THE POLITICS OF RELIGIOUS APOSTASY

The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements

David G. Bromley

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The Politics of Religious Apostasy

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Preface

This book is the product of two long-standing interests I have pursued in affiliation/disaffiliation processes in new religious movements and movement/countermovement conflict. Affiliation with these movements (usually termed "conversion") was the first process to be studied extensively and continues to be the single most researched issue. Because these movements exhibited not only high growth rates but also high membership turnover rates, it was not long before a somewhat separate body of research developed on leavetaking. The task of integrating the process of theoretically linking affiliation and disaffiliation remains unfinished. At the same time, both the affiliation and disaffiliation processes occurred in the context of great controversy over the nature of the movements themselves. In the process of studying and writing about the conflict in which these movements became embroiled, I also analyzed the intellectual and political debates over allegations of coercively orchestrated affiliation (brainwashing) and coercively orchestrated exit (deprogramming). It was in this context that my interest in apostasy as a contested and highly politicized form of exit developed. Subsequently, I became interested in the controversy surrounding new religious movements as a specific instance of a more general social phenomenon that I now refer to as subversion episodes. I have begun examining the nineteenth-century Catholic and Mormon conflicts and the contemporary allegations of satanic cults through this framework. In these various episodes as well as others, it became clear to me that the role of individuals who claimed to have participated in "subversive" groups, who fashioned narratives about their personal encounter with putative evil, and who became participants in countersubversion campaigns was pivotal to the social construction of evil. As I attempted to delineate the characteristics of the apostate role, I found it helpful to think comparatively. It was that process which led to the typology of organ-

izations and contested exit role types. This book is an effort to examine in depth the complexity and significance of the apostate role and, in a larger context, to illuminate the processes through which subversive evil is socially constructed.

The opportunity to pursue this project emerged out of conversations with J. Gordon Melton, under the auspices of the Institute for the Study of American Religion. We discussed our mutual interest in religious conflict, an ongoing conversation that ultimately took the form of two distinct projects focusing on the conflict between religious movements and the societies in which they emerge. The present project examines the role of the apostate as a pivotal element in the social construction of subversion. The other project explores the relationship between religious movements and violence. That project is currently being developed. Initially, we anticipated a conference in Santa Barbara under Institute sponsorship at which papers on both topics would be presented and discussed. We subsequently revised those plans and decided to organize special sessions at the 1996 annual meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, in order to move the projects along in a more timely fashion. Most of the chapters in this volume were presented in draft form at those meetings, and authors revised their manuscripts in response to the feedback they received from the editor and other contributors. Each contributor therefore had the opportunity to read most of the chapters in the process of preparing his or her own, and a number of authors made a point of referring to the work of other contributors in their chapters. I hope that this sharing of perspective among the contributors enhances the integration of the separate chapters.

I am grateful to J. Gordon Melton for his collegiality and support through the Institute for the Study of American Religion in developing this project. Thanks also to Anson Shupe, series editor for Praeger, for his suggestions and guidance throughout the development and completion of this project. Finally, both Gordon and I are grateful to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion for helping to publicize the sessions at which the original papers for these projects were presented.

Part I

Introduction

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Chapter 1

Sociological Perspectives on Apostasy: An Overview

David G. Bromley

This book has as its subject one of the most dramatic roles that has emerged around the conflict between some new religious movements and the social orders in which they have emerged, the *apostate*. Beginning around 1970, when the current cohort of "new religious movements" began to attract both members and visibility, they quickly became the center of an intense controversy that continues through the present and about which social scientists have now written extensively. The initial social science research on these groups was motivated by challenges to both established social science paradigms and by the controversy that swirled around these movements. What was particularly perplexing to scholars was what appeared to be passionate religious commitment precisely among the young, highly educated individuals who were expected to be committed residents of the "secular city."

Over the last several decades the study of contemporary religious movements has become an important area of scholarly inquiry. Of central importance have been explorations of the sociocultural conditions in which new religious movements emerged, and of affiliation/disaffiliation processes and organizational development. Research has also been spurred by the radical form of these movements and the conflict in which a number of them became embroiled. Taken together, these two sets of interests have yielded research on a number of different issues—the sharp break with conventional society; exotic experiments with alternative forms of organization; dramatic conversion experiences reported by some adherents, and casual experimentation by others; charismatic authority claimed by and accorded to some movement leaders; public expressions of anger and betrayal by many families of converts; and allegations of subversive intent and practices by the oppositional movement. Theory and re-

search thus have focused both on the movements themselves and the societal reaction to them.

