves into a trance until they believed themselves to be invincible. At the climax of the frenzy they sacrificed a pig and all drank from its blood to pledge allegiance to one other. "Victory or death" was the motto of the revolutionary uprising.

As the white elite fell in Saint Domingue, the news of their dreadful fate sent shock waves throughout the Americas. Slaveholders everywhere were terrified when they realized that what they had so far considered to be harmless "Negro superstitions" was a powerful religious force to be reckoned with. The Haitian Revolution was every planter's worst nightmare, and *Vodou* has been feared as the embodiment of sheer evil ever since.

The wealth of Saint Domingue was based on a slave labor system that savagely devoured a huge number of enslaved Africans, who made up the majority of the island's population and needed to be replaced constantly. When the Revolution put an end to this exploitation, the Haitian economy collapsed, and Haiti has been to this day the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere. The freedom of the first independent Black republic in modern history came at a price. In terms of religion, the French demanded in Saint Domingue, as they did in all of their territories, that all of their subjects, free or enslaved, become members of the Roman Catholic Church as postulated in the *Code Noir,* the compendium of legal provisions regulating slavery. The Catholic authorities in Rome responded to the Haitian Revolution with outrage and pulled out all of their clergy and members of religious orders from Haiti for nearly half a century in retaliation, but the Vatican reconciled eventually with its faithful membership in the rebellious Caribbean republic during the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the meantime, the particular fusion of popular French Catholicism and various West and Central African traditions that fate had brought together by the end of the eighteenth century in Saint Domingue prevailed without European supervision and influence. A possible explanation for the continued strength of Catholicism during the early phase of Haitian isolation that followed the Revolution is that a significant number of the African-born, newly freed Haitians consisted of practicing Catholics from the Kongo, who had arrived there just before the Revolution. They had already established an Africanized form of Christianity in their native country that suited their religious needs long before their forced exile to the Caribbean. It was therefore easy for them to maintain the faith they had been practicing all along.

After the French troops were defeated and forced out of Haiti, Napoleon reluctantly gave up on all of his New World ambitions. The fall of Saint Domingue caused a serious loss in French revenue and left him no other choice. In order to finance his expensive wars in Europe, he had to sell his North American territories to Thomas Jefferson, the president of the fledgling new Republic of the United States of America. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 was the best real estate deal of all times. Louisiana covered about one third of the North American continent and more than doubled the United States overnight.

New Orleans

Louisiana's Voodoo tradition was long thought to be the offspring of its Haitian cousin *Vodou,* introduced by the large number of Haitian refugees who arrived in New Orleans after the Haitian Revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1809 alone nearly 10,000 Saint Domingue refugees arrived via Cuba in the Crescent City and doubled the population of the city. They left a lasting impact on every aspect of the local culture. However, by then Africans had already been residing in Louisiana for almost a century and had developed their own Neo-African counterculture religion. In the nineteenth century, observers noticed distinctive differences between New Orleans *Voudou* and its Caribbean cousin with the same name. While Haitian *Vodou* had an elaborate system of intermediary divine spirits, the *lwa,* grouped into the *Rada* and the *Petwo* rites, Louisiana Voodoo allegedly "lost" its spiritual complexity and had hardly any African divinities. The common explanation for this phenomenon was that *Vodou* could not flourish in antebellum New Orleans as successfully as in Haiti because of the higher white-to-black population ratio and the stricter American social system. Such sociological and psychological circumstances may have contributed to these religious discrepancies, but cannot fully explain them. The demographic migration patterns during the trans-Atlantic slave trade provide a more convincing explanation in this context. They reveal that Louisiana, unlike Cuba and Haiti, received comparatively few enslaved Yoruba and Dahomeyans from the Bight of Benin, but relatively large numbers of Senegambians and even more people from the Kongo.[5]

During the French colonial regime (1699–1765), 80 percent of the enslaved Africans came from the Senegal River basin (today's Senegal, Gambia, and Mali). The majority of them were Bambara and Mandingo. The remaining 20 percent of Louisiana's African population was Kongolese and Dahomeyan.[6] As we have seen, despite their rather different geographical origins, Senegambian and Kongolese sacred cosmologies have sufficient similarities so that they could blend easily into one another. Both regions do not have flashy intermediary divinities such as the *orisha* or the *lwa* in Haiti that are so characteristic for the religions at the Bight of Benin. Their sacred cosmologies include merely a supreme being, God Almighty, and the ancestral spirits. In addition, both regions have fierce sorcerers and magical practices. For instance, the trademark of Louisiana Voudou, the "*gris-gris* bag" is a good example of this fusion. The term is of Senegambian origin, but the way these bags are made strongly resembles Kongolese *minkisi* (plural for *nkisi* singular) charms.

The term "gris-gris" is a typical Louisiana expression. Similar magical devices are known in other parts of the United States as "juju" or "mojo" bags. A *gris-gris* bag is a small, usually red, flannel pouch that is filled with magical ingredients such as stones, hair, herbs, roots, bones, or remnants of sacrificed animals. The color red indicates spiritual power. It is the color of blood, which is believed to be the ultimate life-force. Just like the *minkisi* of the Kongo, *gris-gris* bags are "dressed" or "fed" with powders, fragrant oils, or liquor in order to spiritually charge them. They are tightly bound on the top to keep the power of the spiritual energy inside the bag and to

protect the efficacy of the charms. Like the spiritual charms of the Kongo, the *gris-gris* of New Orleans can have good functions or bad ones. Some of them serve for protection from adversity or to enhance the petitioner's health, wealth, love, good luck, and success. But, they could also be made with malicious intentions to seek revenge and harm. Such evil *gris-gris* is considered to be very dangerous and can cause accidents, pain, illness, mental confusion, and even the death of a person. The practitioner (the Voudou priest or priestess, conjurer, or spiritual worker) who is contracted by a client to make a *gris-gris* carefully selects the ingredients and prayers to create the desired results. The quality, power, and reputation of a spiritual worker is measured by the efficacy of his or her charms.

A court case from 1773 in the Spanish colonial records, the "Gri-Gri Case," demonstrates that Louisiana Voudou maintained a marked Senegambian flavor[7] until the second part of the eighteenth century. In this incident an enslaved field worker, who spoke only the Mandinga language, was charged with making a *gris-gris* charm to kill his overseer. The court found him not guilty since he was unarmed and never used physical violence. The records demonstrate that everyone in the courtroom appeared to have been quite familiar with the term *gris-gris* and were well aware of the power of spiritual charms and the irrational fears associated with the latter. Hence, we can assume that these Voudou practices were widespread at the time, but not considered to be a threat.

Nago people, as the Yoruba were called by the European slave traders, arrived in significant numbers only during Spanish colonial rule (1765–1803). Many of them were females, specifically "imported" to run the city's markets as *vendeuses* or *marchandes* (marketwomen). But, from the 1790s on, the majority of the Africans who arrived in Louisiana were from the Kongo region. Despite the great distance from Central Africa to the Gulf of Mexico (West Africa is comparatively much closer), which caused a higher mortality rate among the expensive human cargo, the newly booming sugar plantations of Southern Louisiana reinvigorated by displaced planters from Saint Domingue had a great need for slave labor. During the late Spanish and early American period in New Orleans history, a large number of Kongolese people arrived and created a lasting Kongolization of New Orleans culture. The Kongo region was in the hands of corrupt leadership at the time and made captured people from this geographical area cheaply available in huge numbers. Even after the trans-Atlantic slave trade officially ended in 1808 in the United States and Great Britain, including all of the British colonies in the Atlantic world, slave labor was not abolished in the United States until the Proclamation of Emancipation in 1863, and the illegal slave trade continued to flourish until well into the 1880s. The influential pirates of Barataria (a swampy region south of New Orleans) such as Jean Lafitte, their best-known representative, were instrumental in supplying the highly desired enslaved work force from overseas. They smuggled human cargo into Louisiana until the inner-American slave trade took over in the 1830s and proved to be more economical. The trans-Atlantic slave trade continued in the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch colonial territories in the Americas until the 1880s. While most of the West African nations could recover from depopulation during the slave trade, the

decimation of population of the Central African regions, from which most of Louisiana's African Americans came,[8] was so severe that the population never regained its preslave trade numbers. Culturally and spiritually, New Orleans' African population remained Kongo-dominated with a strong affinity with the spirits of the dead.

Finally, African influence came into New Orleans indirectly through the Saint Domingue refugees who flooded the city after 1809, when they were expelled from Cuba. About one third of them were white, one third were free people of color, and the remaining third consisted of enslaved Africans, most of whom were the female domestics of the first two groups. These refugees were very compatible with New Orleanians to begin with because of their shared Africanized French colonial past and had an enormous influence on every aspect of the city's culture from its architecture to its foodways. As French-speaking Roman Catholics, the refugees reinforced the already existing Creole culture of the city and blocked the new American Anglo-Protestant rulers from the North from changing the Latin Creole cultural character of the city. The Saint Domingue refugees also appeared to have strengthened the ranks of Afro-Creole spiritual practitioners in the city by merging seamlessly into the already existing Louisiana *Voudou* traditions. They also may have contributed to the fact that Haiti and Louisiana share the term *Vodou* (regardless of how it is spelled) as the defining term for their African-derived syncretistic traditions with French Catholicism. Yet, despite their similarities, the two sister traditions, Haitian *Vodou* and New Orleans *Voudou,* had very different histories that gave each of them its unique flavor not only during the eighteenth, but especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Like the Haitian *Voudouisants* the *Voudou* practitioners of New Orleans had elaborate, magical practices that included "spiritual work" with various spiritual entities, but their pantheon of spirits consisted of an almighty God called "Li Grand Zombi," a small number of saints, and, most importantly, the spirits of the dead. The word "Zombi" derives etymologically from the Kongo Bantu term *nzambi,* which means "God" in the Kikongo language. In fact, the very same term *nzambi* is used for God in Kikongo Bible translations. As in French Saint Domingue, probably most of New Orleans' enslaved Kongolese had already been Roman Catholics long before they were captured and deported. It is therefore not surprising that one of the most popular saints of the New Orleans Voudou tradition was Saint Anthony of Padua, the patron saint of the Kongo.[9] He was also the favorite saint of the key figure in New Orleans Voodoo tradition, Voodoo Queen Marie Laveaux (1801–1881).[10] Other popular saints frequently invoked in the Crescent City are Saint Expedite for the speedy achievement of an urgently desired goal, Saint Jude, the helper in hopeless situations, and Our Lady of Prompt Succor, the image of the Holy Mother of God that is believed to protect the city from harm in times of emergency, especially during the hurricane season. Saint Peter, who holds the key to the gates of heaven according to Christian mythology, was another important figure in the spiritual pantheon of the Crescent City. Also called Papa Labas or Papa Liba in New Orleans, he merged with the West African guardian of the crossroads, Eshu/Elegba (known as *Eleguá* in Cuba and *Papa Legba* in Haiti), who mediates between the realm of the spiritual

world and the material world of mortal humans. He is always invoked at the beginning of ceremonies and opens the roads for the arrival of divine forces. In her St. Ann Street home, Laveaux also had an altar for Saint Marron (*marron* is the French term for maroon). This saint was peculiar to the New Orleans *Voudou* community. Even the church did not know anything about him according to an eyewitness report. The identity of this saint is not exactly clear. It may have been Bras Coupé, a legendary runaway field worker, who successfully established a Maroon community in the swamps at the outskirts of the city. It makes sense that fugitives from slavery needed a special patron to protect them from the dogs and guns of those owners who hunted them down.

MARIE LAVEAU

If New Orleans has a reputation for being America's Voodoo capital, Marie Laveaux has been recognized as the reigning "Queen of the Voudous," the quintessential representative of Louisiana's Voodoo tradition. In New Orleans, her name and Voodoo are used synonymously. Born free in 1801, her long life encompassed the end of the Spanish colonial period, the entire antebellum period, the Civil War, and, at her death in 1881, the end of the Reconstruction Era. Laveaux was already a legendary figure during her lifetime and became even more so after her death. In fact, some people insist that she never died. Louisiana's folk tradition transformed her from a mere struggling mortal into an invincible mythical being endowed with supernatural powers, clairvoyance, and eternal youth. To this day, she is highly respected by all Voodoo practitioners in New Orleans and has thus become the unofficial patron Voodoo saint of the city.[11]

Eyewitness accounts described her as "the most powerful woman there is." As a person of color and as a woman she was barred from holding public office. Nevertheless, it appears that she effectively ruled the city. For instance, a lengthy obituary in the *New York Times* praised her enormous popularity, stating that "lawyers, legislators, planters, merchants, all came to pay respect to her and seek her offices…"[12] Rich slaveholding white planters and their destitute enslaved African servants and laborers, local New Orleanians, and visitors from all over the world, male and female, young and old, daily crowded Laveaux's humble cottage on St. Ann Street in the French Quarter to seek her support, wisdom, and remedies.

Laveaux was—as Zora Neale Hurston put it—"the great name of the golden age" of Voodoo/Hoodoo in New Orleans.[13] As such, she has often been mistaken for a Haitian. Numerous stories suggest that she was born in Saint Domingue and brought the *Vodou* religion from there to the metropolis at the mouth of the Mississippi river. Yet, neither Laveaux nor her Voodoo tradition had Caribbean origin. She was born on September 10, 1801, in New Orleans, grew up there, and resided for most of her life in the same house on St. Ann Street. Both of her parents, Charles Laveaux and Margarite Darcantel, were native New Orleanians. Official documents classified them, as well as their later famous daughter, as free "mulattoes" (one-half African and one-half European). Hence, Charles Laveaux was not a wealthy planter

of finest French nobility as many accounts maintain, but a well-to-do free man of color. He owned a grocery store and several buildings in the Faubourg (French for "suburb") Marigny. Marie Laveaux's grandmothers were free African women residing in New Orleans who had short-lived affairs with rich French planters. Her father's mother, the first Marie Laveaux, must have been of Kongolese origin and her mother's mother, Catherine Henry, was from Louisiana. The paternal grandfather of the Voodoo Queen was probably Charles Laveau Trudeau, the surveyor of the Spanish crown, who was one of the most influential politicians and military officers in Louisiana under Spanish rule. After the Louisiana Purchase, he served as the first president of the New Orleans City Council and for a brief time as the acting mayor during the early American period. Political aspirations and prominent leadership roles ran in this family. (Henry D'Arcantel, the white *plaçage* partner of her mother, was a wealthy planter and high-ranking officer in the Spanish colonial government, the royal accountant. Trudeau's ancestors were French Canadians, and D'Arcantel was born in Thionville, France.) Hence, New Orleans' leading conjure lady was a third-generation Louisiana Creole and had no roots in Haiti.

Nevertheless, Laveaux had some connection to Saint Domingue. Her first husband, Jacques Paris, was indeed Haitian, a native of the town of Jérémie. He was a free "quadroon" (one-fourth black and three-fourths white) and a carpenter by trade. Their marriage took place on August 4, 1819, in St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans. The senior pastor of the congregation of the Cathedral, the Capuchin Friar Antonio de Sedella from Spain, officiated at the ceremony. Affectionately nicknamed Père Antoine by his parishioners, Sedella was New Orleans' most popular priest and is said to have been a close friend and mentor of Marie Laveaux. Jacques Paris was one of the thousands of Haitian refugees who fled from the turmoil of the Revolutionary War and arrived in New Orleans in 1809. Laveaux's younger half sister, Marie Dolores Laveaux (1804–1839), who had the same father but a different mother, also married a Haitian, a free man of color named Francois Auguste. Hence, New Orleans famous Voodoo Queen must have been familiar with Haitian culture and spirituality. Nevertheless, there is no proof that she was an initiated Haitian *Vodou* priestess. The corpus of rituals and healing techniques attributed to her, the "Marie Laveau routines in conjure," are not watered-down remnants of Haitian *Vodou* but homegrown, Louisiana *Voudou* practices. They are part of New Orleans' very own vibrant indigenous Creole religion that developed in Louisiana independent of its Caribbean cousins.

Despite Laveaux's fame and notoriety, she remains a mystery. Like many of her contemporaries, she was illiterate and did not leave us any memoirs or letters, and the historical data on her are scarce, fragmented, and strangely dichotomized. Some contemporaries depicted her as a veritable saint of great compassion who dedicated her life to the care of the sick and the poor, always ready to assist those in need. Others thought she was a witch and characterized her as dangerous, accusing her of fraud, theft, blackmail, and murder. This ongoing controversy about Laveaux stemmed from a combination of factors, which are connected to her racial/ethnic background, her gender, and most of all to her religious affiliations. Though a

lifelong devout Catholic, Laveaux was the charismatic leader of New Orleans' *Voudou* culture. Her powerful religious leadership role was not unusual within Louisiana's nineteenth-century, urban *Voudou* tradition, which was primarily a women's religion. However, especially from the perspective of the Anglo-Protestant Americans from the North who dominated the city after Louisiana was transferred to the United States, it was completely inconceivable to be a Christian and a member of an African-derived mystical "cult." They considered that blasphemy. In addition, the thought of women leading a religious service must have been bewildering to the white male elite of the city, since the clergy of nearly all Christians denominations was male at the time. Yet, this spiritual empowerment of women was also very attractive to some white women, who joined the circles of the Voudous. Hence, the Voudou ceremonies in New Orleans seemed to have been racially integrated throughout the nineteenth century.

To complicate the situation, the archival data reveal that the historical Marie Laveaux, the great Voodoo priestess, had a grandmother, two daughters, and a half-sister with the same name. Louisiana's folk heroine, the mythical Marie Laveaux, shows traces of the biographies of all of these five historical Laveaux women and combined them into one person. However, unlike the invincible mythical superwoman of the popular stories who could do whatever she wanted, the historical *Voudou* leader did not win all of her numerous battles, but suffered many tragic losses in her life. Her first husband, Jacques Paris, disappeared suddenly during the first years of their marriage, never to be seen again. She mourned his presumed death for one year and then moved on, calling herself the Widow Paris. In order to support herself after her husband was gone, she began a small business as a hairdresser and beautician. She also worked as a fever nurse and mortuary embalmer. She had an enormous knowledge of herbal healing and spiritual and magical practices apparently from an early age. She was very hard working and ambitious and quickly became the leading spiritual worker in town, but her success and excellent reputation among her satisfied customers also attracted the jealousy and ill-wishes from rival *Voudou* priestesses. All sources about her agree that she had many enemies and mention that most people in town were afraid of her. Nevertheless, Laveaux kept walking the streets of New Orleans proudly as if she owned the city, many of her contemporaries recalled.

About 1826, Laveaux found the love of her life in a relationship with Christophe Glapion. The two lived together for almost 30 years until his death in 1855. According to the stories, Glapion was a free man of color from Haiti like her first husband and a distinguished war hero of the Battle of New Orleans during the British invasion of 1815. It is true that he fought in this war, but not in the ranks of the free black militia. His muster roll in the National Archives reveals that Glapion served in a white battalion. His birth and death records, numerous notary, and a few court entries identify him as a white man, the descendent of pure ancient French nobility on both his father's and his mother's sides. His grandfather was a French aristocrat, the Chevalier Christophe de Glapion, the Seigneur du Mesnil Ganchie from Normandy, France. He married into one of Louisiana's leading French families, served as the collector of royal fines under the Spanish, and established a lucrative sugar

plantation in Saint Charles Parish together with his son Christophe Dennis Duminy de Glapion, the father of Laveaux's partner. Antebellum law did not permit Christophe Glapion and Marie Laveaux to be legally married because interracial unions, though widespread, were strictly prohibited. Nevertheless, defying the racist laws of their time, the two considered themselves as legitimate husband and wife in every way that counted. In the 1830 census, they both managed to pass for white, but in later decades she was classified as "free colored," and their community began to believe that he, too, was of partial African descent and hence "colored." Two decades after his death, during the Reconstruction era, when black war veterans and their widows finally became eligible for state pensions like their white comrades, Laveaux requested and received a pension from the State of Louisiana as Glapion's widow. Her burial record lists her—probably by her own request—as "Dame Christophe Glapion," not as "Marie Laveaux, the Widow Paris."

Laveaux and Glapion are said to have had 15 children. Yet, only five are verifiable through church and state records as their biological children, Marie Eloise Eucharist (1826–1862), Marie Louise alias Caroline (died in infancy in 1829), Christophe Maurice alias François (1833–1834), Marie Philomene (1836–1897), and Arcange (1838–1845). Nevertheless, the Laveaux-Glapion family household may, indeed, have included as many as 15 children. Laveaux was known for taking care of homeless street children, who lived with her. Her servants had children, and some of her ten nephews and nieces, the children of Laveaux's younger sister, Marie Dolores Laveaux (1804–1839), the wife of François Auguste, may also have stayed with her from time to time after their mother's untimely and sudden death at the age of 35. Only two of her birth children, her oldest and youngest daughters, reached adulthood and just one of them, Marie Philomene, outlived her. The remaining three died tragically as small children. Laveaux's powerful magic could not save them.

Laveaux's oldest daughter, Marie Eloise Euchariste, is said to have been a powerful Voudou priestess in her own right. She is usually described as more ruthless and less charitable than her mother, and never reached the latter's fame. She, too, passed away tragically at the relatively early age of 35 in 1862 during the turmoil of the Civil War.

Marie Laveaux's home on St. Ann Street was a stellar example of Southern hospitality— always bustling with people. According to the stories, there was always a pot of her famous Gumbo on the stove. Laveaux must have generously fed and accommodated many visitors on a daily basis. In one of the front rooms of the old building was her "office" where she consulted with clients. In another was her altar space where she prayed, conducted séances, and performed "magic" or "miracles." She also conducted spiritual ceremonies every Friday in her courtyard, the so-called "parterres," with a makeshift altar spread out on the floor, and once a year, on Saint John's Eve in June, she organized a gigantic festival near Milneburg along the shores of Lake Pontchartrain.

Laveaux must have studied divinatory, dance and ritual techniques, and herbal healing early in her life. Some stories attribute her skills to the instructions of other Voodoo doctors (Dr. John and Marie Saloppe, for example).[14] A popular Creole slave song indicates that the old alligators ("vieux cocrodil") in the swamps taught

her what she knew. It is also very likely that she had Native American teachers or friends who trained her in their spirituality and their usage of local medicinal plants. They supplied her with fresh herbs on a regular basis and stayed overnight on her premises when they came to the city to sell their baskets and herbs in the French Market. Laveaux's neighbors thought that she was part Indian herself and thought that she looked Indian, but there is no proof of that. Whatever the sources of her skills, her cures seemed to have been highly effective. People consulted with Laveaux for just about every possible reason ranging from major political decisions, problems with the legal system of any sort, to tensions with family members, friends, neighbors, and landlords, financial dilemmas, unwanted pregnancies, and concerns about impotence and infertility. Unfailingly, "Mam'zelle Marie" as people affectionately called her, could "fix" the problem and turn any fate around for the better.

Laveaux was very versatile, yet what she was best known for was her expertise in *affairs d' amour,* "matters of the heart." With her unusual but highly effective methods, she was able to assist her clients to get a desired partner, to separate from an undesirable one, or to straighten out the unwanted behavior of an unruly one. New Orleans was known to be a very romantic city, and her citizens were described as an "amorous race" with hot tempers. They engaged in endless social events with dance, music, and good food, had elaborate courting customs, and fought fierce duels for their honor. Being a major port city with a large transient population of seamen and soldiers, New Orleans also had many men and women with broken hearts who desperately yearned for help. Hence, Laveaux's love potions and charms were perpetually in high demand.

Similar to Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, or her nineteenth century contemporaries Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, the historical Marie Laveaux stood out courageously for herself and her people and thus advanced from being a person to being an icon representing not just herself but a whole oppressed social and cultural segment of American society. Hence, as a model of female and African power, she symbolized more than anything else resistance against a white supremacist, patriarchal, slaveholding system. Though an illiterate woman of color with modest economical means, located near the bottom of the social hierarchies of the antebellum South, she managed to influence the decision making of the city's wealthiest, most educated, and most powerful white men. As such she constituted a serious threat to the dominant group of New Orleans' society who sought to silence and criminalize her. However, many of the enslaved and free people of color remained unmoved by these efforts. To them, Laveaux was a powerful holy woman, loved and feared at the same time. The stories about her power, regardless of whether true or fictive, were important for a downtrodden, discriminated, and abused people because they gave testimony to African wisdom and spirit, reversing the power relations of the city.

CONGO SQUARE

The place most often associated with Voudou in New Orleans is Congo Square, located in today's Louis Armstrong Park in front of the Municipal auditorium. Marie

Laveaux is said to have danced there with a living snake during the famous slave dances that took place there weekly on Sunday afternoons. As a free woman of color she was not permitted to appear there legally since the assembly between free and enslaved people was strictly forbidden under antebellum law, but somehow she succeeded in passing by the watching policemen at the gates week after week to the amazement of the observing crowds that cheered her on when she walked into the center of the gathering and joined the dancers. When she reached the middle of the square, she is said to have pulled her python out of a box and begun her mesmerizing signature dance while the serpent was coiling along her gracefully moving limbs.

Located on an open field at the northern outskirts of the original old city, today's French Quarter, Congo Square was first an Indian trading post, which became during the French and Spanish colonial period the site of a weekly African market with amusement activities. During the early nineteenth century, Congo Square was the only place in the United States during the antebellum period where enslaved Africans were allowed to congregate to keep up their cultural heritage, singing and dancing their traditional songs and dances and practicing their traditional African instruments. The favorite dances were the Calinda and the Bamboula, a joyful Congo-derived flirtation dance with pronounced circular movements of the hip socket and a funky syncopated rhythm. The weekly dances in Congo Square continued to function as a market where the enslaved African workers of the city could exchange the fruits of their labor produced at odd hours during their spare time, such as cookies, rice fritters, bananas, barbequed meats, and garden vegetables. It was also a sacred place where the Africans could keep up with their spiritual obligations to their ancestors and make offerings to them under the old trees. The dances in Congo Square were thus both social and spiritual events that contributed greatly to the development of New Orleans' famous musical traditions. Music historians have credited Congo Square for being the birthplace of Jazz.

DR. JOHN

Doctor John was the city's most prominent Voudou priest. He was a contemporary of Laveaux and is often depicted as the teacher of the great Voodoo Queen who initiated her into the Voodoo path. Allegedly, he became her lover in the process and later her worst enemy and Voodoo rival. Nevertheless, this entire "soap opera" between Laveaux and Dr. John is not historically verifiable. The two probably just knew one another as colleagues in the conjure business, but had distinguished spiritual careers independent from each other.

Doctor John, who was also known by the name Jean Montane (or Montanet) was a tall, very dark skinned Senegalese who made his voyage across the Atlantic Ocean via Cuba to New Orleans, where he first worked as an overseer on the docks in the port, but soon focused on his spiritual calling as a fortune teller and herbal healer. He seems to have left a lasting impression on anyone who met him. A pattern of striking parallel scars decorated his cheeks, which he claimed were the marks of

royalty. He owned a house on Bayou Road, where he lived with several wives, one of whom was a white woman. He practiced his lucrative healing work from this location. In his old age, he lost all of his belongings due to bad investments. During the last few years of his long life, he resided at the house of his daughter Alicia, who took care of him.

The well known New Orleans jazz piano player and singer Dr. John (Mac Rabeneck) with his unique smoky deep voice took on this name to keep the memory of the great Voodoo legend alive. Besides being a locally and internationally accomplished musician, Rabeneck is a devout hoodoo worker in his own right, who not only sings about *gris-gris,* mojos, and Marie Laveaux in his bluesy ballads, but also practices Voodoo.

NEW ORLEANS VOODOO TODAY AND THE FUTURE

The Voodoo scene of the nineteenth century under the leadership of Marie Laveaux with Voodoo spiritual societies, or "houses," similar to the *cabildos* in Cuba and the *oumfo* (or *humfor*) temple societies in Haiti, vanished under the yoke of Jim Crow during the first part of the twentieth century. The former Voudou societies either turned into independent Spiritual Church congregations or went underground. Zora Neale Hurston and a research team of the Louisiana Writers Project a decade later still witnessed the last remnants of this tradition while conducting field research on Louisiana Voodoo/Hoodoo in the late 1930s.[15] But, by the end of World War II, these last remnants had disappeared as well. Only Laveaux's magical healing repertoire, her Hoodoo practices, the so-called "Marie Laveau routines in conjure," have survived. Some of her *gris-gris* recipes are still popular in the city, and the images of her dancing with a snake in Congo Square made a lasting impression on those who remember her.

The social upheaval of the civil rights movement during the 1960s triggered an African spiritual revival in the 1970s and 1980s. After decades of enduring discrimination and intimidation, African Americans gained a new sense of citizenship and self-worth and began to free themselves from the prejudices attached to their African cultural heritage. Following the example of Marcus Garvey and the Nation of Islam before them, they were not satisfied with the changes that the civil rights movement had achieved. They perceived "the white man's religion," Christianity, as highly oppressive and sought to free their souls from the burdens it had imposed on them. Getting equal rights in a white man's world was not enough. They keenly understood that they had not achieved true equality and freedom as long as their African history and cultural heritage were still vilified, suppressed, and misrepresented. Going back to the motherland and converting to the religions of their African ancestors appealed to them as an attractive solution for becoming "whole" again after 500 years of oppression and displacement. Many of them chose to become initiated into Cuban *Santería* and Haitian *Vodou,* as Cuban and Haitian immigrant communities in the United States had priests and priestesses available who could easily initiate and train them. If their finances permitted it, they crossed the Atlantic Ocean and received

initiations in Nigeria (Yoruba), Ghana (*Akan*), or Benin (*Vodun*).[16] For instance, one of the most visible examples of this larger social trend is the "Orisha Voodoo" movement created by a group of African Americans who first became initiated in the 1970s. They followed the example of the late Oba Osejiman Adefumi I, one of the first fully initiated African Americans from New York, whom they respect as their king. They founded under his leadership the Oyotunji (meaning "the ancestors from the Oyo Kingdom have returned") African village in South Carolina, a utopian African American community that lives strictly according to traditional Yoruba standards. While the Oyotunji village confines its members to the Yoruba tradition only, the boundaries between the Neo-African traditions of the African diaspora are often blurred. Many individual practitioners have multiple initiations into several different traditions and practice combinations of various African-based spiritual paths, and the communities of worshippers also shift and overlap.

The fusion between various African-based religious traditions is especially prominent in Louisiana, where "Voodoo" has become a generic term for any form of spiritual belief and practice remotely associated with Africa. In New Orleans, not only African Americans, but also increasingly white people became involved in the *Vodou* religion. Today, most of the Voodoo temples of the city are run by priests and priestesses who received their initiations and training through spiritual lineages from outside of the United States (Haitian *Vodou,* Cuban *Santería* and *Palo,* Jamaican Rastafarians, or Africa traditions from Benin, Nigeria, or Ghana). For instance, the "Historic New Orleans Voodoo Museum" epitomizes this peculiar fusion. It was founded in 1972 by the late Charles Gandolfo (1939–2001), a white New Orleanian, who seized the opportunity for a lucrative market in selling "Voodoo dolls" and so-called "authentic Voodoo ceremonies" to curious visitors, capitalizing on New Orleans' legendary Voodoo past. One of the more prominent "Voodoo priestesses" that he had hired to perform pseudorituals for the tourists was the late Rose Frank, a dark-skinned, young, African American woman who was initiated into a Cuban *Palo* line. The well-known New Orleans Voodoo priestess Ava Kay Jones has also worked with Gandolfo over the years. She is from Thibodeaux in southern Louisiana and has a Haitian and a traditional Yoruba initiation, but she also makes *gris-gris* bags and dances with a python à la Marie Laveaux.[17]

Another "Voodoo priest" affiliated with Gandolfo was the late Oswan Chamani (1944–1995), an Obeah man from Belize. His wife, Miriam, now runs her own "Voodoo Spiritual Temple" on Rampart Street, which enjoys great popularity among the tour groups. Miriam Chamani is from Mississippi and grew up in the tradition of the Spiritual churches in Chicago. She has no initiation into any African or African diaspora religion. Her eclectic temple includes statues and objects honoring every major *orisha,* numerous Haitian *lwa* (*Vodou* spirits), many Catholic saints, some Egyptian deities, an altar with a picture of the late Dagbo Hounon Houna (the highest priest of African *Vodun* in Benin, who is often referred to as the "Pope of Voodoo"), and the ashes of "Chickenman" (a New Orleans Voodoo original, who like Miriam herself was a self-appointed Voodoo priest).[18] Sally Ann Glassman, another contemporary New Orleans "Voodoo priestess" who is well known to the tourist

industry, also represents this peculiar blending of traditions. As a white Jewish artist, originally from Maine, she became initiated into a Haitian *Vodou* line and now runs the "Island of Salvation Botanica," a shop for spiritual paraphernalia and *Vodou* related art, and her own, nearly all-white Voodoo society. Glassman leads a vegetarian lifestyle, does not permit animal sacrifices in her temple, and gained national fame for designing a New Orleans Voodoo Tarot card deck.[19] In her religious services she invokes Haitian, Cuban, and local New Orleanian divinities such as Dr. John and Marie Laveaux, who, according to Glassman, possess her frequently.

Brandi Kelly's *Voodoo Authentica* Collection and Cultural Center on Dumaine Street is another example for this peculiar fusion of traditions. Kelly started out in the Voodoo Museum, but eventually established her own Voodoo shop and performance group, the *Voodoo Authentica Ritual Troupe,* that includes leading local drummers and dancers and Elmer Glover, her staff Voodoo priest. Kelly is an active Voodoo practitioner herself and the organizer and host of the annual Voodoo Fest in October on Halloween. In her Voodoo shop she keeps elaborate, beautiful altars not only for the main Haitian spirits such as Damballah-Wedo, Erzuli Dantor, Erzuli Freda, Papa Legba, Papa Ogou, the twin spirits of the Marassa, and the spirits of the dead including Guede and Baron Samedi, but also altars for the main Yoruba divinities such as Shango, Ogun, and Elegba, the divine trickster, and the female water deities Oshun, the divine spirit of love, beauty, and wealth, and Yemaya, representing the ocean and divine motherhood, and a big altar solely dedicated to Marie Laveaux. Kelly's godmother and spiritual teacher is the famous Haitian *Vodou* priestess Mama Lola, who resides in Brooklyn and is known as the "Oprah Winfrey of Vodou." Lola stems from a hereditary Haitian *Vodou* lineage, but also has initiations from Cuba and Benin.[20] She has "godchildren," whom she has initiated into the *Vodou* religion all over the world (United States, Haiti, Europe, and Japan) and considers the late Dagbo Hounon Houna her godfather.

Elmer Glover is the senior-most initiated Voodoo priest in New Orleans. He makes a living as a seventh-degree black belt karate master and has been running his own Cho Chi Zen martial arts studio for the past three decades. He was born and raised in southern Louisiana and is of African American and Haitian origin, but has traveled worldwide. He, too, has multiple initiations, but considers his 1983 initiation into Haitian *Vodou* as priest (*oungan*) and magician (*boco*) in the Bizango secret society in Archaie, Haiti, to be the most important step on his personal spiritual journey. After he returned from his Haitian initiation to New Orleans he decided to incorporate the local magical practices of his native Louisiana into his spiritual work. Since most of these practices are attributed to the celebrated Marie Laveaux, whom Glover venerates as the mother of all American Voodoo, he went to her famous tomb and asked her to accept him as her godson in the Voodoo tradition. He has relied on her ever since together with his flesh and blood godfather in Haiti as guiding role models for his spiritual calling. Glover has been in Haiti numerous times since his first visit, but his work has remained primarily homegrown Louisiana Hoodoo and Voodoo style, which he had studied already before his initiation in the legendary *Cracker Jack Drug Store,* the main supplier for Hoodoo and Voodoo

spiritual paraphernalia in the city since 1897. The store closed in 1974.[21] Glover is a devotee of *Bawon Samdi,* the highest Haitian *lwa* of the fierce Petwo rites. "The Baron"—as Glover refers to him—is a stern taskmaster. He represents death itself and personifies the power of transformation and magic. As the Haitians put it, "Bawon pa joue!" ("The Baron does not play!") For "heavy-duty" work to effect serious changes in life, Glover takes his clients on his power day, Saturday, to a secret location in the cemetery, where he provides them with spiritual baths and cleansing rituals to free them from negative influences in their lives and prays with them to the spirits of the dead for assistance, while placing offerings of candles, symbolic objects, cigars, and liquor into a real, abandoned tomb.

Inspired by Laveaux's example, snakes are today again popular among New Orleans Voodooists. Brandi Kelly's pet python named *Mojo* is a vital part of the *Voodoo Authentica Dance and Ritual Troupe* she founded. The Historical New Orleans Voodoo Museum also has several pythons. The most frequented Voodoo temple of the city, Voodoo Queen Miriam's *Voodoo Spiritual Temple* on Rampart Street, where nearly every tour group makes a stop, has a live python that resides permanently in her glass container in the sanctuary and comes out only for ceremonies. Queen Miriam's next door neighbor, Chief Dr. Sharon Caulder, the owner/director of *Chez Vodun* Museum, Temple, Bar, and Spa, is also the proud owner of several pythons, representing the ancient Temple of the Pythons in Benin, where Caulder had received her initiation into African Vodun.[22]

The tomb of Marie Laveaux, which houses the mortal remains of the great Voodoo Queen located in the old Saint Louis No. 1 Cemetery on Basin Street, not far from her former residence on St. Ann Street, has developed a life of its own. It has turned recently into one of the most-visited sites in New Orleans, second in popularity only to the bars and clubs on Bourbon Street. The handsome, Greek revival tomb is conveniently located near the entrance of the city's oldest burial site, dating back to the eighteenth century. It is covered with strange X marks, arranged in groups of three, and always has an array of various offerings neatly piled up in front of it. On a given day before hurricane Katrina, several thousand visitors would pass by to see it, making an offering (a few coins, Mardi Gras beads, flowers, tobacco, liquor, or candles), or just take a picture. In the aftermath of the storm the number of visitors to Laveaux's tomb has dwindled down to a few die-hard devotees, but has quickly started to grow again as soon as the tourist industry began to recover.

Just like the Neo-African religions that are growing everywhere in the United States today, *Vodou* in New Orleans is expanding, too, even in the post-Katrina era. The majority of newcomers to the tradition in the Crescent City are presently members of white Neopagan and Wiccan groups, who feel drawn to African-based magical practices, spirit possessions, and ceremonies. Multiple initiations and affiliations are not always welcome but are becoming more and more common. As the American mainstream is increasingly willing to accept Haitian *Vodou* and Cuban Santería as *bona fide* religions and many of the African diaspora temple societies are coming out of their secret underground existence and begin to register as state recognized churches throughout the country, in New Orleans, too, Neo-African traditions are

getting stronger. Not only Caribbean immigrants, but people from every ethnic group are joining their ranks. The Internet and cell phones have become essential tools in the post-Katrina age. New Orleans Voodoo groups remained in contact with their dispersed members and clients everywhere through e-mail lists and information posted on their Web sites. The large number of tourists that came all year around to have fun in the "Big Easy" were the main source of income of the Voodoo practitioners in New Orleans before the storm, but since Katrina, the visitors are scarce. Most of the local Voudouists are now focusing on mail-order Internet business and spiritual consultations over the cell phone in order to survive. In the future, the globalization of *Vodou* through the Internet is expected to grow, and *Vodou* could at last become a respectable American religion leaving the insidious old negative stereotypes behind.

NOTES

1. "Nine out of ten laypersons, asked for their first association with witchcraft reply 'voodoo,'" according to Lucy Mair's classical cross-cultural study of witchcraft. "They suppose it to be a particularly sinister form of witchcraft, as if one were any more sinister, in imagination, than another." Lucy Mair, *Witchcraft* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 234. This statistic is somewhat dated, but it is more likely than not that today, in the year 2006, the majority of the American public would still have "black magic" and "witchcraft" in mind as first association with the word Voodoo.

2. For an excellent history of the antebellum American slave market and New Orleans' central role within this market see Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life in the Antebellum Slave Market* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1999). For a detailed account of the African presence in French and Spanish Louisiana see Gwendolyn Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991).

3. Impressive and powerful Maroon communities existed, for instance, in Brazil, the quilombos or mocambos, in Jamaica, and also in colonial Louisiana. See Roger Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil: Toward a Sociology of Interpenetration of Civilizations,* trans. Helen Sebba (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Leonard Barrett, *The Rastafarians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988); Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana.*

4. For an excellent history of Afro-Cuban religious history see George Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

5. See Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana.*

6. Ibid.

7. Senegambians were brought to Louisiana because of their highly valued agricultural expertise to create Louisiana's rice and indigo plantations. They had an enormous impact on Louisiana's culture because of their strong presence during the forming years of the territory under French colonial rule. They influenced greatly the foodways (to this day Southern Louisiana's cuisine is rice based), folklore, and popular religion. See Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana.*

8. This strong Kongolese immigration pattern during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is well documented in Gwendolyn Hall's data bank, which includes all boat indexes and all court and notary records about Africans in Louisiana from the French colonial

period until 1820, well into the American antebellum period. This data bank covers most records about Africans in Louisiana and traces as well their ethnic heritage. It is accessible to the public electronically on the Internet as Dr. G. Hall, *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719–1920,* http://www.ibiblio.org/laslave.

9. For an excellent study of the Kongolese Antonian movement see John Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684–1706* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

10. See Ina Fandrich, "The Mysterious Voodoo Queen Marie Laveaux: A Study of Power and Female Leadership in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans" (Ph.D. thesis, Temple University, 1994).

11. For more information on Marie Laveaux, her legendary power, and the history of New Orleans Voodoo, see Ina Fandrich, *The Mysterious Voodoo Queen, Marie Laveaux: A Study of Powerful Female Leadership in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

12. *New York Times,* June 23, 1881, 2.

13. Zora Neale Hurston, "Hoodoo in America," in *Journal of American Folklore* 44 (October–December 1931): 318.

14. See, for instance, Robert Tallant, *Voodoo in New Orleans* (New York: Macmillan, 1946); and Luisah Teish, *Jambalaya: The Natural Woman's Book of Personal Charms and Practical Rituals* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985).