One of the most important contributions to the sociology of religion deriving from studying new religions is that it substantially broadens the field. The vast majority of scholarly work is on established, mainline religion, what I have elsewhere called "priestly religion," which sacralizes the dominant structure of social relations. The study of "prophetic religion," outsiders who contest the established order and sacralize resistance, creates a clearer perspective on the actual range of religious authorization of social relations. When the full range of religious organizations is examined, the importance of the exercise of power in constructing what is deemed legitimate and illegitimate religion becomes more apparent. It is in terms of this perspective that this volume was conceived.

Analyzing both the established and the challenging religious groups as contesting for control over powerful symbols and individual loyalties yields a different perspective on legitimate and illegitimate religion. The focus on groups that are deemed illegitimate as a product of conflict shifts to contests between competing coalitions. These political processes have been examined in some detail for new religions, although they have not been systematically integrated into a conflict-oriented paradigm. To put the matter most simply, the balance of allies to opponents is highly favorable for established, mainstream churches and equally disfavorable for challenging religious movements. The key coalitional partners on the two sides, beyond the new religions and countermovement organizations, have involved governmental agencies, churches and denominational bodies, media, families, courts and legislative bodies, and civil libertarian groups. It is out of the actions of these organizational actors that location of specific groups along a legitimate–illegitimate continuum is determined at any given historical moment.

There also are a number of key roles inside and outside of these movements that social scientists have studied. These would include movement founders/leaders, converts, moral entrepreneurs (e.g., investigative journalists), and deprogrammers/therapists. The apostate role is certainly an important one in this cluster. We focus on this role because it is integrally related to a number of the others and because it has been significant organizationally both for religious movements and the countermovements that oppose them. It is a role that integrates the organizational and coalitional levels of analysis. Indeed, the structure of this volume is organized around the role of apostates within the religious movements from which they take leave and the function of the apostate role in the oppositional coalitions, with a final chapter devoted to methodological issues raised by the variety of accounts constructed about religious movements by a range of interested parties. Following the general introduction and the theoretical essay around which the volume is organized, the third part of the book is titled "The Apostate Role and Career," the fourth "The Organizational Context of Apostasy," and the final section "Methodological Issues in the Study of Apos-

tasy.'' While the analysis clearly focuses on contemporary new religions, several contributors call attention to comparable groups, individuals, and processes in prior cohorts of religious movements.

In Chapter 2, Bromley places apostasy in comparative perspective by identifying it as a particular kind of exit and juxtaposing apostates to two other types of exit role, ''defector'' and ''whistleblower.'' The way that disputed exits are organized and the narratives that are constructed about the process, Bromley argues, is a function of the social location of the organization. Allegiant organizations have high legitimacy, a favorable balance of allies to opponents; as a result, these organizations are extended great latitude in resolving disputes internally. Conflicts are suppressed and defectors typically exit in a fashion that does not seriously challenge organizational legitimacy. Contestant organizations operate in an environment containing both allies and opponents; their agendas are deemed legitimate but they are also subject to challenge and constraint. External regulatory units of some type form to mediate the claimsmaking that arises between the organization and groups representing competing interests. The existence of regulatory agencies reduces the capacity of organizations to maintain internal control over disputes. The whistleblowing role is one in which the exiting individual allies with the regulatory unit and an adjudicated conflict ensues over the whistleblower's character and evidence. Organizations are labeled subversive when their organizational practices and objectives are deemed illegitimate; that is, the organization is confronted by a heavy preponderance of determined opponents. Under these circumstances the organization has limited capacity to defend itself when disputes arise. Individuals are actively recruited in various ways to ally with the oppositional coalition and reconnect with conventional networks by playing a variety of pivotal support roles within the oppositional coalition. Apostates construct their prior affiliations as involuntary, recounting their organizational careers as captivity narratives.