15. See Hurston, "Hoodoo in America"; and Carolyn Long, "New Orleans Voodoo," in *Spiritual Merchants: Religion, Magic, and Commerce,* ed. Carolyn Morrow Long (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), chap. 3.

16. In the huge urban centers of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Houston with a large Latin American population, *la Regla de Ocha,* a Hispanic Yoruba New World adaptation was especially successful in this Neo-African spiritual revival movement of the late twentieth century.

17. For more information on Voodoo and Yoruba priestess Ava Kay Jones, see Ron Bodin, *Voodoo Past and Present,* Louisiana Life Series, No. 5 (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1990).

18. For a detailed biography of Queen Miriam's life journey, see Toni Costonie, *Priestess Miriam & the Voodoo Spiritual Temple—A Brief History* (InstantPublisher.com, 2004).

19. Glassman's Tarot deck is commercially available together with a companion book by Louis Martinié. See Louis Martinié and Sally Ann Glassman, *The New Orleans Voodoo Tarot* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1992).

20. Mama Lola's life and spiritual tradition have been beautifully described in an anthropological study by Karen McCarthy Brown, who traces her lineage from Africa to Haiti and Lola's story from Haiti to New York. See Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1991, 2001).

21. For more information on the Cracker Jack and Louisiana's Voodoo and Hoodoo paraphernalia see, for instance, Long, in *Spiritual Merchants.*

22. Sharon Caulder's spiritual journey into the Vodun religion is recorded in detail in her biography. See Sharon Caulder, *Mark of Voodoo: Awakening to my African Spiritual Heritage* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2002).

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PART II

Satanism and the Church of Satan

Eugene V. Gallagher

In many ways "Satanism" is almost as elastic a descriptive category as "cult." At one time or another everything from the actual worship of a diabolical being, through various New Religious Movements (NRMs) held in suspicion by some audiences, to the Mormons and even the Roman Catholic Church has been described, somehow and by someone, as a form of Satanism. On the other hand, the Church of Satan, founded by Anton Szandor LaVey (1930–1997) with a very distinctive ideology and set of practices has long stood as the primary example of a self-proclaimed Satanic group. But it has often been difficult to reconcile what is known about the actual Church of Satan with what is largely feared, but not really substantiated, about Satanism. This essay tries to remedy the confusion about Satanism in three ways. First, it reviews the nature and development of a widespread moral panic about Satanism in the 1980s through the early 1990s. Second, it examines the origins and development of LaVey's Church of Satan, with a focus on its central scriptural text, *The Satanic Bible.* Finally, it examines the various offshoots from LaVey's group that developed over time and how they both continued and transformed LaVey's original Satanic message. "Satanism" in its broad usage is primarily a polemical, not a descriptive, term. People almost invariably use it to define a certain set of practices or beliefs as deviant, threatening, and morally and religiously reprehensible. Often the beliefs and practices in question exist more in the minds of the accusers than in any demonstrable fashion in the world outside their imaginations. On the other hand, LaVey's Satanic stance of opposition to the status quo consistently has attracted a small, but devoted, band of adherents since it was first formulated in the 1960s.

A MORAL PANIC ABOUT SATANISM

From the early 1980s through the early 1990s the American public was informed by the popular news media of a series of spectacular and shocking accusations about

the nefarious doings of an extensive Satanic underground. The shadowy conspiracy was supposedly responsible for a range of horrific crimes, from outrageous forms of child abuse in day care centers to abductions and ritual murders. One commentator dates the ignition of a broad, nationwide, panic about Satanism to the May 16, 1985 broadcast of the ABC TV news show *20/20,* which addressed the claims that literally thousands of Satanic cults were operating across the United States. Bill Ellis argues that "from this point on, Satanism became a major national crisis, and the *20/20* feature was followed by several other national exposes, including a 1988 Geraldo Rivera special that proved the highest-rated two-hour documentary in history."[1] Another analyst identified 62 separate "rumor-panics" about Satanism in the United States in the decade between 1982 and 1992.[2] The same author provides a partial list of 21 cases in which "Satanic ritual abuse" was alleged to have been committed in the years between 1983 and 1987.[3] The explosion of media attention to the suspected practice of a variety of dangerous forms of Satanism both heightened the fear of the general public that truly horrific crimes were being committed and helped encourage some people to add to the growing dossier of accusations. Some academic observers also became caught up in the growing fear of Satanism. One even claimed that there was "a national epidemic of 'satanist-related' crime" in the United States that was "growing faster than AIDS."[4] As is common with "cult controversies" in general, the developing panic was fueled by the tales of unspeakably horrible acts that appeared in a number of autobiographical testimonies of individuals who claimed that they were involved, generally against their will, in Satanic practices. A close look at the first and probably most influential autobiographies of someone who claims to have both remembered and survived alleged "Satanic ritual abuse" reveals both the typical themes and the characteristic social dynamics of the "Satanic panic" that gripped the United States in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Michele Remembers was written by Michelle Smith and her psychiatrist and eventual husband, Lawrence Pazder. In it, Smith claims that she was given by her mother to a cult of devil worshippers when she was only five years old. Smith's story is punctuated with vivid and very troubling excerpts from her conversations with Pazder over a 14-month period. Pazder reports that he reproduced material from their therapy sessions "nearly verbatim" from the transcripts of tape recordings that he made, but he does not disclose what he changed or why.[5] The following passage, a relatively mild one, gives some of the flavor of Smith's recollections:

> *No!* I don't want to be *cut!* … Help me! … They're making lines on me with a knife. I'm afraid. It's like a line down the middle of my face. Why are they putting that stuff on me? They're painting me with red stuff.… They're painting half of me dark. I don't want to be a clown.…. I'm going to have half a red face and half a white face. They are putting red on half of me and the stuff in my mouth on the other half! They're all calling someone. They're all calling that guy and having stomach aches. They … they all start running around the room and screaming and yelling. I didn't move because I'm afraid the candles will burn me.…[6]

Clearly, Smith presented herself to her therapist as someone who was terrified by something that she remembered. It was the therapist, however, who put the

remembered experiences into a coherent interpretive context. Working with the raw material that Smith provided him, Pazder constructed a series of conclusions that gave specific meaning to her chaotic and sometimes imprecise memories. As he retells it, Pazder decided early on that dreams that Smith had in the present were "blatantly symbolic" and might hold the key to some forgotten trauma.[7] The more he talked to Smith, the more he became convinced that "whatever it was, though it was unidentifiable, it was real, he could 'read' it, it was *there*."[8] Pazder's crucial interpretive contributions to Smith's recollections include his deciding that she was, indeed, recovering formerly repressed memories of traumatic childhood experiences, validating and clarifying the nature of the group at whose hands she suffered, and leading her to the religious authorities who would give her remembered experiences a specific religious interpretation.

A careful reading of Pazder and Smith's memoir reveals several of the influential mechanisms by which the existence of a widespread Satanic conspiracy was discovered, nurtured, and communicated to a wary public. The publisher was well aware that some of the claims in *Michele Remembers* would be difficult to accept. He observes mildly in an opening "note from the publisher" that "I knew their book would be not only important but also unusual."[9] He proceeds to list Dr. Pazder's academic credentials, affirms that two investigators independently confirmed some of the details of the story, stresses that "both doctor and patient were interviewed at great length" during the preparation of the book, and at least implies that he has both read the psychiatrist's notes and seen videos of his sessions with his patient.[10] In a rather short space, the publisher goes to great lengths to establish both the accuracy and the truthfulness of what readers are about to read. He even goes beyond that to make Smith a religious heroine, comparing her to Joan of Arc and St. Bernadette, other young innocents "whose authority and authenticity are such that they can tell you things that would otherwise be laughable—yet you do not laugh, you do not dismiss or forget."[11] The publisher clearly is convinced, along with the authors, that the stakes are high in the publication of Smith's story; it is intended to have revelatory meaning. The marketing of Michelle's memories was also intended to reach the broadest possible audience with its searing revelations. *People* magazine covered the publication of the memoir, and a version of Michelle's story also appeared in *The National Enquirer*.[12]

The publisher's effusive characterization of the story stands in marked contrast to two other indicators of significance that begin the book. One is a statement from Pope Paul VI that observes that "the question of the Devil and the influence he can exert on individual persons as well as on communities, whole societies or events, is very important. It should be studied again."[13] The second statement comes from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Victoria, British Colombia, the diocese where Smith lived. In an equally cautious manner, he notes that "I do not question that for Michelle this experience was real. In time we will know how much of it can be validated. It will require prolonged and careful study. In such mysterious matters, hasty conclusions could prove unwise."[14] Although the authors and the publisher clearly intend those statements from the pope and bishop to serve as validations of what

follows, they stand in significant tension with both the publisher's enthusiastic acceptance of Smith's claims and the details of the story that follows.

The different observations that preface *Michelle Remembers* begin to mark out the field of controversies that would attend a decade of Satanic panic in the United States. The publisher clearly anticipated skepticism about Smith's claims and took several steps to ensure that the story he published was validated. But he also went beyond validation to a religious endorsement by comparing Smith to a pair of Catholic saints. On the other hand, the statements from the pope and bishop, which are the first things that appear in the book after the table of contents, seem designed to lend substantial religious authority to Smith's memoir. But they actually have very little to say about Smith and much more to say about the general presence of evil in the world and the need for prolonged and careful study. The placement of the two testimonies signals one thing, but the substance of the remarks signals another. Thus the beginning of *Michelle Remembers* inadvertently demonstrates that any discussion of Satanism is liable to be highly contentious. Some people, like Smith, will fervently claim to have suffered enormous harm at the hands of diabolical others and selflessly wish to warn the American public about the evils to which they could fall prey. They have convinced supporters, like Pazder and the publisher, who invoke both professional expertise and personal passion in their efforts to spread the warning they feel is all too necessary. Other people will be interested religious bystanders, like the bishop of Victoria, who will carefully weigh the claims made and who may often be markedly slow to endorse the more extraordinary claims of people like Smith. Then some people will be skeptics, like those whose objections the publisher anticipates in his opening statement, who will be inclined to attribute the experience claimed by sufferers of Satanic abuse to sources other than Satan himself.

The interactions among those various positions played out in a series of dramatic court cases, which were also fueled by the publication of other memoirs like Lauren Stratford's *Satan's Underground* and widespread and frequently extravagant media attention.[15] Probably the most notorious case involved accusations that teachers at the McMartin Preschool in suburban Los Angeles, California, were involved in the systematic Satanically inspired abuse of children placed in their care. In 1984 prosecutors began a trial on 208 counts of child abuse, concerning at least 40 children, against seven teachers at the school. That case continued until 1990 and never produced a single conviction.[16] Several other high profile cases, based on similar types of accusations, were prosecuted during the same time period. As prosecutors continued to have difficulty in proving their allegations to juries, the tide turned against the image of a broadly dispersed, cunningly effective, and terrifically threatening Satanic underground. For example, Robert D. Hicks, himself a former police officer and later a law enforcement consultant, observed in 1990 that "I have found no proof that pernicious satanic phenomena exist on a scale worthy of new criminal laws and specialized police task forces."[17] Hicks also turned a critical eye on his colleagues in law enforcement, noting that few of them "have taken the time to combat publicly the overstatements, generalizations, clearly false and absurd 'facts' and excursions into illogic relating to the impact of Satanism and the occult on crime."

As the Satanic panic of the 1980s and early 1990s began to ebb because of lack of evidence, scholars proposed different explanations for its sources. Commenting on the material in memoirs like those of Smith and Stratford, Philip Jenkins and Daniel Maier-Katkin proposed that "the study of survivors can tell us a great deal about mental disorders, about the state of American religious belief, or the therapeutic process. What 'occult survivors' can not tell us about is the occult."[18] Similarly, Jeffrey Victor, who coined the term "Satanic panic," argued that the "hidden meaning" of accusations about Satanic cult practices and ritual abuse was that they "convey the complaint: 'The moral order of our society is being threatened by mysterious and powerful evil forces, and we are losing faith in the ability of our institutions and authorities to deal with the threat.'"[19] Debbie Nathan proposed a more specific source for fears about Satanic ritual abuse, identifying them as "a deeply rooted expression of anxieties this culture harbors about unresolved family and sexual issues," including the influx of women into the work force outside the home and the corresponding rise in the dependence of families with children on various forms of day care.[20] By the mid-1990s, especially after the dramatic clash between the Branch Davidians and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), fears about cults were transposed into a different register, but worries about the dangerous effects of Satanism continued to be activated in a number of different contexts. Contemporary Neopagans, for example, have frequently been accused of Satanic practice. Sarah Pike summarizes their effect in this way: "Rumors of Satanism are so widespread that they do not simply affect Neopagans freedom to hold their rituals at state parks or other public places. The explanatory power of satanic conspiracy theories threatens Neopagans' lives on many fronts and impacts child-custody cases, employment, and educational experience."[21] Pike also shows that various individual Neopagans as well as some Neopagan groups also made substantial efforts to demonstrate, as the international organization The Covenant of the Goddess puts it, that "the gods of Wicca are in no way connected to Satanic practice."[22] Claims and counterclaims about the practice of Satanism, however it is understood, thus occur in a wide variety of contexts.

A sense of the elasticity, and hence imprecision, of "Satanism" as a descriptive category is indelibly conveyed by a widely cited report published in 1992 by Kenneth V. Lanning, then a Supervisory Special Agent for the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit. Lanning documented more than 30 different groups that were referred to as practicing some form of Satanism.[23] The appearance of the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set in that group is no cause for surprise, but it also includes the Ku Klux Klan, the Church of Scientology, the Unification Church, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, the Rajneesh movement, Transcendental Meditation, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Mormonism, and the Roman Catholic Church. At that point the challenge is to determine what is *not* considered Satanism. The term has become so elastic that it simply comes to mean "religious practices that frighten me" or "a religion that I don't like." Efforts to restore some small bit of precision to the term also foundered. Carl Raschke, for example, tried to distinguish four types of Satanic activity: the experimental, the occult, the self-styled, and the

traditionalist.[24] But his categories quickly collapse into each other. It is not clear why occult Satanists cannot also experiment, or why the self-styled Satanist cannot make use either of tradition, the occult, or experimentation, for example. Part of the problem is that Raschke includes rumors, accusations, self-testimony, and verifiable actions together under a single umbrella label of "Satanism" without making sufficient effort to sort them out. Other efforts at classification have fared little better.[25]

The combination of cultural polemics exacerbated by the Satanic panic of the 1980s and early 1990s and the lack of rigor in defining categories made "Satanism" into a fuzzy and highly malleable category. Because of that lack of precision, any observer must be especially clear about precisely what is meant by "Satanism" whenever the term is used, and provide in accessible and verifiable form any evidence on which discussions of Satanism is based. The rest of this essay leaves behind the impassioned denunciations and overheated warnings about the pervasive Satanic conspiracy to focus on the primary institutional forms that Satanism has taken in the United States. It focuses in particular on the Church of Satan, founded by Anton Szandor LaVey in San Francisco, California, in 1966, and some of its offshoots.

ANTON LAVEY AND THE CHURCH OF SATAN

Although LaVey said that he was interested in various aspects of the "black arts" for some time, the formal founding of the Church of Satan took place on April 30, 1966. The choice of date was no accident. As one of his closest followers put it in her history of the Church of Satan, "Anton knew the date upon which the first Church of Satan must be established. It would have to be during the traditional night of the most important demonic celebration of the year, when witches and devils roam the earth, orgiastically glorifying the fruition of the Spring equinox, Walpurgisnacht, the night of April 30th–May 1st."[26] That statement reveals many of the hallmarks of LaVey's construction of his new church, including the calculated choice of symbols, the emphasis on unfettered sexuality, an attention to the physical and material, and an embrace of figures of opposition to the status quo. LaVey intended his new church to be an affront to all established religions, especially Christianity. He was particularly critical of the message of self-denial that he found at the core of Christianity. In his church's central text, *The Satanic Bible* (1969), he proclaimed that "no longer shall man's salvation be dependent on his self-denial."[27] In LaVey's view all previous religions overemphasized the spiritual at the expense of the material and failed to accept human beings as they actually are. As a result, he claimed, "it has become necessary for a NEW religion, based on man's natural instincts to come forth."[28] LaVey conceived of his new group both as a religion and as "Satanic" for very explicit reasons. He rejected humanism as an alternative to established religions because it "is simply a way of life with no ceremony or dogma,"[29] both of which, he thought, responded to fundamental human needs. LaVey's adoption of Satan as the patron of his new religion, however, is both more interesting and more complex. For LaVey, Satan fulfilled a symbolic function. He claimed that "Satan represents opposition to all religions which serve to frustrate and condemn man for his natural

instincts. He has been given an evil role simply because he represents the carnal, the earthly, and mundane aspects of life."[30] LaVey intended to reclaim the etymological meaning of Satan as the "adversary" and use him as the leading edge of an intentionally provocative critique of the status quo. Part of that critique involved the unmasking of all of the false guidance and promises that were preached by various religions, particularly Christianity. As LaVey saw it, "popular lies have been the most potent enemies of personal liberty. There is only one way to deal with them: Cut them out, to the very core, just as cancers. Exterminate them root and branch. Annihilate them, or they will us."[31] The other part of LaVey's program was to reawaken a robust sense of self among his audience. LaVey summarized his position in "the Nine Satanic Statements." They are the following:

1. Satan represents indulgence, instead of abstinence!
2. Satan represents vital existence, instead of spiritual pipe dreams!
3. Satan represents undefiled wisdom, instead of hypocritical self-deceit!
4. Satan represents kindness to those who deserve it, instead of love wasted on ingrates!
5. Satan represents vengeance, instead of turning the other cheek!
6. Satan represents responsibility to the responsible, instead of concern for psychic vampires.
7. Satan represents man as just another animal, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all-fours, who because of his "divine spiritual and intellectual development," has become the most vicious animal of all!
8. Satan represents all of the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental or emotional gratification!
9. Satan is the best friend the church has ever had, as he has kept it in business all these years![32]

Statement seven represents the core of LaVey's message. He proposed that any program for a fulfilling human life should proceed from a clear-eyed evaluation of just who human beings really are. They hold no privileged position in his view of the world; they are animals like all the rest. But LaVey did not lament that fact; he celebrated it. Religions deceived people, he believed, precisely because they led humans away from a proper understanding of their own nature. Religious teachings encouraged humans to repress and control their animal instincts, rather than to exercise them. The teaching of the Church of Satan aimed to liberate human beings so that they could be their truest selves. As LaVey put it, "man, the animal, is the godhead to the Satanist."[33] Accordingly, the Nine Satanic Statements praise, among other things, indulgence, vengeance, vital existence, and physical, mental, and emotional gratification.

The Satanic virtues amount to provocative reversals of well-known Christian virtues. In many ways, the Church of Satan became a kind of counter-Christianity, a system of dogma and ceremony that systematically reversed the values of Christian dogma and ritual. Although LaVey asserted that Satan was the best friend the Christian church ever had, because he served as the focal point for all that the church

opposed, Christianity was also the best friend that the Church of Satan had, because it was the target of LaVey's most vitriolic attacks. In fact, the title of LaVey's most important book, *The Satanic Bible,* effectively summed up his intent. He aimed not simply to propose a new ethical and ritual system, but to supplant the dominant one in his own context. He wanted his new Bible to replace the old one. One of LaVey's most dramatic reversals of Christian teaching occurred in his rewriting of the famous beatitudes that are part of the discourse of Jesus in both the gospels of Matthew and Luke. As he did in the Nine Satanic Statements, and as Jesus does in Luke, LaVey set up a series of oppositions between the characteristics he endorsed and those he condemned. His intent to overturn the Christian message was clear from the beginning. LaVey started with the assertion that "blessed are the strong, for they shall possess the earth—Cursed are the weak, for they shall inherit the yoke!"[34] LaVey subsequently praised the powerful, the bold, the victorious, the iron-handed, the death-defiant, the destroyers of false hope, the valiant, as well as those who believe in what is best for them, those who have a sprinkling of enemies, and those who are the mighty minded. On the other hand, he cursed the feeble, the righteously humble, the vanquished, the poor in spirit, the gazers to a richer life beyond the grave, the god-adorers, the believers in good and evil, the "lambs of God," as well as those who do good for others without receiving good in return, those who teach falsely, and those who deceive themselves. Towards the end of his list of oppositions, LaVey aimed particular scorn on the weak, proclaiming that "thrice cursed are the weak whose insecurity makes them vile, for they shall serve and suffer."[35] In contrast, he proudly proclaimed that "the eternal flame of power through joy dwelleth within the flesh of the Satanist."[36] LaVey's beatitudes constitute a striking summary of the message of *The Satanic Bible.* The well-established Christian virtues should be abandoned and cursed; in their place a new set of virtues, much more in tune with true human nature, should be embraced. Such a thoroughgoing transformation of values will be accomplished, LaVey contended, not by attending to a prophetic message attributed to divine inspiration but through determined individual human effort.

For LaVey, the individual was supreme. He counseled, in the pseudobiblical idiom of the first part of *The Satanic Bible:* "Say unto thine own heart, 'I am mine own redeemer.'"[37] Such a statement was not only possible but necessary for LaVey because "all religions of a spiritual nature are inventions of man" and "man has always created his gods, rather than his gods creating *him.*"[38] Because religions are nothing more, or less, than human constructions, and because humans seek to gratify their animal instincts, the ideal religion according to LaVey was nothing other than a form of controlled self-assertion. Only from such a position, LaVey believed, can one appropriately interact with others. In *The Satanic Bible* he put it this way, "The Satanist believes in complete gratification of his ego. Satanism, in fact, is the *only* religion which advocates the intensification or encouragement of the ego. Only if a person's own ego is sufficiently fulfilled, can he afford to be kind and complimentary to others, without robbing himself of his self-respect."[39]

LaVey's emphasis on the primacy of the individual, the unreality of any realm or beings beyond the natural world, and the restriction of Satanism to an elite few who could truly appreciate its radically innovative message all had important impacts on the group he founded. Although LaVey's own interest in exerting control over those who were drawn to his message waxed and waned during his lifetime, he generally held to his conviction that "the 'Satanic Army' is comprised of individuals, not cultists."[40] Throughout his career, LaVey exercised influence as a teacher much more than as the head of a unified organization. Membership in the Church of Satan was more a fundraising mechanism than anything else. Although those who were attracted by LaVey's teachings shared a common critique of all established religions with each other and with LaVey, the emphasis on the cultivation of the individual ego made the development of alternative teaching within the tradition initiated by LaVey an ever-present possibility. LaVey's relentless focus on the physical world and the denigration of the spiritual also made his teachings incompatible with those frequently attributed to the Satanic underground, in books like *Michelle Remembers.* He explicitly states that, from his perspective, "most Satanists do not accept Satan as an anthropomorphic being with cloven hooves, a barbed tail, and horns. He merely represents a force of nature—the powers of darkness have been named just that because no religion has taken these forces *out* of the darkness."[41] Specifically in regard to ritual practices like the so-called "Black Mass," LaVey asserted that they were a "literary invention."[42] Moreover, in statements that would rule out virtually all of the practices attributed to the vast Satanic conspiracy, LaVey acknowledged that, although his Satanism approved of virtually any sexual act, he added very important qualifiers. First, anything was permissible, "so long as it involves no one who does not wish to be involved," and second, "*so long as it hurts no one else.*"[43] As LaVey himself put it succinctly, "there are no categories of Satanism—there are Satanists and nuts."[44] Both the substance of LaVey's exposition of Satanic thought in *The Satanic Bible* and his own explicit attempts to dissociate himself from other "nuts" claiming to be Satanists clearly distinguish the Church of Satan from the types of groups and practices conjured up in memoirs like *Michelle Remembers.*

Even after LaVey's death in 1997, his writings and the activities of the Church of Satan continued to attract interested people. Aiming to secure its status as a religion for a self-styled elite, the Church of Satan explicitly declares that it is not interested in proselytization. The church's Web site asserts that "Satanism is not for everyone, but if it is for you, we welcome you. We are not a fan club, a pen-pal society, or a lonely hearts group. We are a group of dynamic individuals who stand forth as the ultimate underground alternative—the **Alien Elite.** We realize what we have, what we are, and what we shall become. Our scope is unlimited, and the extent of your involvement is based upon your own potential."[45] Nonetheless, LaVey's writings still attract the curious; a recent survey reveals that *The Satanic Bible* "is still the single most influential document shaping the contemporary Satanist movement"[46] whether or not readers proceed to formal affiliation with the Church of Satan by paying the required $200 fee.

What individuals do within the orbit of LaVey's version of Satanism is, as he intended, largely up to them. It is clear that for many reading *The Satanic Bible* and other writings fuels an oppositional stance towards the religious and social status quo. Some actively engage in rituals, either those described in LaVey's companion volume, *The Satanic Rituals,* or those of their own devising. LaVey gave a wide latitude to improvisation by describing the ritual space as "a fantasy world" where practitioners could "harness[ ] the potent wattage of your emotions" and "psychically extend yourself to shape the world beyond the surrounding walls."[47] One example of ritual creativity is included on the official Church of Satan Web site. It has a brief description and full script, with pictures, for a ritual celebration of the rites of spring, devised by Magister Michael Rose. Rose, who reached the fourth of five levels of initiation in the Church, captures the tone and creative approach often associated with LaVey himself in the description of the ritual: "During the ritual the celebrant and his assistant invoke female nymphs to awaken the lusts of Pan from his wintery sleep. We added some real bump and grind stripper music to bridge from the solemnity of the organ music and the ritual formalities into the dance performed by the nymphs. This added that final visual assault and a touch of humour so often lacking in many rituals I have witnessed. After the ritual we had a sumptuous banquet complete with fruit, meat, cheeses, wine and the finest of Ales."[48] What an external observer might see as a shocking blending of the sacred and profane, the Satanist sees as an acknowledgement of the multiple needs of human beings, for sex, humor, pageantry and ceremony, and a good meal. Clearly, the spirit of LaVey lives on in the practices of some of his contemporary disciples.

OFFSHOOTS OF THE CHURCH OF SATAN

Because of its emphasis on individualism and LaVey's generally weak control of those who identified themselves as members of the Church of Satan, the Church produced a number of splinter groups, both during LaVey's lifetime and afterwards. One of the most notable was the formation of the Temple of Set in 1975. That group was formed by Michael Aquino (b. 1946) and other members of the original Church who claimed that LaVey's group lost its bearings and departed from its original principles. Aquino particularly objected to LaVey's decision to sell initiation into the priesthood in order to raise cash. Aquino's group quickly evolved away from both the style and substance of the Church of Satan. During the Satanic panic of the 1980s, the Temple of Set described its task as having two discrete dimensions. It had "not only to defend authentic Satanism against the shrill screams of the scarecrow-merchants, but also to reject superficial glorification of the scarecrow that would return Satanism's image to nothing more than anti-Christian."[49] The Temple of Set, first under the leadership of Aquino and later under Don Webb, appealed to two different sources to guide it along that middle path. First, most notably in Aquino's massive history of the Church of Satan, it offered a new understanding of LaVey's work and its connection to the Temple of Set. Aquino, for example, wrote in the introduction to his history that "the Church of Satan was limited in the

positive potential of its philosophical conceptualizations. The energy and the momentum were present, but Satanists had imprisoned themselves in what turned out to be a very cramped and artificial universe.… The Temple of Set proved to be the latent, always implicit but never predefined promise behind the Church of Satan."[50] That perspective stressed the continuity between the Temple of Set and its parent body even as it presented the Temple as the newer, clearer, and fuller realization of insights that LaVey did not fully grasp. The second strategy provided a deep history for the Temple by linking its teachings to the ancient Egyptian deity Set, who was worshipped as early as 3200 BCE. Providing a clue into the philosophical attractiveness of Set for members of the Temple, Webb described himself as "the Magus of the Word Xeper (pronounced Khefer), an English language coinage expressing an Egyptian verb written as a stylized scarab and meaning "I Have Come Into Being." This Word generates the Aeon of Set, and is the current form of the Eternal Word of the Prince of Darkness."[51] The primary theologians of the Temple of Set, Webb and Aquino, developed their ideas into a much more complex, obscure, and esoteric system of thought than anything in LaVey's writings. The Temple of Set's very distinctive theology is extensively documented on the group's Web site.

While claiming deep roots in antiquity, Webb also retained the oppositional character of LaVey's Satanism, asserting that "awareness of Xeper usually begins with a moment of rebellion against the spiritual status quo."[52] Like the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set does not engage in aggressive proselytizing; it waits for the truly serious rebels to come to it. Webb cautioned that "teaching difficult things is a tough process, and we don't undertake it lightly. We don't spend months or years dealing with people that are looking for a quick occult fix drawn by the lure of the strange."[53] Initiation is not a casual thing, but takes time and a dedication to the study of teachings that are often not immediately accessible. Perhaps even more than the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set stresses the efforts of the individual; it claims to carefully evaluate each application for membership and to reserve membership for an elite few.

The Temple of Set, and particularly Aquino, got caught up in the accusations of Satanic ritual abuse that flourished in the 1980s. In 1986, Aquino, then a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, was implicated in suspicions of child molestation at the day care center at the Presidio military base in San Francisco. He was, however, never charged with any crime.[54] Later, in 1994, Aquino sued a former member who claimed that the Temple of Set was part of the nationwide Satanic underground conspiracy that was responsible for multiple instances of child abuse, abductions, and ritual murders.[55] The group that Aquino helped to found, however, survived both those difficulties and the transition in leadership to Webb. Although solid membership figures are virtually impossible to come by, the Temple of Set maintains a robust presence on the web, offering its literature to interested and dedicated seekers after wisdom.

LaVey's death in 1997 was attended by disputes about succession that frequently plague NRMs as they attempt to make the transition from the generation of the founder(s) to a second generation. Although LaVey was succeeded by his close associate Blanche Barton as High Priestess of the Church of Satan, LaVey's daughter

Karla criticized the Church under Barton's direction for abandoning the legacy of her father and the early years of the Church of Satan. Although the First Satanic Church maintains only a modest presence on the Web, two telling items reveal its sectarian stance toward the original Church of Satan. The section "about the church" attests that "the First Satanic Church was formed on October 31, 1999 by Karla LaVey, Anton LaVey's daughter and founding member of the Church of Satan. We were established due to the lack of a Satanic presence and are dedicated to the study of Satanism and the occult sciences."[56] But the site's welcome page asserts that Karla LaVey's First Satanic Church was founded in San Francisco in 1966, aggressively claiming direct continuity with Anton LaVey's Church of Satan. Karla LaVey's assertion that she is simply re-presenting the original teachings from which the Church of Satan departed is reinforced by the requirement that anyone applying for membership must have read *The Satanic Bible* beforehand.[57] Karla LaVey's First Satanic Church also continues the elitist stance of her father's group and the Temple of Set. The group's Web site warns that "acquiring a membership in the First Satanic church is not a simple task. We do not solicit memberships or accept just anyone. We are the eclectic elite of the Satanic religion and a $100 bill will not buy your way in. To ensure the highest stratum of membership we screen *all* applicants. Only those who are sincerely interested in Satanism and the occult sciences need apply."[58]

Another early member of Anton LaVey's Church of Satan, John Dewey Allee, echoed some of Karla LaVey's criticisms of the current Church of Satan, including her insistence that someone need not necessarily be a member of a specific organization in order to be a Satanist. Allee is critical of what he sees as the elitism of the Church, arguing that "'elitism' should be determined by nature, outside the framework of a political or religious institution. Otherwise, the organizational leaders would be the ones determining who was and was not elite; an attitude which forms the basis for a cult."[59] Allee is explicit in his separation of what he sees as the worthwhile early teachings of LaVey from the master's latter thought and from the continuing teaching of the Church of Satan. He asserts that "while we recognize Anton LaVey's contribution to the ongoing manifestation of the Satanic in the mundane realm, we also feel that, as many dark magicians before him have done, LaVey eventually squandered his gift and his power, and became bitter and alienated: sadly it is this latter (post-1975) 'LaVeyan' period that characterizes the outlook of the current CoS."[60] In what he sees as a return to the spirit of LaVey's original teachings. Allee advocates what he calls "free thought Satanism." Accordingly, he begins the mission statement of his First Church of Satan with this admonition to the reader: "You have the choice of accepting or rejecting what I have to say. If you find it difficult or impossible to accept, I would advise you dismiss my concepts entirely, if you wish!"[61] Allee takes up again Anton LaVey's emphasis on Satanism as an oppositional stance to established pieties, claiming that "Satanism is a dynamic force of social change in a society that resists change."[62]

Also in continuity with LaVey's original insights, Allee attends to the human need for ritual and ceremony, noting that "rituals are performed to effect change, while ceremonies are employed to sustain."[63] The Web site of the First Church of Satan

includes a wedding ritual that he composed; he explicitly gives permission for the ritual to be copied and used by others, so long as nothing in it is changed. The priest's opening invocation gives the flavor of the brief ceremony, at once familiar to those who have attended other wedding ceremonies, yet distinctive for the powers that it invokes: "In Nomine Dei Nostri Satanas Luciferi Excelsi! In the name of Satan, I call upon the forces of Darkness and the infernal power within! Consecrate this place with the power, love and light of Lucifer. Join with us, we say in the binding of these two who shall be as one. They desire to make their union a matter of record, so that their friends and the society in which they live may bear witness and lend support. Diana and Adonis, Ishtar and Tammuz, Freya and Odin … by these and other names are divine lovers known. I invite the Gods to come bless this union as we invoke the infernal names: Amon, Astaroth, Ishtar, Bast, Lilith, Pan, Asmodeus, Thoth. (the congregation may repeat each name as it is spoken)"[64] Take away the specific references to Lucifer, Thoth, and other less familiar beings, and the sentiments would hardly be out of place at many civil or religious wedding ceremonies. The invocation thus inadvertently reveals the tension between the need to shock, something that always motivated Satanists of any kind, and the common human need to acknowledge major life passages.

If the form of the First Church of Satan's wedding ceremony reveals conformity wrapped in an aura of rebellious deviance, another incident from the history of the group is much more shocking and explicitly recalls the themes of the Satanic panic of the 1980s and early 1990s. Much of the controversy took place in e-mail postings to discussion groups and through other communications over the Internet, but both Allee and his current partner Lillee Allee posted their reconstructions of the affair on the Web site of the First Church of Satan. John Allee acknowledges that in his oppositional zeal at the founding of the Church "when I began building The First Church of Satan domain, I sought the most outrageous, controversial and offensive internet addresses I could find for our 'Links' section."[65] One of those links led whoever would follow it to the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), a notoriously controversial group that endorses pedophilia and is the subject of frequent denunciations and litigation. As Allee recalls it, his attempt to shock and to provoke thought blew up in his face. Members of the governing council of the First Church of Satan demanded that he remove the link, and a vicious cycle of accusations and counteraccusations erupted, largely in cyberspace. Allee remains both adamant about his true intentions and chastened by the reactions he elicited. He reports that "Yes, I put myself up there for ridicule. I wanted to get a reaction. I wanted people to think. Instead, many of the Satanists who should have been thinking, started pointing fingers and using me as a scapegoat. For a person to be guilty of a crime, there must first be proof! All of a sudden, I had become a child molester and worse! To this day, this has continued to haunt my family and me. When I have complained about this, I was then called a martyr. There is nothing worse than a closed mind. I will state here once again. I have never been and I am not a pedophile or a child molester. I am, by nature, controversial. I do make statements that are explosive and I do go where angels obviously would fear to tread. Before you judge me too

harshly, understand that if my statements have been rash, for every hate letter I have received, I have received ten letters of support."[66] Allee admits that at least some circumstantial evidence lent credence to the accusations against him. The council of the First Church of Satan, for example, had a disproportionate number of young males. But accusations quickly escalated beyond the little evidence available. Allee cites one e-mail exchange that accused him of having "killed innocent children by curses" and made "threats to sexually abuse council members."[67]

Lillee Allee sheds a different light on the entire episode. She focuses on the abrasive and controversial persona that Allee adopted in the 1990s, Lord Egan or Daemon Egan. She argues that the more deeply Allee inhabited that persona, the more stubborn and impervious to compromise he became. What began as a provocateur's playful attempt to question all received wisdom and to jar his audience into thought by making it confront very challenging ideas hardened into the mask of a tyrant that could not be removed. Lillee Allee concludes that "Egan Had to Die."[68] In fact, in 2003 John Allee took the dramatic step of announcing the death of Lord Egan. As Lillee recalls it, "this is how I see it. Egan wanted out. When Egan somehow did not like what he heard or could not explain what he wanted or whatever, he told them that by killing off the persona, John Dewey would finally have the life he wanted one way or the other."[69] Although the manner in which Allee killed off his former persona created a number of additional problems, clearly he intended to give both himself and the First Church of Satan a fresh start by leaving behind the persona that was such a lightning rod for controversy and realizing what had become an iron grip on the organization and doctrine of the group. In another manifestation of the restless creativity of those who identify themselves as following the Satanic or "left-hand" path, John Allee's teaching continues to change, in part perhaps because of the influence of his new partner Lillee. They now describe themselves as having founded the "Allee Tradition" in 2003. They claim that their teaching "is based on Hermetic philosophy. This magical tradition incorporates practices from both paths in order to live a more balanced mundane and magical life."[70]

The accusations against John Allee created a substantial controversy in the relatively small world of those associated with the First Church of Satan and other Satanic groups. But they are also important because they show how the explosive charges that were such an integral part of the Satanic panic of the 1980s and early 1990s could be used to damaging effect *within* the orbit of institutional Satanism itself. Allee had to spend much of his time defending himself against dissident members of his own group and those from other Satanic groups who might have found the accusations against him credible. The conflict in this case, as opposed to the McMartin preschool case, for example, was intra-Satanic, rather than between suspected Satanists and wary outsiders. Allee's NAMBLA incident thus shows several things. If the wedding ceremony suggests an implicit yearning for conformity, the NAMBLA accusations suggest that rules for proper behavior exist that even self-professed opponents of the status quo will strive to maintain. LaVey himself clearly understood that desire when he insisted that any participation in Satanic sex must be voluntary. The use of the NAMBLA accusations by Allee's opponents also shows

how elements of individual cult controversies can become part of the polemical ammunition even of the groups against which the charges are generally made. In the minds of Allee's accusers their task was to separate the proudly and appropriate rebellious oppositionalists (themselves) from the devious perverts (Allee), a task very similar to that undertaken by those who issue blanket warnings about the deviant Satanic underground. In both instances, accusations about the practice of unacceptable Satanism serve to distinguish one social group from another, stigmatize certain types of conduct, reassert moral boundaries, and defend specific images of both community and authority from anything that is seen as threatening them. Allee's experience also shows how religious leaders who get too far in front of their followers can risk having their authority challenged, their character impugned, and their very sanity questioned. The specific form that the controversy took in the First Church of Satan was definitely shaped by some of the distinctive Satanic ideas about provoking reevaluation of the status quo, asserting one's individualism, and embracing all that is denigrated by established society, but they also demonstrate in miniature the dynamics that attend the career of any NRM as it strives to stake out a path that is both distinctively and enticingly new and, at the same time, comfortingly familiar. The more a group champions alternatives to accepted modes of thought and action, the more likely it will be opposed by those who have substantial interests and investments in the accepted ways of doing things. The more leaders assert their distinctive, if not unique, differences, the more they are open to critical examination. Allee played out such dynamics in his tenure as the head of the First Church of Satan. He displayed the tenacity to maintain his Satanic oppositional stance even as he grudgingly displayed the flexibility that enabled him to retreat from an increasingly untenable position.

CONCLUSION

In LaVey's way of thinking, contemporary Satanism is both a distinctly new religion, which he himself, without any false modesty, invented and the continuance of an ancient tradition of opposition to the status quo. As a new religion, it aims to liberate human beings from the shackles that were impressed upon them by every previous religion. As a tradition of opposition, it rescues inspiring examples from ancient history and mythology in order to spur individuals to heroic efforts at self-affirmation. For LaVey, Satanism is also the religion of the playful provocateur; anything that will shock people out of their unthinking adherence to the status quo is worth thinking about or even doing.

Foremost among the shocking gestures of the Church of Satan is its wholehearted endorsement of the great Adversary himself, Satan, as the patron of the new church. LaVey meant to shock and unsettle people with his embrace of Satan and the rest of the infernal mythology that he developed, and shock them he has. The extent to which his own calculated effort to shock has sparked periodic moral panics about the broad influence of a Satanic conspiracy remains difficult to ascertain. The stories and lore that accumulated about Satan since his introduction in the Hebrew Bible

more than two millennia ago are as available to any reader as they were to LaVey. In the preaching and practice of many religious people within the broad biblical tradition throughout history Satan often played a prominent role. Historians, in fact, can easily document a number of other Satanic panics that predate the outbreak in the 1980s and 1990s. The links between LaVey's Church of Satan and fears about Satanism thus remain tenuous both because of the limited popular influence of LaVey and his disciples and because multiple other sources can excite justifiable concerns about the influences of Satan upon earthly affairs. Satanism was not directly inspired by the Church of Satan or any of its offshoots. Rather Satanism is a powerful and compressed symbol that certain people use to express fears and suspicions that may not be fully formulated by those who hold them but which are nonetheless experienced as deeply troubling. When people act on such fears by lashing out at individuals or groups deemed to be Satanic, without fully clarifying what they mean and substantiating what they fear has been done, much damage can be done to the accused and the accusers alike. As with any controversy about NRMs, nothing substitutes for a careful, patient reading of all the evidence before the alarms are sounded.

NOTES

1. Bill Ellis, *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions, and the Media* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), xv.
2. For a detailed summary see Jeffrey Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), 330–354.
3. Ibid., 355–361.
4. Carl Raschke, *Painted Black* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 95.
5. Michelle Smith and Lawrence Pazder, *Michelle Remembers* (New York: Pocket Books, 1980), 20; see 39.
6. Ibid., 34. Their emphasis.
7. Ibid., 9.
8. Ibid., 15.
9. Ibid., xi .
10. Ibid., xi–xii.
11. Ibid., xiii.
12. Victor, *Satanic Panic,* 82.
13. Smith and Pazder, *Michelle Remembers,* ix.
14. Ibid.
15. For Stratford see *Satan's Underground: The Extraordinary Story of One Woman's Escape* (Gretna, LA: Pelican, 1991). On the period in general see the essays in James T. Richardson, Joel Best, David G. Bromley, eds., *The Satanism Scare* (New York: Aldine DeGruyter, 1991).
16. For a brief summary of the case see www.religioustolerance.org/ra_mcmar.htm. See also Paul and Shirley Eberle, *The Abuse of Innocence: The McMartin Preschool Case* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993); and Debbie Nathan and Michael Snendeker, *Satan's Silence* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).
17. Robert D. Hicks, *In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the Occult* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990), 12.

18. Philip Jenkins and Daniel Meier-Katkin, "Occult Survivors: The Making of a Myth," in *The Satanism Scare,* ed. Richardson, Best, and Bromley, 127–144, quoted from 142.
19. Victor, *Satanic Panic,* 54.
20. Debbie Nathan, "Satanism and Child Molestation: Constructing the Ritual Abuse Scare," in *The Satanism Scare,* ed. Richardson, Best, and Bromley, 75–94, quoted from 88.
21. Sarah Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 91.
22. As quoted in ibid., 114. See the group's Web site at www.cog.org.
23. Kenneth V. Lanning, "A Law-Enforcement Perspective on Allegations of Ritual Abuse," in *Out of Darkness: Exploring Satanism and Ritual Abuse,* ed. David K. Sakheim and Susan E. Devine (New York: Lexington, 1992), 109–146; see 113. Lanning's essay provides in more accessible form the substance of his original report, the text of which is available at www.religioustolerance.org/ra_repo3.htm.
24. Raschke, *Painted Black,* 129–131.
25. See, for example, http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/satanism/intro.html and www.religioustolerance.org/satanis3.htm.
26. Blanche Barton, *The Church of Satan* (New York: Hell's Kitchen Productions, 1990), 11.
27. Anton LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* (New York: Avon Books, 1969), 23–24.
28. Ibid., 48. His emphasis.
29. Ibid., 50.
30. Ibid., 55.
31. Ibid., 32.
32. Ibid., 25.
33. Ibid., 89.
34. Ibid., 34.
35. Ibid., 35.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., 33.
38. Ibid., 44, 40, respectively. His emphasis.
39. Ibid., 94.
40. www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/MFInterview.html.
41. LaVey, *The Satanic Bible,* 62. His emphasis.
42. Ibid., 99.
43. Ibid., 67, 69, respectively. His emphasis.
44. As quoted in Barton, *The Church of Satan,* 70.
45. www.churchofsatan.com/home.html.
46. James Lewis, "The Satanic Bible: Quasi-Scripture/Counter Scripture," 2, www.cesnur.org/2002/slc/lewis.htm.
47. Barton, *The Church of Satan*, 96. See Anton LaVey, *The Satanic Rituals* (New York: Avon Books, 1972).
48. www.churchofsatan.com/home.html.
49. www.xeper.org/pub/lib/xp_FS_lib.htm.
50. Michael A. Acquino, *The Church of Satan,* www.xeper.org/macquino/nm/COS.pdf, Introduction, 9.
51. www.xeper.org/pub/gil/xp_FS_gil.htm.
52. Ibid.
53. Don Webb, "Why Should I Join the Temple of Set?" Ibid.

54. For Aquino's take on the incident see http://users.cybercity.dk/~ccc44406/smwane/presidio.html. See also http://www.apologeticsindex.org/news/an200925b.html#28.
55. For a summary treatment of Aquino's legal difficulties see http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/satanism/tempset.html.
56. www.satanicchurch.com/content/about.aspx.
57. See www.satanicchurch.com/content/membership.aspx.
58. Ibid. Their emphasis.
59. www.churchofsatan.org.
60. www.churchofsatan.org/faq.html#first.
61. www.churchofsatan.org/mission.html.
62. Ibid.
63. www.churchofsatan.org/wedding.html.
64. Ibid.
65. www.churchofsatan.org/nambla.html.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. www.churchofsatan.org/whyegan.html.
69. Ibid.
70. www.churchofsatan.org/gallery.html.

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The Church of Scientology

Douglas E. Cowan and David G. Bromley

If individuals have encountered Scientology at all, it is likely through advertisements offering a "Free Personality Test," kiosks set up in shopping districts offering passersby a "Free Stress Test," or perhaps watching a celebrity such as Tom Cruise tout the benefits of Scientology's "study tech" while being interviewed by Oprah Winfrey. On the other hand, they may have read one of the in-depth news reports about the Church that almost inevitably appear following a critical incident of some kind. Few in North America and Europe have not heard of Scientology, but fewer still understand its history, doctrine, and practice.

Growing out of the popular self-help therapy, Dianetics, the Church of Scientology is a uniquely American religion, known as much for the controversies it generates as for the celebrities who enthusiastically tout its benefits. Discovered, though many would argue invented, by L. Ron Hubbard (1911–1984), in terms of organizational growth Scientology is one of the most successful New Religious Movements (NRMs) to emerge in the latter half of the twentieth century. Since the founding of its first church in 1954, Scientology has grown rapidly both in North America and around the world, with centers in over 50 nations by 1980 and more than 100 by the late 1990s. Now, with some 3,000 church-related organizations around the world and Church estimates that eight million individuals have participated in its various programs, Scientology claims to be the fastest growing religion in the world.[1] Estimates of active membership, however, vary widely and range from as few as 50,000 to several hundred thousand.[2]

Of all the major NRMs, Scientology is currently among the most controversial, with debates over its legitimacy turning on the question of whether it is a religion at all,[3] the often confrontational and litigious manner in which it chooses to deal with its critics, and the actions of media celebrities such as Cruise, John Travolta, Jenna Elfman, Isaac Hayes, and Kirstie Alley who regularly publicize its virtues and benefits. Scholars approach Scientology from a variety of perspectives. Some argue that it fits many or all of the sociological criteria for consideration as a religion,[4] while others contend that its religious façade serves simply to mask its transnational

business interests.[5] Bromley and Bracey, for example, treat Scientology as a "quasi-religion"—an organization that "[straddles] the boundary between sacred and secular."[6] Because of its often ambiguous marriage between religion and technology, Straus concludes that Scientology presents a "split personality."[7] Passas and Castillo, on the other hand, describe Scientology as a deviant business that succeeds only by remaining a religion.[8] Overall, however, most scholars have concluded that Scientology falls within the category of religion for the purposes of academic study, and a number have defended the Church in judicial and political proceedings on this basis. While some ethnographic work has been conducted on the Church of Scientology,[9] to date this has not been carried out with the depth and rigor warranted by the group's importance as an emergent new religion.[10]

The Church of Scientology itself certainly contributed to these different controversies and ambiguities. On the one hand, Scientology began as a secular self-help therapy, describes its thought system as "data,"[11] and claims to represent "man's first real application of scientific methodology to spiritual questions."[12] Hubbard's first and most well-known book is titled *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* and lists neither "God" nor "religion" in its index. On the other hand, Scientology also defines itself as a religion,[13] more specifically an "applied religious philosophy"[14] whose "roots lie in the deepest beliefs and aspirations of all great religions,"[15] and has sought official recognition as a church in every country in which it operates.[16] Indeed, the Church of Scientology claims to be "the only major new religion to emerge in the twentieth century."[17]

Comparisons of Scientology with more traditional churches almost always yield ambiguous results. Scientologists do profess belief in deity, which is defined as "the urge toward existence as infinity, as God or the Supreme Being or Author of the Universe,"[18] but the Church claims that "it makes no effort to describe the exact nature or character of God"[19] and does not make a supreme being the focus of belief or practice for adherents. Church doctrine teaches that every person possesses god-like potential individually, but that that potential can be cultivated only through a process that is more akin to therapeutic rehabilitation than worship or sacrament. Church doctrine refers to Hubbard's writings as scripture and regards "the Hubbard® Electrometer [as] a religious artifact used in the Church confessional."[20] The Church of Scientology ordains clergy, regards adherents as parishioners, and holds weekly gatherings that resemble traditional church services. In reality, however, they have no conventional church buildings or sanctuaries in which the faithful regularly gather, and neither the clergy nor these services are particularly central to the religious lives of Scientologists.

Scientology claims to root its belief and practice in rigorous scientific research and the faithful application of what it calls the "tech," and regards its doctrines and practices as having a status comparable to scientific law. "The fact is," the Church declares, "*Scientology works 100 percent of the time when it is properly applied to a person who sincerely desires to improve his life.*"[21] Rather than mediate the benefits of religious practice through conversion or a process of ceremonial admission, Scientologists define themselves as those who use the knowledge they gain through

application of the tech to realize the unlimited potential they believe is immanent in every person, though shackled in most through aeons of negative experience. Rather than legitimating one's belief in terms of church authority, sacred scriptures, or some divinely given prophetic word, at all stages in the process of Scientology—at all steps along "The Bridge to Total Freedom"[22]—the Church urges adherents to evaluate the results of their practice according to the measurable benefits that accrue. As Hubbard himself put it, "For a Scientologist, the final test of any knowledge he has gained is, 'did the data and the use of it in life actually improve conditions or didn't it?'"[23]

What is perhaps most striking about the Church of Scientology's claims to religious status is that rather than relying on gifts and offerings from parishioners, Scientology operates on a fee-for-service basis (although payments are officially termed "donations") and provides all of its religious products as *services* to *clients.* This raises the question of whether practitioners are consumers or parishioners, and, based on claims that one's journey along the Bridge can cost several hundreds of thousands of dollars, leads to significant criticism of Scientology as a legitimate religious faith.[24]

THE ORIGINS OF SCIENTOLOGY

Scientology bears the unmistakable imprint of its founder, Lafayette Ronald Hubbard, who was born in Tilden, Nebraska, in 1911. The son of a naval officer, Hubbard and his family moved often during his childhood. According to the Church of Scientology, he was an extraordinarily adventurous youth who travelled the globe and became an accomplished navigator, sailor, pilot, surveyor, and explorer.[25] Though there is, as yet, no official Church biography of Hubbard, the Church maintains an extensive Life Exhibition devoted to his accomplishments,[26] and Author Services, Inc., which ensures the continual production of works by and about Hubbard, publishes an impressive array of materials designed to keep him firmly at the center of Scientology.[27]

During the 1930s Hubbard supported himself by writing fiction and became a moderately successful science fiction writer. In 2000, elements of his multivolume science fiction saga, *Battlefield Earth,* were produced as a movie, with the lead role played by John Travolta, one of Scientology's most visible celebrities.[28] Though the Church of Scientology and its critics dispute the details of his military career,[29] clearly Hubbard served as a naval lieutenant during World War II though it remains unclear whether he actually saw combat. Hospitalized near the end of the war, Hubbard began contemplating the nature of the human mind, immersing himself in Freudian psychoanalytic theory and the Eastern philosophy he had encountered earlier in his life. In 1949, he wrote to the American Psychological Association to apprise them of research he was conducting that integrated the "early work of Freud" and a process he called "narcosynthesis."[30] Thoroughly rejected by the psychological and psychiatric communities,[31] Hubbard turned to a world with which he was much more familiar to publicize his findings.

The basic principles of what became both Dianetics and Scientology represent Hubbard's personal synthesis of philosophy, physics, and psychology. His ideas

received their first public exposure in 1950 when the popular magazine, *Astounding Science-Fiction (ASF),* featured an article on Dianetics, and *ASF* editor John W. Campbell quickly became one of Hubbard's earliest converts. In that same year, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health,* which later became the seminal text of Scientology, was published. Though the publishers were not initially optimistic,[32] *Dianetics* was soon a best seller and Hubbard quickly emerged as a popular lecturer. Because it offered a do-it-yourself alternative for individuals interested in improving their own mental health, Dianetics appealed to a wide range of people, many of whom became practitioners. In contrast to psychotherapy, Hubbard claimed that Dianetics was more accessible to the average person, promised practitioners more immediate progress, and placed the practitioner rather than a therapist in control of the therapy process. Following the initial success of *Dianetics,* Hubbard founded the Hubbard Dianetic Research Foundation to offer classes and train practitioners. According to the Church of Scientology, "by late fall of 1950, there were 750 groups across the country applying Dianetics techniques,"[33] and soon practitioners were reporting experiences from what were apparently previous lives or incarnations. Taking these reports seriously, Hubbard postulated the existence of an immortal essence, which he labeled the "thetan" and which he believed existed for each individual across a multitude of lifetimes. The discovery of the "thetan" gave Dianetics the spiritual dimension it needed to emerge as the religion of Scientology.[34]

The first Church of Scientology was established in Los Angeles, California, in 1954. The following year Hubbard moved to Washington, D.C., and established the Founding Church of Scientology. For most of its history, considerable controversy surrounded Hubbard's decision to shift Dianetics from secular therapy to religious counseling. While the practitioner reports of prebirth and past-life memories that led to Hubbard's conceptualization of the "thetan" are certainly one factor, citing remarks attributed to Hubbard before the publication of *Dianetics,*[35] critics have long maintained that Hubbard's principal motivations were political and financial.[36] In 1959 Hubbard moved again, this time to England, where he remained until the mid-1960s.

Hubbard provided the nascent Church of Scientology with both administrative and spiritual leadership for more than a decade. In 1966, however, he resigned his organizational positions to devote himself to further research and writing. A year later, he formed what came to be an elite branch within Scientology, the Sea Organization (Sea Org), a church unit staffed by advanced members who pledge to devote their entire lives (and more) to the cause of Scientology. The Sea Org derives its name from its initial design as a flotilla of oceangoing ships—the flagship, *Apollo,* on which Hubbard lived, the *Athena,* and the *Diana.*[37] In 1975, the Sea Org moved to a land base in Clearwater, Florida. Hubbard continued to relinquish control over church organizations, and by 1980 he withdrew completely from public view. Although he retained the title of "Founder," he lived a reclusive life until his death on January 24, 1986.

During his life Hubbard never claimed to be a supernatural figure, nor, despite some of the claims made for him by the Church of Scientology, was he regarded as

such by Scientologists. Rather, Scientologists understood him as an extraordinary man who discovered the principles through which all of humankind could achieve its true, infinite potential. Scientology does not teach that individuals possess the immortal essences Hubbard called "thetans," but that they *are* these essences.[38] This belief allowed Church leaders to announce at the time of Hubbard's death that his material body had begun to impede his work and that he had moved to another plane of existence to continue his research.

In the period immediately following Hubbard's death, the Church announced that no one would emerge as a spiritual or prophetic successor to Hubbard and that his writings alone would constitute the full and final record of Scientology doctrine, belief, and practice. For Hubbard, though, the "first dynamic principle of existence is survival,"[39] and all organizations require leadership if they are to survive. Shortly after Hubbard's death, David Miscavige (b. 1960), a 26-year-old, second-generation Scientologist, and a devoted member of the church's elite Sea Org, was named the head of the Church, a position he continues to hold.

Over his lifetime, Hubbard was prolific by any standard. According to the Church of Scientology, Hubbard's teachings are contained in approximately 500,000 pages of written material and 3,000 recorded lectures—a total of some 65 million words. He also produced 100 films and 500 novels and short stories. The Church has gone to extraordinary lengths to preserve his writings, and a special organization, the Church of Spiritual Technology, is engraving the entire corpus of Hubbard's original texts on steel plates that will be stored in titanium containers and buried in a vault deep in the New Mexico mountains.[40] The purpose of this project is to ensure that Hubbard's teachings will survive the effects of any future catastrophe and be available to survivors as the basis for rebuilding human civilization.

SCIENTOLOGY'S DOCTRINE AND RITUAL PRACTICE

Doctrine

Rooted in his assertion that each individual is a thetan or spirit, an immortal, god-like expression of the basic life force (theta),[41] Hubbard traced the existence of this force back trillions of years. According to Hubbard, in the beginning theta was separate from the physical universe, having neither energy nor mass, neither time nor location in space. In a primordial explosion of undifferentiated theta countless individual thetans were released, each possessing the characteristics of the whole. According to Scientology doctrine, thetans existed prior to and, in fact, constitute the original source of the material universe. "The spirit, then, is not a *thing*," Hubbard wrote. "It is the *creator* of things."[42] Indeed, at one time, Scientologists believe, thetans were celestial entities, each with its own distinctive individuality, each of which created and controlled its own universe.

Four basic elements comprise the material universes created by the thetans—matter, energy, space, and time, commonly know by the acronym, MEST (the first letter of each basic element). Since MEST is the creation of thetans, it possesses only the

reality thetans attribute to it. Reminiscent of Hindu belief that the universe is a dream in the mind of Brahman or the *citta-matra* (mind-only) schools of Buddhism, for Scientologists the material universe is an illusion that only becomes reality through the actions of thetans.[43] However, once thetans created the MEST universe, they began to experiment, eventually taking on a corporeal human form. In the process, thetans lost the knowledge of their sublime origins and were trapped in the human bodies they had created and in the material universe.[44] When the mortal body dies, the thetan reincarnates, entering another body at the time of birth. Scientologists refer to this succession of lifetimes as a thetan's "time track," and with each new incarnation the thetan's previous identities, experiences, memories, and activities became further obscured and more Scientological processing is required to restore the thetan's original state.

In a very real sense, then, for Scientologists the root problem faced by all thetans is ignorance—a lack of knowledge of their true identity. Suffering from a millennia-long amnesia, thetans accept the illusion that they are human. Nonetheless, because MEST is illusory and thetans the ultimate reality, this immortal essence is capable of transcending matter, energy, space, and time. Transcending MEST, realizing the thetan's innate, unlimited power and potential, is Scientology's equivalent of salvation. Eliminating the cumulative, deleterious effects of MEST, reestablishing awareness of itself as a spiritual entity, and allowing the thetan to progress "with memory and identity intact"[45] is the goal of Scientology practice. As one Scientologist put it, the person is "(and discovers himself to be) a BEING (spiritual agent) of infinite creative potential who acts in, but is not part of, the physical universe."[46]

Scientology's explanation for how humans become trapped in the world of MEST rests in its model of the human mind. Reminiscent of Freud's tripartite theory of the ego, superego, and the id, Hubbard taught that the mind consists of three components—analytic, reactive, and somatic, though only the first two figure prominently in Scientological practice. The analytic mind is a conscious, completely rational mechanism that processes information with all the efficiency and infallibility of a computer, though Hubbard argued that its capabilities far exceed that of any computer that could possibly be built. "Sanity depends upon rationality," he wrote in *Dianetics,* and the key to happiness, the key to survival, is a well-functioning analytic mind.[47] However, the analytic mind is also very delicate, and its functioning can be disrupted by traumatic events and experiences.

The reactive mind, on the other hand, operates on a stimulus-response basis and is the principal focus of Scientology.[48] Functioning "below the level of consciousness,"[49] the reactive mind is an extremely precise recording device that stores every detail of sensory experience—emotion, touch, sight, sound, smell—that occurs while the analytic mind is inoperative, even if the individual is physically unconscious at the time. Since thetans lived through a multitude of lifetimes, the reactive mind recorded traumatic incidents from its entire time track. Scientologists refer to the individual memory records of traumatic events stored in the reactive mind as "engrams," and the collective set of which across a thetan's time track are "the Bank." "If there ever was a devil," Hubbard wrote, "he designed the reactive mind,"[50] and

clearing the Bank created by the reactive mind is one of the first goals in Scientology practice.

Engrams from current or past lifetimes are reactivated whenever something recurs from any part of the traumatic experience that originally produced the engram, whether physical, mental, or emotional. One common way in which Scientologists demonstrate this is known as the "pinch test." With a participant seated in front of an E-Meter (see below), the auditor lightly pinches the participant's arm. The needle on the E-Meter records a response, which Scientologists interpret as a mechanical measure of the engram that was just created. After a few moments, or even a few months, when the participant is asked to recall the experience of being pinched, the E-Meter reacts in similar fashion, though no actual pinch occurs.

According to Scientology, when a sufficiently traumatic engram is reactivated, an individual becomes emotional and irrational; their rational, analytic mind is no longer in control. Scientologists believe that these engrams can trigger physical and psychosomatic illnesses as well. "What can it do?" asked Hubbard in *Dianetics*. "It can give a man arthritis, bursitis, asthma, allergies, sinusitus, coronary trouble, high blood pressure and so on."[51] Even the common cold is rooted in the engram bank.

Deciphering the connection between particular engrams and the specific responses they generate is complex because, like a holograph, in which the whole of an image is contained in every part, a current experience that involves only one element of an engram may reactivate the entire engram. Further, engrams may overlap and become linked into chains, and whole engrammatic chains may be reactivated by a single experience. Finally, because engrams are located below the level of conscious thought—and may even have been created in prior lifetimes—the analytic mind does not have direct access to them. Since the analytic mind is unaware of the engrams and their effects, its search for a logical order in experience leads it to construct elaborate justifications for irrational or deviant behavior that is ultimately caused by the contents of the Bank. The outcome can be recurrent, debilitating symptoms and an inability for individuals to engage in appropriate, adaptive behavior. Indeed, according to Scientology, when mediated by the reactive mind, individuals will inevitably engage in behavior that is both personally and socially destructive. Because they prevent individuals from communicating accurately with themselves or with others, from being able to agree on a common reality, or from maintaining mutually rewarding relationships, reactive behavior, and any attempts to conceal it, create yet another layer of individual and social problems that must be identified, processed, and eventually cleared.

Scientologists believe that as they eliminate engrams they restore themselves to their original, natural condition, their "native state." In this native state individuals can think and act rationally. They can be "at cause" when dealing with events and relationships in their everyday lives, rather than simply reacting to the effects of past trauma stored in the engram Bank. Being at cause increases survivability, the central principle of Scientology.

The will to survive is not simply an individual drive, but is a basic principle of existence that Scientologists believe is expressed across eight levels, or "dynamics."[52]

The eight dynamics constitute an ascending hierarchy of needs to which humans can respond. The eight survival dynamics are the following: (1) individual survival, (2) sexual reproduction and family survival, (3) group and nation survival, (4) species survival, (5) survival of all life forms, (6) survival by the physical universe, (7) survival by the individual as a spiritual entity, and (8) survival through infinity or oneness. As individuals grow spiritually, advancing along the "Bridge to Total Freedom," they are capable of responding to and being responsible for higher dynamic levels. Individuals who achieve the highest level of survivability can unite with the universe as a spiritual entity with godlike properties and powers. As we noted earlier, although Scientologists do assert a belief in deity,[53] the nature of deity remains largely unarticulated, partly because Scientologists believe that humans are not sufficiently advanced spiritually to conceptualize deity, and partly because they reject the notion that a conception of deity can be imposed by an organization. Based on the level of spiritual advance, every individual can and must reach his or her own conclusions about the nature of deity. While there are some hints that deity can be viewed simply as an infinite potential, which is consistent with Scientology's emphasis on the unlimited power and potential of the thetans, in thought and practice primary attention is paid to empowering practitioners.

In order to function and grow as social beings, individuals must be able to express three integral elements in their relationships—affinity, reality, and communication. In Scientology thought, these elements are conceptualized as the ARC triangle.[54] As we noted earlier, the MEST world is illusory and exists only by the agreement of thetans, which means that reality is simply an agreement about what is. In order to function in the MEST world, then, agreement about a shared reality is crucial. Communication, the accurate and effective exchange of ideas, is essential to establishing this common reality. Affinity refers to personal resonance or affection and grows out of the sharing of ideas. Though it is often represented so in Scientology writings, Scientologists believe that the ARC triangle is not equilateral. Because only appropriate communication produces and maintains a mutual conception of reality out of which affinity between individuals is generated, communication is considered the most critical component. As well, since individual liberation comes with and through the ability to communicate with one's own thetan, learning to communicate effectively is central to the lived religious practice of Scientology.

In Scientology individual salvation is achieved progressively. Hubbard identified an increasing number of levels of freedom from MEST that together constitute the Bridge to Total Freedom. There are two benchmarks of achievement along the Bridge. First, everyone begins the practice of Scientology as a "pre-clear," which the Church defines somewhat tautologically as "someone who is receiving Scientology or Dianetics auditing on his way to becoming Clear."[55] The first benchmark is reaching a state of Clear, which Scientology defines as "a person who no longer has his own reactive mind and therefore suffers none of the ill effects that the reactive mind can cause."[56] "Going Clear" means that through the process of auditing, which the Church defines as "a purely religious service,"[57] the beginning Scientologist has eliminated all the engrams stored in the Bank and functions rationally "in that he forms

the best possible solutions he can with the data he has and from his own viewpoint."[58] As one of Scientology's advertisements put it, "Go Clear—For the first time in your life you will be truly yourself."[59]

Once a person has gone Clear and the reactive mind is emptied, he or she achieves a new level of spiritual awareness and is capable of making further progress along the Bridge. The highest level of spiritual development is that of Operating Thetan, by which Scientology means that the practitioner is "able to control matter, energy, space, and time rather than being controlled by these things."[60] Operating Thetans are spiritually perfected beings who transcend all limitations and assume total control over and responsibility for all their actions. In short, they are self-determined. Even death becomes insignificant as the individual, incorporeal spirit simply secures another body in which it can survive and grow.

In their quest to grow spiritually, Scientologists are taught to confront through the auditing process the various obstacles that were engrammatically produced, both personally and socially, both intentionally and unintentionally. Simply by virtue of acting and experiencing, all individuals produce their own time tracks. Individuals also create problems for one another as a result of ARC breakdowns—an inability to agree on reality, to communicate effectively, or to develop a resonant affinity. Wrongdoing toward others, for example, whether by intention or omission, Scientologists refer to as "overts."[61] These are almost inevitably followed by attempts at concealment, which Scientology labels "withholds"[62] and which generate further tension between the affected parties. In other words, being trapped in the MEST world creates existential problems, the more uniquely personal problems created through one's own time track, and the social problems that result from an inability to coordinate properly with others—all of which must be resolved in order to attain a state of true spiritual awareness and perfection.

In addition to problems caused by those factors that are largely unintentional, the world also contains an assortment of deliberately malevolent individuals and organizations. Hubbard estimated that about 80 percent of the population is composed of "social personalities," those who accept and promote the happiness and prosperity of others. The remaining 20 percent, referred to as "suppressive persons," consists of those with some connection to "antisocial personalities"—those who attempt for whatever reason to reject and undermine the welfare of others. An even smaller group, about 2.5 percent of suppressives, Hubbard designated as overtly dangerous individuals—"the Adolf Hitlers and the Genghis Khans, the unrepentant murderers and the drug lords."[63] The existence of antisocial and suppressive individuals further complicates the process of locating the source of one's problems, since even minimal contact with such persons can negatively affect one's spiritual progress.

The struggle to regain one's true spiritual identity and to sustain meaningful relationships with others inevitably involves ethical dimensions. Although Scientologists believe that all human beings are innately good, their capacity to express that goodness individually and socially is impaired by the engram banks accumulated during their time tracks. Thus, by eliminating the reactive mind and the negative effects of the Bank, individuals enhance their capacity for more ethical personal actions. In a

rather utilitarian fashion, Scientology teaches that the most appropriate action in any situation is one that maximizes survivability for self and others across the eight dynamics. There is, however, a larger, collective goal. If eliminating the reactive mind elevates the condition of the individual, then it follows that eliminating the reactive minds of all humanity would elevate the condition of all humankind. Following this logic, Scientology's ultimate goal is to "clear the planet," to bring every person on Earth at least to the state of Clear. In its quest to achieve this, the Church reports that about 500 practitioners reached a state of Clear by 1969, approximately 17,000 by 1980, and nearly 50,000 by 1995. The Church of Scientology is convinced that clearing the planet will eliminate chronic human problems such as war, pollution, insanity, drugs, and crime, and Scientologists believe that ultimately their personal spiritual salvation is contingent upon achieving this larger goal.

Ritual Practice

The two ritual practices that are most central to spiritual progress in Scientology are auditing and training—the process of locating and removing engrams from the reactive mind, and the study of Scientology principles to apply them in all areas of one's life, though "the end result of training is that an individual is able to minister auditing to another person."[64] Rather than ceremonial observances, these practices are the principal processes through which practitioners actively seek release from problems they face and recovery of their natural abilities. In short, auditing and training are the means for gaining the ultimate personal empowerment that Scientologists understand as salvation.

When individuals first begin practicing Scientology, they participate in Training Routines and Objective Processing, a set of exercises that develop skills they will use throughout their Scientology careers. These TRs have two interrelated objectives: enhancing individual awareness and self-control while simultaneously building responsiveness and sensitivity toward others. For example, practitioners learn the capacity for "just being there" by simply maintaining nonverbal presence and attentiveness with a partner for an extended period of time ("confronting").[65] In another exercise, known as "bull-baiting," participants try to maintain focus in a situation despite concerted efforts by their auditor to disrupt concentration.[66] In addition to building auditing skills, Scientologists believe that these and other training routines create and enhance the capacity for meaningful communication with others.

During auditing, the practitioner works with a more experienced Scientologist called an auditor, and the process is mediated by the Electropsychometer (also known as the Hubbard® E-Meter), a key piece of diagnostic technology that the Church of Scientology has termed a "religious artifact."[67] During the auditing session, which can last several hours and which has also been labeled "the Church confessional,"[68] the auditor attempts to locate engrams in the practitioner through a carefully structured exchange of commands, questions, and responses. The auditor monitors the E-Meter gauge, while the practitioner holds a pair of metal cans connected to machine by wire leads. Essentially a simple skin galvanometer, the E-Meter

sends a very small electrical charge through the body and then registers the electrical flow. Because engrams are thought to possess an actual mass, they offer resistance to that flow, resistance that is measured by the E-Meter. When, through the course of the session, the auditor identifies specific incidents, experiences, or orientations that are troubling the practitioner, the various patterns of needle swing and amplitude guide the auditor to root out the engrammatic cause of the problem. Auditors assist practitioners in eliminating engrams by first locating points of resistance, converting the form those points take into energy, and then discharging that energy. When a stored emotional charge (engram) is identified and is discussed sufficiently (audited), it will no longer produce an emotional response (the charge it contains will be released), and the E-Meter needle will no longer register a reaction (it has been cleared). Recalling the pinch no longer produces the negative response associated with the original pinch. Once an engram has been cleared, the event in which it was lodged is removed from the reactive mind and refiled in the standard memory bank of the analytical mind. Scientologists commonly use the analogy of a file clerk to describe this process.

In the same way Hubbard's beliefs and theories about Dianetics and Scientology evolved over time, so too has the practice and purpose of auditing. In Dianetics auditing, the emphasis is on clearing the engrammatic traces of traumatic incidents in the individual's past, while Scientology auditing uses this clearing process to affect the broader orientations through which the individuals organize their realities. As they advance through the various auditing levels—going Clear requires more than a dozen steps, five steps mark the preparatory stages to the Operating Thetan level, and there are currently 15 levels of OT processing—practitioners assume more control over the auditing process. Indeed, in order to attain the level of Clear, candidates must audit themselves ("solo audit"), assert their new spiritual status, and demonstrate that they have assumed responsibility for their new levels of understanding and control.[69] As practitioners gain additional knowledge about Scientology technology and make progress in eliminating their banks of stored engrams, they anticipate both heightened spiritual struggle and a surge of power as they confront and expunge traumatic memories. As one practitioner put it, "All in all, my ability to confront and handle the pressures and stresses of day-to-day interrelationships increased dramatically and I find myself calmer and enjoying life much, much more."[70] Another claims that Dianetics auditing restored his failing vision,[71] while a third claimed healing from epilepsy.[72] Finally, a Scientologist who had just gone Clear captures the experience reported by many who offer their testimonies on behalf of the Church: "I have just achieved the state of Clear! It is nothing short of miraculous to be rid of one's reactive mind and to have the accompanying freedom, happiness and newfound abilities that I know are lasting."[73]

At advanced levels of auditing, one experience many Scientologists reported is termed "exteriorization." In a manner similar to astral projection, when one "goes exterior" the thetan is able to leave the body and return later with no ill effects. One participant engaged in the auditing process reported the experience as follows:

> Then, all of a sudden, I wasn't a body anymore. It was just me, and I was floating. Like drifting among the constellations. Although they weren't really stars. It was like "Space Odyssey-2001"—beautiful whirling things flying past me. I was drifting in outer space and these things were going past me. It was beautiful—I didn't want it to stop! And I was beautiful! I was like one of those whirling things too, but I was the center of it. I was a glowing ball of fiery … radiance, that's the only way I can describe it. I could feel rays, energy, coming out from the center of me in every direction … I felt full of this energy—so powerful—like I filled the universe.[74]

Being able to experience conscious awareness outside of one's body and a sense of oneness with the universe are particularly compelling experiences for Scientologists in that they are considered measurable results demonstrating that salvation and immortality can be achieved through their spiritual practice.

THE ORGANIZATION OF SCIENTOLOGY

All Scientology organizations, which are known as "orgs," are dedicated to one of three major missions: practice and training, technology application, or social reform. Each of these hosts three broad categories of membership: lay practitioners, staff, and Sea Org members. Although it can be very expensive, costing as much as $1,000 an hour at the upper levels and requiring many hours to complete a level, lay practitioners pay on a straight fee-for-service basis for the training and auditing they receive. At the lower levels, however, members may audit one another free of charge. Staff members, on the other hand, work for the church and exchange their labor for auditing. Normally signing contracts for up to five years, they receive their training and auditing at a reduced rate. Finally, Sea Org staff are responsible for administrative staffing above the local church level. Currently numbering between 5,000 and 7,000 members,[75] the closest parallels to the Sea Org within traditional churches are religious orders. Sea Org members work long hours for nominal compensation and, "to symbolize their commitment to the religion as immortal spiritual beings,"[76] sign billion-year contracts in which they pledge themselves wholly to organizational service.

Each of the three types of church-related organization is extraordinarily bureaucratic, and organizational activities are coordinated to the smallest detail through an intricate system of memoranda and directives. Each organization systematically gathers "stats" on individual and collective performance so that a Valuable Final Product can be produced. Operating budgets within organizations are based on performance indicators such as these and are reviewed frequently. Positive stats ("up stats") are an indication that an individual or organization is contributing to the fulfillment of Scientology's mission, and there is considerable pressure to achieve higher and higher levels of productivity. Any failure to perform adequately or to show continuous improvement may invoke what is known as "the ethics system."

From the earliest days of Dianetics through the development of Scientology, Hubbard taught that "Scientology works 100 percent of the time when it is properly

applied."[77] Each org has an Ethics Officer who bears responsibility for ensuring that the tech is administered precisely as Hubbard developed it. Deviation of any kind is not permitted—to the extent that the sermons delivered during Scientology worship services are excerpts from Hubbard's voluminous work and are read verbatim from a master text.[78] At all levels of Church organization, any actions not in compliance with Scientology's complex policies and regulations—or that reduce its profitability and productivity—may constitute ethics violations. Individuals who deviate from standardized procedures are referred to in the Church as "squirrels," because of the animal's seemingly erratic behavior patterns. A detailed code of offenses defines various acts as errors, misdemeanors, crimes, or, in the most serious cases, suppressive acts—those that actively hinder the operation or development of Scientology and, according to Scientologists, the betterment of humankind.

The Church of Scientology maintains its own justice system, which plays a central role in the maintenance of ethical standards and the surveillance of suspected transgressions. The Religious Technology Center (RTC) owns and maintains the copyright over all Dianetics and Scientology trademarks and administers them in conjunction with the Church of Scientology International, to which the RTC refers as "the mother church of the Scientology religion."[79] Serving as "the final arbiter of orthodoxy"[80] and "the guarantor of Scientology's future,"[81] the RTC maintains an aggressive internal and external surveillance system to expose the "nemesis of alteration and reinterpretation that has plagued other religions."[82] As one of us has written elsewhere, Scientology is the quintessential "closed source" religion.[83] Indeed, according to the online mission statement of the RTC, "Scientologists across the globe view the maintenance and incorruptibility of their religious technology—in precise accordance with the Founder's source writings—to be essential to their very salvation."[84] To supervise the surveillance and maintenance of Scientology's voluminous material—the tech—the RTC provides a detailed list of offenses for which loyal Scientologists should be on guard and electronic report forms to submit suspected incidents to the RTC's Inspector General Network.[85]

One of the more controversial components of the Scientology justice system is the Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF), which is invoked when a Scientologist commits a violation. Originally, the RPF was established to handle theological or ethical violations within the Sea Org, working through a process of rehabilitation and reinstatement rather than punishment and retribution. When someone is charged with a violation, a Committee of Evidence is convened, and if the charges are substantiated the individual is required either to resign from the Sea Org or to accept assignment to the RPF. Based on interviews with those who participated in the RPF, either voluntarily or as a consequence of an ethics violation, the most common issues are theft, lying and misrepresentation, major violations of Church policy, adultery or other sexual misconduct, and severe dereliction of duty.[86] The daily RPF regimen consists of five hours of study or auditing, eight hours of work, which may be physical labor such as renovating hotel rooms in a building purchased by the Church, and a minimum of seven hours sleep. Those who successfully complete the program are eligible to return to the Sea Org; those who violate rules while in the RPF, or whose progress

is not considered satisfactory, may be assigned to the "RPF's RPF," an even more stringent program.

Ideally, the various components of the Scientology justice system are designed to sanction deviance, reward productivity, and strengthen organizational solidarity and individual commitment. There are dramatically divergent accounts of the Rehabilitation Project Force, and observers dispute whether the program is voluntary or coercive, therapeutic or punitive.[87] By all accounts, though, participants are isolated from other Church members for an extended period, engage in long hours of physical labor and auditing, and must earn their reintegration into the Sea Org community.

Practice and Training Organizations

Scientology practice and training is carried out on several different levels. Hundreds of missions and churches around the world offer introductory level training, and the vast majority of Scientologists participate in the church at this local level. One of the most striking and controversial features of these particular orgs is that they are licensed franchises. They offer practitioners beginning level auditing on a set fee-for-service basis, then return a stipulated percentage of their revenue to the "mother church." They retain the right to sell church services only so long as they meet the qualitative and quantitative standards established and rigorously monitored by the RTC and its Inspector General Network.

A number of other orgs above the church or mission level offer advanced training or perform specialized functions within Scientology's complex, almost labyrinthine ecclesiastical structure. For example, Saint Hill Organizations resemble religious colleges or seminaries and train auditors, who provide the basic service of Scientology, and ministers, who serve as religious leaders in the Church. Even higher levels of the tech are offered to senior practitioners in advanced orgs such as the Flag Ship Service and the Flag Service Organization, both of which are headquartered in Clearwater, Florida. All of these orgs are united under the umbrella of The Church of Scientology International, and the Sea Organization provides staff for all orgs above the mission or church level.[88]

Technology Application Organizations

A network of social reform organizations creates model programs that apply Hubbard's technologies to a variety of societal problems. Each of these organizations claims success rates that far exceed their conventional counterparts. For example, *Narconon International* offers drug education and rehabilitation services, administering a drug treatment program based on Hubbard's theory that drugs and other toxins stored in the body inhibit one's spiritual growth. The Narconon program consists of auditing and intensive study of Scientology tech, combined with a strict regimen of exercise, saunas, vitamins, and diet management. *Criminon,* on the other hand, seeks to rehabilitate criminals by teaching them how to study, to communicate more

effectively, to avoid what Scientology terms antisocial personalities, and to adopt more appropriate personal values. *Applied Scholastics,* the tech most often promoted by actor Tom Cruise, employs Hubbard's educational technology to teach students how to learn and to study effectively. *The Way to Happiness Foundation* distributes Scientology's moral code to the public in the form of small booklets that have, to this point, been translated into over 40 languages and contain what "may be the first nonreligious moral code based wholly on common sense."[89]

Reform organizations also address business problems.[90] The World Institute of Scientology Enterprises (WISE), for example, is a not-for-profit organization that licenses the use of Hubbard's voluminous business technology. Licensed business training organizations, of which Stirling Management is the best known, offer training in specific skills such as hiring, logical decision making, planning and implementation, and organizational streamlining. According to one observer, WISE lists among its clients such large corporations as Allstate, General Motors, Volkswagen AG, and Mobil.[91]

Social Reform Organizations

The third category of Scientology orgs is dedicated to combating governmental and nongovernmental organizations that engage in practices the Church deems detrimental to individual and collective human rights. Though perhaps based on the Church's own problematic history with some of these agencies, in the United States Scientologists have specifically identified such organizations as the Internal Revenue Service, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Department of Justice as particularly opposed to human rights. Nongovernmental groups such as professional mental health associations, drug and alcohol treatment programs, and elder-care facilities that Scientology alleges engage in abusive practices[92] have been similarly stigmatized by the Church. Emerging naturally from Scientology's conviction that accurate and complete information is critical to both survival and spiritual growth, among the practices opposed by the church are, not unreasonably, government maintenance of computerized data banks on private citizens, the restriction or prevention of legitimate access to public documents requested under the *Freedom of Information Act,* the use of experimental drugs on prison populations, the use of electroshock and "mind altering" drug treatments in psychiatric facilities, and governmental coverups of discrimination and abuse.

The most prominent organizations by which Scientology opposes what it regards as abusive practices by public and private agencies are the Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) and the National Commission on Law Enforcement and Social Justice. Founded by the Church of Scientology in 1969 and "dedicated to investigating and exposing psychiatric violations of human rights,"[93] the CCHR has a reputation as an unremitting opponent of psychiatry, the roots of which trace back to Scientology's founder. Since the rejection of Dianetics by the psychiatric community in the early 1950s, Hubbard expressed unequivocal hostility toward psychiatrists, branding them "outright murderers"[94] and contending that they "are the

sole cause of decline in this universe."[95] Current Scientology publications continue the campaign against psychiatry. *What is Scientology?,* for example, a basic though fairly comprehensive introductory text, declares that psychiatry is a "conglomeration of half-baked theories," something that is more "priesthood than science."[96] More than that, "it is a cold, hard fact," states one CCHR publication, "that psychiatry spawned the ideology which fired Hitler's mania, turned the Nazis into mass murderers, and created the Holocaust."[97] Over the last decade CCHR conducted two high profile campaigns against what it considers abusive drugs—Ritalin, which is manufactured by Eli Lily and is prescribed to manage hyperactive behavior in children, and Prozac, a widely prescribed antidepressant. Although neither drug was forced off the market, Eli Lily's sales suffered following the campaign, and Prozac received highly unfavorable publicity.[98]

Scientology's National Commission on Law Enforcement and Social Justice combats what it considers abusive practices by national and international policing agencies. This group particularly targets Interpol on the grounds that it collects and disseminates false information about Scientology, abuses the rights and privacy of citizens in various nations, and has organizational links to the KGB as well as historical connections to Nazism. The conflict with Interpol began when the agency circulated what the Church insists was false information to several nations that were then investigating Scientology.[99] Since Scientology regards its tech as the only viable path to individual and global salvation, attacks upon and misinformation about the Church are treated as particularly egregious offenses. In these campaigns, the National Commission did not retreat from conflict with some very powerful governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and these battles have served to increase both the church's visibility and its controversiality.