The focus of analysis in this volume is the role of apostates in the controversy surrounding those contemporary new religious movements that are deemed ''subversive.'' Both ''apostate'' and ''subversive'' have very specific meanings here. The analytic category ''subversive'' is used in this volume to refer to organizations that are perceived and labeled ''subversive'' by oppositional groups as a tactic for status degradation that legitimates implementation of extraordinary social control measures. The typology of organization and corresponding exit role types identifies apostasy as a unique social form that emerges under very specific social conditions. Apostate refers not to ordinary religious leavetakers (the general referent) but to that subset of leavetakers who are involved in contested exit and affiliate with an oppositional coalition. The number of individuals playing this role in any given conflict may not be large; indeed, in a number of movements one or a small handful of individuals have dominated this countermovement niche. The role is distinguished not by the number of individuals occupying it but rather by its recurrence in situations of intense conflict and its centrality to countersubversion campaigns.

THE APOSTATE ROLE AND CAREER

This section contains chapters by Armand L. Mauss, Eileen Barker, Stuart A. Wright, and Daniel Carson Johnson. The common theme of these chapters is the variety of factors influencing the social construction of the apostate role. The focus is on individual motivations, role and narrative construction, role alternatives, and social factors influencing the form that the apostate role and narrative assume.

While Bromley's analysis is structural in nature, Armand L. Mauss, in Chapter 3, focuses on the quandary individuals face in preserving their identities in the leavetaking process. This is an important matter, for individuals as well as organizations have problems to solve in the leavetaking process. In an insightful analysis, Mauss offers a social psychological–level interpretation of apostasy, employing "self-concept" as an analytic tool to connect individual and organizational levels of analysis. Self-concept is defined as a set of identities tied to social roles. The structural situation in which exiting members of all three types of organizations find themselves requires a reconstruction of self-concept, and individuals adjust their behavior to preserve their self-concepts. He identifies the self-verification process as particularly significant in interpreting defection, whistleblowing, and apostasy. Failure to achieve self-verification yields self-discrepancy, which may take the form of a discrepancy between the actual and ideal self or actual and ought self. The former he associates with defection and whistleblowing and the latter with apostasy.

In developing his argument, Mauss draws on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mormonism for illustrative case material. The Mormon case is an unusually instructive one since Mormonism was deemed subversive in the last century and has moved toward an allegiant position in recent decades, but continues to occupy a contestant position in some social locations. Mormonism thus demonstrates an important point—a variety of exit roles may be associated with the same organization at different times and at the same time in different locations. Mauss features the cases of William McLellin in the nineteenth century and Jerald and Sandra Tanner to exemplify apostasy, and Fawn Brodie and Sonia Johnson to illustrate twentieth-century whistleblowing.

While much of this volume emphasizes the process of exiting and the difference between members and ex-members, Eileen Barker, in Chapter 4, examines the gradation of membership and the continuum between membership and ex-membership. Exiting poses a variety of dilemmas and costs, and so some movement members are motivated to entertain other alternatives. Barker argues that movement participants may assume a variety of positions between core member and ex-member. She focuses primarily on the marginal member, juxtaposing marginals with peripheral members. The peripheral member most often is an individual who at one point was a core member, and, while still positively disposed to the movement, is unwilling to make the kind of personal commitment that the movement demands. Movement and member reach an agreement

through which the individual moves, with movement recognition and acceptance, to a peripheral position within the movement. For the groups under consideration here, this typically means separate living arrangements and part-time participation. The existence of peripherals is not without benefit to the movement, as peripherals may reduce tensions between the movement and the larger social order.

By contrast, a major distinguishing characteristic of marginal members is that they hold an ambiguous, unrecognized status within the movement. While disputing some movement belief and/or practice, marginals are individuals whose identities continue to be tied to the movement and who continue to be treated by the movement as core members. This position, of course, creates tension both for movement and member alike. Barker argues that marginals position as they do because they reject peripheral membership, which offers the advantages of neither core member networks nor external, non-member networks. Turning Bromley's argument on its head, Barker proposes that for movements in high tension with their environments, some individuals elect marginal status precisely to avoid centripetal pressure from the movement and centrifugal pressure from external networks. They thus avoid the kind of narrative account and return to the pre-movement self that may be required of apostates. These relationships become even more complicated over time as a second generation emerges within the movement. Members of a generation raised within the movement but lacking first generation commitment to the movement may drift into a marginal status and even form networks at the margin, a development which creates additional challenges to movement solidarity.