CONTROVERSY AND THE CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY

Scientology's mixture of therapy, science and technology, business, and religion has created a host of problems for the Church. Based on allegations of improper claims concerning the effectiveness of their healing practices, various regulatory agencies have taken action against Church-affiliated organizations. In 1958, for example, on the grounds that claims for the product were unfounded in medical science, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration seized a quantity of tablets called Dianazene, which were being distributed by a Scientology-related organization to prevent and treat radiation sickness. The FDA also raided Church offices and seized E-Meters on the basis that Scientology was representing to the public that these instruments were an effective treatment for physical ailments. Upon appeal, the E-Meters were returned to the Church, and the court ruled that they could be used in religious practice as long as they carried labeling that stated they were not effective at treating physical illness.[100]

Scientology's worldwide petitions for religious status yielded mixed results over the decades. After banning the Church for several years, Australia granted Scientology religious status in 1982. In a major victory after a two-decade battle, Scientology

was granted tax-exempt status by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service in 1993. In 2000, Italian courts ruled that Scientology qualifies as a religion, the South African government granted Scientology clergy the right to perform marriage ceremonies, and the Swedish government recognized Scientology churches as "religious communities." By contrast, though, the Charity Commission of England and Wales rejected Scientology's application for registration as a charity in 1999, and Scientology has yet to receive official recognition as a religion in Canada.

Recently, some of the most ardent official opposition to Scientology occurred in France and Germany. In 2001, the French government passed its About-Picard Law, an extremely aggressive anticult (referred to as "sectes" in Europe) bill, which declared Scientology (among many others) a dangerous sect.[101] Earlier, during the 1990s, a number of local and regional governments in Germany passed legislation intended to control Scientology, and the Church was for a time even labeled *verfassungsfeindlich,* a threat to the constitution.[102] Among other things, Scientologists could not join the then-ruling Christian Democratic Union Party, were prevented from securing government contracts, and were subject to police surveillance. Although the German courts ultimately reversed the Church's status as *verfassungsfeindlich* and struck down many of the proscriptions against it, this clearly illustrates the tension with which the Church of Scientology lives in some countries.[103]

Scientology is also one of the most controversial of the NRMs for reasons beyond its unique beliefs and organization. Its frequently confrontative style and determined opposition from critics has given the church a high public profile and an often negative image for much of its history.[104]

In 1966, for example, in response to attacks from a number of quarters, the Church established what was known as the Guardian's Office, which Miller characterizes as "Scientology's intelligence bureau."[105] As it grew in power, the Guardian's Office adopted an increasingly activist and belligerent stance. Opponents of Scientology were harassed under what Hubbard enunciated as a "fair game" policy. In one highly publicized case, Church members organized a vendetta against Paulette Cooper, a freelance journalist who wrote a scathing indictment of Hubbard and his Church in *The Scandal of Scientology.*[106] As part of their campaign, Scientologists sent bomb threats to an Arab consulate written on personal stationary they stole from Cooper. Although she was ultimately exonerated of these charges, Cooper was indicted before a grand jury before finally establishing her innocence.[107] Since then, journalists, academics, and Internet users have experienced harassment and intimidation at the hands of Scientologists.[108]

A number of illegal acts were committed by the Guardian Office as well.[109] In another highly publicized episode, in 1977 armed federal agents raided Scientology headquarters in Los Angeles and Washington. Several church members were subsequently convicted and imprisoned for infiltrating federal agencies, including the FBI and the IRS, and stealing agency documents. The Church defended its actions on the grounds that both agencies not only gathered and disseminated false information about Scientology, but refused to comply with legitimate requests for documents made under the *Freedom of Information Act.* The Church asserted that its

members infiltrated the agencies in order to copy the thousands of pages of documents it required to prove its allegations. One of those convicted and imprisoned was Mary Sue Whipp Hubbard, L. Ron Hubbard's third wife, whom he married in 1952.

In response to such incidents, the Guardian's Office was disbanded in 1983, and the Church removed a number of its officials from their positions. Scientology, however, openly maintains a policy of defending its rights and confronting its opponents within the limits of the law, a posture that resulted in the Church being viewed with suspicion from many quarters. Media treatments, for example, are frequently antagonistic, the most notable example being *Time* magazine's 1991 cover story "Scientology: The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power" and, more recently, a lengthy five-part series published by *The Boston Herald* in 1998.[110] Following the publication of the 1991 article, Scientology sued *Time,* though both the trial and appellate courts ruled that the article was not maliciously libelous. That the author, Richard Behar, was later awarded the Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism and a Conscience-in-Media Award by the Society of Journalists and Authors—both as a result of his article on Scientology—only illustrates further the often strained relationship between the Church and the cultures in which it operates. According to a follow-up article in *The Boston Herald,* the Church "hired a private investigator to delve into the private life of" series author Joseph Mallia, a fact that was confirmed by the President of the Church of Scientology International, Heber Jentzsch.[111] As Melton noted in a 1997 interview, while "Scientology has probably received the most persistent criticism of any church in America in recent years … Scientologists bear some of the responsibility. 'They don't get mad, they get even,' Mr. Melton said. 'They turn critics into enemies and enemies into dedicated warriors for a lifetime.'"[112]

Few events, however, generated more negative publicity for the Church of Scientology than the death of Scientologist Lisa McPherson on December 5, 1995 at the age of 36, seventeen days after a minor car accident in Clearwater, Florida. Immediately following the accident, McPherson exhibited signs of mental disorder, and paramedics took her to a local hospital for psychiatric evaluation. Church officials, however, soon removed McPherson from the hospital and took her to the Fort Harrison hotel, Scientology's Clearwater headquarters. While there, her condition steadily worsened, and she died by the time that Scientologists sought medical treatment for her. The church was charged by the county prosecutor with practicing medicine without a license and criminal neglect of a disabled adult. Amid charges, countercharges, and an inept investigation by the county medical examiner, those charges were dropped five years later. The church alleged that critics were using the incident to discredit Scientology, and opponents argued that the church engaged in a cover-up and pressured the medical examiner's office. In 1997, though, McPherson's estate filed a wrongful death suit against the Church, a case that became "one of the most fiercely contested and enduring legal battles in Pinellas County history."[113] Though the two sides in the dispute were miles apart in terms of what each regarded as a fair settlement—the Church offering $20,000 during one meeting while lawyers for

McPherson's estate countered with $80 million—the suit was settled before it went to trial for an amount that remains undisclosed.[114]

CONCLUSION

Although many things about the Church of Scientology remain unclear, a few at least seem certain. Scholars might question claims that Scientology is the fastest growing religion on the planet, but the facts remain that (a) for hundreds of thousands of dedicated followers it is a system of religious thought and practice that gives their lives meaning and fulfillment, and (b) it is a multifaceted organization that shows no evidence of disappearing anytime soon. What remains to be seen, though, is how and whether the organization is able to maintain its membership now that second- and even third-generation Scientologists are emerging. Will these grow disillusioned with their parents' faith, as so many other young people do in other faiths? Or will the firmly established Scientology system of "applied religious philosophy" be enough to retain the youth of the Church into the twenty-first century? Will the Church be able to maintain its literalist fidelity to Hubbard's writings, or will new movement intellectuals emerge and perhaps provoke schisms within Scientology?[115]

On the other hand, while a bona fide religion to many, including most social scientists who have commented on the subject, to many of its critics Scientology remains perhaps the most dangerous New Religious Movement in the world. Just as the Church shows little sign of slowing down, neither do those who have dedicated their lives to exposing it as what they regard as an impious fraud. As Cowan has noted elsewhere, though, "one of the perspectives from which the social history of religious development can be written is that of the clash between movements and countermovements,"[116] a clash that will undoubtedly continue as Scientology develops and grows.

NOTES

1. This claim is made in several Church documents, including Church of Scientology International, "Scientology Effective Solutions: Providing the Tools for Successful Living" (Brussels, Belgium: Church of Scientology International, 2004); Church of Scientology International, "This is Scientology: An Overview of the World's Fastest Growing Religion" [DVD] (Los Angeles: Golden Era Productions, 2004); Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?* (Los Angeles: Bridge Publications, 1998), 491; H.C. Jentzsch, "Scientology: Separating Truth from Fiction," in *New Religious Movements and Religious Liberty in America*, ed. D.H. Davis and B. Hankins (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2002); and the official Church Web site, www.scientology.org.

2. The disparity here is due to a difference in the way membership is determined and is not unimportant in terms of claims to phenomenal growth made by the Church. The Church of Scientology maintains a careful record of everyone who has participated in one of its programs, whether directly related to the Church or as part of a social benefit program, and counts each of these as a "member." The number of full-time, active practitioners of Scientology is closer to

the lower estimate. These types of claims are not new. By 1980, four years before Hubbard's death, the Church of Scientology was already claiming more than five million members; see T. Meldal-Johnsen and P. Lusey, *The Truth About Scientology* (New York: Ace Books, 1980).

3. Numerous works have been published on Scientology, both in print and now on the Internet, and these vary widely in the positions they take on the various issues that have surrounded the Church. Like other controversial new religions, the Church of Scientology has attracted criticism from former members [e.g., J. Atack, *A Piece of Blue Sky: Scientology, Dianetics and L. Ron Hubbard Exposed* (New York: Lyle Stuart Books, 1990); B. Corydon and R. DeWolf [L. R. Hubbard, Jr.], *L. Ron Hubbard: Messiah or Madman* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart Books, 1987); M. Wakefield, *The Road to Xenu: A Narrative Account of Life in Scientology*; www.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Library/Shelf/xenu/xenu.pdf (retrieved January 2, 2006)], interested or outraged others [e.g., R. Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah: The True Story of L. Ron Hubbard* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1987); K. Moos, *A Chronological View of L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology* (Silkeborg, Denmark: Seagull Productions, 1995)], and dedicated countermovements, both religious and secular [e.g., Roger Gonnet, www.antisectes.net; Tilman Hauserr, http://home.snafu.de/tilman; Anton Hein, www.apologeticsindex.org; Andreas Heldal-Lund, www.xenu.org; and Karin Spaink, www.spaink.net). For a very useful bibliography of material related to Scientology, see M. Frenschkowski, "L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology: An Annotated Bibliographical Survey of Primary and Selected Secondary Literature," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 4, no. 1 (1999), www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/frenschkowski.html (retrieved March 24, 2004).

4. See, for example, M. F. Bednarowski, "The Church of Scientology: A Lightning Rod for Cultural Boundary Conflicts," in *America's Alternative Religions,* ed. T. Miller (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); J. G. Melton, *The Church of Scientology* (Torino, Italy: Signature Books, 2000). In its battle to be recognized as a legitimate religion, over the years the Church of Scientology has also solicited statements of support from a number of scholars in a wide variety of disciplines; see J. A. Beckford, "Scientology, Social Science, and the Definition of Religion" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1980); P-A Berglie, "Scientology: A Comparison with Religions East and West" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1996); A. W. Black, "Is Scientology a Religion?" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1996); M. D. Bryant, "Scientology: A New Religion" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1994); D. Chidester, "Scientology: A Religion in South Africa" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, n.d.); R. Dericquebourg, "Scientology" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1995); A. Figerio, "Scientology and Contemporary Definitions of Religion in the Social Sciences" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1996); H. Heino, "Scientology: Its True Nature" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1995); D. M. Kelley, "Is Scientology a Religion?," rev. ed. (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1980, 1996); J. Pentikäinen and M. Pentikäinen, "The Church of Scientology" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1996); D. Sabatucci, "Scientology: Its Historical-Morphological Frame" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1983); F. Sawada, "The Relationship Between Scientology and Other Religions" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1996); H. M. a. S. Sawada, "Scientology and Islam: An Analogous Study" (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1996); M. A. Sivertsev, "Scientology: A Way of Spiritual Self-Identification (Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, 1996). The Church of Scientology also entered actively into the debate; see Church of Scientology International, "Can We Ever Be Friends? An Appeal by a Minister of the Church of Scientology to Reconcile Former Friends and Family" (Los Angeles: Chaplain's Office of the Church of Scientology, 2001); Church of Scientology International, *Scientology: Theology & Practice of a Contemporary Religion* (Los Angeles: Bridge Publications, 1998).

5. See, for example, B. Beit-Hallahmi, "Scientology: Religion or Racket?" *Marburg Journal of Religion* 8, no. 1 (2003), www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/beit.html (retrieved January 3, 2006); S. Kent, "The Creation of 'Religious' Scientology," *Religious Studies and Theology* 18, no. 2 (1999): 97–126; S. Kent, "The Globalization of Scientology: Influence, Control and Opposition in Transnational Markets," *Religion* 29 (1999): 147–169; S. Kent, "Scientology—Is this a Religion?" *Marburg Journal of Religion* 4, no. 1 (1999); www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/kent.html (retrieved January 3, 2006).

6. D. Bromley and M. Bracey, "Religion as Therapy, Therapy as Religion: The Church of Scientology as a Quasi-Religious Therapy," in *Sects, Cults, and Spiritual Communities: A Sociological Analysis,* ed. W. Zellner and M. Petrowsky (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 141.

7. R.B. Straus, "But We *Are* a Religion: 'Religion' and 'Technology' in Scientology's Struggle for Legitimacy" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Savannah, GA, 1985).

8. N. Passas and M. Castillo, "Scientology and Its 'Clear' Business.," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 10 (1992): 103–116. Over the past several years, and often in relation to the court challenges it has waged over copyright infringement or its own ongoing battle for legitimacy as a religion, the Church of Scientology has been discussed in several law journals and reviews. See, for example, Y. Benkler, "Free as the Air to Common Use: First Amendment Constraints on Enclosure of the Public Domain," *New York University Law Review* 74 (1999): 354–446; A. Brill and A. Packard, "Silencing Scientology's Critics on the Internet: A Mission Impossible?" *Communications and the Law* 19, no. 4 (1997): 1–23; M. Browne, "Should Germany Stop Worrying and Love the Octopus? Freedom of Religion and the Church of Scientology in Germany and the United States," *Indiana International & Comparative Law Review* 9 (1998): 155–202; P. Horwitz, "Scientology in Court: A Comparative Analysis and Some Thoughts on Selected Issues in Law and Religion," *DePaul Law Review* 47 (1997): 85–154; T.A. Lyons, "Scientology or Censorship: You Decide: An Examination of the Church of Scientology, Its Recent Battles with Individual Internet Users and Service Providers, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, and the Implications for Free Speech on the Web," *Rutgers Journal of Law and Religion* 2, no. 1 (2000), www-camlaw.rutgers.edu/publications/law-religion/RJLR_2_1 _1.pdf (retrieved January 3, 2006).

9. See W.S. Bainbridge, "Science and Religion: The Case of Scientology," in *The Future of New Religious Movements,* ed. David G. Bromley and Phillip Hammond (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987); R. Wallis, *The Road to Total Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of Scientology* (London: Heinemann, 1976); H. Whitehead, *Renunciation and Reformulation: A Study of Conversion in an American Sect* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); H. Whitehead, *What Does Scientology Auditing Do?* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1977).

10. On this, see D.E. Cowan, "Researching Scientology: Academic Premises, Promises, and Problematics" (paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, TX, November 2004).

11. L.R. Hubbard, *Scientology: The Fundamentals of Thought* (Los Angeles: Bridge Publications, 1988), 88.

12. Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 1.

13. Ibid., 561–571.

14. On this, see the Church of Scientology's official Web site, www.scientology.org.

15. Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 1.

16. See, for example, Church of Scientology International, *The Background, Ministry, Ceremonies & Sermons of the Scientology Religion* (Los Angeles: Bridge Publications, 1999); Church of Scientology International, *Theology & Practice*; Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?*

17. Church of Scientology International, *Background, Ministry, Ceremonies & Sermons,* 13.

18. Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 530.

19. Church of Scientology International, *Theology & Practice,* 26.

20. "To the Reader," in L. R. Hubbard, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health,* Commemorative ed. (Los Angeles: Bridge Publications, 1990).

21. Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 215; emphasis in the original.

22. See Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 99.

23. Church of Scientology International, *Scientology: What is it?* (Los Angeles: Scientology Information Center, 1985), 2.

24. See, for example, R. Behar, "Scientology: The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power," *Time* (May 6, 1991): 50–57; Beit-Hallahmi, "Scientology: Religion or Racket?"; Kent, "Scientology —Is this a Religion?"

25. The Church maintains that by the end of his life Hubbard had become a "writer & professional in dozens of fields," including screenwriter, poet, lyricist, and essayist; filmmaker, photographer, composer, and balladeer; archeologist, mineralogist, and horticulturalist, www.scientology.org.

26. Audio and video selections from the L. Ron Hubbard Life Exhibition, which is located in Hollywood, California, are available for download on the Internet at www.lronhubbardprofile.org/exhib.htm.

27. See Church of Scientology International, *L. Ron Hubbard: A Lifetime of Creativity* (Hollywood: Celebrity Center International, 1994). In the mid-1990s, Author Services also produced a number of books in the "Ron" series, including, for example, *Ron the Philosopher: The Rediscovery of the Human Soul* (Los Angeles: L. Ron Hubbard Library, 1996); *Ron the Humanitarian: Education* (Los Angeles: L. Ron Hubbard Library, 1996); and *Letters and Journals: The Dianetics Letters* (Los Angeles: L. Ron Hubbard Library, 1997); reprint collections of Hubbard's writings, including L. R. Hubbard, *Education, Literacy & Civilization* (Los Angeles: L. Ron Hubbard Library, 1996); L. R. Hubbard, *Ethics, Justice & Civilization* (Los Angeles: L. Ron Hubbard Library, 1995); L. R. Hubbard, *Rehabilitating a Drugged Society* (Los Angeles: L. Ron Hubbard Library, 1996); and a number of issues of *ASI Magazine,* which featured stories about Hubbard, excerpts from Hubbard's "never-before-published" writings, and news about the distribution and reception of Hubbard's fiction around the world.

28. R. Christian, dir., *Battlefield Earth* (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 2000).

29. Particularly intense debate surrounds the details of Hubbard's life. Critics have charged that many of the claims made both by Hubbard and by the Church on his behalf are fraudulent (e.g., Atack, *A Piece of Blue Sky;* Corydon and DeWolf, *L. Ron Hubbard;* Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah*), and some social scientists have also challenged the official Church version of Hubbard's life (e.g., Wallis, *Road to Total Freedom*). For a balanced treatment of specific biographical events, see Melton, *Church of Scientology.*

30. *Ron the Philosopher,* 16.

31. Perhaps stemming from this early rejection, for much of its history Scientology has conducted a vitriolic campaign against the disciplines of psychiatry and psychology, charging them with a wide variety of human rights abuses. Under the auspices of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, a Scientology organization that promotes itself as an "International Watchdog

for Mental Health," they maintain a permanent exhibit in Los Angeles exposing what they believe are the rampant abuses perpetrated by the psychiatric community and publish an array of books on the same topic. See, for example, *Documenting Psychiatry: A Human Rights Abuse and Global Failure* (Los Angeles: Citizens Commission on Human Rights, 2000); *Documenting Psychiatry: Shattering Your World with Drugs* (Los Angeles: Citizens Commission on Human Rights, 2001); *Psychiatry: Education's Ruin* (Los Angeles: Citizens Commission on Human Rights, 1995); *Psychiatry: Committing Fraud: Extortion in the Name of Healing* (Los Angeles: Citizens Commission on Human Rights, 1999); *Psychiatry: Destroying Morals: A Travesty of Help* (Los Angeles: Citizens Commission on Human Rights, 1995); *Psychiatry: Destroying Religion In the Name of Salvation* (Los Angeles: Citizens Commission on Human Rights, 1997); *Psychiatry: Eradicating Justice* (Los Angeles: Citizens Commission on Human Rights, 1995); *Psychiatry: Victimizing the Elderly: A Parody of Help* (Los Angeles: Citizens Commission on Human Rights, 1995); *Psychiatry's Betrayal in the Guise of Help* (Los Angeles: Citizens Commission on Human Rights, 1995).

32. Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah,* 154–155.

33. Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 48.

34. On Hubbard's concept of the thetan, see Church of Scientology International, *Theory & Practice,* 17–21; Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 539; Hubbard, *Scientology,* 64–65.

35. According to Atack, in 1949 Hubbard told science fiction publisher Lloyd Eshbach that the way to make money was to start a religion (*A Piece of Blue Sky,* 137), while Miller recounts that Hubbard was more precise even than that. Hubbard "was invited to address a science-fiction group in Newark.… 'Writing for a penny a word is ridiculous,' he told the meeting. 'If a man really wanted to make a million dollars, the best way to do it would be to start his own religion'" (Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah,* 148).

36. See, for example, Kent, "Scientology—Is this a Religion?"; Wallis, *Road to Total Freedom.*

37. For the most extensive examination of the Sea Org to date, J. Gordon Melton, "A Contemporary Ordered Religious Community: The Sea Organization" (paper delivered to the annual meeting of CESNUR/INFORM, London, England, April 2001).

38. Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 68.

39. Hubbard, *Dianetics,* 30.

40. Richard Leiby, "A Place in the Desert for New Mexico's Most Exclusive Circles," *Washington Post,* November 27, 2005, D01.

41. Church of Scientology International, *Theology & Practice,* 18.

42. Hubbard, *Scientology,* 64.

43. See, for example, Church of Scientology International, *Theology & Practice,* 21; Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 562.

44. Some scholars have also noted the similarities between the beliefs of Scientology and particular streams of Buddhism and Hinduism; see Berglie, "Scientology: A Comparison with Religions of the East and West"; F.K. Flinn, "Scientology as Technological Buddhism," in *Alternatives to American Mainline Churches,* ed. J.H. Fichter (Barrytown, NY: Unification Theological Seminary, 1983); S. Kent, "Scientology's Relationship with Eastern Religious Traditions," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 11, no. 1 (1996): 21–36.

45. Church of Scientology International, *Theology & Practice,* 21.

46. R. Thomas, *Scientology and Dianetics* (Los Angeles: Church of Scientology, 1970), 8.

47. Hubbard, *Dianetics,* 67; cf. 61–67.

48. Hubbard, *Scientology,* 68; cf. 68–70.

49. Ibid., 68.
50. Hubbard, *Dianetics,* 69; cf. 68–91.
51. Ibid., 70.
52. See Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 71–73. Originally, in *Dianetics* Hubbard delineated only four dynamics (see *Dianetics,* 54–57). Like many religious beliefs, however, as Scientology evolved out of Dianetics his beliefs were refined and elaborated over time; cf. Hubbard, *Scientology,* 39–42.
53. According to Scientology, Hubbard wrote that "no culture in the history of the world, save the thoroughly depraved and expiring ones, have failed to affirm the existence of a Supreme Being. It is an empirical observation that men without a strong and lasting faith in a Supreme Being are less capable, less ethical and less valuable to themselves and society" (Hubbard, *Science of Survival,* quoted in Church of Scientology International, *Theology & Practice,* 26).
54. See Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 76–77; Hubbard, *Scientology,* 45–48.
55. Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 538.
56. Ibid., 552.
57. Ibid., 564.
58. Ibid., 552.
59. Cited in R. Stark and W.S. Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 266.
60. Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 553.
61. Ibid., 177.
62. Ibid., 177.
63. Ibid., 209.
64. Ibid., 540.
65. Ibid., 174.
66. Westley describes "bull-baiting" in somewhat harsher terms, stating that it involved "insulting, attacking and exposing all the weaknesses in a manner as merciless as possible" [F. Westley, *The Complex Forms of the Religious Life: A Durkheimian View of New Religious Movements* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 118].
67. Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 539.
68. "To the Reader," *Dianetics.*
69. On the Bridge to Total Freedom, which is also known as the Classification, Gradation and Awareness Chart of Levels and Certificates, see Church of Scientology International, *The Scientology Handbook Based on the Works of L. Ron Hubbard* (Los Angeles: Bridge Publications, 2001), lxxxvi–lxxxvii; Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 98–100.
70. K.R., in Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 261.
71. R.B., in Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 263.
72. J.B., in Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 264.
73. G.A., in Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 267.
74. Quoted in Whitehead, *Renunciation and Reformulation,* 255.
75. See Melton, "A Contemporary Ordered Religious Community"; J. Pentikäinen, J.F.K. Redhart, and M. York, "The Church of Scientology's Rehabilitation Force Project," www.cesnur.org/2002/scient_rpf _01.htm (retrieved January 5, 2006).

76. Church of Scientology International, "What is the Sea Organization?," www.scientology.org (retrieved January 4, 2006).
77. Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 215.
78. See, for example, the nearly 100 sermons in Church of Scientology International, *Background, Ministry, Ceremonies & Sermons.* The introduction reads, in part, "the spiritual freedom promised in Scientology can be attained only if the path developed by Mr. Hubbard is followed without deviation" (22).
79. Religious Technology Center, "The Guarantor of Scientology's Future," www.rtc.org/en_US/guarant/pg002.html (retrieved January 4, 2006).
80. Religious Technology Center, "Inspector General Network," www.rtc.org/en_US/guarant/pg004.html (retrieved January 4, 2006).
81. See Religious Technology Center, "The Guarantor of Scientology's Future," www.rtc.org/en_US/guarant/index.html (retrieved January 4, 2006).
82. Religious Technology Center, "The Guarantor of Scientology's Future," www.rtc.org/en_US/guarant/pg001.html (retrieved January 4, 2006).
83. See Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 30–33.
84. Religious Technology Center, "The Guarantor of Scientology's Future," www.rtc.org/en_US/guarant/pg005.html (retrieved January 4, 2006).
85. See Religious Technology Center, "Matters of RTC Concern," www.rtc.org/en_US/matters/index.html (retrieved January 4, 2006).
86. See Pentikäinen, Redhart, and York, "The Church of Scientology's Rehabilitation Project Force."
87. On this, see L.L. Dawson, "Raising Lazarus: A Methodological Critique of Stephen Kent's Revival of the Brainwashing Model," in *Misunderstanding Cults: Searching for Objectivity in a Controversial Field,* ed. Benjamin Zablocki and Thomas Robbins (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2001); S. Kent, "Brainwashing in Scientology's Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF)" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, San Diego, CA, November 1997); S. Kent, "Compelling Evidence: A Rejoinder to Lorne Dawson's Chapter," in *Misunderstanding Cults: Searching for Objectivity in a Controversial Field*; Melton, "A Contemporary Ordered Religious Community"; Pentikäinen, Redhart, and York, "The Church of Scientology's Rehabilitation Project Force."
88. See Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 323–332; Melton, "A Contemporary Ordered Religious Community."
89. L. Ron Hubbard, *The Way to Happiness: A Common Sense Guide to Better Living* (Hollywood, CA: The Way to Happiness Foundation International, 1989), back cover.
90. For a critical review of these, see D. Hall, "Managing to Recruit: Religious Conversion in the Workplace," *Sociology of Religion* 59 (1998): 393–410.
91. See R. Sharpe, "How Allstate Applied Scientology Methods to Train its Managers," *Wall Street Journal,* March 22, 1995, A1, A8.
92. See, for example, S. Kent, "International Social Control by the Church of Scientology" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Pittsburgh, PA, November 1991).
93. Citizens Commission on Human Rights, "What is CCHR?," http://cchr.org/index.cfm/7555 (retrieved January 6, 2006).
94. Hubbard, quoted in Atack, *A Piece of Blue Sky,* 247.
95. Hubbard, quoted in Atack, *A Piece of Blue Sky,* 288.

96. Church of Scientology International, *What is Scientology?,* 504. See more complete references in n.31 above.
97. Citizens Commission on Human Rights, *Documenting Psychiatry: Human Rights Abuse,* 31.
98. See T. Burton, "Anti-depression Drug of Eli Lilly Loses Sales after Attack by Sect," *Wall Street Journal,* April 19, 1991, A1, A6; R. Karel, "FDA Refuses Scientologists' Request to Ban Prozac," *Psychiatric News* (September 6, 1991).
99. On academic assessments of European investigations into Scientology and other new religions, see, for example, I. Hexham and K. Poewe, "Source Criticism and the Reconstruction of Reality: A Reply to Brigitte Schöen and Hubert Seiwert," *Nova Religio* 6, no. 1 (2002): 129–136; I. Hexham and K. Poewe, "'*Verfassungsfeindlich*': Church, State, and New Religions in Germany," *Nova Religio* 2, no. 2 (1999): 208–227; S. Kent, "The French and German versus American Debate over 'New Religions,' Scientology, and Human Rights," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 6, no. 1 (2000), www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/kent2.html (retrieved March 24, 2004); B. Schöen, "New Religions in Germany: The Publicity of the Public Square," *Nova Religio* 4, no. 2 (2001): 266–274; B. Schöen, "Reconstructing Reality from Highly Deviant Perspectives: A Reply to "'*Verfassungsfeindlich*': Church, State, and New Religions in Germany" by Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe," *Nova Religio* 6, no. 1 (2002): 102–118; H. Seiwert, "Is Germany Different? A Comment on Hexham and Poewe's Interpretation of German Anticult Policy," *Nova Religio* 6, no. 1 (2002): 119–128.
100. See United States of America, libelant, v. An Article or Device … "Hubbard Electrometer" or "Hubbard E-Meter," etc., Founding Church of Scientology et al., claimants, No. D.C. 1-63, United States District Court for the District of Columbia, July 30, 1971, 333 F. Supp. 357.
101. On the connections between European legislative measures and the North American anticult movement, see A. Shupe and S.E. Darnell, "Agents of Discord: The North American-European Anticult Connection" (paper presented at the international conference of CESNUR/INFORM, London, England, April 2001), www.cesnur.org/2001/CAN1.htm.
102. See Browne, "Should Germany Stop Worrying and Learn to Love the Octopus?"; Hexham and Poewe, *"Verfassungsfeindlich"*; Horwitz, "Scientology in Court"; S. Kent, "Hollywood's Celebrity-Lobbyists and the Clinton Administration's American Foreign Policy Toward German Scientology," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 1 (2002), www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/article-scientology.html.
103. On the changes in various European legislations, see S. Palmer, "Caught Up in the Cult Wars: Confessions of a Canadian Researcher," in *Misunderstanding Cults: Searching for Objectivity in a Controversial Field;* J.T. Richardson and M. Introvigne, "'Brainwashing' Theories in European Parliamentary and Administrative Reports on 'Cults' and 'Sects,'" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 2 (2001): 143–168.
104. On this, see D.E. Cowan, "Contested Spaces: Movement, Countermovement, and E-Space Propaganda," in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet,* ed. L.L. Dawson and D.E. Cowan (New York and London: Routledge, 2004); Cowan, "Researching Scientology."
105. Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah,* 298.
106. P. Cooper, *The Scandal of Scientology* (New York: Tower, 1971).
107. See D.G. Bromley and A.D. Shupe, Jr., *Strange Gods: The Great American Cult Scare* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), 67.
108. See Cowan, "Researching Scientology"; J. MacLaughlin and A. Gully, "Church of Scientology Probes Herald Reporter," *The Boston Herald,* March 19, 1998, 4. On the various battles

that have been waged over online criticism of Scientology and the unauthorized replication of Scientological esoterica, in addition to the references in n.8 above, see Cowan, "Contested Spaces"; W.M. Grossman, "alt.scientology.war," *Wired* 3, no. 12 (1995), www.wired.com/wired/archive/3.12/alt.scientology.war (retrieved December 25, 2005); W.M. Grossman, *Net.wars* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); J. Lippard and J. Jacobsen, "Scientology v. the Internet: Free Speech and Copyright Infringement on the Information Super-Highway," *Skeptic* 3, no. 3 (1995): 35–41; J. Lippard and J. Jacobsen, "Scientology Loses Judgment in Internet Case," *Skeptic* 3, no. 4 (1995): 18–19; M. Peckham, "New Dimensions of Social Movement/Countermovement Interaction: The Case of Scientology and its Internet Critics," *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie* 23, no. 4 (1998): 317–347.

109. See Wallis, *Road to Total Freedom,* 127–156.

110. See J. Mallia, "Inside the Church of Scientology," *The Boston Herald,* March 1–5, 1998, five parts.

111. MacLaughlin and Gully, "Church of Scientology Probes Herald Reporter."

112. J.G. Melton, quoted in D. Frantz, "Boston Man in Costly Fight with Scientology," *New York Times,* December 21, 1997, sec. 1, 24.

113. R. Farley, "Scientologists Settle Death Suit," *St. Petersburg Times (Florida)* May 29, 2004, 1A.

114. Ibid.; Reuters, "Scientologists Settle Lawsuit," *The New York Times* May 30, 2004, sec. 1, 25.

115. There is at least some evidence that this has happened and is continuing to happen; see Melton, *Church of Scientology;* Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah.* FreeZone America, for example, is an organization for "those who have left the Church of Scientology or are thinking of leaving," but who still want to continue with their journey up the Bridge, http://freezoneamerica.org. Dedicated to Hubbard's tech, they have grown disillusioned with the Church of Scientology as an institution. Through FreeZone America, visitors "can connect with auditors and case supervisors who can assist you with your auditing and training, find an affordable meter, talk with others who feel as you do," http://freezoneamerica.org.

116. Cowan, "Contested Spaces," 255.

FURTHER READING

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Heaven's Gate

Rosamond C. Rodman

"39 MEN FOUND DEAD IN SAN DIEGO SUBURB"

Thus did *The New York Times* headline for Thursday, March 27, 1997, announce the discovery of 39 bodies in a sprawling house in Rancho Santa Fe, a high-end suburb of San Diego, California. That headline, as it turns out, was factually incorrect. But media depictions of the group such as "California fruitcake" (*The Los Angeles Times*), "the most secret and seductive cult in the country" (Diane Sawyer, *ABC News*), and a "suicide sect" with brainwashed members, a power-hungry leader, and dangerously millennialist leanings spinning a "web of death" (*Newsweek*) indicated more serious and widespread misunderstandings of Heaven's Gate.

As the story of Heaven's Gate unfolded, journalists consulted academics, clergy, and pundits. Many of the statements about the group mobilized typical rhetoric for religious others, that is, rhetoric more descriptive (and pejorative) than analytic. There was the notable exception of sociologist David Balch, who infiltrated the group in its early years (see Further Reading). But the event seemed to catch religion scholars off-guard, and many found themselves unable to speak knowledgeably about what Heaven's Gate was or represented. A few, however, did warn that characterizing the group as bizarre was effectively a refusal to see or admit that, in fact, Heaven's Gate shared characteristics and beliefs of many mainstream American religious groups. As one such scholar put it, the members of Heaven's Gate "are too easily dismissed as hypnotized cultists. They are our children, our parents, our brothers, our sisters, and potentially ourselves."[1]

A primary example of what Heaven's Gate shared with many was the central place and primary importance of the Bible. Indeed, members of Heaven's Gate understood themselves to be enacting a biblical drama, put in motion by Jesus coming to the world in human form. Now they were here to finish the job begun by Jesus and his disciples. The mandate for their "departure" was in large part biblical, as so many American mandates have been—"because the Bible tells me so."

THE LEADERS

The leaders, Bonnie Lu Trousdale Nettles, and Marshall Herff Applewhite met by chance in Houston in 1972. Applewhite was born in Spur, Texas, in 1932 to a Presbyterian minister father and a homemaker mother. He graduated from Austin College and briefly attended Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, before abandoning plans for the ministry to pursue a career in music. Newly married, he moved to Gastonia, North Carolina, to work as the music director of the First Presbyterian Church. Applewhite was drafted into the United States Army in 1954, and he and his wife Ann moved first to Salzburg, Austria, and then to White Sands, New Mexico, where he served as an instructor in the Army Signal Corps. The Applewhites had two children. In 1966, Applewhite was appointed to the faculty at St. Thomas University in Houston; in 1968, the Applewhites divorced; and in 1970, Applewhite resigned from his university post amid rumors of strange behavior. It seemed that Applewhite was having a difficult time. His career as a professor was probably at an end; his father died in 1971; he was in severe debt; and he dropped out of the social circles in which he usually traveled.

By 1972, Applewhite's stress manifested itself physically. He was admitted to the hospital for treatment of a heart blockage. It was there that Applewhite met Bonnie Lu Nettles, who was a psychiatric nurse at that Houston hospital. Little is known about Nettles's early life, other than that she was born in 1927 and had a penchant for occultism, fortune tellers, and séances. At the time she met Applewhite, Nettles was married and had four children. In addition to her professional nursing career, Nettles also taught at the Houston Christian Arts Center, where she offered classes in astrology and Theosophy. "Bonnie" and "Herff" developed a close friendship. Nettles's astrological reading of the uncanny alignment between them convinced them both that God had brought them together for a purpose.

In 1973, they left Houston together for an extended camping trip to determine that purpose. Their lengthy and circuitous route took them eventually to a campsite on the Rogue River in central Oregon. Here, Applewhite and Nettles realized that they knew each other in past lives: they were the modern incarnation of the two witnesses referred to in the book of Revelation 11:3–13. In this passage, "two witnesses" (also referred to in the same passage as the two olive trees and the two lamp stands) are told to prophesy, after which they are killed. Their enemies gloat over their bodies for three and a half days until God resuscitates them and commands them to ascend to heaven in a cloud, while a devastating earthquake ravages the earth.

As Applewhite and Nettles thought about the passage, they realized that, although it spoke in ancient, biblical language, it clearly referred to them. They were the two witnesses referred to in the passage. In a note to friends, they wrote that during their trip,

> Jesus' words and example took on their true meaning, and after much necessary suffering —the "Big Daddy" revealed to Bonnie and me our mission. We are his 2 lamp stands or candlesticks, his 2 olive trees. This is clearly explained [in Revelation 11].[2]

They also believed that, like the two witnesses in the biblical passage, they too would probably die as a direct result of their testimony. Perhaps their deaths would not be caused literally by "the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit," as reported in Revelation. Rather, Nettles and Applewhite thought as yet unknown enemies would probably assassinate them. After this, God would take them up to heaven not "in a cloud" but in a spacecraft. In this way, Nettles and Applewhite understood that the Bible mandated their mission. Their task was to update the Bible's antiquarian language to accommodate modern sensibilities.

Rejecting their given names, Applewhite and Nettles began to refer to themselves as "The UFO Two," or often just "The Two." Later, they also adopted other monikers, such as "Guinea and Pig" (a wry reference to themselves as a cosmic experiment), "Bo and Peep" (shepherds leading the flock), "Nincom and Poop" (these names, perhaps for obvious reasons, never caught on), and finally came to rest on "Ti and Do" (pronounced like the musical notes)—celestial notes in a cosmic scale.

THE FLOCK

The Two continued to travel, though often skipping out on restaurant and hotel bills, knowing that they were not bound by earthly laws and explaining that they, like the returning Lord, were "as a thief in the night" (Revelation 3:3, 16:15, cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). They also began to attract followers, the first being a woman named Sharon Morgan. At one point, Morgan gave them her credit card, which Applewhite used to rent a car. However, he never returned the car and was still in possession of the vehicle nine months later, when Morgan's husband found out and pressed charges. In 1974, Applewhite was convicted and spent six months in jail in Missouri. While behind bars, Applewhite wrote a treatise on the beliefs of "the UFO Two," which he and Nettles mailed to spiritual groups and New Age teachers all over the country. One copy came into the hands of a man named Clarence Klug, who led what he called the "Self-Initiation Class" in Hollywood, California. Klug and his group studied the book of Revelation intently. They were intrigued by the UFO Two's claims that they were the two witnesses from Revelation. Klug invited them to come and speak to his class.

Apparently, Klug and his group were hoping for some revitalization from the "UFO Two." The group was at a low point, casting about for meaning and direction. Approximately 50 people showed up that night, curious about these special guests. The speakers introduced themselves as "Guinea" (Nettles) and "Pig" (Applewhite). For the most part, Guinea and Pig spoke in terms with which the Self-Initiation Class was already familiar. But they also introduced different ideas, one of which concerned UFOs. Whereas Klug told the Self-Initiation Class that they could eventually expect to be turned into ethereal beings composed only of light, Guinea and Pig refuted this teaching, telling them that they could and would literally depart the world in spaceships. However, to do so meant a disciplined break with the past and with attachments of all sorts—both in the group and with family and friends outside the group. This was something that Klug had not emphasized. Guinea and

Pig invited those who were really serious about this "break with the human level" to bring camping gear, money, cars, and food, and to make their way to a secret destination, which they would divulge in individual consultations after the group meeting. By the end of the evening, Klug, along with many of the inner circle of the Self-Initiation Class, decided to join Guinea and Pig. They were young and old, rich and not so rich, men and women. They were students, waiters, actors, real estate brokers, film editors, and mechanics. Virtually all were educated, middle-class, white people, with mainline Protestant backgrounds.

By May 1975, about two dozen people from the Self-Initiation Class made their way to Oregon's Rogue River, where the initial revelation of Applewhite and Nettles occurred. The secret meeting place was marked with a cardboard lamb. "The UFO Two," who left California prior to the others, were the last to arrive at this secret destination. When they did, they announced that their names were now Bo and Peep, to signify their roles as shepherds leading their flock aboard UFOs bound for "The Evolutionary Level Above Human" or TELAH.

PERIODS OF RECRUITMENT AND WITHDRAWAL

After this initial meeting in Oregon, Bo and Peep sent the flock out in teams of two to seek other recruits and to spread the word of the UFO Two and the group's impending departure. Each team went in a different direction. These small groups traveled extensively (mostly in the western part of the United States) and held information sessions in order to search for others who wanted to join. They had minimal instructions and almost no contact with the leaders. This was known as the first "period of recruitment."