Since apostasy is a special form of exit, identifying factors associated with the adoption of an oppositional stance is a pivotal issue. In Chapter 5, Stuart A. Wright observes that most individuals exiting religious movements labeled subversive are not hostile to the groups with which they were formerly affiliated. Therefore, in his chapter, Wright first conceptualizes apostasy and then identifies a series of social factors linked to the form. In seeking to explain the occurrence of apostasy, he draws on the concepts of narrative and role. The characteristic apostate account is fashioned as a captivity narrative with "warfare" and "hostage-rescue" as central motifs, leading to the use of derivative concepts such as "enemy" and "casualties." The corresponding role paralleling the captivity script is that of "victim" or "survivor," which is proffered and confirmed by countermovement affiliated counseling practitioners.

Based on this conceptualization and building on his considerable previous work on exiting religious movements, Wright identifies a series of structural and processual factors that influence the nature of leavetaker orientations to their former groups. Among the most important structural factors are the primacy of the role (which increases the importance of a socially acceptable account for one's actions) and the social value of the former affiliation (with more culturally disvalued groups yielding more negative assessments). Processual factors include mode of exit (where lower degrees of voluntariness correlate with a more

negative orientation) and location of new social networks (with connection to oppositional coalitions yielding a more hostile stance). Wright goes on to examine the way in which former members may become "professional ex-s" and develop credentialed careers in which they affirm and reproduce their own orientations in clients.

In Chapter 6, Daniel Carson Johnson offers a provocative analysis of the limiting form of apostasy, "apostates who never were." The significance of the apostate role is clearly evident in these cases. If actual individuals with the requisite characteristics are lacking, those attributes, and sometimes entire identities, are fabricated. These apostates may exert immense influence in a religious conflict but, at least in the cases at hand, ultimately are exposed as having fictive movement identities. Johnson selects a variety of notable cases from nineteenth- and twentieth-century subversion episodes through which to document this construction process—from the last century imposter nuns Rebecca Reed and Maria Monk—and from the present era counterfeit satanic priest Michael Warnke, Catholic priest Alberto Rivera, and satanic ritual abuse victim Lauren Stratford.

Johnson focuses on the narratives of these apostates as a distinctive literary genre. He argues that these narratives stretch the "membrane" between fiction and non-fiction to the limit. Apostate narratives involve what Johnson terms "autobiographical laxity" and "artificial contextualization." With respect to the former, the timing and length of membership as well as the source of initiative and motivation in affiliating are likely to be reconstructed. Some of these narratives even "go all the way," as the very fact of membership itself is a fiction. It is such constructed membership histories that sustain these apostates in their roles. With respect to the latter, the context of the group is fictionalized to varying degrees. One of the most important ways that this occurs is through contextual introductions. Apostate narratives often are preceded by statements from allies that contain more general denunciations of the subversive organization, or are endorsed in congratulatory reviews. In either case a subversive historical context for the group is created outside the boundaries of the apostate account. Some of these narratives too "go all the way," as the very existence of the organization is a fiction. The fact that this form of narrative is produced cannot be traced to individual flights of fancy but rather must have a structural source.

The narratives produced by apostates exhibit stylistic commonalities that contribute to their audience impact. These include defensive posture designed to pre-empt scrutinizing and questioning of the narrative (through pleas, corroboration, attestation, and challenges); a dwelling on irrelevant details, which injects an entertainment quality into the narrative; selective revelations that lend the account an air of mystery and fascination by leaving implications to the reader's imagination; and recognition of risk and duty, which raises the credibility and lowers the responsibility of the apostate by assertion of the perilous circumstances to which he or she has been subjected.