This period was marked by two key experiences: being "rejected of men" and "testing the churches."[3] These "experiences" stem from biblical citations, 1 Peter 2:4 and 1 John 4:1, respectively, and evidently referred to maintaining the faith while confronted by the world's doubt and relying upon churches for charity while on the road. Balch, the sociologist who infiltrated the group during this early period, later explained, "Since we had no money, we had to test the churches to eat and keep the car running."[4]

Meanwhile, Bo and Peep traveled widely, giving public talks in Los Angeles, Denver, and Chicago. Their lectures, focused on the subject of "Human Individual Metamorphosis," drew mostly negative media attention. Much of it was generated by contemptuous interest in Bo and Peep's claims that a spaceship was to pick them up at Waldport, Oregon. At the same time, a large number of the flock literally disappeared from sight during the period of recruitment and were no longer in contact with friends or family. Suspicions were raised about "The Two." CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite reported that "a score of persons from a small Oregon town have disappeared. It's a mystery whether they've been taken on a so-called trip to eternity—or simply taken."[5] Nettles and Applewhite were not surprised at the media's response. Indeed, it fulfilled the prophecy of Revelation. But they were frightened that such publicity would attract their assassins before their message was sufficiently

refined and dispersed. They ordered the recruitment teams to meet at another remote location.

In June 1976, the group came together in the Medicine Bow National Forest in Wyoming. The period of recruitment had lasted approximately one year and had not been easy; the leaders were absent and out of touch. Not surprisingly, the group's numbers—about 200 members in late 1975—were now about half that. Bo and Peep decided to take the 100 or so members that remained in the group into seclusion. During this period, as one member put it, "we were very much 'lifted out' of this world—literally."[6] The group moved, depending on the weather, to a series of national parks and campsites from 1976 to 1979.[7] This was referred to as "the period of withdrawal." During this time the group became increasingly secretive. They established intergroup "guidelines," as well as rules for their interactions with the "human level." They avoided contact with the outside world. They read no newspapers, had no contact with family or friends, and related only minimally, if at all, to anyone with whom they might have contact. All sexual encounters were strictly forbidden. The leaders discouraged any activities that drew the group into the world, such as reading, listening to music, and talking about the past. They lived frugally and communally. Members substituted their given names for a series of initials with the suffix "-ody"; hence Srrody, Jstody, Rkkody. They also gave up their possessions and all contact with their friends and families. The prospect of becoming "too human … was a constant source of anxiety."[8]

This was also the beginning of "the classroom period," in which Ti and Do gave lectures and lessons, and also introduced certain disciplined activities. The group engaged in a number of exercises designed to break "human" habits. One was called the "smooth whirlwind," according to Balch.

> For about a month everyone rotated from one camp to the next, being paired with a different partner in a different tent every day…. The whirlwind had two functions. It forced members to get better acquainted with each other, and it helped them become comfortable with change. Bo and Peep said humans instinctively avoid change, but that change is constant at the next level and candidates for the next kingdom needed to get used to it.[9]

They compared the members to astronauts in training.[10] The point was to ready oneself for life at the "Next Level." Members pursued various ascetic practices designed to safeguard against habitual worldly behaviors. Diet and sleep regimens were severely limited. Members paired up for group chores, but rotated partners in an effort to keep each member honest and responsible to the group. There were a number of efforts to ward off private or selfish thoughts and habits. Members used meditation techniques to control emotions that might otherwise interfere with the group or distract others. Gaining control over the body, which they often referred to as a vehicle, especially sensual thoughts and urges, was an ongoing and central effort of members in the group. At night they kept vigil, watching the sky for speeding meteors that might signal the arrival of a spaceship.

One of the members had a sizable trust fund, which supported the group throughout this period. The leaders drew from it minimally, since the group generated few expenses. By about 1979, the group wearied of the rigors of outdoor life and began to rent houses in Colorado and Texas. The move indoors was a dangerous accommodation to the world. Ti and Do offset this by strictly maintaining the group's isolation, allowing members to leave their houses only to run necessary errands. The Two continued to give lectures and hold classes with the group, and to design exercises that freed them from the human level and prepared them for "the Next Level."

Rental expenses depleted the trust fund quickly. Soon the group needed money. Some of the members applied for jobs, but the leaders planned this effort carefully. Only relatively menial employment could be sought, and applications were filled out using fictitious résumés and references. Often the references' phone numbers provided on employment application forms would ring other members of the group, who would offer high praise for the applicant. Many in the group had saleable skills —mechanic, technical writer, computer technician—so jobs were relatively easy to find. As was the case with the move to indoor housing, this further contact with the outside world increased the group's ascetic practices. The group's long-standing practice of celibacy received renewed attention, as contact with the world tested the group, specifically the men. Some of the male members requested permission to have their testicles removed. At first resistant, Applewhite later gave permission to inquire into the procedure. Eventually, Applewhite and seven others underwent medical castration.

THE RECALL OF "THE FATHER"

In 1983, Nettles was diagnosed with cancer. She refused traditional treatments, and the cancer took over, first taking an eye, and then moving to her liver before finally causing her death. The "worldly" diagnosis was cancer, but according to the group, she had been "recalled" to TELAH. Because Nettles and Applewhite had, as "The Two," come to expect that they would ascend to TELAH together, Nettles's death in 1985 caused a crisis of meaning for Applewhite. He was forced to reconfigure the expected ascent (as per Revelation 11) of "the Two." He did so by reconfiguring the relationship between himself and Nettles this way: Nettles was actually an "older member of TELAH," which translated in biblical terms the "Heavenly Father." In other words, Nettles's death/departure caused Applewhite to renarrate their relationship. He did this not by dropping the biblical frame altogether, but rather by substituting one biblical frame for another. Now, as her departure made clear, Nettles was better apprehended as "the Father." This meant, in turn, that Applewhite was "the Son," or Jesus. While it appeared that Nettles was female, she was, in fact, "the Father." Despite appearances, Nettles had been "the one referred to as 'True God.'" Applewhite explained that the Father had simply been "undercover," incarnate in a female body for his earthly stay. Applewhite himself, it thereby followed, was the present-day Jesus, and the members of the group were the disciples.[11] Just as Jesus and his disciples had been castigated during their time,

Applewhite and the members of the group were likewise considered a radical cult. "Our mission," said Applewhite, referring to Jesus and the disciples 2000 years ago, "is exactly the same … a continuation of that last task as was promised, to those who were students 2000 years ago."[12]

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Approximately three years after Nettles's death, the group initiated another period of recruitment, making contact again with the outside world. In 1988, the group wrote the "'88 Update," which provided the "opportunity to set the record straight and to refute many of the false reports and outright lies widely circulated and published by the media back in 1975."[13] Taking out a full-page ad in *USA Today,* the group resurfaced with a bang. For about nine months, they made a concerted effort to reconnect with former members of the group who over the years dropped out. After this period of contact in 1988, the group withdrew once again, smaller than ever. For Do, this was a sign that the time of departure was imminent.

They surfaced again in 1994, calling themselves the "Total Overcomers Anonymous." They published advertisements, again in *USA Today,* as well as in regional newspapers and magazines. They broadcast a series of cable television programs. They again split up into teams, as they had during the original period of recruitment. They held public meetings in alternative bookstores, college classrooms, and hotels from Minneapolis to Los Angeles and points in between, much as they had in the original period of recruitment.

By 1995, the group settled in New Mexico. They preferred the southwestern United States where UFO sightings were not uncommon. They sought clear signs from Ti, to no avail. Earlier, the group rejected suicide, arguing that the bodily vehicle wore out as a sign of readiness for the Next Level, much as Ti's had done. Further, they expected to go to the Next Level *en masse.* Now some of the members began to consider how necessary the body was for entrance to TELAH. It was at this point that the group began to seriously consider a more proactive approach to shedding their human vehicles, or in the "world's" terms, committing suicide.

During this period, some of the members learned computer languages, such as Java and HTML. Capitalizing on the computer boom of the period, the group began an Internet consulting business called "Higher Source." They had an impressive clientele, including the San Diego polo club and Kushner-Locke, a Hollywood production company. The members launched their own Web site, www.heavensgate.org,[14] which featured links to many of Do's talks in transcription, as well as updated versions of writings circulated earlier. By 1996, their Web site flashed these words: "Last Chance to Evacuate Earth—Before It's Recycled."

WAITING FOR THE SHIP

In 1996, the group also sold all their possessions and contracted with a company to make their "Away Team" patches. They leased a large house in Rancho Santa Fe,

a suburb of San Diego. Given their rigorous asceticism, the setting was somewhat odd: a lavish, seven-bedroom, seven-bath mansion replete with swimming pool and tennis court. The rent was high, but the Heaven's Gate group was earning large sums of money as Web site designers and consultants.

In 1996, astronomers announced that the Hale-Bopp comet would travel near the earth and would be clearly visible for a brief period in 1997. This news excited the group enormously. To them, the comet was a sign that a spaceship from TELAH was coming to pick them up, or as their Web site put it, "the Hale-Bopp comet is the marker we've been waiting for." In other words, they believed that the spaceship they had been waiting for was with, or the same as, the Hale-Bopp comet. Throughout 1995, and especially in 1996, Heaven's Gate increased their efforts to reach former members and those who wanted to depart for TELAH. They also began preparations for their departure, collecting sufficient amounts of phenobarbital and studying how best to shed "their vehicles." They timed their departure to correlate with the point in time when the comet came closest to the earth's atmosphere, March 22, 1997. It also coincided with Holy Week. To the group, everything seemed to be falling into place. They added to their homepage, in flashing red words, "RED ALERT! HALE-BOPP Brings Closure to Heaven's Gate."

Coroners reconstructed the deaths of the members of Heaven's Gate as having occurred in stages within a 24- to 48-hour period, with a first group of 15 ingesting a lethal dose of phenobarbital mixed with pudding and chased down with vodka. Plastic bags were secured over their heads with elastic bands. After their deaths, the others cleaned up, removing the plastic bags from the heads of the dead, covering their bodies with purple squares of cloth. Then another group of 15 ingested the lethal mixture, and the remaining members prepared their bodies, and so on. Only two members were found still wearing the plastic bags, and these, it was determined, must have been the last two to die.

A member who left Heaven's Gate six months prior to the group's collective departure discovered their bodies.[15] Having received farewell videotapes made by the other members and sent to him and a variety of media outlets in the mail, ("We're looking forward to this!" smiled one member on the tape, a sentiment echoed repeatedly by others. "It's just the happiest day of my life!"), he went immediately to the house in Rancho Santa Fe. There he found the bodies of Heaven's Gate lying face up on their beds throughout the seven-bedroom house. All had their hair closely cropped. They were wearing similar clothing: dark pants, black Nikes, and white shirts with arm patches that read "Heaven's Gate Away Team." All but two were shrouded in squares of purple cloth. (These two, coroners later surmised, were the last to die.) They appeared so similar that initial press coverage reported incorrectly that 39 men were found dead At the autopsies, it became clear that more women (21) were in the group than men (18).

Near each body lay a small overnight bag with a change of clothing. In their pockets they carried passports, lip balm, a five-dollar bill, and some quarters. The group knew that their "departure" would be understood as mass suicide. These travel necessities were a way for the group to signify that they conceived of this not as the largest

mass suicide on American soil to date, but as a journey to what the group referred to as "The Evolutionary Level Above Heaven," or TELAH. Their departure coincided with Palm Sunday and the beginning of western Christian Holy Week, as well as with the point at which the Hale-Bopp comet, which was then arcing visibly across the sky, came closest to the earth's atmosphere.

Several days later, on April 1, 1997, a man with no previous connection with Heaven's Gate committed suicide in northern California. He was covered with a purple shroud and left a note indicating his intent to join the others on the Hale-Bopp spaceship.[16] About a month later, in early May 1997, two former members of the group, Jstody (Wayne Cooke) and Rkkody (Chuck Humphrey), attempted to "exit their human vehicles" (common group parlance for suicide) and catch up with the rest of the group from a motel room in Encinitas, California. Jstody "succeeded," Rkkody did not, and he was rushed to a nearby San Diego hospital. Rkkody explained his failure by saying that he was apparently not yet acceptable to the Next Level. In February 1998, Rkkody tried again, using carbon monoxide and a sealed tent; this time, he died.[17] In total, 42 people departed from the world for TELAH in what constitutes the largest mass suicide in the United States to date.[18]

The story of Heaven's Gate came to light over a number of weeks, as a puzzle with disparate pieces slowly fitting together. A major part of the puzzle would remain unsolved, in large measure because the group's religious sensibilities were immediately labeled bizarre and dangerous. The media was quick to point out that the group often made reference to extraterrestrials, spaceships, and UFOs, as indeed they did. What they did not understand was crucial, however: that Heaven's Gate did this in order to modernize and update a basically biblical narrative.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

The original Heaven's Gate Web site was embargoed shortly after the bodies were found. It can be accessed only as a "mirror site" through links from other Web sites. It features excerpts from a book that the group assembled, transcripts of videotapes made of Ti and Do's talks to the group, an artistic rendering of what a member of the Kingdom of Heaven might look like, working papers on a variety issues, and "exit statements" by members of the group. The following analysis of the way Heaven's Gate used the Bible depends mainly upon these online primary sources.

The Heaven's Gate Web site makes clear how prolific the members of Heaven's Gate were. Over the years, both leaders and members collaborated on a book entitled *How and When Heaven's Gate May Be Entered,* as well composing a large number of working papers and essays. Even a cursory reading of Heaven's Gate's writing reveals a great number of references to biblical verses, phrases, and idioms. Many, however, did not recognize Heaven's Gate's propensity for biblical references because they were often glancing, partial, or translated into "updated language." The way that Heaven's Gate combined biblical passages with UFOs and extraterrestrials, for instance, obscured familiar biblical notions, phrases, and stories. It was not accidental that

Heaven's Gate preferred the Gospel of John, that most otherworldly of the four biblical gospels, as the biblical touchstone for their self-narration.

Yet Heaven's Gate was conflicted about the Bible *in toto.* On the one hand, the Bible was the only reference from the time when a previous representative, Jesus, had been sent to earth, and as such it was "the primary historical record we have of periods when the Next Level was relating to man."[19] Further, the Bible preserved the previous representative's requirements for transition back to the Level Above Human (this was known as "discipleship," in biblical terms). Thus, the Bible—properly understood, of course—was utterly essential, for it contained the formula for access to the Kingdom of Heaven.

On the other hand, Heaven's Gate thought that the Bible was misunderstood, corrupted, and mistranslated by churches and scholars. For Heaven's Gate, very few who called themselves Christians were accurately informed about the real contents of the Bible. Heaven's Gate, by contrast, read the Bible to determine its real message in today's context. They claimed a superior understanding of the Bible over that held by most Christians.

One of the main problems, according to the group, was that the Bible's message was cast in terms, naturally enough, that ancients would understand, but that modern people would not. Yet the Bible's formula for transition back to TELAH could still be understood by contemporary readers. The task, as member Jwnody put it, was how to claim the biblical past in a meaningful way for the present situation, so that others would still recognize Heaven's Gate as emissaries from the Kingdom of God.

> How do we present the information in a credible fashion, when to most, our Truth is definitely stranger than any fiction? … At the same time, how do we acknowledge our past associations with this civilization which are primarily recorded in your Bible, so as to offer those who are waiting for prophecy to be fulfilled enough clues to put it together?[20]

For Heaven's Gate, the answer lay in part in a reliable translation of the Bible. If the Bible was "the primary historical record we have of when the Next Level was relating to man," then a proper translation, communicated in modern language, was of central importance and great value.[21]

> One of the greatest struggles we've had from the beginning is the terminology—if we try to correct the vision of the Christians and talk their language, we're seen as a religious cult on an ego trip—if we try to state our information in language more relevant to our actual situation, the masses see us as attempting to make the "Trekkie" vernacular into religion.[22]

Heaven's Gate chose The Amplified Bible as their preferred translation. The Amplified Bible is not a word-for-word translation, but one that freely updates ancient language into more appropriate language for the modern reader.

But no translation could address all of Heaven's Gate's anxiety about the Bible. They were hemmed in on two sides: on the one hand, Heaven's Gate wanted to counter the laxity of modern, worldly Christianity. On the other, they wanted to

appropriate the Bible as the primary record of their own legacy. They focused on the purported actual words of Jesus, dispensing with any narration about Jesus, and with the Old Testament altogether. In this way, Heaven's Gate sifted through the Bible, separating what was "accurate" and "historical" from the chaff of churchy obfuscation. This effort, according to Heaven's Gate, enabled them to isolate the true biblical message (how to gain entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, or TELAH). Then they would have a much clearer understanding of their tasks on earth and when they could expect to depart for the Level Above Human.

A DEPOSIT OF RECOGNITION

A mainstay of Heaven's Gate rhetoric was to draw attention to the fact that Jesus was shunned and misunderstood by many. They too suffered from mistreatment and misunderstanding. Do, in particular, identified with Jesus. But the members of the group furthered the analogy by claiming that they were among the few who would be able to recognize Jesus or a "current representative" of TELAH as such. They described this special gift of recognition or insight primarily as "the deposit of recognition," but they also referred to it as an "implant,"[23] a "chip," or a "seed."[24]

This deposit of recognition, of course, like almost everything for Heaven's Gate, had a biblical analogue. According to the member known as Lvvody, Jesus himself referred to the deposit in numerous ways. For example, Jesus was describing the deposit "when he said, 'No one comes to me unless the Father Who sent Me attracts and draws him and gives him the desire to come to Me, and I will raise him up at the last day.' (John 6:44)." But he spoke of it even more specifically when he said, "My sheep know my voice … and they follow me" (John 10:27).[25]

Most individuals, according to the group, have some ability to recognize the Representative. Some have more ability than others, some have none at all. Most, unfortunately, mistreat this gift, by denying it, or by trusting worldly ways and means. In doing so, they neglect their deposit of recognition, or remain "blind" to the current representative." Meanwhile, members of Heaven's Gate had years of practiced discipline and were clearly committed to Do, so they had enhanced their deposit of recognition sufficiently to advance (or return) to TELAH. Merely dying was no guarantee that one would enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, as so many worldly Christians believed.[26]

How was one to know whether one had the sufficient amount or type of deposit? The deposit made itself known through certain characteristic feelings and experiences, such as the impetus to seek out the present Representative, a loss of respect for the world and its corrupt systems, and a persistent "feeling like 'I don't fit here,' 'I hate this corrupt world,' or 'I just want to go home to God.'"[27] Having a deposit ultimately meant separating completely from the world, which those with a deposit desperately desired anyway. According to Applewhite, those with deposits usually exhibited some form of antisocial tendency.[28] One member of the group, Lvvody, wrote that it was the deposit that enabled her to recognize "the Two" even before meeting them.

While most of the world would consider the members of Heaven's Gate to have been duped or brainwashed, the reason that so few people realized that Do was, in fact, Jesus incarnate was because very few have the necessary "deposit of recognition."[29] Yet even those without a deposit, or with an insufficiently nourished deposit, unwittingly confirmed the Representative as such. The inability of most to recognize Heaven's Gate as the current representatives simply mirrors the pattern of responses to Jesus and his disciples, as recorded in the Bible. Just as Jesus and followers had been deeply suspect, so also would be Applewhite and his followers:

> I will again be hated for my "blasphemy" (of who I say I am) and hated by those families and others that are affected by all who aspire to leave with us, because this mission requires that they forsake all ties and binds to this world.[30]

In many ways, their rejection by the world affirmed Heaven's Gate's mission, precisely because Jesus and his followers were also rejected. Those who responded negatively to Heaven's Gate were simply enacting what the Bible foretold. The negative response not only confirmed Heaven's Gate as true members of the Kingdom of Heaven, but also undermined those "Christians" who most vehemently rejected Heaven's Gate. These so-called "Christians," member Srrody charged, lacked the deposit necessary to truly understand. "I'm afraid that even those 'born-again' aren't [those] we would identify as of our Father's House."[31]

But Heaven's Gate was not only concerned about the deposit of recognition, an invisible, though critical, element for the transformation to TELAH. According to the leaders, the deposit was placed in the body to use as a "cocoon" or "chrysalis" in order to prepare for the Next Level.[32] As a result, they were also deeply concerned about their bodies and the part the body would play in the effort to advance beyond human.

CELESTIAL BODIES

For many, Heaven's Gate's evident contempt for their own human lives was the most repulsive aspect of the group and the most difficult to understand. In fact, at certain points it seems that Heaven's Gate members would have agreed with media pundits shocked by the group's evident disregard for their bodies. Do, for example, complained, "I'm wearing a human vehicle, because I have to wear one for this task. I don't like it. It doesn't match me."[33] But for the most part, Do focused on how essential the body was for Heaven's Gate's main task: overcoming the world (John 16:33). They *needed* their bodies in order to best express this overcoming. Ti, after all, was recalled to TELAH while still inhabiting her human vehicle. It was only fairly late in the life of the group, when Heaven's Gate learned that Hale-Bopp comet would be near the earth, that Do and the other members began to seriously consider "shedding the human vehicle."

For Heaven's Gate, the body served an essential purpose. It provided the opportunity to overcome greed, lust, and other self-serving pursuits, as befit members of the Kingdom of Heaven. The more they prepared for their transition to TELAH in their

human bodies, the easier it would be. Heaven's Gate seems to have thought that their bodies would be a part of their transition to TELAH. In their writings, it becomes clear that they needed their bodies in order to complete their transition from the worldly realm to that of TELAH. They made this clear in their statement, "Our Position Against Suicide." "We take good care of our vehicles [bodies] so they can function well for us in this task, and we try to protect them from any harm."[34] They seem also to have expected that their bodies would naturally give out, as Ti's body had evidently done. Over time, however, it seemed increasingly unlikely that this would occur collectively.

Heaven's Gate also thought about the bodies they would have once they got to TELAH. "The Next Level body is a creature that looks very attractive, has two eyes, some remnant of a nose, some remnant of ears… It doesn't reproduce. It's not male nor female [sic]. It would probably look like what you might consider a very attractive 'extraterrestrial.'"[35] On their Web site they provided rendering of what their Next Level image would look like.[36]

As with so much else for Heaven's Gate, the TELAH body had a biblical analogue. Here, however, the group turned to the writings of Paul, whom they usually shunned (on the basis that he never met Jesus and could not accurately represent what Jesus had said):

> There will be no males, no females, no children, no families other than your relationship with God, your Lord … no incense is required, no flowing robes, no tinkling bells … Our Father's Kingdom requires … ridding ourselves of the lusts of the human world, and of the binds to the human level.[37]

TELAH, then, would be as Paul urges the Galatians to be (Galatians 3:28), and the TELAH body was like the resurrected body in Paul's imagination, a body "incorruptible and imperishable" (1 Corinthians 15:42).[38]

Long after Ti's departure, Do remained undecided about whether "shedding of the human body" would be necessary in order to ascend to TELAH. Before the arrival of the Hale-Bopp comet, Do thought that members might need to discard their "borrowed human bodies" in order to depart, but more probably "the Father" would not make that a requirement.[39] "He will take us up into His 'cloud of light' before such 'laying down of bodies' need occur."[40] Evidently, the years of waiting and the arrival of the Hale-Bopp comet galvanized Do and the rest of the group to shed their human vehicles.

CONCLUSION

The last communication from Heaven's Gate was fashioned as a press release, and dated March 22, 1997, the day they began to depart.[41] It was sent to various media outlets to coincide with the discovery of their bodies. The release stated that the group now resided in distant space, what is known "in your religious literature" as the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God. The statement goes on to say that the Representatives from the Level Above Human have exited the bodies they wore

for their earthly task in order to "return to the world from whence we came" followed by instructions for others who wished to join them.[42] The Exit Statement said that Heaven's Gate's purpose had been to offer a doorway to the Kingdom of God as well as information about TELAH, and "to work against the forces of what the human level has become." The statement ended, just as their book, *How and When Heaven's Gate May Be Entered,* had, with "some relevant scriptures," including, most chillingly, John 12:25: "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."[43]

Heaven's Gate members claimed that they were never from this world, that they returned from whence they came, after a failed effort to reveal the truth about themselves to those who reside at the human level. That depiction, so eerily refracted through the Bible and their understanding of Jesus as the previous representative, provided them with ways of framing and substantiating their own strange sojourn among those hostile to them and to their message, as so many before them have done.

NOTES

1. Stephen O'Leary, "Perspective On the Millennium," *The Los Angeles Times,* April 22, 1997, B7. Mark Muesse echoes just this sentiment in "Religious Studies and 'Heaven's Gate': Making the Strange Familiar and the Familiar Strange," *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* April 25, 1997, 6–7; and see also Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Heaven's Gate: A Mingling of Traditions," *National Catholic Reporter,* May 2, 1997, 14.
2. Barry Bearak, "Eyes on the Glory: Pied Pipers of Heaven's Gate," *The New York Times,* April 28, 1997, A1.
3. "The Two claimed 'members of the next kingdom' would guide them through the experiences they needed to complete their overcoming. One of the most important was the experience of being 'rejected of men.' Members had to 'test the churches,' which meant asking ministers for food and gas money. Besides the obvious purpose of surviving day to day, 'testing' provided preachers with an opportunity to demonstrate their own Christian commitment, and it helped Bo and Peep's followers overcome their human pride." Robert W. Balch, "Waiting for the Ships: Disillusionment and the Revitalization of Faith in Bo and Peep's UFO Cult," in *The Gods Have Landed: New Religions from Other Worlds,* ed. James Lewis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 143.
4. Balch, "Waiting for the Ships," 151.
5. Barry Bearak, "Eyes on the Glory," B9.
6. Heaven's Gate Web site, "Overview of Our Present Mission."
7. Heaven's Gate Web site, "How and When Heaven's Gate May Be Entered."
8. Balch, "Waiting for the Ships," 149.
9. Ibid., 155.
10. Robert W. Balch and David Taylor, "Making Sense of the Heaven's Gate Suicides," in *Cults, Religion, and Violence,* ed. David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 214–217.
11. Heaven's Gate Web site, "Statement by and E.T. Presently Incarnate."
12. Heaven's Gate Web site, "Do's Intro."
13. Heaven's Gate Web site, "Overview of Present Mission."

14. The original Heaven's Gate Web site was embargoed shortly after their bodies were discovered. However, the writings of Heaven's Gate can be viewed on any number of mirror sites available by using a reliable search engine. Rather than provide unreliable and rapidly changing URLs, I refer to the titles of the working papers on the Heaven's Gate site.
15. Richard Ford is his given name, but he prefers Rio DiAngelo. He was known inside the group as "Neody." Mark Miller, "Secrets of the Cult," *Newsweek,* April 14, 1997, 28–37.
16. Tim Golden, "Man, 58, with Purple Shroud, Commits Suicide, Noting Cult," *The New York Times,* April 2, 1997, A16.
17. Staff writer, "Suicide is Suspected in Death of Ex-Member of California Cult," *Boston Globe,* February 21, 1998, A5.
18. By contrast, over 900 people died at Jonestown, in Guyana, in a mass suicide led by an American, Jim Jones.
19. Heaven's Gate Web site, "How and When Heaven's Gate May Be Entered, Appendix B: Relevant Bible Quotes."
20. Heaven's Gate Web site, "Overview of Present Mission."
21. Heaven's Gate Web site, "How and When Heaven's Gate May Be Entered."
22. Heaven's Gate Web site, "'95 Update."
23. Heaven's Gate Web site, "Last Chance to Evacuate."
24. Heaven's Gate Web site, "'95 Update."
25. Heaven's Gate Web site, "How and When Heaven's Gate May be Entered."
26. "Part of the 'stay blinded' formula goes like this: 'Above all, be married, a good parent, a reasonable churchgoer, buy a house, pay your mortgage, pay your insurance, have a good line of credit, be socially committed, and graciously accept death with the hope that 'through His shed blood,' or some other equally worthless religious precept, you will go to Heaven after your death." Heaven's Gate Web site, "Do's Intro."
27. Heaven's Gate Web site, "How and When Heaven's Gate May be Entered."
28. "Humans with deposits … can likely be identified at this time as some of those who are rapidly losing respect for this world or its 'system.' They are, from the establishment's point of view, being irresponsible or antisocial—and will be seen by the world as duped, crazy, a cult member, a drifter, a loner, a drop-out, a separatist, etc." Heaven's Gate Web site, "'95 Update."
29. One of the members wrote, "For those who may be quick to judge that Ti and Do are two con-artists who deceived these innocent students into following them, whether for personal ego or for monetary gain, or for any other reason you might conjure up, you're gravely mistaken. I am not an innocent victim. It is beyond any doubt to me that **we students and our Teachers are not from this world, but from the Level Above Human.**" Heaven's Gate Web site, "How and When Heaven's Gate May be Entered" (bold in original).
30. Heaven's Gate Web site, "How and When Heaven's Gate May be Entered."
31. Heaven's Gate Web site, "Srrody's Exit Statement."
32. Heaven's Gate Web site, "How and When Heaven's Gate May be Entered."
33. Ibid.
34. Heaven's Gate Web site, "Our Position Against Suicide."
35. Heaven's Gate Web site, "'95 Update."
36. Heaven's Gate Web site, "How a Member of the Kingdom of Heaven Might Appear."
37. Heaven's Gate Web site, "Statement by an E.T. Presently Incarnate."
38. "The true Kingdom and God … and the Evolutionary Level Above Human are completely synonymous. As a genderless Kingdom, it "reproduces" or adds to its Kingdom membership through the use of the metamorphic process." Heaven's Gate Web site, "Statement by

an E.T. Presently Incarnate." Cf. Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

39. Heaven's Gate Web site, "'95 Update."

40. Heaven's Gate Web site, "How and When Heaven's Gate May Be Entered." See also "Our Position Against Suicide," where Do wrote, "We take good care of our vehicles [bodies] so they can function well … and we try to protect them from any harm. We fully desire, expect, and look forward to boarding a spacecraft from the Next Level very soon (in our physical bodies)."

41. Heaven's Gate Web site, "Exit Press Release."

42. Ibid. "If you should choose to do this, logistically it is preferred that you make this exit somewhere in the area of the West or Southwest of the United States … You must call on the name of TI and DO to assist you. In so doing you will engage a communication of sorts, alerting a spacecraft to your location where you will be picked up after shedding your vehicle, and taken to another world by members of the Kingdom of Heaven."

43. Heaven's Gate Web site, "Exit Press Release."

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UFO(s and) Religion

Brenda Denzler

When they saw the Unidentified Flying Object, or UFO, even the chaplains fell to their knees, genuflecting with clasped hands. In July 1957, more than 3,000 military men on an aircraft carrier and the four destroyers that accompanied it watched for 20 minutes as a dark gray cylindrical object measuring approximately 4,000 feet by 350 feet hovered overhead, then darted around at incredible speeds, making impossible maneuvers, before disappearing in a "snap." It was, said one of the witnesses more than four decades later, "a most stirring sight indeed."[1]

A physicist from Southeast Missouri State University was doing field research on reported UFO sightings in the early 1970s and finally had a sighting of his own. Later that night, he recalls, "I slowly succumbed to sleep, believing that my life would never be the same.… For more than a year, as I approached that particular episode during public lectures, I had difficulty dealing with the emotion it stirred. Even now [1981], the impact of the experience may surface without warning."

But it was not just the raw fact of this sighting and the ones that followed that made an impact on this man of science; it was the mutuality of the encounters. "More was involved than the measurement of physical properties of UFOs by dispassionate observers," he concluded. "A relationship, cognizance, between us and the UFO intelligence evolved.… This facet of the UFO phenomenon perturbed me as much as the advanced technology we observed. It is a facet I cannot really fathom —and I have thought about it every day for more than seven years."[2]

A trailer factory worker living in the area where that same UFO flap was occurring in the 1970s reported that he walked out his front door to go to work before dawn one morning and found a 20 foot by 15 foot disk hovering over a nearby telephone pole. "I thought I must be dreaming, but no, there it was, bright yellow, green and red lights along the bottom.… I stood and watched this thing for about five minutes just to be sure that I was seeing it," he wrote 25 years later. "Yes, folks, there are UFOs. It changed my life ever since that day."[3]

Since 1947 when pilot Kenneth Arnold reported seeing nine silvery objects flying over Mt. Ranier, Washington, hundreds of thousands of UFO sightings have been

reported by people from all walks of life. Regardless of the witness's education, socioeconomic status, occupation, gender, or race, the experience is very often a stunning one. It is an encounter with that which appears to be "wholly other"—a modern-day encounter with what theologian Rudolf Otto called the *mysterium tremendum*—that which evokes feelings of awe and attraction.[4] As the witness seeks to make sense of the experience, the result is often a quiet but profound shift in his or her ideas about and practice of religion.[5] But sometimes the result is the formation of blatantly religious or quasi-religious movements with a UFO twist.

"The God of orthodox religion has been found wanting … and can no longer be relied upon," lamented Christopher Evans in his 1973 book, *Cults of Unreason.* "In his place new Gods have arisen—superintelligent beings who are technologically and, perhaps, morally superior to mankind. They come not from some out-dated Dantean Heaven, but from one or many of the myriad planets which undoubtedly exist in the vast arena of the universe. They no longer ride on clouds or chariots of fire, but in fast and maneuverable spaceships of a bewildering variety of designs, most commonly shaped like giant inverted saucers."[6]

As Evans correctly observed, the earliest culturally significant religious response to the UFO phenomenon, with its intimation that there might be intelligent life in the universe beyond planet earth, was a tendency to place UFO occupants in a more or less salvific role previously reserved for venerated deities. Perhaps this occurred because the more established religious bodies remained silent on the topic of UFOs and their presumed occupants, taking their cue from a scientific establishment that was at best coolly tentative about the possibility of extraterrestrial life anywhere in the universe and thus dismissed the UFO phenomenon as nothing more than hoaxes, hallucinations, and "Cold War jitters." In 1952 *Time* magazine became the first to publish anything about religion and UFOs.[7] *Science News Letter* followed suit in 1953.[8] It was not until 1956 that a major religious periodical, *The Christian Century,* gave the subject of extraterrestrial life any attention.[9] Instead of a sustained and reasoned discussion about the religious significance of UFOs and the theological questions that even their *potential* reality might imply, mainstream religions left witnesses largely on their own to devise world views broad and meaningful enough to encompass what they experienced. Some of these witnesses found at least tentative answers in the "contactee" movements that began in the early 1950s.[10]

Contactees were those who claimed that they not only saw a UFO but had personal contact with its occupants. More often than not, those who started and were most attracted to contactee movements had preexisting metaphysical interests that lent themselves well to reinterpretation in light of the UFO phenomenon. The prototypical contactee who set the pattern for many of those who would follow was "Professor" George Adamski (1891–1965).

THE CONTACTEES: FACE-TO-FACE ENCOUNTERS

A Polish immigrant who worked in a hamburger stand on the slopes of Mt. Palomar in southern California, Adamski was already deeply embedded in the

metaphysical community of his day by the time he claimed to have had his UFO experiences. For decades he gave lectures on the occult and "Universal Law," and during Prohibition in the 1920s and 1930s, he founded an esoteric "monastery."[11] It was not until October 9, 1946, Adamski later claimed, that he saw his first UFO, which provided him with material for a whole new series of lectures in 1949 and 1950. Then, on November 20, 1952, Adamski had what eventually became one of the most widely discussed UFO encounters ever when he met the jumpsuited occupant of one of the crafts—a spaceman with classically Aryan good looks who introduced himself as "Orthon." The story of this encounter was published in 1953 as an addition to a book titled *Flying Saucers Have Landed,* by British occultist Desmond Leslie (1921–2001). Two years later, Adamski published a further account of his contacts with the aliens, including trips via UFO to some of the other (inhabited) planets in our solar system. On these lengthy excursions, Adamski was told that people on Orthon's home planet lived in peace and harmony and that they came to Earth as part of a mission to warn us about the dangers of nuclear proliferation.[12] Over the years, Adamski's story and its attendant message struck a chord with thousands of people, allowing him to travel throughout the United States and Europe giving lectures about the Space Brothers and their philosophy.

However, Adamski also had his detractors, who accused him of falsifying photographic evidence and lying about his supposedly real contacts. In particular, they pointed out that he appeared to have reused story elements from a little-known 1949 science fiction novel he wrote. Even the vaunted philosophy of Orthon and his compatriots sounded very much like the metaphysical system that Adamski taught for many years before his alleged encounters—a system he published in 1936 and attributed to masters of the Far East. Yet the evidence against Adamski's claims, powerful as it was, was never all-encompassing and conclusive enough to convince everyone, and there remains to this day a small group of Adamski supporters. As cultural historian Colin Bennett observes, there is no doubt that Adamski was a "likeable rogue" who at times "tarted up" some of his experiences, but "our world would have been a much more comfortable place had Adamski been proved to be an imposter." That kind of incontrovertible proof, alas, was not to be had.[13]

To the surprise and amusement of many (and the frustration of others), publication of *Flying Saucers Have Landed* generated a flood of similar contact claims, creating what one historian described as a climate of "delicious insanity."[14] Like Adamski, a central topic of interest to most of those who reported such encounters was religion and philosophy. Truman Bethurum (1898–1969) in 1954 publicly reported his meeting two years earlier with a stunningly beautiful spaceship captain, Aura Rhanes, at whose behest he solicited funds to set up a "Sanctuary of Thought" devoted to metaphysical teaching.[15] In 1955, Orfeo Angelucci (d. 1993) claimed that he spent seven days aboard an extraterrestrial craft in January 1953, at which time he was commissioned to spread the space beings' message of peace and love to the people of Earth. One reason Angelucci gave for his mission introduced a new twist into the emerging religious interpretation of the UFO phenomenon: according to the space beings, they and the people of Earth shared an ancient kinship. This claim

was also implied in the 1956 revelations of contactee Howard Menger (b. 1922), who himself introduced a new theme, though one that was not to become widely reported until the advent of the abductees several decades later. According to Menger, his contacts with the space brothers had occurred since childhood simply because they were making contact with "their own."[16]

THE CONTACTEES: CHANNELED MESSAGES

Though face-to-face contact with alien spaceship pilots was a central feature of some of the earliest contactee reports, many of the movement's eventual leaders (and their followers) did not claim to have ongoing physical experiences—or, indeed, any physical experiences at all—with the extraterrestrial visitors. Instead, most contactees reported that their encounters with UFO occupants took place by means of telepathy. One of the first of these was George Van Tassel (1910–1978), an aeronautical engineer who announced in his 1952 book, *I Rode a Flying Saucer!,* that he made telepathic contact with a variety of extraterrestrial beings who circled the Earth in their UFOs on a mission to raise the planet's "vibratory level" and thus improve the human race.[17] Van Tassel was a long-time student of metaphysics, having founded the "Brotherhood of the Cosmic Christ" in the late 1940s. In 1953, he founded the Ministry of Universal Wisdom as an organization devoted to the scientific exploration of the UFO experience. One of the most venerable resources Van Tassel consulted in this exploration was the Bible. Therein, he discovered, was evidence that the human race was in actuality an extraterrestrial race that had been seeded onto the planet in order to grow and develop spiritually. Because negative space beings interfered in this process, he deduced, an extraterrestrial woman named Mary became pregnant and landed on earth to give birth to the historic Jesus, whose mission was to help humanity in its evolution. This same Jesus, said Van Tassel, was preparing to return to Earth in the 1950s with a fleet of spaceships in order to save the planet from those whose obsession with developing more and better atomic bombs indicated that they were still under the control of the negative galactic forces.[18]

Despite his attempts to reconcile the UFO phenomenon with traditional Christian religion, Van Tassel's main contributions to popular UFO religion did not lie in his unique theology but in his sponsorship of a yearly UFO convention and in his telepathic communications with an extraterrestrial by the name of Ashtar. As part of the work of his Ministry of Universal Wisdom, Van Tassel sponsored a yearly UFO convention at Giant Rock in the Mojave Desert, where his alien informants told him to build a rejuvenation machine or time machine ("a high-voltage electrostatic generator that would supply a broad range of frequencies to recharge the cell structure"[19]). For nearly a quarter of a century (1953–1977), these conventions provided a venue where tens of thousands of people with all kinds of UFO experiences —from long-distance sightings to near-at-hand encounters to deeply personal contacts—gathered to compare experiences, hear and give lectures, buy and sell books, and form networks.

Perhaps in part as a result of these events, contactee stories very early came to share what UFO researcher Isabel Davis called "a strong family likeness."[20] Aliens in these stories were seldom just passing by our corner of the galaxy and investigating a planet that showed surprising signs of harboring intelligent life. Instead, they almost always seemed to know humanity already (sometimes even claiming kinship with us)—and what they knew alarmed them. As a result, they came to Earth to help us survive our shortcomings, which were about to kill us all. Time after time, the aliens promised a mass landing of UFOs just a few months or a few years into the future. Yet time after time these modern heralds of terrestrial salvation, whose mission was to save the human race from immanent extinction and show it the way toward moral and technological advancement, refused to boldly land on the White House lawn or at Buckingham Palace or the Kremlin and state their case. They insisted, instead, on imparting their wisdom and warnings to people whose social status and political connections made them least likely to effect the immediate and widespread moral and technological reforms that the aliens claimed they were trying to bring about.

Because the aliens kept promising to land, yet showed such a consistent reticence to come unambiguously out into the public eye, contactees and their followers who promulgated the messages of the visitors often endured disbelief and ridicule. Then, as promise after promise of mass landings failed to come true, the messages from the space brothers slowly began to change. Contactees began to report that an ethical reason prevented mass landings: humanity's extraterrestrial benefactors were unwilling to interfere with our free will by landing directly and taking control—whether by might or by the sheer power of their intellectual, technological, and moral superiority. Rather, said the contactees, humanity must freely choose the guidance of their would-be saviors. "The truth [of the aliens' warnings and teachings] must be infiltrated rather than trumpeted,"[21] they suggested. The truth became not so much a matter of the aliens making worldwide political, scientific, and social changes, as a matter of each human being making an individual decision to accept or reject the teachings and guidance of the Space Brothers.[22] One of the more important purveyors of this kind of alien truth during the last half of the twentieth century was a loquacious extraterrestrial entity known as Ashtar.