Johnson argues that it is the political structure in which apostasy occurs that

yields these stylistic continuities. The key elements in the political structure he identifies are the sponsoring audience, narrative distancing, and truth-telling. The sponsoring audience actually promotes and shepherds the apostate narrative once it has been fashioned. The support and certification of the sponsoring audience builds the credibility of the account and the certitude and confidence of the apostate–narrator. The distancing of the narrative paradoxically enhances it believability, even if through the suspension of disbelief, and broadens its appeal. Separating the narrative spatially, temporally, and informationally from the receiving audience renders the narrative mysterious and unverifiable even while its veracity and accuracy are being proclaimed. The category of participants Johnson calls truth-tellers functions to critique the extreme claims of apostates. Drawn from the ranks of "moderates," the truth-tellers find the apostate narratives destabilizing, polarizing, and provocative. The protestations of truth-tellers, however, offer yet another opportunity for repetition of the charges, the raising of fears of collusion with the enemy, and evidence of the insidiousness of evil.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT OF APOSTASY

Part IV of this volume includes contributions from John R. Hall and Philip Schuyler, James T. Richardson, Susan J. Palmer, and Anson Shupe. These chapters examine both the role of apostates within the countermovement and the impact of apostates in the movement–society conflict. As these chapters make clear, a relatively small number of apostates have had considerable impact in some movement–society conflicts and they are integral to countermovement organization and influence.

Chapter 7 develops a general model of religious violence in which the role of the apostate is a key element. Eschewing an essentialist position, Hall and Schuyler argue that religious violence is rooted in social conflicts between utopian religious movements and ideological proponents of an established order. Religious movements that locate outside the dominant structure of social relations and are organized totalistically create a gulf between themselves and the larger social order and can assume a militant stance. The culmination of confrontation between movement and established order in violence or collective suicide offers a means through which the movement can preserve its sense of legitimacy by refusing to capitulate to state authority or external definitions of its identity.

Hall and Schuyler develop a model of movement–societal confrontation that contextualizes the role of apostates. They first identify a set of necessary preconditions and then a second set of additional conditions that, taken together, increase the likelihood of violent confrontations. The former include organization as a charismatic religious social movement, an apocalyptic ideology; internal organization capable of maintaining solidarity, legitimacy sufficient to exercise collective social control, political and economic viability, and strong

social boundaries and cognitive isolation. The latter factors, which are at the heart of the analysis, include mobilization of a solidary group of cultural opponents, shaping of news media coverage through the oppositional frame of reference, and the invocation of state authority. The combination of these conditions undermines the capacity of a movement to persist as an authentically apocalyptic movement. Violence becomes a means of aggression against detractors and an affirmation of self-determination. Three contemporary cases of religious violence are used to interpret through the model: the Peoples Temple, Branch Davidians, and Solar Temple.

In the case of the Peoples Temple, there was ongoing conflict between the movement and an oppositional coalition, Concerned Relatives, that included both relatives and former members. The oppositional group was not very successful in its efforts to mobilize the various governmental agencies it contacted, but it did increase the "siege mentality" within the Peoples Temple and it served as a catalyst in the conflict between the movement and its opponents. Apostates played a major role in organizing the opposition. For example, apostates approached the Internal Revenue Service with information about financial practices within the movement, which was a factor in the migration of the Peoples Temple to Guyana. And it was the opposition that initiated state involvement in the form of the visit of Congressman Leo Ryan and a delegation (including opponents and media) on a "fact-finding mission" to Jonestown. Disaffected members leaving Jonestown with Ryan promised further opposition and negative media coverage. It was at that juncture that several members of the Ryan delegation were murdered, sealing the fate of the movement and triggering the mass suicide that quickly followed.

The Branch Davidians, a splinter group once affiliated with the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, had occupied various sites around Waco for half a century prior to the two violent encounters with federal authorities. The Davidians experienced a number of defections from the group following the assumption of leadership by David Koresh. The disaffected members sought to enlist the support of various state agencies but faced the same lack of enthusiasm as had opponents of the Peoples Temple. However, the network was able to generate negative media coverage, and in the process raised the specter of mass suicide. In this episode, a single apostate, Marc Breault, played a central role in drawing a network of apostates together. The state child welfare agency and federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) both were influenced by this network as each had unsuccessfully sought to intervene against the Davidians on child abuse and weapons possession charges, respectively. The ATF relied heavily on apostates to generate the evidence used to secure the warrant that triggered the first violent confrontation with the Davidians. The ATF's concern about a potential mass suicide significantly influenced its strategy in confronting the Davidians. The deadly encounters between movement members and law enforcement officers left the movement members with no realistic option for continuing as an autonomous collective entity.

Like the Peoples Temple and Branch Davidians, the Solar Temple experienced a series of defections and the potential for embarrassing disclosures about the movement from those individuals. Again, one major leavetaker, Rose-Marie Klaus, played a major role as an apostate. As an outgrowth of a marital dispute with her husband and conflict with the movement, Klaus made contact with a countermovment organization and offered damaging information about the movement. As a result of a convoluted series of events, several movement leaders were prosecuted on a weapons possession charge. That incident, in turn, triggered a series of investigations by other governmental agencies. The movement increasingly began to perceive itself to be the target of a government conspiracy. As Hall and Schuyler conclude, although the shift from "earthly apocalyptic survivalism to passage beyond the earthly apocalypse" occurred several years prior to the initial Transit, the emphasis on "departure" emerged in the context of increasing organized opposition.

In Chapter 8, James T. Richardson examines the important issue of the impact of apostates on the movements that they oppose. Only a small number of individuals ultimately play apostate or whistleblower roles, but the effects of their actions often far exceed their numbers. Richardson focuses on some of the most high-profile instances of the special case in which apostates turn whistleblowers and become particularly influential in shaping social control and public opinion alike. In working through his argument, Richardson draws on cases involving three contemporary religious movements that triggered the cult controversy (the Unification Church, Hare Krishna, and The Family), one movement that has become embroiled in controversy more recently (the Church Universal and Triumphant), and a church with a much longer history (Christian Science) that had achieved considerable acceptance but now faces renewed opposition to its spiritual healing practices. In each of these episodes Richardson analyzes the impact of former members who played some combination of the apostate and whistleblower roles, beginning with the former and moving to the latter.

In the episode involving the Church Universal and Triumphant, a former member brought suit against the church on a variety of grounds, some of which were based on alleged brainwashing activity by the church. He received a large financial settlement, including a personal award against the church's spiritual leader, and his campaign against the church was a significant factor in its decision to relocate geographically.

In the Unification Church case, two former members brought suit against the church on brainwashing-related charges. The case went through trial and appeal all the way to the United States Supreme Court before finally being settled out of court for an undisclosed sum. Richardson reports that in addition to the protracted negative publicity and the financial settlement it was forced to incur, the church restructured its recruiting procedures and reallocated financial resources. The case also kept alive the legal viability of brainwashing-related legal claims.

The family of a former member of Hare Krishna sued the California branch of that movement on wrongful death and brainwashing-related charges. The case

was a complex one in which the daughter, who was legally a minor when she joined the group, was deliberately hidden from her parents by the group. She was subsequently expelled from the group in the face of threatened legal action. The family ultimately did sue the Krishnas following the father's death, which the family attributed in part to the stress associated with the family–movement conflict. The result again was a case that went all the way to the United States Supreme Court before being settled out of court. The Hare Krishnas suffered a large financial penalty (including punitive damages), were forced to accept a lien on all of their property in order to finance the appeal process, and subsequently revised their recruitment procedures as a result of the case.

In a series of incidents involving The Family, a small group of apostates orchestrated a campaign around the world to bring child abuse charges against the group. The result was a number of official interventions in which children were physically removed from movement "homes," sometimes for extended periods. In none of these cases did official investigations substantiate the allegations, but the group nonetheless bore major financial costs; experienced extremely negative media coverage; and was compelled to agree as part of legal settlements to restructure its relationships with former members, increase contact with family members of current members, and revise its child education programs.

Finally, the Christian Science case is instructive because it demonstrates how the legitimacy accorded religious organizations may change in either direction as a function of changes in the environment as well as in the organization itself. After achieving legal protection for its spiritual healing methods in many states, Christian Science has come under increasing fire again in recent years. One former member in particular has been influential in mobilizing a network of other former members, medical professionals, and child welfare advocates. The church has experienced negative publicity and unfavorable legal decisions; as a result, the church has modified its official stance on employing spiritual healing in the case of children. Richardson thus concludes that apostates and whistleblowers, although often few in number, have had a substantial impact on the image, resources, organization, and practices of a range of religious groups.