The second of Van Tassel's long-term contributions to popular UFO religion, besides his Giant Rock UFO conventions, was his initiation of telepathic contact in the early 1950s with an extraterrestrial spaceman who identified himself as "Ashtar, Commandant Vela Quadra sector, station Schare"—a member of the galactic constabulary sent to liberate Earth from its control by negative space beings. Initially, members of the Ministry of Universal Wisdom were content to receive these transmissions and disseminate them primarily within their limited group. But a few who were more passionate about popularizing the messages broke away from the Ministry and began their own group, resulting in a proliferation of such groups that continued for many years. Before long, messages from "Ashtar Command" were being channeled not only by Van Tassel but by dozens of others in the contactee and metaphysical communities. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, these messages promised that soon a public landing of a fleet of UFOs would occur whose occupants

would set matters straight on Earth. Unfortunately, all of these predictions of global salvation failed to come to pass. Though devotees of the Ashtar transmissions were stymied by repeated disconfirmations, they eventually understood that the true nature of the messages was more esoteric and less physical than they first thought. Ashtar Command was not offering humanity salvation in global and physical terms, but in more personal and metaphysical ones. Today, as sociologist Christopher Helland noted, the *concept* of Ashtar has fared better than any one of the many groups who channeled and promoted the Ashtar teachings, most of whom slowly disbanded. As for the teachings themselves, they have become largely indistinguishable from those of other prominent metaphysical groups.[23]

Just as Adamski was not the only person who claimed to have face-to-face contact with the extraterrestrial occupants of UFOs, so Van Tassel was not the only one who claimed to have nonphysical communications with the visitors.[24] Like Van Tassel, others often felt compelled by the power of the messages they received to broadcast them to the widest possible audience. Among those who did so with singular success were Ernest (1904–1971) and Ruth Norman (1900–1993), who founded the Unarius Science of Life movement after publication of Ernest's 1956 book, *Voice of Venus,* which described his psychic trip to Venus and the knowledge he acquired from its inhabitants.[25] That same year the Venusians made another showing when London taxi driver and long-time metaphysician George King (1919–1997) founded the Aetherius Society, named after the Cosmic Master Aetherius, a native of Venus who contacted King via telepathy two years earlier with the announcement that King had been chosen as the Venusians' "primary terrestrial channel."[26] Like the followers of Adamski, adherents of the Unarius Science of Life and of the Aetherius Society can still be found today in small numbers, upholding the legacies of their founders.

One of the most notorious UFO religions to emerge from the "delicious insanity" of the contactee era did not surface until the mid-1970s, when Marshall Herff Applewhite (1931–1997), son of a Presbyterian minister, met Bonnie Lu Nettles (1927–1985), who introduced him to the metaphysical principles she was studying. In the context of a series of dreams, visions, and mystical revelations that ensued, Applewhite and Nettles began to believe that they were the two witnesses prophesied in the biblical Book of Revelation. In keeping with the role of spiritual shepherding that this entailed, they called themselves "Bo" and "Peep." Into this fusion of Christianity and popular metaphysics, they inserted ideas about UFOs that by then were not altogether uncommon in either metaphysical or contactee circles. In their idiosyncratic reinterpretation of the Christian faith, biblical references to "clouds" were often understood to mean "UFOs," and the heavenly kingdom of God that was the destination of the righteous was not some vague spiritual realm but a literal, physical place in the universe that was accessible only by spacecraft. The point of earthly life, they taught, was to overcome Earth's "poisoned spiritual atmosphere" by separating from the world so as to reach the "next level" of human evolution—the creation of a new kind of being, an immortal transhuman who was capable of continual spiritual growth.[27] When the Hale-Bopp Comet appeared in 1997, the few remaining followers of Applewhite and Nettles made their separation from this world final and

at the same time cemented their place in the history of popular UFO religions by committing mass suicide in order to ascend to a space ship that some UFO enthusiasts claimed was hiding in the tail of the comet.[28]

A different understanding of what constitutes human progress emerged from another popular UFO religion that began in 1973 after former race car driver Claude Vorilhon (b. 1946) (now known by his spiritual name of "Raël") had an unexpected face-to-face encounter with several small humanoid aliens who told him that human beings were genetically engineered and put on earth by a race of extraterrestrial scientists known as "the Elohim." The only hope of immortality that any individual human might have, he was told, lay in the regeneration of suitable replacement bodies through cloning. To that end, Raël's followers expect the Elohim to return in UFOs, bringing with them the technology to provide a scientific salvation via cloning to the Raëlian faithful around the world, who have contracted to have pieces of their skull bones preserved in ice should they die before the expected arrival. In the meantime, followers are encouraged to be successful in their worldly careers and to experience pleasure in whatever forms they can find it—especially including sexuality—for it is only "those who find total self-fulfillment [who] will be immortalized through cloning."

But the mission of the Raëlians is not entirely about physical gratification. In addition to preparing an embassy for the returning Elohim, Raëlians are assiduously attempting to discover the scientific secrets of humanity's creators by learning how to perform their own cloning operations. In 2002, Brigitte Boisselier, a high-ranking Raëlian disciple and CEO of the Raëlian-controlled firm Clonaid, announced that company scientists had produced the first cloned human baby. Though several subsequent claims of other successful human cloning procedures emerged, the company declined to allow outside scientists to test the babies and establish the veracity of the claims.[29]

THE SILENT CONTACTEES

The contactee movement of the 1950s and 60s provided a very visible group of people for sociologists, psychologists, and religious studies scholars to study. They were easy to identify, easy to find, and thus easy targets for both serious research and less-serious journalism. However, many other individuals during those years also had odd personal experiences involving UFOs but did not become a part of the contactee movement; thus, their claims and experiences are less well documented in the scholarly literature … or even in news accounts of the day. Paranormalist John Keel called them the "silent contactees"—people who privately told an inquiring UFO researcher about having had close contact encounters, but who were very reluctant for their stories to be publicly recounted.[30] Because of their reluctance, and their failure to attract followers (indeed, their lack of desire to *have* followers), they usually went unnoticed. Sometimes, though, their stories would surface.

On the night of June 26, 1959, at the Anglican Mission at Boianai, New Guinea, a bright light approached the mission station from the northwest and descended to

within about 500 feet. The priest, Father William Booth Gill, called for others at the station to come and see the disk-shaped object, which soon disgorged three small, humanoid beings who walked around on its perimeter. The four-hour spectacle was, Gill wrote to a friend the next day, "at times … absolutely breathtaking." The next night just before sunset the UFO returned and the three small occupants re-emerged and continued to move about on the outside of it as if they were doing something purposeful, while a fourth small humanoid stood and looked down at Gill and the assembled islanders. On an impulse, Gill raised his arm and waved at the watchman, who surprised the crowd by waving back. After a lengthy exchange of signaled greetings between the disk occupants and the mission station personnel, Gill realized that he could not convince the visitors to land, so he and some of the other observers went indoors to eat supper and then have an Evensong service in the church. Several hours later, the remaining witnesses reported, the UFO and its occupants left as visibility diminished and the night skies became overcast. In all, the two sightings lasted for more than six hours and involved almost 40 witnesses at the mission. When news of the sighting leaked to the press, Gill was approached by supporters of contactee Adamski, who wanted him to join forces with them to publicize the immanent arrival of the Space Brothers. Gill, however, declined, saying that he just could not "swallow" Adamski's stories. Eighteen years later, he reflected on the furor that surrounded the event.

> The thing that amazed me about the whole thing was that it became so well known. This was just a local thing for me.… Had I done this as a bit of journalism that I'm going to make a packet on, I think I might have approached it in an entirely different way … but I just didn't have that sort of thing in mind. I wasn't interested in doing anything but just recording it. Had I done all this with a view toward publicity, I certainly would have been making money on it.[31]

One mental health professional who claims a history of personal close encounters observed that, "Interactions between beings and people are replete with events that swing from local to universal, from absurd to sublime."[32] Many times, the experiences of the silent contactees were no less absurd-sounding than the experiences of their more publicity-seeking fellows. The oddness of the reports that surfaced from time to time from this quieter group could, in fact, be very baffling.

In 1961, Wisconsin plumber and farmer Joe Simonton reported that a disk-shaped UFO landed in his driveway and opened up to reveal three occupants who appeared to be cooking something. They indicated to him via a rough kind of sign language that they needed water, which Simonton obligingly provided. He was rewarded, in return, with a gift of what the occupants of the odd-looking craft were cooking: some rather tasteless, flat cakes. When news of Simonton's sighting spread, the cakes were sent to the National Investigation Committee on Aerial Phenomena (a grassroots UFO investigative group) and to the United States Air Force for analysis. Both organizations agreed that the bland pastry was nothing more exotic than buckwheat pancakes.[33]

Not only could the experiences of the silent contactees seem just as strange as those reported by the Adamskis and Van Tassels of the world, they could also have just as profound an impact on the experiencer's religious world view. In April 1964, Socorro, New Mexico, patrolman Lonnie Zamora encountered an egg-shaped UFO sitting on the ground near an explosives shack in the desert. As he got out of his patrol car to investigate this strange sight, he heard the sound of two pieces of metal being clapped together, like a heavy door closing, then a roar, followed by a blue flame from the underside of the craft as it lifted slowly off the ground, tilting toward the shack. As Zamora dived for cover behind his car, the roar turned into a whine and the UFO flew away. When backup officers arrived at the site a few minutes later, they found indentations in the soil and smoldering brush where the object had been sitting, along with a thoroughly shaken and dirt-covered Zamora. One patrolman commented that Zamora looked like he had "seen the devil," to which Zamora replied, "Maybe I have." Before he would speak to investigators outside his own police department, he insisted on seeing a priest.[34]

A completely different impression was made on French farmer Maurice Masse more than a year later when he encountered two very small, pale, large-headed beings near a large round vehicle in the middle of his lavender field outside of Valensole, France. When Masse attempted to approach the beings, he reported, they paralyzed him by pointing a tube at him, but he could still watch and hear them as they walked around gathering plants and communicating via strange grunting sounds. After they reentered their craft and flew away, Masse found himself released from the paralysis. An investigation of the ground where the UFO sat revealed indentations, as in Socorro, but no smoldering vegetation. Instead, that area of the field simply would not produce healthy plants for many years afterward. Masse refused to discuss his personal impressions of the experience in detail, replying to inquiries by stating simply that "One always says too much." But several years later his wife admitted during an interview that her husband received an intelligible message from the entities and that he thought of them daily, considering the event a spiritual experience. Because of this, he felt that the ground where they landed was somehow hallowed, and he urged his family to keep it in their possession forever.[35]

UFO(S AND) RELIGION

The religious valences of the UFO phenomenon manifested themselves early in the modern UFO era. At first, that manifestation occurred most noticeably in the contactee movement, where the figure of the UFO and its presumed occupants tended to be grafted into preexisting metaphysical belief systems. Indeed, the advent of the Space Brothers provided the loose-knit metaphysical community with an infusion of energy at a time when its fortunes appeared to be somewhat spent. Being a subculture where contact with higher powers was the norm for adherents, rather than reserved for spiritual specialists, contactees within that milieu not only went public with reports of their experiences but also expected to continue having them … and continue publicizing them.

For contactees who stood outside the metaphysical thought world, however, UFO experiences usually were interpreted in terms of whatever religious or philosophical world view was already available to them. In the dominant Judeo-Christian culture of the day, neither direct apprehension of something outside the norms of everyday life nor individual theological speculation were valued activities for the average person. Instead, these activities were reserved for spiritual specialists—saints, mystics, theologians, and clerics—operating within (and thus constrained by) the established framework of their various traditions. Under the circumstances, contactees within this more mainstream religious culture were not as inclined to go public with their unusual experiences. Though they may have used religious frameworks to privately interpret their experiences—often viewing them either as ineffable manifestations of the divine or as frightening encounters with evil—one can read the overall silence of mainstream theologians and ministers on the subject of UFOs as evidence that these silent contactees did not tend to turn to the established religious authorities for insights.

Even so, the silence of mainstream religious culture in the West with regard to the appearance of UFOs is remarkable, since the phenomenon garnered a great deal of public attention. By 1973, 95 percent of the people in the United States had heard of UFOs, which is one of the highest public awareness indices ever recorded.[36] Yet many theologians and certainly most of the rank and file clergy were reluctant to take up the challenge of the phenomenon, leaving the subject of UFOs and religion wide open for exploration and, in some cases, exploitation. In the 1950s and 60s, during the heyday of the contactee era, most of those few theologians who tackled the subject downplayed its significance, saying that the idea of the existence of extraterrestrial life was not a major concern to religion.[37] One theologian commented that whenever he thought of the possibility, the verses that came to mind were from the Beatles—not the Bible: "When I find myself in times of trouble, / Mother Mary comes to me / Speaking words of wisdom, / Let it be."[38]

Ministers and adherents of small fundamentalist groups were the only segment of Christian faith to respond more or less formally to UFOs (considering them to be demonic manifestations masquerading as extraterrestrial life forms), and those responses were both few in number and limited in scope, being published and promoted mainly within that rather limited milieu. There were only two other ministers who made any significant attempts to wrestle with the problem. In 1968, Presbyterian minister Barry Downing suggested that biblical events and even biblical teachings may have been inspired by early extraterrestrial visitors.[39] And by the mid-1970s, Lutheran pastor Ted Peters expressed his concern about the ways in which the UFO phenomenon inspired feelings of religious awe that could amount to virtual idolatry. While it was encouraging to know that the "religious sensibilities" of modern humanity were alive and well, he wrote, it was disturbing to think that people might be conflating the technological hope implicitly offered by UFOs with the spiritual hope for a remedy for human wickedness that only God could provide. The messages of the UFO occupants delivered via the contactees, Peters noted, seemed to do just that by promoting a gnostic-style, "do-it-yourself" prescription

for salvation. In the end, he said, "The UFO religions have not yet heard or comprehended the Christian gospel."[40]

These kinds of thoughtful encounters between mainstream religion and the idea of extraterrestrials were rare. A 1985 survey sent to Christian seminaries and Jewish synagogues revealed that there was virtually no formal discussion of the implications of extraterrestrial life for their faith traditions.[41] In a 1994 survey, religious leaders still maintained that the discovery of an advanced alien civilization would not significantly necessitate a rethinking of doctrine, nor would it raise serious questions among their church and synagogue members.[42]

Not everyone agreed. A 1960 study from the Brookings Institute reported that the effect on religion of the discovery of intelligent life in the universe would be profound, especially for fundamentalists of all faiths. The report advised that further studies be conducted on the position that major world religions took on the question, but such studies did not occur because few thoughtful, articulated positions were available to be studied.[43] This is not to say that the significance of extraterrestrial life has never been considered before by religions. In fact, throughout the centuries there have been many speculations about the possible existence of other inhabited worlds and what that might mean, all of which bubbled to the surface with renewed vigor in the nineteenth century as scientists and theologians grappled with Darwin's theory of evolution and the question of how life originated on earth. But these speculations tended to keep the alien on his own planet, at a safe distance from the earth rather than in spaceships circling the earth, and no clear position statements emerged from either single denominations or broader faith traditions. In fact, the only religious bodies to take the question of extraterrestrial life seriously into their formal theology during this period were three alternative religions that started in the nineteenth century: Swedenborgians, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Seventh-Day Adventists.[44]

By the early twentieth century, the debates of the previous century were mostly forgotten, and the idea of the extraterrestrial was further explored mainly in the new literary genre of science fiction.[45] It was not until 1998 that the question of extraterrestrial life and religion was once again taken seriously by academic and religious thinkers when the Templeton Foundation sponsored a conference to examine the question.[46] Almost four decades after the Brookings report, the situation was virtually unchanged. One of the conference participants noted that, despite the fact that the major world religions in the twentieth century claimed that they had no problem with the notion of intelligent extraterrestrial life, no substantial theological work has been done on this question. She predicted that the abstract idea was probably more acceptable than the proven fact would be.[47]

Based on the reactions of people who reported close UFO encounters in the latter half of the twentieth century, there is more reason to take the opinions of the Brookings Institute seriously than to uncritically accept the denials of the leaders of the faithful. No matter what effect the officially announced discovery of intelligent life might have in formal religious systems, its apparent discovery by average citizens during the 1950s and 1960s in the shape of UFOs very often resulted in a

rethinking—sometimes a radical rethinking—of long-held religious beliefs, which in turn sometimes gave rise to New Religious Movements (NRMs). At one point there were more than 150 contactee groups in the United States devoted to studying and supporting the extraterrestrial teachings of their leaders.[48]

The lack of guidance from religious leaders left the field open to a whole range of quasi-authoritative, but always authoritative-sounding, speculation—not so much about formal issues in Christian theology such as whether the atoning sacrifice of Jesus would cover the sins of nonterrestrial beings (issues most likely to be taken up by trained theologians), but about events in biblical history and how those might be related to, or even explained by, the UFO phenomenon. As noted above, it was not hard to read proto-UFO events back into ancient texts, finding UFOs in clouds and alien Space Brothers in angels—and even in the Virgin Mary and in Jesus. It was equally easy to find the devil. In 1960, occultist Trevor James advocated a "spiritually scientific" approach to UFO contacts, but warned that it would be risky since UFO occupants were both "of the anti-Christ" and "of the Christ forces."[49] This ability to see the modern UFO phenomenon in ancient religious frameworks was not confined to Christians. Sheikh Nazim Effendi of the Nakshband Order of Dervishes was less equivocal than James about the nature of the UFO occupants. He remarked that UFOs were actually operated by jinn who shared the Earth with the human race and wanted to enslave us.[50] In 1963, Robert Charroux suggested that ancient Sanskrit texts from India contained information about proto-UFO visitations, a theme that was picked up and elaborated upon 30 years later by David Hatcher Childress and by Keith Thompson.[51]

Though most people tended to look askance at the messages relayed by contactees from the Space Brothers, some of the ideas that first emerged in that specialized context proved to have a great deal of popular appeal and cultural staying power. One of the most important is the idea that UFO occupants were on earth thousands of years ago and have been interacting with humanity for eons—working in the guise of (or, more charitably, being mistaken for) gods. As the theoretical source of many of our terrestrial religious traditions, UFO-nauts have also been credited by these mostly ad hoc theologians with everything from building the Great Pyramid in Egypt to teaching primitive human beings the arts of civilization.[52]

Given this level of extraterrestrial involvement in human history, these amateur theologians have asked, what is the real nature of humanity's relationship to them? It is on this question that there has been the most variation of opinion. The earliest messages of the Space Brothers from the contactees suggested that our two species shared a common extraterrestrial ancestry—an idea that would have been a natural outgrowth of the idea being debated in the nineteenth century about very primitive life forms having been introduced to earth from seed-bearing comets that got caught in our planet's gravitational field. According to the early Space Brothers, however, human beings arrived on Earth not as primitive organisms that had to evolve into humanity, but as prehistoric space travelers who got stranded here (or who were sent here as punishment for crimes committed elsewhere in the galaxy). As this idea of our extraterrestrial origins developed, the ancestors of modern UFO occupants

slowly began to be credited with a more active role. Human beings, said the ad hoc, "street" theologians, were not just accidentally seeded here, but deliberately seeded as part of an attempt to jump-start intelligent life on this planet. Perhaps the ultimate elaboration of the theory about human origins in relationship to UFO occupants is that propounded by Zechariah Sitchin, who has maintained in a series of popular books that extraterrestrials from a home world that is the twelfth planet in this solar system came to Earth many thousands of years ago and genetically engineered the human race by combining their own genes with the DNA of a protohominid race in order to produce a moderately intelligent and capable servant race.[53]

In the past few years, the scientifically confirmed discovery of other planets outside our own tiny solar system has done what 50 years of well-documented UFO sighting and encounter reports largely failed to do—spark the interest of a few theologians in the question of the impact that the discovery of intelligent alien life might have on Christian and Jewish theology.[54] Until unambiguous and officially acknowledged contact with an intelligent extraterrestrial race is actually made, however, street-level God talk and NRMs that link UFOs and ultimate concerns will continue because people from all walks of life continue to report close encounter experiences with UFOs. Keith Thompson quotes Heidegger's observation that we are living in a new and sometimes frightening time that has us collectively hovering between a death of the old gods and the birth of new gods. "If there is a 'teaching' of the saucers," Thompson suggests, "perhaps it is to remind us of the multiple worlds we inhabit, a reality with which most of humanity has lived for centuries."[55]

NOTES

1. Whitley Strieber and Anne Strieber, *The Communion Letters* (New York: HarperPrism, 1997), 180–181.

2. Harley D. Rutledge, *Project Identification: The First Scientific Study of UFO Phenomena* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981), 47, 232–233.

3. G.L. Oliver, Letter to the Editor, *Arkansas Democart-Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), August 12, 1997.

4. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational,* trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1923).

5. See Brenda Denzler, "Religious Affiliation and Attitudes among Members of the UFO Community in the USA," in *UFO Religions,* ed. Christopher Partridge (London: Routledge, 2003).

6. Christopher Evans, *Cults of Unreason* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1973), 137–138.

7. Anonymous, "The Theology of Saucers," *Time,* August 18, 1952, 62.

8. Anonymous, "Biblical Flying Saucers," *Science News Letter* 63 (March 7, 1955): 148.

9. Norman Pittenger, "Christianity and the Man on Mars," *The Christian Century,* June 20, 1956, 747–748. For an excellent discussion of Pittenger's extraterrestrial theology, see T. Peter Park, "The 'Cosmic Christianity' of W. Norman Pittenger," posted on the Mythfolk list,

http://www.mail-archive.com/mythfolk@yahoogroups.com/msg00139.html (accessed December 21, 2005).

10. Though the UFO-oriented contactee movement began in the 1950s, many people prior to this time claimed contact with extraterrestrial beings. These protocontactees, however, established contact through telepathy or trance—not through actual physical, face-to-face encounters, as many of the earliest contactees of the 1950s would later claim to have done. As J. Gordon Melton observed, the contactee movement in the last half of the twentieth century came out of a long metaphysical tradition in which the only really new element was the UFO. See "The Contactees," in *The Gods Have Landed: New Religions from Other Worlds,* ed. James R. Lewis (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 1–14.

11. During Prohibition, the manufacture of alcoholic beverages like wine was confined to religious organizations that, presumably, needed it for sacramental purposes.

12. Desmond Leslie and George Adamski, *Flying Saucers Have Landed* (New York: The British Book Centre, 1953); George Adamski, *Inside the Flying Saucers* (New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1955), reprint of *Inside the Space Ships.*

13. Colin Bennett, *Looking for Orthon* (New York: Paraview Press, 2001), 158, 175, and 208.

14. Ibid., 69.

15. Truman Bethurum, *Aboard a Flying Saucer* (Los Angeles: DeVorss and Co., 1954). Two years later, Rhanes became the first extraterrestrial named in a lawsuit when Bethurum's wife sued for divorce on the grounds that her husband's affections were alienated by the captivating captain. For the legal action, see Isabel Davis, "Meet the Extraterrestrial," *Fantastic Universe* 8, no. 5 (November 1957): 35; and Coral and Jim Lorenzen, *Flying Saucer Occupants* (New York: Signet Books), 39. For the establishment of the Sanctuary of Thought, see Jerome Clark, *The Emergence of a Phenomenon: UFOs from the Beginning through 1959,* vol. 2, *The UFO Encyclopedia* (Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics, 1992), 76–79.

16. For Orfeo Angelucci, see *The Secret of the Saucers* (Amherst, WI: Amherst Press, 1955); as well as Davis, "Meet the Extraterrestrial," 34–35; and Clark, *The Emergence of a Phenomenon,* 47–49. For Howard Menger, see *From Outer Space To You* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1959), and Clark, *The Emergence of a Phenomenon,* 246–249.

17. George Van Tassel, *I Rode a Flying Saucer! The Mystery of the Flying Saucers Revealed* (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing, 1952).

18. George Van Tassel, *When Stars Look Down,* 2nd ed. (La Jolla, CA: Trade Service Publications, 1999).

19. From http://www.integratron.com/2History/History.html (accessed December 15, 2005).

20. Davis, "Meet the Extraterrestrial," 40–43.

21. Evans, *Cults of Unreason,* 149.

22. The introduction of new ideas and new practices to groups whose expectations were shattered, resulting in a real or threatened reduction in group commitment, is a common strategy for the repair and maintenance of commitment. Most commonly, new ideas and practices are not specifically presented as entirely new, but are instead framed as adjustments or extensions of the previous ideas and practices advocated by the group. The result is a set of values and habits that bear enough continuity with earlier values and habits to prevent the leaders from appearing (to themselves or to others) as rank opportunists willing to change their teachings for the sake of gaining a following, yet that are novel enough to recapture the interest, enthusiasm, and support of group members—and, potentially, new supporters. See the classic

study by Leon Festinger, Henry Riechen, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956); and Robert W. Balch, "Waiting for the Ships: Disillusionment and the Revitalization of Faith in Bo and Peep's UFO Cult," in *The Gods Have Landed,* ed. Lewis, 137–166.

23. Christopher Helland, "From Extraterrestrials to Ultraterrestrials: The Evolution of the Concept of Ashtar," in *UFO Religions,* ed. Partridge, 162–178. See also Helland's discussion in "Ashtar Command," in *UFOs and Popular Culture: An Encyclopedia of Contemporary Myth,* ed. J.R. Lewis (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 2000), 37–40.

24. Indeed, the idea of telepathic or out-of-body communications with extraterrestrials began 200 years earlier with Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). Not until the 1950s, however, were such communications linked to aerial phenomena like UFOs. See Melton, "The Contactees," 2–8.

25. Ernest L. Norman, *The Voice of Venus* (El Cajon, CA: Unarius Academy of Science, 1956). See also Diana Tumminia and R. George Kirkpatrick, "Unarius: Emergent Aspects of an American Flying Saucer Group," in *The Gods Have Landed,* ed. Lewis, 85–104; and Diana Tumminia, "When the Archangel Died: From Revelation to Routinisation of Charisma in Unarius," in *UFO Religions,* ed. Partridge, 62–83.

26. The Aetherius Society is one of the more well-studied contactee groups from the 1950s. For a brief presentation of its history, see Simon G. Smith, "Opening a Channel to the Stars: The Origins and Development of the Aetherius Society," in *UFO Religions,* ed. Partridge, 84–102. A somewhat edgier presentation of the Aetherius Society's history can be found in Evans, *Cults of Unreason,* 150–164. The term "channeling," which is widely used today to describe the process of using altered states of consciousness to contact entities or retrieve information from nonphysical realms, appears to have gotten its start with the announcement of Master Aetherius to King. See J. Gordon Melton, "New Thought and the New Age," in *Perspectives on the New Age,* ed. James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 15–29.

27. Balch, "Waiting for the Ships"; also Robert W. Balch and David Taylor, "Seekers and Saucers: The Role of the Cultic Milieu in Joining a UFO Cult," *American Behavioral Scientist* 20 (1977): 839–860; Robert W. Balch, "Looking Behind the Scenes in a Religious Cult: Implications for the Study of Conversion," *Sociological Analysis* 41 (1980): 137–143; and "Bo and Peep: A Case Study of the Origins of Messianic Leadership," in *Millennialism and Charisma,* ed. Roy Wallis (Belfast: The Queen's University, 1982): 13–71.

28. See James R. Lewis, "Legitimating Suicide: Heaven's Gate and New Age Ideology," in *UFO Religions,*. ed. Partridge, 103–128.

29. Susan Jean Palmer, "Women in the Raelian Movement: New Religious Experiments in Gender and Authority," in *The Gods Have Landed,* ed. Lewis, 105–136.

30. John Keel, *Operation Trojan Horse* (New York: Putnam, 1970), 162–179, 190–191. See also Coral and Jim Lorenzen, *Flying Saucer Occupants* (New York: Signet Books, 1967), 36. The "mainstream" UFO community, composed of those with a more scientific interest in the UFO phenomenon, were very reluctant to believe most of the early contact reports—whether those contacts allegedly occurred on a physical or a purely spiritual level. Nevertheless, some of the major UFO periodicals occasionally took note of new claimants as they emerged. In 1963, the venerable *Flying Saucer Review* published a list of those contactees who received mention in its pages during the previous nine years. The list contained 29 entries. See Reginald Dutta, "Contact Claims," *Flying Saucer Review* 9, no. 2 (March 1963): 31–32.

31. See http://www.theozfiles.com/ufos_subrosa5.html (accessed December 19, 2005). Also see Coral Lorenzen, *Flying Saucers: The Startling Evidence of the Invasion from Outer Space—An Exposure of the Establishment's Flying Saucer Cover-Up* (New York: Signet Books, 1966), 175–177; Anonymous, "Papua: Father Gill Revisited," *International UFO Reporter* 2, no. 11 (November 1977): 4–7, and 2, no. 12 (December 1977): 4–7.

32. Lisa Oakman, "UFO Beings, Folklore, and Mythology: Personal Experiences," *International UFO Reporter* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1999), 7–12.

33. Jerome Clark, "The Pancakes of Eagle River," *International UFO Reporter* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1996), 168–175.

34. Jacques Vallée, *Forbidden Science: Journals 1957–1969* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1992), 102, 111, 286–287; Jerome Clark, *High Strangeness: UFOs from 1960 through 1979,* vol. 3, *The UFO Encyclopedia* (Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics, 1996), 452–465; Coral and Jim Lorenzen, *Flying Saucer Occupants* (New York: Signet Books, 1967), 26–28; W.T. Powers, "The Landing at Socorro: New Light on a Classic Case," in Charles Bowen, *The Humanoids: A Survey of Worldwide Reports of Landings of Unconventional Aerial Objects and Their Alleged Occupants* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery, 1969), 130–142. For skeptical opinions about the case, see Curtis Peebles, *Watch the Skies! A Chronicle of the Flying Saucer Myth* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 148–153; and Philip J. Klass, *UFOs: Identified* (New York: Random House, 1968), chap. 12.

35. Coral and Jim Lorenzen, *Flying Saucer Occupants,* 101–102; Bowen, *The Humanoids,* 239–248; Jacques Vallee, *Confrontations: A Scientist's Search for Alien Contact* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 96–100; Clark, *High Strangeness,* 534–537.

36. Gallup Organization, Question US Gallup.883 Q05A, survey of November 5, 1973. See also the *New York Times,* November 29, 1973, 41.

37. Frank Scully, *Behind the Flying Saucers* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1950), 137, 181; D. Grassi, *Civilta Cattolica,* November 7, 1952; Donald Keyhoe, *Flying Saucers: Top Secret* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), 206–207.

38. William Hamilton, "The Discovery of Extraterrestrial Intelligence: A Religious Response," *The Humanist* 36, no. 3 (May–June 1976), 25, 26.

39. Barry Downing, *The Bible and Flying Saucers* (New York: Lippincott, 1968).

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The Raëlian Movement

George D. Chryssides

The Raëlian Movement is classified by scholars as a UFO religion; that is, it is an organization whose world view and activities center on belief in extraterrestrials. It is important to understand it against this background. The modern interest in UFOlogy stems from aircraft pilot Kenneth Arnold's alleged sightings in 1947 of "flying saucers" that appeared to be traveling at a recorded speed of 1,656 miles an hour. The Roswell incident, which occurred on July 2, 1947, added fuel to public interest in UFOs, when a farmer at Foster Ranch, near Corona, New Mexico, heard an explosion and saw the wreckage of some kind of flying craft. The rumor spread that five bodies were discovered that were not human, and that one was still alive and succeeded in communicating telepathically with the authorities.

Following these incidents, a large number of claims to UFO sightings or finding evidence of extraterrestrial visitation have been made, and scientific work has been carried out to determine their authenticity and explanation. J. Allen Hynek, director of the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) in Chicago, has defined four levels of claimed "close encounters" (CEs) with extraterrestrials. A "close encounter of the first kind" (CE1) is a simple claimed sighting of a UFO, without any interaction with the claimant or effect on the environment. A CE2 occurs when physical evidence is left, such as debris or burn marks on the ground, or where some ancillary effect occurs such as the cutting out of the observer's car ignition. In a CE3 extraterrestrials actually appear, not merely their spacecraft: the expression "close encounters of the third kind" is well-known on account of the film bearing that title, which concluded with space aliens emerging from their craft. The CE4 is a more recently claimed phenomenon: this occurs where humans allegedly board the alien spacecraft, either voluntarily or involuntarily, experiencing "alien abduction," at times undergoing allegedly traumatic experiences such as being subjected to surgery or some other form of alien experimentation.

The Raëlian Movement is one of a number of spiritual groups that emerged from an interest in UFOs. Older UFO religions include the Aetherius Society (possibly the first), established by George King (1919–1997), who claimed to have been

commissioned by the "spiritual hierarchy of Earth" in 1954 to be "the voice of Interplanetary Parliament." UFO religions exist worldwide and are documented in Germany, Finland, Taiwan, and Japan, as well as in the United States and Britain. The most notorious was Heaven's Gate, whose members committed collective suicide in 1997, probably in the belief that death would effect their transition to a waiting spaceship, which was allegedly visible behind the Hale-Bopp comet that appeared at that time. In Hynek's terms the Heaven's Gate claim was of the CE2 variety: the claimed sighting was thought to show up on instruments. Raël's claims are much stronger, belonging to the CE4 category.

At the time of this writing, the Raëlian Movement claims approximately 80,000 members worldwide, in 91 countries. Since Raël's original message was in French, it has tended to concentrate in the French-speaking parts of Canada, where there are probably about 10,000 supporters; its headquarters are in Quebec. Approximately one-third of its members are in Europe, and there are substantial numbers of followers in Japan and Korea (possibly a further 10,000 in each country). Membership in the United States is undeclared, but there are small groups in each state, the greatest support is in Boston, Chicago, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and Miami.

Raëlians do not altogether welcome being described as followers of a UFO religion, claiming that they are not interested in UFOs as such, but more in the "philosophical dimension" of the phenomenon. One Raëlian Web author has written:

> The UFO dimension alone is totally boring. It is the philosophical, the religious dimension which interests us. What do Extraterrestrials change in the minds of human beings is the interesting question![1]

Certainly, it is the message of the extraterrestrials that is important to Raëlians, who are not at all concerned to go UFO spotting or to log up modern-day UFO sightings. Significantly, Raël is almost unique within the movement in claiming to have experienced the Elohim (the extraterrestrial contactees). The only UFO sightings by other followers were by his wife and a close follower named François, shortly before his second major encounter in 1975. Raël encourages his followers to communicate telepathically with the Elohim rather than to seek out extraterrestrial spacecraft.

Raëlians might also reasonably question the "U" in UFO, since, of course, their founder and leader Raël claims to have *identified* the flying objects and spoken to their crews. However, it is more helpful to classify Raëlianism as a UFO religion on the grounds that it is one of a cluster of religious groups that base their teachings on the wisdom of extraterrestrials, who travel in their spacecraft, making contact with human beings.

The Raëlians' ideas are explained in a number of key texts, principally *The Book Which Tells the Truth* (1974) and *Extra-Terrestrials Took Me To Their Planet* (1975). These two books were published together in English as a single volume, in Canada in 1978, under the title *Space Aliens Took Me To Their Planet,* and in 1986 the English paperback bore the title *The Message Given To Me By Extra-Terrestrials: They Took Me To Their Planet.* Today the two volumes are published, with slight alterations in the translation, as *The Final Message* (1998). Other writings of Raël are *Let's Welcome*

Our Fathers from Space (1987), later reissued as *Let's Welcome the Extra-terrestrials* (2003), containing questions and answers, together with "new revelations"; *Yes to Human Cloning!* (2001), which concerns genetic engineering; *Sensual Meditation* (2002), which addresses the areas of education and spiritual practice; *Geniocracy* (2004), a translation from the much earlier French *La Géniocratie* (1977), which deals with Raël's views on government and politics. *Intelligent Design* (2005) is a further reissue of *The Message Given To Me By Extra-Terrestrials: They Took Me To Their Planet* under a new title. In 2005 *The Maitreya* was published: this is a collection of past speeches.

RAËL'S INAUGURAL MEETING

The Raëlians' founder-leader Claude Vorilhon was born in France in 1946. Although he had the ambition of becoming a racing driver, Vorilhon never managed to secure the necessary sponsorship to acquire his own racing car, so he earned his living by establishing a small racing magazine. He also used his literary skills to write poetry and songs, and he had some degree of success as a singer. All this was to change, however, on December 13, 1973, when he was walking near the volcanoes in Clermont-Ferrand. There he claimed that he saw a flying saucer, out of which emerged a small bearded figure with almond-shaped eyes, who spoke to him in French. (This creature claimed to speak every Earth language, as well as to communicate telepathically.) He instructed Vorilhon to come back the following day with his Bible and a notebook. He should not speak to anyone about his encounter; else the extraterrestrial would never meet with him again.[2]

The following day Vorilhon received an extended lesson on biblical exegesis. The extraterrestrial's exposition spanned a wide range of biblical passages, although in contrast with Christian fundamentalism, the creators acknowledged that not all parts of the Bible are equally important and that layers of irrelevant material have been superimposed on the original message. The extraterrestrial explains:

> Only the parts of the Bible that I will translate are important. The others are only poetic-babblings [sic] of which I will not talk. You can surely appreciate that, thanks to the law which said that the Bible had always to be copied out without changing the smallest sign, the deeper meaning was kept intact throughout the millennia, even if the text was loaded with mystical and meaningless sentences.[3]

Raëlians better know Vorilhon as Raël, the name given to him by Yahweh, the leader of the Elohim. Raël means Light, the one who brings the Light, and ambassador and messenger of the Elohim. The word Elohim comes from the Bible. The first lesson Raël received from his teacher began with Genesis 1:1. Raël writes, "In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth."[4] "Elohim," Raël appropriately points out, is a plural noun, and thus does not refer to the God of monotheism but to a plurality of extraterrestrial scientists who discovered the Earth 25,000 years previously and judged it to be suitable for the creation of artificial life. Elohim, it is explained, means "those who came from the sky." If one asks who created the

creators, the Raëlian answer is that there exists a yet higher level of beings who created them, and an even higher level of beings who brought into existence the higher-level beings—and so on *ad infinitum.* Raëlians see no problem in positing an infinite series of worlds and hierarchies of beings.

Raël then received a detailed description of how the ancient extraterrestrial scientists studied and developed the Earth. Since the research took considerable time, the biblical day refers to a zodiacal period of about 2,000 years. They placed artificial satellites around the Earth, which at that time was a mass of water and thick fog: this is the meaning of the spirit of the Elohim moving across the waters (Genesis 1:2).[5] They then ascertained whether the sun was emitting rays that could be harmful to potential life on Earth, but concluded that "the light was good."[6] The process of creation, which is then described in some detail, entails the creation of aquatic and animal life, finally culminating in the creation of human beings. The fact that there are several human races indicates that there were numerous teams of creators, or Elohim, the best of which were based in what is now Israel.[7] Raëlianism thus presents an account of the origins of life that is an alternative both to evolutionism and to strict creationism: species did not evolve by natural selection nor were they created by the God of theism. They were genetically engineered by the Elohim.

The Elohim wanted to ensure that the newly created humans did not turn out to be more intelligent than their creators, hence the prohibition on eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, which meant that humans could read as much literature as they wanted with the exception of scientific writings. However, one group of scientists (referred to as "the serpent") had such a great love for their human creations that they defied the prohibition. As a result, humans embarked on scientific study, and "their eyes were opened." They realized that they too had the ability to become creators of life. The creators who wanted to give Adam and Eve this knowledge were exiled by the others, condemned to live out the rest of their existence on Earth. Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden in case they should find the means of infinitely prolonging their lives. The cherubim who are said to have guarded the entrance to the forbidden Garden were "soldiers with atomic disintegration weapons" who stood guard in order to ensure that Adam and Eve did not come back to steal further scientific secrets.

The biblical stories that follow are accounts of subsequent interactions between the Elohim and humanity. These few samples will suffice to indicate the way in which Judeo-Christian scriptures are interpreted within the Raëlian Movement. From their point of view, Noah's ark was, in fact, a spacecraft, designed to preserve various creatures from radioactive fallout caused by the creators' decision to eliminate life on Earth. This decision followed sexual encounters between some of the creators and human beings, the consequence of which was the birth of children with unduly exceptional knowledge (Genesis 6:4). The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9) was a rocket built to enable humans to reach the creators' planet. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by an atomic explosion; the burns incurred by Lot's wife (Genesis 19:23–26) were similar to those of Hiroshima victims, causing her to look like a pillar of salt. Elijah ascended to heaven in his spacecraft (2 Kings 2:11), and Ezekiel's

vision of the chariot surrounded by lightning flashes was a close encounter of the fourth kind (Ezekiel 1:4). Ezekiel's words allude to this (Ezekiel 3:12): "Then the spirit took me up … and took me away.… I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing."[8] The story of Uzzah (2 Samuel 6: 6–7), who meets an unfortunate death while trying to steady the Ark of the Covenant when oxen stumble, is given the explanation that Uzzah must have come into contact with live electrical parts that electrocuted him.

The Raëlian narrative continues in similar vein using the Christian New Testament. From their perspective, the claim that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit means that there was a sexual relationship between Yahweh and Mary. The star that the Magi followed was, in fact, a spacecraft, which guided them to his birthplace. Jesus's baptism was an initiation in which the Elohim revealed Jesus's true identity to him "You are my beloved son"—and inaugurated his mission. The mission was to bring the kingdom of the creators to Earth: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This message was accompanied by what were presumed to be miracles, but which were really applications of the creators' advanced scientific techniques. For example, the creators directing a concentrated laser beam achieved the healing of the paralytic. The feeding of the crowds was accomplished by the use of highly advanced concentrated food products; Jesus appearing to walk on water was the result of an antigravitational beam, which the creators projected. According to Raël, "There are no miracles, but only differences in levels of civilization."[9]

All the apparent miracles were devices to attract the attention of Jesus's listeners: his main mission was to be a teacher, not a savior figure. Jesus's relationship to his Father is clear: "Our Father … is in heaven." Heaven is a physical planet situated at a distance of almost one light year from the Earth. Jesus's death does not achieve any salvific function, but it is necessary because the Elohim do not wish to impose themselves on humanity. For Jesus to have lived immortally on Earth would have been tantamount to an invasion: This is not the way of the Elohim, who wish to be received voluntarily by the Earth's inhabitants. Both Jesus's death and resurrection are real enough: Jesus was resuscitated by the creators (who can do this by their advanced technology), and he was taken back to their planet at the Ascension.