In Chapter 9, Susan J. Palmer offers a detailed analysis of both the changing role and organizational impact of apostates in a single case, the Northeast Kingdom Community Church. The saga is an interesting one since on a number of counts the group has a rather unexceptional history yet was involved in a very dramatic confrontation with the state. The group became a focus of national attention in 1984 when Vermont state authorities conducted a pre-dawn raid on its community at Island Pond and took over 100 children into protective custody. The Messianic Communities, as they are now called, are most distinctive by virtue of having a controversial prophetic leader, communal organization, and a millenarian ideology. As do a number of conservative Christian groups, the Messianic Communities advocate strict discipline and corporal punishment of willfully disobedient children. The millenarian expectations of the group and

child discipline practices converge as members seek to protect children from corruption by the secular world and to insure that their children will be instantly responsive to signs of impending world transformation. As Richardson points out in Chapter 8, controversial child socialization and discipline practices easily are designated as abusive in the present environment, and child abuse is an incendiary legal charge.

Palmer traces the history of movement–societal conflict and the role of apostates in that conflict through three phases. The Messianic Communities became embroiled in controversy early in their history when a number of members were coercively deprogrammed and the decisions in several child custody cases uniformly awarded custody to the non-affiliated parent. It was in this turbulent climate that the primary movement apostate, Juan Mattatall, emerged. Despite the controversy that swirled around Mattatall, he became a major influence on the movement's history, even after his own death. Mattatall was accused of child sex abuse by the movement and ultimately rejected by both his wife and the community. He became a public opponent of the movement in the context of seeking custody of his children. Despite the fact that sex abuse charges were repeatedly leveled at Mattatall and he was ultimately killed by his mother in an apparent reaction to these incidents, his allegations against the Messianic Communities have continued to resurface. A coalition formed around Mattatall that continued to oppose the movement and ultimately lobbied for the dramatic 1984 raid.

During the second phase, the conflict between the movement and the larger society escalated as church elders began to perceive a concerted campaign against the movement and authorities began to conclude that movement secrecy, evasiveness, and non-cooperation impeded legitimate public oversight. A variety of minor conflicts and ambiguous events thus were converted into major public conflicts during this period. A number of individuals found themselves being cast in the apostate role, despite their own ambivalence, as the oppositional coalition sought to fashion a case for public intervention.

In recent years both sides have stepped back from the brink. The Messianic Communities have restructured their lifestyle, sought more congenial relationships with the surrounding community, and openly courted allies with mainline institutions; and authorities have refrained from intervention and conflict escalation. Still, tension remains around children as a number of custody decisions have been unfavorable to the group and parents within the movement, with or without group sanction, have concealed children from authorities in custody cases.

While most of the chapters emphasize the impact of apostates on the movements they oppose, in Chapter 10 Anson Shupe examines the reciprocal role that apostates play in the anti-cult movement. Shupe begins his analysis by identifying the key resource that apostates bring to countermovements—direct, personal experience with putative evil. The narratives that apostates construct function to legitimate countermovement ideology. In designating and analyzing

these narratives, Shupe asserts, there is no presumption concerning the truth or factuality of the atrocity stories that apostates recount. As he notes, the apostate role is not unique to contemporary countermovements; in fact, it has been a prominent feature of countermovements through American history. However, the role that apostates play is not an invariant one; it changes with the development of the countermovement.

Shupe documents how the role of apostates in contemporary anti-cultism has shifted during three time periods. His analysis is quite parallel to Palmer's except that the focus is on the organizational needs of the countermovement. The earliest apostate testimonies were central to a highly decentralized, emergent anti-cult movement. These accounts, in classic atrocity story format, were largely reported by journalists in local and regional newspapers and magazines. The narratives served to create awareness of the cult problem and mobilize support among the general public, media representatives, and public officials. Later, autobiographical accounts in book form recounted similar stories. However, Shupe argues that the value of apostates began declining at this time, except as an internal solidarity-building mechanism, as professionals replaced family members in anti-cult leadership positions. During the most recent period, apostate accounts have declined both in their utility to the anti-cult movement and in media interest. Shupe attributes this decline to migration of media to new sources of sensational stories, the clichéd quality of the narratives, shifting public concerns, and professionalization within the anti-cult movement. As the countermovement institutionalized and professionalized, the apostates shifted from frontstage to backstage, supplanted in a public leadership role by professionals with the credentials to generate greater institutional legitimacy.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF APOSTASY