Incidents in Jesus's life are taken to corroborate this interpretation. At Jesus's transfiguration (Mark 9:2–13), the appearance of Moses and Elijah is explained by their emergence from a spacecraft, which emits powerful projections of light. The Elohim explain:

> This scene happens at night and the apostles are all frightened to see Jesus illuminated by the powerful projectors of the spacecraft, out of which Moses and Elijah stepped, still alive, thanks to the tree of life from which they had benefited. Immortality is a scientific reality, even if it does not correspond to humanity's idea of immortality.[10]

The Elohim make occasional surreptitious appearances on Earth. In the Acts of the Apostles, an angel comes to deliver Peter from prison, whereupon Peter finds that the prison doors are open and that he can escape without any hindrance. He is

so surprised that he thinks this is a vision (Acts 12:7–9). The explanation of this remarkable happening is as follows:

> Peter, primitive as he was, thought he was having a vision as his chains fell off. He did not know about the electronic laser welding-torch which was being used by one of the creators. When such amazing things happen, we think we are dreaming.[11]

Given the right conditions, the Elohim will return to Earth. Raëlians expect the Elohim to return to Earth in their spaceships in 2025. The arrival of Elohim is something to be welcomed. Here is the arena of opportunity, and the benefits they offer are twofold. First, they bring a new world order, which will be enjoyed by all. Second, they offer to humans the possibility of eternal life.

Having received these teachings, Raël was instructed to begin the institutionalization of his movement with the founding of MADECH. MADECH is an acronym for "Movement for l'acueil des Elohim créateurs de l'humanité" (Movement for the welcoming of the Elohim, creators of humanity). The name was changed, with the Elohim's approval, in 1975 to the International Raëlian Movement, which remains its current name. MADECH continued as a support organization, being effectively the congregation of Raëlian Guides. These Guides would be the first point of contact for interested enquirers, would practice the Elohim's teachings faithfully, and serve as guides for other practicing members. The Movement currently has bishops who preside over the Guides, and Raël is accorded the title "Guide of Guides."

RAËL'S SECOND ENCOUNTER

Raël's second book *Extraterrestrials Took Me to their Planet,* which forms the second half of *The Final Message,* relates Raël's second encounter with the Elohim. This, we are told, occurred on the night of October 7, 1975, when Raël witnessed the sky lighting up and a fireball appear behind bushes. On investigation, Raël encountered a spacecraft and the same Eloha he had met two years previously. ("Eloha" is assumed to be the singular of "Elohim.") The Eloha invited him inside, and this time he was amazingly transported to the planet on which the Elohim reside.

Yahweh, their leader, guides Raël around the planet, which contains just over 9,000 inhabitants, 700 of whom are Elohim, and who constitute the Council of Immortals. A further 8,400 are humans who live there. They are sufficiently advanced individuals who made a significant contribution to human progress while on Earth: scientists, social reformers, benefactors, and religious leaders. Raël claims to have been introduced to Moses, Elijah, Jesus, the Buddha, and Muhammad. The planet is a utopia, where flowers and fruits grow all year round, and in which there is no winter, since the inhabitants are scientifically advanced enough to be able to control the climate. Everyone enjoys a life of ease, with the unpleasant and menial tasks being assigned to robots. Each inhabitant typically possesses ten such robots, who, unlike humans and Elohim, do not grow, reproduce, or experience feelings. The robots can also function as exotic dancers, or be made according to one's own specifications, for the purpose of sex. Raël is shown a number of designs of females

from which to choose and is given a total of six female robots for his enjoyment. Women inhabitants may equally choose male robots or, presumably, robots of the same sex if they are gay.

During his visit Raël is commissioned to be the Elohim's ambassador on Earth, the final prophet to appear before the Elohim's judgment of the human race, the "Guide of Guides." Raël is given a set of laws and instructions to make preparations for the Elohim's imminent arrival on Earth. The Elohim are not planning to invade the Earth: this would be contrary to the freedom that they want to respect and encourage. They must be received voluntarily by the Earth's inhabitants, and hence an Embassy must be established to receive them. Israel has been chosen for this purpose, and Raëlians have written to the prime minister requesting permission to acquire land in or near Jerusalem. The redefinition of the calendar underlines the status accorded to Raël: he is the *Mashiach*—the Messiah—and the proposed embassy for the Elohim will be the new Third Temple. Raël states:

> We had asked that an Embassy be built to welcome us near Jerusalem, and the authorities of the stiff necked people have refused several times to give their authorization and grant the status of extra-territoriality necessary.[12]

In this context, mention should be made of the Raëlian symbol. It consists of two stars, one upright and pointing upwards, and a second inverted, pointing downwards, interlocking with it. Until it was redesigned, the middle area common to both stars was occupied by a swastika, being the ancient Aryan symbol of power. In his original encounter, Raël reports having seen this symbol on the creators' spacecraft. For obvious reasons the symbol has now been modified, and the swastika has been redesigned as a kind of swirl. The swastika symbol, Raëlians point out, has been popularly misunderstood, but of course the presence of the swastika on their central symbol would be unlikely to make the Israeli government more amenable to the building of their embassy.

Perhaps predictably, the Israeli government has been uncooperative with the Raëlians, who now accuse the Jews of repeating their mistakes of the past, by refusing to recognize their true creators and the arrival of the messiah. Other nations have been approached in their stead, and even if they receive permission from another government, Israel will again be given one final chance.

GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY

Once the Embassy is built, a new era will commence, in which, at humanity's request, the Elohim will cooperate with humanity, offering their knowledge with a view to creating a scientifically created utopia. Raël disapproves of capitalism and communism alike. The former places undue emphasis on money, placing wealth in the hands of the few, at the expense of the majority of citizens. Communism is repressive, emphasizing equality at the expense of freedom. Raël believes in the importance of affording equality to citizens at birth, but thereafter their fortunes will

vary, and should be allowed to do so; what is important is that people should be rewarded for merit.

Democracy is not the way to achieve the desired societal goals. In a democratic system, Raël believes, the government responds to the whims of the majority of people, which may be undesirable. Raël does not approve of universal suffrage, or the current tendency to undertake opinion polls, which elicit the opinions of the unawakened, and follow the majority's wishes, whether or not they are desirable. The relationship between the government and the people should be conceived more like the relationship between one's head and one's body: the former is the seat of intelligence and decision making, which the latter implements.

Since this new society depends on scientific, technological, and intellectual advancement, it is important that it should be governed by the appropriate leaders. Previous governments have been dominated by the rich, the strong, and the brutal, and even democracy, although much extolled by human beings, is not capable of ensuring that the right leaders are in office. Raël regards democracy as "mediocracy," since it does not elect the most intelligent for leadership roles. Accordingly, Raëlianism advocates "geniocracy," government by the most intelligent members of society.

Raël sets out his political manifesto in his *Geniocracy: Government of the People, for the People by Geniuses* (2004). The current system of voting would be abolished. Instead, those whose intelligence is 10 percent above average or higher would be given the right to vote, and this sector of the population would elect leaders from the most intelligent 10 percent. Intelligence is not to be measured by academic qualifications, but by scientific tests devised collaboratively by psychologists, neurologists, and ethnologists. Such tests would not be IQ tests, but would measure intellectual potential (IP), which Raël equates with the ability to use acquired information to deal with situations facing the examinee. Because positions in government would be obtained strictly on merit, there would be no stipulations about having equal numbers of men and women, and proportional representation from different nations or regions. Any attempt to create a quota system would militate against the principle of geniocracy.

Raël envisages a world government, but recognizes the desirability of its various cultural and regional characteristics being retained. The world government would be heralded by specific countries and regions creating their own geniocratic governments. The geniocratic world government would, of course, determine its own policies, and hence Raël emphasizes that the ideas of his *Geniocracy* are no more than possibilities. At no point does he indicate that he himself would be a political leader in this new utopia.

The world government would have its own symbols of unity. Raël envisages a world language. He believes that previous attempts at creating a world language, such as Esperanto, rely too heavily on the Latin and Greek roots on which western languages depend. The emergent world language must be totally new, and Raël believes that linguistic experts could be commissioned to create a truly novel language, with the assistance of computers. Other ways of creating a world identity include the abolition of national anthems, which would be replaced by a world anthem, to be played

at public events to help establish a unified "planetary consciousness." A competition might be held to design a world flag, to be hoisted on official buildings, although Raël thinks that it should be used in addition to, rather than in place of, national and regional flags.

This unified society will be a just and humanitarian society, in which everyone is born equal with the same wealth, and rewarded according to merit. It will be a world of peace: Raël disapproves strongly of military force and the amount of money that is spent on military projects. This money could be used to promote scientific knowledge and education, with the obvious benefits of achieving the standards of living that the new geniocratic world order can offer. Raël views war and military force as incompatible with the principles of love, respect, and unity, and urges his followers to become conscientious objectors if conscripted to fight. Being a conscientious objector entails performing alternative societal duties during war time, and, unlike some dissenting groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Raël finds no problem in this regard. Raël has called for an end to military service throughout the world. Because the coming utopia will be based on love and respect, there will be no military service. Each citizen will be in harmony with everyone else, since everyone will be in harmony with the infinite, of which all are part. In the interim period preceding the establishment of the utopia, the military would assume the role of the police. However, eventually crime will have a scientific solution: the modification of the human brain will accomplish this.

The Elohim's utopia will look to science and technology to bring an end to menial work. Raël does not accept the view that work is inherently fulfilling, and does not endorse a "work ethic." Work should be fulfilling and creative, and in the utopia robots and other technological devices will perform all menial tasks. Science and technology will be used to promote the good of society, rather than to amass greater profits for the wealthy. Because the coming society will be an ideal one, where each individual strives for the good of the community, there will be no need for a monetary system: each citizen will be able to attain the comforts he or she desires, and surplus goods will be redistributed, thus abolishing the present disparities between rich and poor, and ensuring the elimination of world poverty and hunger.

Even with the Elohim's help, the coming utopia will require substantial scientific and technological advance, which will entail appropriate education for its citizens. Education should naturally include the sciences, but it should not train people to perform the menial skills that the robots will be well capable of performing. With robots and other technological devices undertaking all the unfulfilling tasks, humans can enjoy leisure, develop intellectually and personally, enjoy freedom, and promote universal fraternity and peace. Activities that are particularly encouraged are scientific research, meditation, music, painting, and enjoying leisure. Since commodities will not be bought and sold commercially, artists and musicians will be able to create works of art for purely aesthetic enjoyment, rather than with an eye to what is likely to be of commercial value.

Education should encourage a questioning attitude, so that children can become able to challenge embedded customs and traditions. Children should be encouraged

to be "open to infinity," seeing themselves as part of it, and respecting other people who are equally part of infinity. This entails tolerance and respect for other people's values and religions. To develop this, the world's major religions should be taught, but in chronological order, so as not to promote the worth of any single religion over the rest. Moral education should be part of the child's education, but should emphasize responsibility, rather than an attitude that encourages committing misdeeds, then making confession to and seeking absolution from a priest. It is one's overall character that will determine one's eternal destiny rather than the rites of any church.

Raël urges responsibility both to oneself and to the world. He urges a respect for the environment, and the coming world government will ensure that the earth's natural resources are conserved. Couples should be limited to a maximum of two children, in order to stabilize the population. Land should be arranged into industrial, rural, and residential areas, as a means of preserving the environment and conserving energy. One should respect one's body as well as the environment, and members are discouraged from smoking and taking recreational drugs. Alcohol is permissible in moderation, but should not be used to excess. There are no dietary prohibitions: Raël believes that meat eating is acceptable, but prefers to avoid foods, such as veal, that cause unnecessary animal suffering.

Medical science will rehabilitate social deviants. It is a world to be enjoyed. Gone are the pointless restrictions imposed by the Christian Church. "Everything is permitted" so long as it is compatible with an advanced society and is not harmful to anyone. Enjoying the pleasures of the senses is to be encouraged; marriage is seen as restrictive, and sexual relationships are to be encouraged freely. Abortion is totally permissible, as is nudity; one should not be ashamed of one's body, since this was the original condition of Adam and Eve in the paradise of Eden. On the creators' planet to which Raël was taken, scientists have created robots who simulate nude human dancers and who are freely available for entertainment or for sexual relationships.

Raëlians are renowned for their liberal attitudes to sexual morality. Raël believes that traditional Christianity, and Roman Catholicism in particular, have been repressive in this area. In November 1992 Raëlians distributed some 10,000 condoms outside a Roman Catholic school in Montreal, after the school authorities had decided against installing condom vending machines on school premises. The incident was named "Operation Condom." Sex, Raël claims, is certainly not to be reserved for the potential procreation of children, but exists to be enjoyed. Not only is contraception encouraged, but members of the Raëlian movement are encouraged to enjoy a variety of partners. Even after one is married, it is permissible to seek sexual relationships with partners other than one's spouse. Raël argues that, if someone feels the need for extramarital sex, this could result from a difference in the respective sex drives of husband and wife, and extramarital relationships can usefully accommodate this. As Raël has said, "Life is too long to share it only with one partner." Homosexual relationships are not merely tolerated but encouraged. If one has a preference for a same-sex partner, Raël sees this as a natural propensity, which should not be suppressed. The Raëlian movement therefore encourages gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people to acknowledge their sexuality, celebrate it, and practice it.

Raëlianism offers more than a paradisiacal life. As science advances, men and women will live longer. Life expectancy will soon rise to 130 years of age, eventually culminating in an expected life-span of 700 years. However, technological advance offers more than longevity; it is the key to eternal life. Some cells of the deceased should be left in the Embassy for the Elohim that Raëlians plan to build, and, if one's deeds merit it, the creators can use the deposit cells to clone an immortal replica of the deceased. The cells of the frontal bone between the eyes on one's forehead are particularly important for this purpose, but the scientific expertise of the creators makes it possible for them to create a replica from a single cell. Everyone's actions are monitored and recorded by computer, and after one's death the Grand Council of the Eternals meets to consider whether the deceased is to be chosen for recreation. Even if the Immortals do not select them for immortality, there is no terrifying fate that awaits them: death will simply be a sleep, which is not to be feared. Consistent with his teachings about the Church, funerals should not involve the Church, and humans are encouraged to donate their bodies to science.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND CLONING

Because the Elohim have such a technologically advanced society, Raëlianism is very much in favor of scientific education and technological advance. The Raëlians have proved to be controversial because of their views on genetic engineering; for example, Raël has expressed approval of genetically modified foods, pointing out that the existence of humanity is itself an experiment in genetics by the Elohim. Raël is particularly controversial for his ideas on human cloning. Not only is cloning the key to immortality, but it offers numerous other benefits in both its therapeutic and reproductive uses. After al Qaida's attack on the World Trade Center's twin towers on September 11, 2001, Raël suggested that cloning might be used to bring deceased offenders, such as suicide bombers, back to life in order to undergo trial.

In 1997 Raël attempted to set up the Valiant Venture Ltd. Corporation in the Bahamas, but the project was cancelled when the Bahamian government heeded press reports that experimentation on human embryos might be carried out in the Bahamas. In the same year, Raël entrusted the project Clonaid to Dr. Brigitte Boisselier, a Raëlian bishop who holds a doctorate in physical and biomolecular chemistry and was formerly a director of marketing at a French chemical company. Clonaid was originally set up in the United States, but because of legal problems relating to human cloning, it was moved to another (undisclosed) country, in which such experimentation is said to be legal.

Since cloning is the key to immortality, Insuraclone—a subdivision of Clonaid — enables clients to bank a sample of their DNA, from which a replica body will be made at some point in the future. Two restrictions apply: for obvious reasons, only one replica may be made for each person, and this must be done after one's death rather than before. Raël has explained that these are the rules that the Elohim themselves observe. Clonaid offers pragmatic rather than spiritual benefits: cloning can be used therapeutically, and the organization promotes therapeutic cloning as beneficial

for combating disease and for the creation of replacement organs. It is claimed to be particularly beneficial for overcoming Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, as well as for diabetes, spinal cord damage, cancer, and autoimmune disorders such as multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis. Boisselier claims that therapeutic cloning, unlike organ transplantation, does not carry the risks of organ rejection.

More controversial is Clonaid's program of reproductive cloning. Boisselier now claims success in bringing human life into existence without sexual reproduction, and commends it not only to infertile couples, but also to homosexual partners who want to have children, to bereaved families, and to those who have genetically transmittable diseases or conditions, such as HIV. Boisselier claims to have given life through cloning to five human babies between December 26, 2002 and February 4, 2003. After critics challenged her to provide evidence of such a claim, Boisselier stated that the families' identities could not be divulged on account of client confidentiality. Clonaid affirms that they are developing normally and are no different from children born through natural means.

Also worthy of mention in connection with cloning is Ovulaid. This project enables women to buy and sell human eggs. Women or couples are encouraged to browse a catalogue showing pictures of the donors, so that they can choose the features of the child they would wish to bear. This service is carried out at an unspecified country where such a service is legal, and hence the Clonaid Web site invites women to "Come and return to your country pregnant with the child of your dreams!" Raël has stated that he sees no problem with "designer babies"; if technology can enable women or couples to have exactly the child they want, they should not be prevented from doing so.

THE KEYS

Movements that run counter to societal norms, especially when they advocate sexual permissiveness, are often construed as being libertarian and irresponsible. However, Raëlianism does not lack a moral basis. Raëlian ethics and spiritual practice are expressed in a number of principles known as "The Keys." There are 16 in all, and they are enumerated in *Intelligent Design* and *The Final Message.* They are as follows: (1) humanity; (2) birth; (3) education; (4) sensual education; (5) fulfillment; (6) society and government; (7) meditation and prayer; (8) the arts; (9) sensual meditation; (10) human justice; (11) science; (12) the human brain; (13) the Apocalypse; (14) telepathic communication; (15) the reward; and (16) the Guides.

(1) *Humanity.* Human beings should regard themselves on four levels. First, men and women should view themselves as being in harmony with the infinite. This involves viewing other people as being equally part of the infinite universe, and achieving harmony through love. Second, they should view themselves in relationship with the Elohim, who are their creators and who offer advice for living. Third, followers should view themselves on the level of human society. It is society that facilitates the development of individuals, but belonging to society can facilitate human development only if it does not impose laws that imprison and inhibit individuals.

It is therefore important continually to question and challenge traditions and habits that we have inherited. Fourth, human beings exist on the level of individuals, with their own traits, propensities, and desires; these exist to be fulfilled, enabling them to realize their full potential.

(2) *Birth.* Raël teaches that the children are individuals who should be encouraged to make their own decisions and thus to fulfill themselves when they are sufficiently mature to do so. Religion should not be imposed on them: hence, initiation rites such as baptism and circumcision should not be carried out at infancy, but should be practiced only when an individual reaches the age of responsibility and can freely decide to undergo such rites. The child is an individual, whose liberty should be respected.

(3) *Education.* Despite the apparently liberal nature of Raëlian ethics, Raël advocates the use of corporal punishment for young children. He sees such punishment as being necessary, since children are not yet fully capable of reasoning. Such punishment, however, should be used only for misdemeanors that show disrespect for others or that violate their freedom, and applied only to very young children; parents of children who have reached the age of seven should seldom find a need to resort to corporal punishment.

(4) *Sensual education.* This is an area of education that Raël believes has been unduly neglected. Sensual desires include all bodily appetites, including one's sexual urges. As has already been noted, Raël perceives Roman Catholicism as having instilled shame and repressiveness with regard to sexual relationships, typically teaching abstinence rather than the attainment of pleasure through bodily desires. Sexual education should not be confined to gaining knowledge of human and animal reproductive systems. Raël argues that it should be similar to the teaching of music, which inevitably includes theoretical understanding, but goes beyond it to instill appreciation and enjoyment of musical performances. Sex should be no different, he believes; one should also be taught how to enjoy sex, since satisfying one's sensual desires is part of being in harmony with the infinite. Sexual activity should not induce shame, as the Church has traditionally taught. On the contrary, since the Elohim have created human bodies, including one's reproductive organs, sex and nudity are to be positively encouraged.

(5) *Fulfillment.* This incorporates sexual fulfillment, but goes substantially beyond it. On sexual matters, men and women should feel free to enjoy sex, in whatever way they prefer. For example, Raël perceives no problem with group sex, provided it has full consent of all partners and does not cause harm. In matters of procreation, conception should not be left to chance. Abortion is preferable to allowing an unwanted child to come into the world and is quite permissible. It is important that children should be wanted, although this does not necessarily entail an upbringing in the traditional nuclear family; single parenting, for example, is quite acceptable. Raël tends to disapprove of traditional marriage; relationships should be based on love, rather than a marriage contract, and he does not view love as a contractual relationship. It is therefore better that a relationship should be loving rather than contractual.

The final stages of fulfillment come in old age and death, and Raël believes that the senior members of society should be well cared for and respected. However, respect should not stem for an elderly person's seniority, and the old should not be believed or obeyed simply because of their advanced years. When they die, death should not be a matter for sorrow, but for celebration, because many will have advanced to gaining a place in the Immortals' paradise, where they will experience eternal life.

(6) *Society and government.* This topic has already been dealt with above. Raël reiterates that society and government are compared with the human body and brain, and it is important that government should be intelligent—a geniocracy, rather than any other type of human political system. Geniocracy will apply the principles of humanitarianism, thus ensuring peace, leisure, abolition of poverty, and care for the environment.

(7) *Meditation and prayer.* Followers should meditate on the Elohim at least once a day, as well as before they dine. Once a week they should meet as a group to attempt to establish telepathic communication with the Elohim. Raëlians are strongly recommended to attend an annual convention of the Movement's members.

(8) *The arts.* Anything that appeals to the senses is to be encouraged; hence literature, music, painting, and sculpture are important. Raël believes that literature should convey important and new ideas and not merely consist of beautiful-sounding words. Audiovisual media are important because they address different sensory organs simultaneously, and Raël believes that they could even replace literature in due course, since literature appeals to only one single sense. In addition to these "officially recognized" arts, Raël suggests the inclusion of perfumery, gastronomy, and lovemaking.

(9) *Sensual meditation.* As has been noted, Raël has devoted one of his books entirely to this topic. Sensual meditation aims at achieving harmony with nature. In order to engage in sensual meditation one should find a quiet place and create an environment that stimulates all the senses. One should have pleasurable tactile sensations with a cushion or couch; the meditator should visually contemplate works of art or any objects that convey "love, infinity and sensuality";[13] one's nose should inhale the scent of perfumes; the mouth should enjoy agreeable food and drink; and one's ears should listen to pleasant music. If there is a friend to whom one feels attracted, he or she should be invited to share this experience and, if it is mutually agreeable, to share one's bodies in a sexual relationship.

(10) *Human justice.* In this section Raël outlines plans for dealing with criminals. All offenders, he believes, are sick, and it is expected that scientific advance will find cures. In the meantime they should be shown love. Although at times it may be necessary to use physical force to restrain violent criminals, Raël opposes capital punishment, believing that all offenders should be given an opportunity to make amends.

(11) *Science.* Science should become one's religion. The Elohim used scientific means to create humanity, and hence humanity should act like their creators. Science can solve all of humankind's problems, provided it is not used for military purposes or for the financial gain of researchers.

(12) *The human brain.* Raël believes that the human brain is not well understood in our present state of scientific knowledge. In particular, he advocates its use for "direct perception" (telepathic communication), which one should learn from a young age. Mediums are to be encouraged, and Raël believes their powers could be developed through meditation.

(13) *The Apocalypse.* As Raël points out, the word "apocalypse" means "revelation." The Elohim are about to reveal themselves as the true saviors of humanity. However, Raël warns against false prophets who are likely to appear at such a time. Such false prophets include religious traditionalists, as well as eastern gurus. The East is not a source of spiritual truth, Raël believes: being technologically less advanced than the West, it needs to rely on western science for its emancipation. One's spiritual journey should rather be conducted inside oneself.

(14) *Telepathic communication.* One's sensory organs are limited and cannot bring oneself into harmony with the infinitely large universe. Telepathic communication is therefore an important means of contact with the infinite. As previously mentioned, Raël teaches his followers to communicate telepathically with the Elohim, rather than to seek out UFOs. Raëlians are therefore encouraged to reflect on the Elohim's message of love and on one's wish to be with them as one of the chosen ones who will experience immortality.

(15) *The reward.* Immortality is the final reward that Raëlianism offers, through "scientific reincarnation." Such a reward is so great that followers should be eager to spread this message. It is not sufficient simply to lead a morally neutral life that does good to others on a small scale and does not harm them. The delights of the Eternals' planet fulfill all conceivable desires.

(16) *The Guides.* Because Raël is specially chosen by the Elohim and has had special privileged access to them, it is important that followers should follow the advice that the "Guide of Guides" transmits. Raël acknowledges that his teachings have previously gone unrecognized, but this observation serves to enhance Raël's status rather than diminish it. It is Raël who bears the message of eternal life to his followers, and not other religious leaders, especially those who work within the Roman Catholic Church.

RAËL AND THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

Although much of Raël's philosophy is innovative, he relates his ideas to Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and, occasionally, Islam. In all four religions, Raël believes that we find human misconceptions and human laws grafted onto the original message.

Raël says little on Islam, but his attitude to the Qur'an tends to be negative: he contends that it preaches hatred, intolerance, and violence, and that it encourages racism and sexism. (He objects to its statements regarding the Jews.) Its more positive features, however, include its apocalyptic message, which he views both as a salutary warning against humanity's irresponsible ways of living, and as a prophecy of the new

era that is dawning, in which God's paradise will be enjoyed. He quotes with approval the sura that reads:

> Seated on couches wrought with gold and jewels,
> Reclining thereon facing each other,
> There will wait on them youths, who will not age,
> Carrying goblets and ewers and cups filled out of a flowing spring,
> No headache will they get therefrom,
> And carrying such fruits as they choose,
> And flesh of birds as they may desire,
> There will be fair maidens with wide,
> Lovely eyes,
> Like pearls, we preserved,
> As a reward for what they did.
>
> (*Qur'an* sura 56: 15–24; cited in Raël 1999, 217–218.)

RAËL AND CHRISTIANITY

Raël's main attack targets Christianity. As has already been shown, he regards the Bible as alluding to various extraterrestrial encounters, but believes that its message was distorted through time. He regards Christianity, particularly in its Roman Catholic form, as repressive, and regards himself as the new messiah, heralding a movement that will supercede the Christian religion. Claude Vorilhon's birth in 1946 is believed to be the new zodiacal Age of Aquarius, which supplants the Age of Pisces. (The Age of Pisces, symbolized by the Christian symbol of the fish, corresponds to the 2000 years of Christianity.) It was formerly taught that Raël was selected by the Elohim, being born of a Jewish father and Catholic mother. However, according to more recent teaching, his father is, in fact, Yahweh, who is also the father of Jesus. To signal the arrival of this new era, Raëlians have defined their own calendar, in which year 1 is 1946.

THE ROLE OF THE BIBLE

Although Raëlians do not use the Bible as their sole source of religious imagery or legitimation, its place in their discourse is unmistakable. Such heavy reliance on biblical exegesis needs explanation, particularly since the Raëlian Movement is so opposed to traditional Christianity. The fact that Raël makes Israel the focal point for the arrival of the Elohim, rather than his own country, or some other part of the globe, also requires explanation.

Raël clearly possessed a Bible before writing down the interpretation that appears in his various books, and he must have known it well enough either to understand an extraterrestrial's exegesis or to provide his own idiosyncratic interpretation. The role of the Bible may seem surprising, since Raël's religious background lies in Roman Catholicism, rather than in the Protestant tradition, which has typically laid much greater emphasis on the authority of scripture. Obviously, in the absence of firsthand

accounts of Raël's early life, it is impossible to be sure of his exact acquaintance with Christian scripture before 1973, and what follows is to some degree speculative.

It should be remembered that Raël's early years were set against the background of reforms within the Roman Catholic Church, which were largely the result of Pope John XXIII's Second Vatican Council, which met from 1962 to 1965. One obvious repercussion of the Council was the radical change in the Church's liturgy, which previously consisted of the Tridentine Mass, which was conducted entirely in Latin, including the readings from the Bible. The resultant change was that the Mass was to be in the vernacular, thus publicly opening up the words of the Bible. Catholics were encouraged to read the Bible in private devotion, although the Church's authority in matters of interpretation was still retained. It therefore seems likely that Raël was one of many Catholics who, having obtained a Bible, read it in some detail.

It is also worth noting that the Second Vatican Council almost coincided with a rather different attempt at interpreting scripture. Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods* was first published in 1969 and suggested that ancient scriptures contained allusions to spacecraft and to extraterrestrial encounters with the Earth, which had been singularly ignored in traditional biblical exegesis. Although biblical scholars unanimously regard von Däniken's theories as absurd, his writings proved to be internationally popular. Von Däniken's approach differs slightly from Raël's, since the former draws on ancient texts and archaeological discoveries from a variety of religious traditions, and not merely Christian ones, but the two world views have considerable common ground. Whether or not Raël knew von Däniken's writings is hard to determine; Raëlians deny that they influenced him, since any such acknowledgement would undermine the revelatory status of Raël's inaugural encounter with the extraterrestrial. One informant, however, while denying direct dependence, was happy to acknowledge that von Däniken "wrote some great books." Raël's employment of Christian scripture, coupled with the rejection of other human influence such as von Däniken, serves as a means of legitimating the Raëlian Movement. The use of scripture helps to ensure that Raëlianism is not dismissed as the mere creation of its founder-leader, but it can claim ancient roots, making reference to ancient happenings. Scripture legitimates Raël and his teachings: Raël thus becomes the sole custodian of doctrine and the unrivalled interpreter of biblical teachings. As has been noted, his two principal encounters with the Eloha are solitary, and he travels unaccompanied to the Elohim's planet. One principal reason why followers do not regard themselves as belonging to a UFO religion and claim that UFO sightings are "boring" is that any claimed encounters by the movement's membership could potentially conflict with and undermine Raël's authority as the unique mediator of the extraterrestrials' message.

Raël's role as an interpreter of scripture goes further than this. It is almost unnecessary to point out that his biblical exegesis is considerably at variance with that of the Catholic Church. His description of the Bible as "poetical babblings" is plainly provocative and deliberately distances him from Roman Catholicism. More than this, Raël's position as the interpreter of scripture is a plain challenge to the Church's authority. As the Catholic encyclical *Dei Verbum* states:

> The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.[14]

Raëlianism therefore emerges as an overt form of anticlericalism. Not only does Raël present his interpretation of scripture in rivalry with the Roman Catholic Church, but his assertion that its core message relates to a race of extraterrestrial hedonists who champion sexual licentiousness could hardly be more insulting to traditional Roman Catholicism. Raël also states that his Raëlian calendar is devised to assault the Christian domination of the world's calendar, the pivotal point of which is the traditional presumed date of Jesus of Nazareth's birth.

The Raëlian Movement has staged various events and mounted campaigns to undermine the Roman Catholic Church's status and authority. For example, at the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney, Australia, in March 2006, Raëlians organized a float led by "Pope Alice," a female supporter who attired herself in a bishop's miter and fuchsia-pink cope, flanked by two topless female Raëlians. Pope Alice exposed her breasts periodically, revealing a large artificial penis underneath. The float promoted Raël's message of "de-baptism": he objects to the Church's practice of baptizing infants at an age when they cannot possibly understand what is happening, and therefore urges people to renounce their baptism. Raël used the slogan, "Baptize unconsciously, apostatize consciously," recommending that this should be done by completing a form and sending it to the bishop who presides over the diocese in which the apostate was baptized. Although firmly opposed to the Roman Catholic Church, Raël makes it clear that he does not renounce Jesus, whom he regards as a prophet and a teacher, whose father was Yahweh, and who is now one of the immortals on the Elohim's planet.

JEWS, JUDAISM, AND ISRAEL

The role of Israel in Raëlian thought is noteworthy. Israel has the obvious significance of being the promised land of Yahweh's chosen people. Any religious movement that is Bible-based cannot fail to recognize the importance of Israel in Jewish and Christian thought. Although the Bible does not portray the original act of creation as taking place in Israel (Christian fundamentalists are more inclined to identify modern Iraq as the location of the Garden of Eden), subsequent encounters with the Elohim take place within Israel. Israel is frequently identified as the land from which the messiah will come, and, of course, it is the birthplace of Jesus of Nazareth. As a present-day messianic claimant, Raël naturally wishes to create a special role for Israel in connection with his movement. His action of giving the Israelis first refusal of enabling an embassy to be built within their territory is a recapitulation of the Bible's portrayal of salvation being offered first to the Jews, but subsequently to the Gentiles when the Jews largely rejected Jesus's messianic status. Raël's reference to the Israelis as the "stiff-necked people" is a clear allusion to the speech of the early Christian martyr Stephen, who uses this expression when addressing the

Sanhedrin, immediately before his stoning (Acts 7:51). Stephen was himself referring to Hebrew scripture (Deuteronomy 10:16), implying that the Jews he was addressing were not properly observing the Torah. By this logic, the Israeli government's refusal to grant the Raëlians permission to build their embassy becomes a recapitulation of the ancient Jews' refusal to recognize Jesus as their messiah. The Raëlians' failure, however, is precisely their success: a Jewish rejection serves only to underline, even enhance, Raël's presumed messianic status.

The Raëlian Movement's emphasis on Israel can be seen, therefore, to serve a number of purposes. At a practical level, their special regard for Israel provides them with a *prima facie* for claiming territory for their Embassy. More importantly, however, it is a logical extension of Raël's biblicism, and, above all, it helps to reinforce Raël's own status by placing his ultimate goal of receiving the Elohim within the context of biblical terrain, thus legitimating his messianic claims.

RAËL AND BUDDHISM

Although Raël's teachings are based on his interpretation of the Christian Bible, some comment is needed on Raël's references to Buddhism in his writings. When *The Maitreya* was published in 2005, his followers hailed it as a major development in his teaching. Although this publication makes it fairly clear that Raël regards himself as Maitreya—the coming Buddha of the future eon, as predicted by most Buddhists—this book is largely an anthology of old speeches and contains little reference to Buddhism. Such references as exist go no further than previous statements made by Raël about the Buddhist religion.

Raël's allusions to Buddhism are scant and give the impression of relying on hearsay rather than independent reading. For example, in *The Final Message* Raël portrays the Buddhist as believing that, on death, vigilance is needed to escape encounters with various devils, otherwise the soul will fall back into the cycle of reincarnation. Presumably he is alluding, somewhat inaccurately, to the Tibetan Book of the Dead. He recognizes that it teaches the existence of constant change, although he cites the example of not bathing twice in the same river, since the stream constantly moves on—an example that belongs to the ancient Greek philosopher Heracleitos rather than to any ancient Buddhist teacher. Despite such inaccuracies, Raël regards Buddhism as the religion that is closest to the truth. In particular, he is impressed by its apparently atheistic character, as well as its teachings on the control of aggression. Buddhism, he believes, teaches personal development, and the feeling of connectedness of everything in the universe—ideas that are eminently amenable to Raëlian philosophy.

Just as Raël has assumed the Jewish-Christian title of "messiah," Raël also claims himself to be Maitreya, whom he refers to as the "prophet" of Buddhism, and urges Buddhists to look at the signs that point to himself as the last of the line of prophets. Raël also, correctly, notes the swastika, at one time the Raëlian symbol, is prevalent in many Buddhist temples in the East. Raël teaches that the future of the world's religion will involve a rallying to Raël, and that Christianity and Buddhism will be the

most amenable to facilitating this. Raël boldly asserts that, "If Jesus or Buddha were here today, they would be Raëlian."[15]

THE RELIGIOUS STATUS OF RAËLIANISM

To the unsympathetic reader, Raël's writings may sound like science fiction. However, they are taken with the utmost seriousness by Raëlians, for whom the movement offers a means of giving meaning to life in an age dominated by science. Using biblical references, Raël offers scientific answers, which purport to be a major advance on the answers offered by the mainstream churches. Like several UFO religions, Raëlianism dispenses a "scientific" religion that reduces everything to physicalistic terms: the gods, however advanced, are no more than physical beings.[16] Ironically, this is legitimated by biblical references. Raël's encounters with the extraterrestrials assume the form of religious visions. Vorilhon's first encounter with one of the creators is a kind of inaugural vision, comparable to that of Isaiah in the Jerusalem Temple (Isaiah 6). However, like Isaiah, this inaugural vision is a commissioning: Raël is to proclaim the message of the extraterrestrials to the rest of the world. Raël offers a form of religion that dispenses with abstruse theology repackaged with biblical and scientific references. It is an unashamedly self-professed "atheistic religion" whose cosmology is entirely physicalistic. More than that, Raëlianism not only offers a religion, but a theory about the origin of all religions. From the Raëlian perspective, it all began from ancient extraterrestrial visitors who created life on Earth, and these visitors, the Elohim, will be returning soon.

Finally, it is appropriate to consider the extent to which the Raëlian Movement can be regarded as a religion. Raëlianism is accorded the legal status of a church in Canada, while elsewhere it claims to be an atheistic educational organization. Despite its physicalistic character, Raëlianism has many of the salient features of a religion: a world view, which features beings who are deemed superior to humanity (the Elohim); an attempt to give meaning to life and, particularly, to provide an account of what one might expect after death and how to achieve eternal life; savior figures (the Elohim, and Raël himself who is accorded the status of prophet and messiah); and an attempt to understand the sacred texts of Judaism and Christianity. The story of Raël's first encounter with the extraterrestrial in Clermont-Ferrand is comparable to inaugural visions that legitimate the status and mission of other prophets and founders: one might compare it, for example, with Isaiah's vision of the seraphim and subsequent commissioning in the Jerusalem Temple (Isaiah 6), or Joseph Smith's vision in the sacred grove at Palmyra, New York, which led to the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or Mormons). Raël's claimed experience is certainly more "high tech" than either of these, but it serves the same function. Although Raëlians do not have a formal set of scriptures, Raël's writings are authoritative and set out his followers' goals and expectations; and, as has been shown, Raël himself offers an interpretation of Judeo-Christianity's sacred body of scripture. The Movement offers its followers a way of living: as has been argued, it is not antinomian, but presents a definite set of moral principles for Raël's followers

to abide by. The Movement is organized as a religion, with rites and festivals, and religious "specialists" such as Guides and Bishops.

The fact that the Raëlian Movement is atheistic need not disqualify it from having religious status. Some Eastern religions do not refer to a superempirical creator God, for example, Buddhism and Jainism. The Raëlian view that only the empirical is real enables its followers to answer the kinds of questions that religions typically address, but without recourse to the metaphysical. Raël offers to his followers a discovery of life's meaning, but one that is compatible with a scientific empirical way of understanding the world. Finally, Raël presents not only a quasi-religious way of understanding the world, but also a theory of the origins of all other religions.

NOTES

1. Raëlian Church Web site, 1999; see www.rael.org.
2. See Susan J. Palmer, *Aliens Adored: Rael's UFO Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 31–56.
3. Raël (Claude Vorilhon), *Let's Welcome Our Fathers From Space: They Created Humanity in Their Laboratories* (Tokyo: AOM Corporation, 1986), 15.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 16.
7. Ibid., 20–22.
8. See ibid., 55.
9. Ibid., 82.
10. Ibid., 83.
11. Ibid., 87.
12. Raël (Claude Vorilhon), *The Final Message: Humanity's Origins and Our Future Explained* (London: Tagman Press, 1988), 202.
13. Ibid., 178.
14. *Dei Verbum* 10, 2, as quoted in Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Christian Church* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), 85.
15. Raël (Claude Vorhilon), *The Maitreya: Extracts from His Teachings* (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Raëlian Foundation, 2005), 208.
16. See Christopher Partridge, *UFO Religions* (London: Routledge, 2003), for an overview of UFO Religions.

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New and Alternative Nature Religions in America

Bron Taylor and Joseph Dylan Witt

On April 22, 1970, millions of Americans gathered in communities across the country to celebrate the nation's first Earth Day. Invented to raise national awareness of what organizers considered an intensifying environmental crisis, Earth Day was a watershed in the emergence of ecological awareness in the United States and beyond. Earth Day can also be considered an important moment in which nature religion gained new prominence, for on this day and in subsequent celebrations, large numbers of Americans and others around the world came together in a mass ritual both implicitly and explicitly expressing a perception that there was something sacred about the biosphere and that people have an ethical obligation to treat life on earth with reverent care.

The importance of Earth Day to the environmental movement is well known, but its relationship to nature religion is less often considered. Also less well known are the ways in which environmental awareness coevolved with a wide range of nature-related spirituality, the forms of which are diverse, continually evolving, and mutually influential. Also obscure to most are the ways in which this kind of dynamic new religious production in the United States draws on organicist, romantic, and esoteric forms of religion with deep roots in western history, and that one cannot fully understand these western streams without appreciating the important if not decisive influence upon them by their encounter with Asian religious cultures.

This sense of the sacred in nature, what Catherine Albanese called the "natural dimension" of religion, is so diverse in the United States that no single treatment can be comprehensive.[1] In what follows we hope to arouse the reader's curiosity about influences on nature religion as well as the diverse contemporary echoes of them in nature religions today. While our effort spotlights trends and phenomena in North America, many if not all of what is discussed here have kindred expressions elsewhere.

We begin by introducing some of the religious and philosophical streams that most directly affected nature religion, as well as environmental activism, before turning to specific examples, some of which may be surprising to consider as new or

alternative forms of nature religion, just as it may be surprising to consider Earth Day as an annual rite celebrating the sacredness of the Mother Earth, which promotes environmental action in defense of it, and has been growing into an expression of a global, civic, earth religion.