It is consistent with the argument that orients this volume that a variety of interpreters construct narratives about religious movements and their relationship to the surrounding social order. The groups' self-accounts often have been granted little legitimacy. Oppositional groups have also faced legitimacy problems, although public opinion probably is more sympathetic to the latter than the former accounts. Scholars have fashioned interpretations that address various disciplinary theories/issues and, secondarily, matters of public debate. In constructing their narratives, scholars face the question of how to interpret and incorporate information from other sources. This is a critical issue to the extent that research data are gathered from or influenced by movement allies and opponents. It is therefore appropriate that the concluding chapter of this book by Lewis F. Carter explores this issue.

Carter begins by defending the importance of triangulation, "using a number of data sources with differing perspectives," in constructing scholarly narratives. He illustrates the way that triangulation methods may be employed to sort out

complex events and variant accounts in a case study of a contested incident involving Rajneeshpuram. As a prelude to his analysis, he identifies and examines four important sources of information about religious groups: believers, ethnographers, apostates, and opponents. Each source, he asserts, has different strengths and weaknesses, and it is important to assess the knowledge, motivation, and context of the information of various parties rather than presumptively equating categories of person and information.

Believer is a label that is applied to a broad range of organizational participants who typically share in common being positively disposed to the organization. However, believers may have very different types and levels of information, particularly in hierarchical movements, Carter argues. Barker's (Chapter 4) distinction between peripheral and marginal is instructive here and confirms the general line of argument. It is therefore important to determine what knowledge believers might reasonably be expected to have in a given group and location, and even their personal qualities of inquisitiveness and perceived trustworthiness may influence this.

Apostates also may be an important source of information. Carter here distinguishes between ordinary leavetakers (the generic use of apostate) and "career apostates," which more closely parallels Bromley's usage in the introductory chapter. Some former members have extensive knowledge of the organization, and "moderate" former members may possess the virtue of insider knowledge and outsider detachment. "Extreme" former members are likely to be more available to scholars or others as they possess heightened motivation as well as a negative orientation toward the organization.

Ethnographers also are influenced by their location with respect to the group. As Carter observes, it is difficult to engage in participant observation without spending extended time inside of the organization and learning the internal language and perspective. Social scientists historically have sought to maintain a certain detachment and "objectivity," which may be more elusive than they suppose. Ethnographers are insiders at one time and outsiders at another, and they may experience a certain amount of resocialization as they move from inside to outside the organization. As a result, their perspective too shifts with their social location. The cautionary tales that anthropologists tell about "going native" are instructive on this point.

Finally, opponents sometimes develop extensive information about their former groups. The case of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, about which Mauss writes in Chapter 3, is an excellent case in point in this volume. The information that opponents have may have direct and indirect effects on the research process. On the one hand, groups share information and respond to problems and opposition that other groups encounter, which creates an indirect effect. On the other hand, opponents (as well as groups themselves) supply information to scholars; they may gain legitimacy and corroboration for their version of events to the extent that the information they gather is incorporated into scholarly narratives.

In sum, then, the contributors offer a variety of theory, data, and substantive insights that extend and modify the model proposed in Bromley's introductory chapter. While there is general agreement that the typological distinctions Bromley has constructed are useful ones, the contributors collectively create a richer, more complex mosaic. Collectively, the volume contributors suggest the fruitfulness of research on individual apostate careers and of their organizational careers; the movement of individuals between the three types of contested exit roles and of groups between the three organizational types; the occurrence of circumstances leading to the various "mixed" exit role and organizational types; and the political processes that preserve the network alliances that create and sustain the organizational locations and the intra-organizational social control mechanisms. The lengths to which countermovements will go in constructing (and even fabricating) apostates and which movements will go in attacking and discrediting these individuals; the intensity with which some individuals will embrace the apostate role and others abjure it; and the veracity attributed to apostate narratives during periods of intense conflict and their folkloric treatment at other times all suggest powerful motives and forces at work. The ultimate value of this volume is not found in final answers to all of these issues but in its argument for their inclusion in the social science agenda and their theoretical salience in understanding social movements and countermovements.

Part II

A Comparative Approach to Organizational Exit