NATURE RELIGION IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND AMERICAN HISTORY

Beginning in the sixteenth century, the idea that religion can be explained only by reference to a divine creator who reveals himself to believers has been increasingly challenged in the West. A wide variety of theories regarding the origins of religion emerged, many of which took a decidedly naturalistic turn, explaining religion as the result of natural processes. Scholars increasingly assumed that explanations that worked best were naturalistic, not dependent on divine fiat.[2]

By the late nineteenth century theorizing about the origins of religion was most notably represented in E. B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871), F. Max Müller's *Natural Religion* (1888), Emile Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1922) and *The Worship of Nature* (1926), and Mircea Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1958). Many of these works analyzed so-called "primitive religions," which involved animism (viewing natural objects or places as imbued with spirits) or totemism (in which objects or entities have specific spiritual meaning for individuals or tribes) and were observable in indigenous and traditional communities. These scholars sought universal origins of religious belief in the myths and practices of ancient and indigenous peoples. Some of them, like Eliade and many of his intellectual progeny, assumed that there *was* something sacred in nature, for it seemed universal that some people apprehended the presence of the sacred within it, at least at special times and places. This kind of perception influenced many religion scholars, whose work subtly suggested just such a spirituality, which in turn helped to shape the religious perceptions and the nature-related spirituality of a variety of individuals and religious groups that followed.[3]

Although such an approach has been sharply criticized by scholars expounding Marxism, postmodernism, and postcolonial theory, who suggest that such perspectives camouflage the ways theories of religion serve the interests of powerful social sectors, it is nevertheless possible to analyze forms of religion that have affinities with those who perceive nature to be sacred in some way. A watershed in such scholarship can be found in Catherine Albanese's *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (1990) and *Reconsidering Nature Religion* (2002), which illustrate some of the diverse ways in which nature-focused religions in the United States draw on and manipulate nature, even while sometimes considering it to be explicitly sacred. In other words, nature is seen as sacred in itself, not only in some indirect sense by virtue of having been created by a divine being. For Albanese, nature religion is a system of orientations based in nature or natural themes, a trope for all religious phenomena in which nature is an important religious symbol or conceptual

resource, whether or not the individuals involved in it consider nature to be sacred.

Albanese argues that focusing on "nature religion" as she understands it has value because it reveals important beliefs and practices that are often ignored in American religious history but that have great power both for individuals and their societies. She cites numerous examples including the Transcendentalists, represented by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), the nineteenth-century popular fictional stories of Davy Crockett, the wilderness writings of John Muir (1838–1914), and several nineteenth- and twentieth-century natural health movements, to name just a few. In Albanese's understanding, each of these examples represents a specific orientation toward the natural world based on certain values, each helping to constitute American nature religion.

American nature religion, though, also involves more unpleasant features. Albanese argues that although it is commonly thought to promote social and ecological well-being, American nature religion often masks an impulse to dominate nature as well as other people. She says, "the impulse to dominate was, in fact, everywhere in nature religion."[4] Notions of harmony and the rural ideal, for Albanese, masked or intentionally supported the domination of Native American peoples. Deistic republican ideology from the eighteenth century, which she understood also as a form of nature religion, buttressed the pernicious ideology of "manifest destiny," the belief common to many nineteenth-century Americans that the United States had a mission to take over territory in the New World and spread its political and religious values.[5]

It is worth considering all of the phenomena that she examined as new or alternative forms of nature religion, at least if we consider as "new" religious production that which has unfolded since the arrival of people of European ancestry and consider valid Albanese's broad definition of nature religion.

While Albanese's work significantly influenced the study of nature religion, at the time she was publishing the first of her books about it, another scholarly approach, although not entirely new, began to gather momentum and influence. In 1990, a number of scholars proposed to the American Academy of Religion (AAR), the major professional organization in the United States for religion scholars, the formation of a "Religion and Ecology" focused subgroup that would present scholarly papers at annual meetings of the AAR. Sparked in part by a growing chorus of criticism by environmentalist scholars who held one or more religions responsible for environmental decline, the aim of the new group was in no small measure to explore and promote environmentally friendly aspects of the world's largest religious traditions.

The first meeting of the group represented a landmark in the emergence of a subfield of religious studies that became known, most commonly, as "Religion and Ecology." Soon, additional scholarly groups emerged that operated in concert with this approach. The Forum on Religion and Ecology, for example, led and shaped by then Bucknell University professors Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, held a series of conferences at Harvard University that focused on the world's major religious traditions and ecological matters and was a watershed in gathering scholars to focus

on the obstacles to and resources within religious traditions for environmentally beneficent behaviors. These conferences were the seedbed of a landmark Harvard University Press book series entitled Religions of the World and Ecology, published between 1997 and 2003. Meanwhile, the Religion and Ecology group grew and diversified its interests and solidified its place as a legitimate branch of religious studies scholarship.[6]

These developments are mentioned to recognize the role that many of the scholars involved in these endeavors played in promoting various types of green or nature religion. They did so sometimes by working up greener (more nature-friendly) forms of existing religions. At other times they promoted greener values by helping to create fertile cultural soil in which newer forms of nature-revering religiosity can more easily spring forth. A good example of both trends is the Earth Charter, an international document of environmental and social rights and values.

The Canadian Maurice Strong (b. 1929) proposed the Earth Charter at the 1992 "World Summit on Environment and Development," sponsored by the United Nations, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Many international communities and nongovernmental and religious organizations aided in the document's drafting until its presentation at the 2002 "World Summit on Sustainable Development" held in Johannesburg, South Africa. Prominent supporters of the Earth Charter included Mikhail Gorbachev (b. 1931), former leader of the Soviet Union, who once said, "I believe in the cosmos … nature is my god. To me, nature is sacred. Trees are my temples and forests are my cathedrals."[7] As president of Green Cross International, Gorbachev remains very active and influential in international environmental activist circles while Strong and others continue to seek support from nations and organizations for the tenets of the Earth Charter. In a way that was carefully crafted to not offend people from the world's largest religious traditions (especially those historically hostile to nature religions of any sort), The Earth Charter called for a renewed sense of reverence for the community of life on earth, as well as for greater equity in human cultures. The strategy underlying the effort was to kindle such reverence and to influence the leaders of international institutions including corporations, the United Nations, and its member states, so that they would consider it a sacred duty to promote environmentally sustainable and socially just societies.[8]

Calls for a greening of world religions have also been strongly made by modern philosophers and ethicists. In *The Idea of Wilderness* (1991), Max Oelschlaeger argued for the acceptance of the ecologically beneficent lifeways of "Paleolithic" peoples.[9] In this work, Oelschlaeger expressed his hope for a return to the ecological attitudes of prehistoric peoples. However, in a later work, *Caring for Creation* (1994), Oelschlaeger revealed significant versatility, assembling a case for the greening of Christianity.[10] Nevertheless, while he considers the development of "green Christianity" to be critical at this historic moment, he clearly sees it as more an interim ethic than an environmental antidote, subtly expressing his ultimate hope for a passage from "textual religiosity several thousand years old" to new religious forms inspired by Paleolithic spiritual sensibilities, that "connected rather than separated" people from the wider web of life.[11]

Another prominent philosopher, J. Baird Callicott, called for a greening of world religions as well. In *Earth's Insights: A Survey of Ecological Ethics from the Mediterranean Basin to the Australian Outback* (1994), Callicott identified resources for and obstacles to ecologically friendly behavior in cultures and religious traditions from around the world.[12] Yet he also argued that these traditions should be updated to cohere with evolutionary science, and ultimately expressed his desire to see "superstitious," otherworldly religions recede and a "religion of natural history," drawing on the spiritual aesthetics of figures like the American ecologist Aldo Leopold (1886–1948), to assume increasing influence.[13]

The scholarly study of the relationship between religion and nature has been an important component of religious studies, and often the line separating religious studies, philosophy, philosophies of nature, and the construction of new forms of nature religion is very blurry.[14] Given this assertion, let us now consider a few interesting points in the history of nature religion since Europeans arrived in North America.

In a now-classic work, *Wilderness in the American Mind* (1967), Roderick Nash traced the complex and ambivalent relationships of European Americans to the North American landscape and concluded that as wild places became scarcer they became increasingly valued and were considered sublime or sacred. He noted also that these trends were shaped by philosophical and artistic trends in Europe, especially the Romantic movements. In later editions of this work, he became increasingly forthcoming, expressing his own fidelity to wilderness and the value of considering it sacred, even while retaining his postmodern sensibility that such spirituality was historically contingent, constructed, and sometimes carried with it real dangers.[15]

By way of contrast, John Gatta published *Making Nature Sacred* in 2004, and contrary to Nash found evidence of deep spiritual reverence for nature among some of the earliest Euro-Americans, including Puritans such as William Bradford, Cotton Mather, and Anne Bradstreet.[16] Bradford and Mather believed that God spoke through two books, the Bible and the "book of nature." Therefore, according to Gatta, these figures believed God's laws and moral teachings could be learned through observation of the natural world. But while having differing perceptions about how much nature reverence there was among early American Puritans and others, like Nash, Gatta's own affinity for nature spirituality is woven into his scholarly work in various ways, and he also found it to be salutary and important as he thought about the possibility of constructing ecologically sustainable societies.

BIOCENTRIC NATURE RELIGION

These works by Nash and Gatta, which differ over how much spiritual connection to nature early Europeans may have had, nevertheless converge in their clear if subtle promotion of nature religion and provide an interesting framework for looking back at some of the major events in the evolution of what we might call biocentric nature religion. "Biocentric" means nature religion that considers nature to be sacred in

some way and all species of life to have intrinsic value, a right to be here, and worthy of reverent protection.

We have already alluded to Nash's contention that the earliest European pioneers viewed the wilderness as a place both to fear and overcome. The love of wilderness, in his reading, developed first with "the literary gentleman wielding a pen, not the pioneer with his axe" and drew on philosophical positions popular in Europe, such as Edmund Burke's theories of aesthetics and the sublime in his *Philosophical Enquiry Into the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), and the Romantic Primitivist philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[17]

Scholars have also noted that many Americans, including most prominently Thomas Jefferson, promoted what Albanese called "Republican nature," namely, the idea that the rural is ideal, that it has many moral, patriotic, and spiritual virtues, including a reverence for the American landscape.[18] Jefferson once wrote, for example, that "those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God."[19] For colonialists such as Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, the spiritual orientation of Deism fostered positive spiritual attitudes toward nature. Combining the "book of nature" theory with Enlightenment ideas of scientific rationalism, Deists believed that observation of the natural world revealed God's rational order of the universe.

Influenced by theories of the sublime, Romanticism, and Deism, as well as by Vedantic/Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, Transcendentalism emerged in the mid-1800s as another spiritual and philosophical system concerning nature. Transcendentalists such as Emerson and Thoreau promoted a philosophy in which the spiritual realm can tell us what we most need to know about life. Importantly, the natural environment served as a source for both material and spiritual knowledge. Thoreau famously tested this epistemological idea during his time spent at Walden Pond. In *Walden* (1854), Thoreau said of his retreat, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."[20]

While Emerson and Thoreau advocated deep respect for nature, Transcendentalism did not develop a fully biocentric nature religion. Emerson's thought emphasized the ideal over the material, to the detriment of placing a clear priority on the value of nature for its own sake. As Gatta said, "Emerson's Transcendental Idealism threatens to turn nature finally into another, albeit richly ennobling, form of 'Commodity' and human creation."[21]

Despite such ambivalences, the Transcendentalists played a central role in the early phases of the evolution of what Nash called the "wilderness cult"—the romantic desire to preserve American wildlands.[22] This cult, catapulted decisively forward through the work of a Scottish immigrant named John Muir, played a major role in a kind of generic, civic nature religion, which in turn went on to have great impact globally. This kind of nature religion involves the demarcating of national parks and other wildland reserves, both implicitly and explicitly, as "sacred places," to which nature religionists (tourists and outdoor enthusiasts) would naturally make pilgrimage.[23] Muir also became the most important patron saint of American biocentric,

nature religion, and his biography often blurs into hagiography in the typical recitation.

Born in Dunbar, Scotland, in 1838, Muir moved with his family to Wisconsin at 11 years of age. Through childhood, Muir worked on the family farm under a strictly authoritarian father and revealed talents for machinery. While studying the sciences at the University of Wisconsin, Muir came under the tutelage of geologist Ezra Carr and discovered the works of German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, Emerson, and Thoreau. After an 1867 factory accident nearly took his eyesight, Muir decided to devote his life, in whatever way he could find, to his first love—the wild. He said of his accident and the resulting epiphany, "God has to nearly kill us sometimes to teach us lessons."[24] Intending to travel to Mexico, Muir walked from Indiana to Cedar Key, Florida (his famous 1,000-mile walk to the gulf). However, while waiting for a ship to south Texas, Muir became extremely ill with an undiagnosed fever, possibly malaria. After recovering in Florida, Muir went to California and soon found the Sierra Nevada Mountains and Yosemite Valley. Through the 1870s, Muir traveled throughout California and Alaska, conducting research and writing on his spiritual experiences gained in the wild.[25]

In some of his writings, Muir retained the language of his Christian upbringing. The world was a place of revelation, where one came closest to God. Writing of a mountain stream in "My First Summer in the Sierra," Muir said, "the place seemed holy, where one might hope to see God."[26] Of the Sierra Mountains in general, Muir said, "everything in it seems equally divine—one smooth, pure, wild glow of Heaven's love."[27] However, as he moved farther from his Wisconsin home, Muir moved away from the Christianity of his authoritarian father and developed more mystical, pantheist (or viewing the world as representative of a transcendent god), and even animistic spiritual expressions. After finding a rare orchid, Muir said, "I never before saw a plant so full of life; so perfectly spiritual. It seemed pure enough for the throne of the Creator. I felt as if I were in the presence of superior beings who loved me and beckoned me to come. I sat down beside them and wept for joy."[28] And Muir explicitly expressed a biocentric view of nature in his essay "Cedar Key," writing "the world, we are told, was made especially for man—a presumption not supported by all the facts."[29]

In "Wild Wool" Muir celebrated the quality and usefulness of wild sheep wool over domesticated varieties, concluding, "a little pure wildness is the one great present want, both of men and sheep."[30] Indeed, for him domesticated animals, including humans, were inferior, even desecrated beings, in comparison to their wilder cousins.

Muir also understood and celebrated the wild as a place of danger. He faced death several times in his travels, including once while climbing California's Mount Ritter and another time while crossing an Alaskan glacier. However, this danger only added to Muir's love of the wild and heightened his spiritual experiences there. Reflecting upon Alaska, Muir said, "I never have held death in contempt, though in the course of my explorations I have oftentimes felt that to meet one's fate on a noble mountain, or in the heart of a glacier, would be blessed as compared with death from disease, or

from some shabby lowland accident."[31] This sentiment would be repeated in the later works of others who became saint-like figures in American biocentric nature religion, such as Robinson Jeffers (1887–1962) and Edward Abbey (1927–1989).[32]

Muir remains best known as the founder of the Sierra Club, an organization devoted to the preservation of wild and ecologically valuable places. As a popular and widely read writer during his day, Muir held the attention of Americans across the country and promoted issues of preservation to persons who otherwise had no contact with remote western wilderness areas. In 1890, Muir successfully petitioned Congress for the formation of Yosemite National Park. Shortly thereafter, in 1892, Muir and a few others formed the Sierra Club to organize preservation efforts and promote the protection of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Muir served as the club's president until his death. He remained an active public figure, meeting with government officials such as the nation's first Chief Forester, Gifford Pinchot. However, Muir broke with Pinchot following differences regarding land use. As a biocentric thinker, Muir argued that wild lands should remain untouched by humans. Pinchot, on the other hand, believed that natural areas should be preserved as stores of resources to be tapped when necessary. This marked the important distinction in American environmental history between biocentric nature religionists like Muir, who sought to preserve the wild in pristine and untouched states, and utilitarian conservationists, like Pinchot who believed natural resources should be protected for the benefit of humans, not because of their intrinsic or spiritual value.

While Muir articulated early biocentric appeals for the preservation of wilderness, the environmental movement received perhaps its first great biocentric philosophy, which should also be understood as a watershed in the development of nature religion in the United States, in Aldo Leopold's land ethic (the ethic that decisively influenced Callicott, whose scholarship was noted above).

Leopold worked as a forester with the United States Department of Forestry from the 1910s to his death in 1948. While doing so, he recorded his changing attitudes toward the earth in journals that became the basis for his now famous, posthumously published, *Sand County Almanac* (1949). In this work, Leopold revealed a spiritual orientation toward the natural world and articulated his idea of a biocentric ethic for human interactions with the land.

As a young forester, Leopold's journals reveal, he was ambivalent toward the natural world. He had a precocious sense of wonder about nature, but viewed nature in much the same way as many people of his day. However, while working with some fellow foresters in the southwest, Leopold experienced a conversion to biocentric spirituality. In a famous and moving passage from *A Sand County Almanac,* he recounted this experience. Resting with his forester comrades, he saw a mother wolf and her pups walking a short distance away,

> In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but with more excitement than accuracy: how to aim a steep downhill shot is always confusing. When our rifles where empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide-rocks. We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have

> known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.[33]

Witnessing the green fire die in the wolf's eyes forced Leopold to completely reevaluate his ideas regarding the natural world. This experience marked Leopold's turn to a biocentric world view.

In *A Sand County Almanac,* Leopold called for a radical revision of human attitudes toward the world and criticized Abrahamic religions for evincing so little sense of the sacredness in nature. Like Muir, Leopold emphasized the intrinsic value of nature and at the same time promoted it as a place necessary for healthy human personality formation. He even intimated that American freedom required wild places, saying "of what avail are forty freedoms without a blank spot on the map?"[34] In another example expressing a natural, spiritual epistemology, Leopold wrote, "there are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace."[35]

His thought culminated in the final part of *A Sand County Almanac* entitled "The Upshot." Here, Leopold explained the spiritual and philosophical attitudes necessary to preserve wild places. For Leopold, this meant the land ethic, or as he formulated it, "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."[36] In other words, the preservation of ecological stability remained the goal of human actions. This biocentric view sharply contrasted with other more anthropocentric views which claimed that human needs trumped those of other species. While Leopold remained largely unknown during his own lifetime, *A Sand County Almanac* became a critical source for the twentieth-century environmental movement, influencing many later writers, theorists, and activists. And Curt Meine, his biographer, has uncovered through interviews with Leopold's family members strong evidence that if he had tried to label himself religiously, he would probably have called himself a pantheist, in other words, one who considered the earth (or universe) itself to be sacred, if not divine, in some way.[37]

Working roughly contemporaneously with Leopold, Rachel Carson (1907–1964) provided another major voice to the growing American environmental movement. Her importance to that movement is well known. Less well known is her own nature-embedded spirituality, which she kept relatively quiet in order to not give her enemies in the chemical industry and elsewhere more ammunition to attack her credibility.

Carson worked as a marine biologist at the Woods Hole oceanographic research institute in Massachusetts where she published several best-selling books on sea biology, including *Under the Sea Wind* (1949), *The Sea Around Us* (1951), and *The Edge of the Sea* (1955). In these early works, Carson expressed a spiritual devotion to the ocean, celebrating its cycles of death and rebirth. It was not until her publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962, however, that she solidified her place among the

most influential writers of the American conservation movement. How did this occur?

After World Wars I and II, the American government sought to redirect military and industrial power in ways that would not erode economic growth. This was done by diverting the wartime chemical and weapons industries toward civil ends, such as agriculture. Factories originally built to create poisonous gases shifted to the production of herbicides and pesticides. The creation of these new products corresponded with massive advertising campaigns that promoted the everyday usefulness of chemicals such as DDT, malathion, and parathion. Americans largely accepted these claims, and the chemical industry expanded dramatically. However, scientists soon noticed changes in biotic behaviors and reproduction. After years of careful research and observation, Carson concluded that such chemicals were causing massive species declines, especially of insects and birds.

She devoted herself to proving the harmful effects of agricultural chemicals, publishing *Silent Spring* in 1962, which articulated a stunning critique of the emerging chemical culture and called for the recognition of the intrinsic value of all species. The spirituality revealed in her early work and little known talks to women's groups, combined with her clearly stated biocentric ethics, makes it clear that she too is an iconic figure in American biocentric nature religion.[38] Though she died of cancer in 1964, Carson's work, like Leopold's, greatly affected the growth of the American environmental movement and later radical environmentalists. Its spiritual aspects will likely exert more influence, as they become better known, and as more Carson-focused scholarship is published.

Of course, philosophies and spiritualities promoting the intrinsic value of nature continued after Leopold and Carson. Only two years after the first Earth Day, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (b. 1912) coined the term "deep ecology" at a conference in Bucharest, Romania. He followed with a 1973 article entitled "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology and Movements." Naess explained deep ecology as an understanding of the intrinsic value of nature, or the worth of nature beyond any use to humans. He defined this in opposition to the "shallow ecology" of some environmentalists who preserved nature for purely utilitarian ends. This somewhat resembled the earlier preservationist-conservationist debate between Muir and Pinchot. While deep ecology promoted biocentrism, Naess insisted that there was a plurality of possible paths to deep ecology. He called these individual paths "ecosophies" and defined his own as Ecosophy T, after his beloved mountain home in Norway. Ecosophies could also include insights from various religious traditions. In addition to nature itself, Naess found inspiration in the monistic pantheism of philosopher Baruch Spinoza as well as in Mahatma Gandhi's notion of self-realization. What is clear about deep ecology, as well as the movements and groups that are its social carriers, is that it involves a deeply spiritual biocentrism, which has become an influential form of biocentric nature religion, both in the United States and beyond.[39]

This is also clear when examining the various forms of ritualizing invented and spread by participants in the deep ecology movements. The most important such

ritualizing has been the Council of All Beings, created by Joanna Macy (b. 1929) and John Seed (b. 1946). Macy and Seed, both environmental activists and Buddhist practitioners, created the Council of All Beings in a series of workshops held in Seed's native Australia.[40] This ritual, which is very popular among environmentalists and some religious groups, requires each participant to identify as a natural being or entity, such as an animal, plant, river, or mountain. Through this identification, participants develop a more intense spiritual connection to natural processes and other forms of life.[41]

Many deep ecologists also subscribe to a green social philosophy known as bioregionalism, which received its most important early formulation in 1969 when the poet/essayist Gary Snyder (b. 1930) published *Turtle Island,* which became especially influential after he received a Pulitzer Prize for it. Bioregionalists believe that local products and small communities based around natural features such as watersheds instead of arbitrary political designations provide the best solutions for living on the earth.

Many bioregionalists are ardent environmental activists and hope that, by building the movement, they will generate more activism. In 1984, David Haenke organized the first North American Bioregional Congress (NABC) in Missouri. This Congress brought together local groups and individuals in order to spread and solidify key bioregional ideas, though with priorities still given to regional needs over any forced generalizations of bioregionalist principles. In subsequent years, the NABC added explicitly spiritual activities. In 1986, David Abram sponsored a petition to include representatives of other species at the meetings. This led to a process resembling the Council of All Beings ritual, where individuals took on the personae of these different species. Later Congresses also held rituals based on Native American and European pagan traditions.

As the bioregional theorist Michael Vincent McGinnis put it, "the goal of bioregionalism is to reimmerse the practices of human community (religion, art, theater, institutional building) within the bioregions that provide their material support."[42] While there is no officially endorsed form of nature spirituality in bioregional subcultures, the immersion McGinnis refers to generally includes spiritual experiences of connection to nature and yields biocentric values. These movements thus provide another good example of American biocentric nature religion.[43]

Themes of nature religion appear frequently throughout American history, from the Republican nature of some colonialists, to the biocentrism of Muir, Leopold, and Carson, to the spiritual orientations of deep ecology and bioregionalism. Rather than representing freestanding traditions, these themes interact with each other and with other spiritual orientations, from mainstream to countercultural, to produce the multiple expressions of nature religion found in the United States today.

We conclude by examining two additional examples of American nature religion that may have more in common than practitioners in either subculture might think. Moreover, looking at them may suggest some future directions regarding the future importance of nature religion.

NATURE RELIGION IN PAGAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND OUTDOOR RECREATION ENCLAVES

Deep ecology, bioregionalism, and other green spiritualities regularly fuse with aspects of Pagan, New Age, Native American, and other spiritual traditions among many environmental activists.[44]

While Pagan (sometimes also called Neopagan)[45] and New Age traditions frequently interact, there exist some basic differences among their features. As Sarah Pike notes, "Neopagan practices highlight the centrality of the relationship between humans and nature and reinvent religions of the past, while New Agers are more interested in transforming individual consciousness and shaping the future."[46] Rather than distinguishing between New Age and Paganism, Adrian Ivakhiv prefers to characterize both along a continuum of belief between "ascensionism," or the spiritual concern for the future and other worlds, and "ecospirituality," or the spiritual concern for this planet at this time.[47] While the New Age tends more toward ascensionism and Paganism toward ecospirituality, the lines are often blurred. However, these groups both have continuity with nineteenth-century new religious developments such as Theosophy and Spiritualism, and they both emphasize personal authority and ritual over belief and dogma.[48] Along with the "nineteenth century spiritual hothouse"[49] in which many alternative religions cross-fertilized and incubated, modern Pagan and New Age activism grew from countercultural developments of the 1960s. Theorist Colin Campbell called this the "cultic milieu," or a general countercultural stew favoring deviant and suppressed understandings. Such a milieu certainly provided a good habitat for the explosion of nature religions.[50]

When one looks at discourses among radical environmentalists and outdoor enthusiasts, one finds many echoes and expressions of nature religion, including those drawing on Paganism, New Age ideas, and Asian religions.

Speaking generally, radical environmentalism is an activist movement that, in addition to traditional political strategies such as lobbying and promoting candidates in elections, promotes and deploys illegal actions, both civil disobedience and sabotage, to pursue their ecological and political goals. The spiritual connections to nature most radical environmentalists feel have significant continuities with all of those we have mentioned who can be labeled biocentric nature religionists. The key difference is that their political and ecological analyses have led them to conclude, since their emergence in 1980 as a social force, that politics as usual is an insufficient response to the environmental intensifying of suffering that is accompanying an also intensifying environmental degradation.[51] For these activists, direct resistance is morally obligatory, and, with such a form of nature religion, they engender conflict with those who do not share their earth-revering world view.

Conflict can also emerge when practitioners of nature religion do not agree among themselves as to what constitutes properly reverent behavior regarding places they consider sacred. For example, while protesting the construction of a telescope on Mount Graham in 1993, a site sacred to many Western Apache, several Euro-American activists argued with Native American compatriots over the presence of

alcohol on the sacred mountain. Some of the environmentalists refused to agree to rules the Native Americans wanted that would ban alcohol on the sacred mountain. During one debate a Wiccan woman entreated, "I come from a Catholic and a pagan perspective. In both, drinking is sacramental But here, this is someone else's church. It's right for them, in their church, to ask us not to drink. Just as I would ask them not to use tobacco, their sacrament, in many of our pagan ceremonies."[52] But others refused to agree to such rules. This incident shows that while people may agree on the sacredness of a place, it does not mean they will agree on what constitutes reverential behavior there.

Another example where biocentric nature religionists share fundamental beliefs but cannot agree on how to put them into practice has to do with whether, and if so how, to draw on Native American themes, beliefs, and practices for their spirituality. Ceremonies like the Council of All Beings and those held at the North American Bioregional Congresses sometimes employ Native American themes and prayers. Sometimes activists adopt Native practices such as the sweat lodge or the vision quest, or construct medicine wheels, to enhance their own nature spiritualities. Some criticize harshly such borrowing, arguing that it represents a continuing cultural genocide against Native Peoples, misrepresenting and idealizing old ways while ignoring the problems faced by Native Peoples today. According to Philip Deloria, for example, this type of "playing Indian" originated with the Boston Tea Party and continues through literary conceptions of the "noble savage" such as in James Fennimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales,* the development of Ernest Thompson Seton's Woodcraft Indians, and the Boy Scouts of America at the end of the nineteenth century, as well as more recently, in modern syncretistic Native traditions such as those practiced and promulgated by Sun Bear.[53] Others argue that non-Natives simply cannot practice Native American religions since, as non-Natives, the practice automatically becomes syncretic and different. Still others, however, hold that borrowing from different traditions is a common feature of religions around the world and should not be categorically condemned.[54] The key point to note here is that wherever people invest the land with sacred meanings there will be conflicts, and these often take a long time to work out amicably, if they ever are.

A different example of nature religion that also engenders conflicts over the land understood as sacred occurs when recreational rock climbers argue with American Indians, especially through lawsuits, over who should have privileged access to places both consider sacred. This occurred at Wyoming's Devil's Tower (Mato Tipi or Bear's Lodge in the nearby indigenous languages), a place of important ceremonial functions to several Plains tribes.[55] It might seem odd that rock climbers would justify their right to climb on sacred principles. But most examples of nature religion share a foundational assumption, that to know the spiritual value of nature, one must experience it directly. Some rock climbers, as well as subsets of the practitioners of many other outdoor pursuits, claim to experience nature as sacred and intrinsically valuable, and to have learned to set aside their ego and feeling of species superiority, through their outdoor practices, whether mountaineering, kayaking, surfing, fly fishing, canoeing, or something else.

Outdoor pursuits sometimes lead to or contribute not only to nature religion, but also to its radical environmental forms. For example, Naess, the founder of deep ecology, was an avid mountaineer who led the first ascent of Tirich Mir in the Hindu Kush. This activity shaped his perception of the interconnection and the intrinsic value of nature. Other deep ecology philosophers and participants in radical environmentalist moments, including Michael P. Cohen and George Sessions, were impacted similarly through their climbing experiences.[56] Reinhold Messner, one of the first to ascend Mount Everest without the aid of portable oxygen tanks, also reported emotional and spiritual feelings of connection with nature at the completion of his climb.[57] For mountaineers like Naess, Cohen, Sessions, and Messner, climbing can produce a spiritual feeling of unity with the universe. Muir himself had similar experiences after his near fatal ascent of California's Mount Ritter. And the religion scholar Greg Johnson has analyzed how rock climbers invent whole sacred languages and ritual practices in their sport.[58] So the practice of climbing a mountain can and has for some become a spiritual undertaking, one that both evokes a sense of the sacred in nature and also redounds in environmental concern and action.

Another outdoor sport, surfing, evokes a similar spirituality and ethics. Like mountaineering, surfing can generate feelings of oneness with the cosmos, the energies of the universe, and even special feelings of kinship with the many animals that surfers encounter. Some even report animistic experiences of interspecies communication with dolphins, pelicans, and other creatures, often as they sit outside on days when the surf is small or inconsistent and they have the opportunity to be alert to such awareness. Surfing also involves many ritual-like behaviors that, for some, help to evoke in them states of ego-transcending consciousness that leads them to care for and protect ocean habitats. Socially and environmentally concerned surfers have formed many organizations, some of which have chapters around the world that seek to raise ecological awareness, promote a sense of community among surfers, and, indeed, to awaken surfers to their own sense that the sport has a religious dimension that goes far beyond the fun "stoke" of the experience. Surfers who feel their practice has spiritual dimensions sometimes refer to themselves as "soul surfers," indicating that they see themselves involved in a religious quest and practice, not simply a sport.[59] Surfing, and perhaps mountaineering in some of its forms, might well be understood as new forms of biocentric nature religions, which really emerged and began to spread globally only in the twentieth century, and especially in the post World War II period.[60]

While certainly not new, hunting and fishing are increasingly understood by their practitioners as a source of nature-based spirituality.[61] Some who do understand these practices as religious draw on the work of scholars who have written about indigenous cultures and how such means of sustenance are often understood to be sacred practices.[62] Some contemporary hunters report experiences of feeling a part of a great cycle of life and death and describe feelings of connection with the prey. Gary Lease explains the spirituality of hunting as follows:

> an ethically determined hunt always bears the character of a "liturgy" or a "ritual." The marks of such a performance are to be found in the fact that the prey is always killed in a particular way and not according to whim; in the special constitution of a "sacrificial act," whereby the death has not occurred without purpose (in this way, for example, hunting is distinguished from the attempted extinction of a plague or nuisance animal); and in the perpetuation of honoring and remembering the prey and its death, which both imbue the being that has been killed with a further meaning that continues after its death.[63]

For Lease and other spiritual hunters, hunting is a means of connecting to larger biological processes, and it transpires in a sacred time, one with ethical and ritual strictures.

In a similar way, fishing is spiritual practice for some, and for a subset of these, it even can be understood as the central ritual of a biocentric nature religion. As Samuel Snyder has argued, "just as any religious person approaches his/her respective tradition, the devout fly fisher approaches fly fishing with the same discipline and respect. It is not unusual to hear people speaking of fly fishing in ways that invoke the religious dimensions of life, as they commonly deploy terms like religious or spiritual, the sacred or divine, ritual, pilgrimage, meditation, priests, community, or notions like the sanctuary of religious space, to describe the experience."[64]

A great deal of evidence exists that for some practitioners of mountaineering, surfing, kayaking, hunting, and fishing, the sport itself becomes a religious act.[65] They utilize religious terms such as "sacred," or may draw on concepts found in Asian religions, such as "karma," to describe the spiritual dimensions and lessons they derive from their practice. These practitioners often leave behind the theistic religious cultures into which they were born and develop more mystical understandings of unity with the natural world and its cycles, placing such perceptions at the center of what can probably best be called nature religion.

CONCLUSION

Environmentalism and a variety of outdoor activities, including many we have not discussed, such as gardening and ecological restoration practices, represent different but related forms of new or alternative religions.[66] They share a perception that the earth is sacred and all life is related, in some way, as kin. Like many new and alternative religions, environmental religion, including many of the mainstream and radical forms as well as diverse outdoor practices, emerge out of specific and complicated historical and cultural contexts. What we see over the past few decades are both new and stronger forms of not-so-new nature religions, which view the earth as sacred, and the protection of ecosystems as a moral duty.

And as has often been the case with nature religion and nature-related religion in American history and culture, scholars who analyze it are often also participants in it. As they both practice and reflect on the practice, they help their fellow practitioners, both scholars and outdoors enthusiasts, to understand these activities as nature religions. The resulting reciprocal feedback loop suggests that these activities

will increasingly be understood as nature religions, which will both compete in the religious marketplace for devotees and attract their fair share of attention in the future.

NOTES

1. Catherine Albanese, *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 8.
2. See J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Nature Religion* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996).
3. Further information on individuals, events, and ideas mentioned in this article is available in Bron Taylor, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (New York and London: Continuum International Publishers, 2005).
4. Albanese, *Nature Religion in America,* 12.
5. See Matthew Glass, "Manifest Destiny," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 1038–1044.
6. See the group's Web site, which was relocated to www.religionandecology.org in 2005. It provides a wide range of resources and announcements pertinent to the Religion and Ecology mission.
7. Mikhail Gorbachev, "Nature is my God," *Resurgence: An International Forum for Ecological and Spiritual Thinking* 184 (1997): 14–15 (15).
8. For the text as well as information about the initiative, see www.earthcharter.org.
9. Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 7.
10. Max Oelschlaeger, *Caring For Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).
11. Max Oelschlaeger, "Paleolithic Religions and the Future," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 1256–1257 (1256).
12. See J. Baird Callicott, *Earth's Insights: A Survey of Ecological Ethics from the Mediterranean Basin to the Australian Outback* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), especially chap. 9.
13. See J. Baird Callicott, "Natural History as Natural Religion," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 1164–1169.
14. For two articles explicitly addressing the role of scholarly work in nature-related religiosity, see Bron Taylor, "Religious Studies and Environmental Concern," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 1373–1379; and Arne Kalland, "The Religious Environmentalist Paradigm," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 1367–1371.
15. Roderick Frazer Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 4th ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001). See especially his epilogue to this edition.
16. See John Gatta, *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
17. Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 44.
18. Albanese, *Nature Religion in America,* 47.
19. Quoted in Gatta, *Making Nature Sacred,* 27.
20. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or, Life in the Woods* (New York: Signet Classics, 1999), 72.
21. Gatta, *Making Nature Sacred,* 57.
22. Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 141.

23. See John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
24. Quoted in Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 124.
25. For an excellent biography of Muir, see Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981).
26. John Muir, *Nature Writings,* ed. William Cronon (New York: Library of America, 1997), 180.
27. Quoted in Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 126.
28. Quoted in Fox, *The American Conservation Movement,* 43.
29. Muir, *Nature Writings,* 825.
30. Ibid., 606.
31. Ibid., 566.
32. See Bron Taylor, "Death and Afterlife in Robinson Jeffers and Edward Abbey," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 455–456.
33. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), 130.
34. Quoted in Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 189.
35. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac,* 6.
36. Ibid., 224–225.
37. Curt Meine, *Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998). For a quicker introduction to the evidence see Meine's "Leopold, Aldo," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 105–108.
38. For compelling examples of her nature spirituality and evidence that she might also be considered an early ecofeminist, see Rachel Carson, *Lost Woods: The Discovered Writing of Rachel Carson,* ed. Linda Lear (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).
39. For good introductions, see Bron Taylor and Michael Zimmerman, "Deep Ecology," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 456–460; George Sessions, ed., *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 1995); Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith, 1985); Bill Devall, *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends: Practicing Deep Ecology* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith, 1988); Dolores LaChapelle, *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex: Rapture of the Deep* (Silverton, CO: Finn Hill Arts, 1988); Dolores LaChapelle, *Earth Wisdom* (Silverton, CO: Finn Hill Arts, 1978); Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, eds., *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic, 1995); Bron Taylor, "Ecological Resistance Movements; Not Always Deep but if Deep, Religious: Reply to Devall," *The Trumpeter* 13, no. 2 (1996): 98–103; and Frederick L. Bender, *The Culture of Extinction: Toward a Philosophy of Deep Ecology* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003).
40. For the theoretical basis and the initial guidebook for the ritual, see John Seed, Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming, and Arne Naess, *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1988).
41. See Joanna Macy, "The Council of All Beings," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 425–429.
42. Michael Vincent McGinnis, "Bioregionalism," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 188–189 (189). See also Michael Vincent McGinnis, ed., *Bioregionalism* (London: Routledge, 1999).
43. See Bron Taylor, "Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part I): From Deep Ecology to Radical Environmentalism," *Religion* 31, no. 2 (2001): 175–193; and Bron Taylor, "Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part II): From Earth First! and Bioregionalism to Scientific

Paganism and the New Age," *Religion* 31, no. 3 (2001): 225–245. See also Bron Taylor, "Bioregionalism and the North American Bioregional Congress," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 190–192.

44. On the process of bricolage in green religious subcultures, see Bron Taylor, "Diggers, Wolves, Ents, Elves and Expanding Universes: Bricolage and the Question of Violence within the Subcultures of Radical Environmentalism," in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization,* ed. Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Lööw (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira, 2002), 26–74. See also in the same volume Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization," 12–25.

45. The difference in meaning between the terms Pagan and Neopagan is still contested by scholars today. For more information, the interested reader should see Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers and Other Pagans in America Today* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986); Graham Harvey, *Contemporary Paganism: Listening People, Speaking Earth* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Michael York, *Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

46. Sarah Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 18.

47. Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 8.

48. Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America,* 22.

49. Ibid., 42.

50. Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization," 14.

51. For a primer on these issues see Bron Taylor, "Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 518–524; and for an international survey of such movements, see Bron Taylor, ed., *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

52. See Bron Taylor, "Resacralizing Earth: Pagan Environmentalism and the Restoration of Turtle Island," in *American Sacred Space,* ed. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 97–151 (132).

53. See Phillip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); and Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), for more concerning issues of Native American religious appropriation.

54. See Bron Taylor, "Earth Spirituality or Cultural Genocide?: Radical Environmentalism's Appropriation of Native American Spirituality," *Religion* 27, no. 2 (1997): 183–215 (184).

55. See Bron Taylor and Joel Geffen, "Battling Religions in Parks and Forest Reserves: Facing Religion in Conflicts over Protected Areas," in *The Full Value of Parks and Protected Areas: From Economics to the Intangibles,* ed. David Harmon and Allen Putney (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2003), 281–293; and Matthew Glass, "Devil's Tower, *Mato Tipi,* or Bear's Lodge (Wyoming)," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 477–479.

56. In Cohen's book about John Muir he describes his own mystical, oceanic experience of oneness with the universe during his climb of Cathedral Peak in Yosemite National Park on the 100th anniversary of John Muir's ascent. See *The Pathless Way: John Muir and American Wilderness* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

57. See Kocku von Stuckrad, "Mountaineering," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 1119–1120.

58. Greg Johnson, "Rock Climbing," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 1398–1400.

59. See Glen Hening and Bron Taylor, "Surfing," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 1607–1612. For a good example of writing from a soul surfer, see Drew Kampion, *Stoked: A History of Surf Culture,* rev. ed. (Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2005). Kampion also wrote *The Way of the Surfer* (NY: Harry Abrams, 2003).

60. Bron Taylor, "Surfing into Spirituality" (paper presented at the American Academy of Religion, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2005). A forthcoming book on biocentric nature religion by Taylor will include analysis of the religious history of surfing.

61. See Ted Keresote, *Bloodties: Nature, Culture, and the Hunt* (New York: Kodansha International, 1993); James A. Swan, *In Defense of Hunting* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995); Mary Zeiss Stange, *Woman the Hunter* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997); and David Petersen, *Heartsblood: Hunting, Spirituality, and Wildness in America* (Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 2000).

62. Perhaps most importantly on Paul Shepard's books, beginning especially with his seminal *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (New York: Scribners, 1973).

63. Gary Lease, "Hunting and the Origins of Religion," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 805–809 (807). See also Mary Zeiss Stange, "Hunting Spirituality," in ibid., 809–811; and David Petersen, "Hunting Spirituality and Animism," in ibid., 811–812.

64. Samuel Snyder, "Fly Fishing," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 667–669 (667).

65. Whitney Sanford, "Pinned on Karma Rock: Popular Understanding of Whitewater Kayaking as Religious Experience through Hindu and Buddhist Terms" (paper presented at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2005); Samuel Snyder, "Casting for Connection: Religion, Ethics, and Environmental Conservation in Fly Fishing Culture" (paper presented at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2005). These scholars continue their research.

66. See for example William Jordan III, "Restoration Ecology and Ritual," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature,* ed. Taylor, 1379–1381; and Maria G. Cattell, "Gardening and Nature Spirituality," ibid., 687.

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