

# Taking Shelter from the Coining Storm: The Millennial Impulse of the Church Universal and Triumphant's Royal Teton Ranch

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While notions of the apocalyptic can take many forms, there are certain commonalities associated with its appearance. Among its general traits is an angst-ridden belief that an irremediable tension exists between the way things are and the way they should be. This conviction, generated by the certainty that something at a cosmic level is broken, implies a paradoxical message. There is both an overwhelming pessimism inherent in this vision, suggesting the unfolding of a sweeping cataclysm, and a visible optimism reflecting transformation and hope for the future. The interplay between these central aspects of the apocalyptic, disclosing both sobering and promising revelations, displays a basic perceptual duality. Thus, when the apocalyptic "lens" is focused upon an outside world appearing vile and impure, the imagery of imminent destruction for the existing order is seldom totally bleak. Rather, the post-cataclysmic dream for change sustains believers through "the troubled times" until the world can be finally recast in a hallowed form.

This article examines the apocalyptic undercurrents in the belief system of the Church Universal and Triumphant, a New Religious Movement with a worldwide membership numbering in the mid-10,000s.<sup>1</sup> Because the Church's worldview emerged from a close attachment with the "I AM" Religious Activity of Guy and Edna Ballard, I address the linkage between the groups as it pertains to their respective views of disaster. Retaining the basic features of its precursor's eschatology, the Church adapted this "millennial idea" to conform to its present-day existence. Since the organization's view of impending cataclysms is informed by the visions of early apocalyptic seers, a portion of the article concentrates on the New Age forebears of the Church's belief system. Evolving from a strain of thought associated with two prominent figures

in the New Age movement, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Edgar Cayce, the Church's philosophy shares many of the apocalyptic features found in the doctrines of these New Age pioneers.

As the largest intentional community in North America, the Church's Royal Teton Ranch has been no stranger to public attention. The ranch, which was described to me by a senior staff member as "a monastic community,"<sup>2</sup> is home to several hundred disciples of a faith in the Ascended Master tradition. While religious scholars have documented the philosophical heritage of the Church's exotic beliefs, there has been no thorough appraisal of the millennial basis of the group's cosmology, nor any detailed discussion of its origins. A close examination of the Church's history reveals that its millennial thought has been fixated upon themes of a catastrophic nature.

The Church, whose international headquarters is located in southwestern Montana near Yellowstone National Park, briefly became the object of national media attention in early 1990 when nearly a thousand members of the organization flocked to the surrounding Paradise Valley area to prepare for a nuclear war. From points as distant as Australia, Europe, and South America, members of the Church fled their homes for the safety of an extensive complex of fallout shelters under construction on and around the organization's 24,000-acre Royal Teton Ranch. The devoted were responding to the warnings of Elizabeth Clare Prophet, the Church's spiritual leader, that the world had entered upon a period of "accelerated negative karma" which greatly increased the likelihood of a Soviet first strike.<sup>3</sup> Arriving ready to participate in a continuous, two-month prayer vigil designed to psychically ward off the oncoming calamity, members of the group braced for disaster while, at the same time, desperately sought to prevent it.

So powerful was the imagery of the destruction of the existing world order that Church members repeatedly practiced emergency drills in anticipation of a nuclear attack. At the Royal Teton Ranch, the 600 permanent members of the Church Staff rehearsed disaster scenarios around the group's immense main shelter facility. Constructed hastily to provide underground living quarters for the entire staff, this structure was outfitted to sustain its inhabitants for a period of several years. The preparation of the facility required a herculean communal work effort. As one member of the staff told me, "We worked long, hard, sixteen-hour days for months to get it ready in time. It was mind-numbing work, but we knew it had to be completed."<sup>4</sup>

When the "danger period" passed without incident, many of the group's membership experienced a feeling of bewilderment about the dramatic activity in which they had participated. In some cases, the disconfirming evidence of life as usual following Elizabeth Clare Prophet's dire warning proved to be too much to bear. Although only a small fraction of those who came to Montana left the Church for reasons having to do with the cognitive dissonance attached to the experience, many of the faithful experienced a sense of let-

down after the non-event.<sup>5</sup> However, for most members of the ranch community, the failure of the nuclear apocalypse to come about reinforced the belief that the intensive prayer vigil averted the disaster.

Nine years have passed since the nuclear nightmare scenario played itself out on the Royal Teton Ranch. For most residents of the ranch community, it is an uncomfortable topic of discussion. Bombarded with slanted media attention, much of which was aimed at casting the group as a "doomsday cult" hoping for nuclear war, the complex, underlying motivations leading to the Church's "shelter period" remain largely unexplored.

The Church's response to the perceived apocalypse carries with it some perplexing connotations. Faced with evidence that the group anticipated a surprise nuclear attack on the United States, a casual observer of the Church's activity during this period might quickly dismiss it as a product of "mass psychosis." Such a label conveys an artificial sense of certainty about unusual human events and tends to dictate a cursory glance at phenomena defying "mainstream" characteristics. Pointing to the existence of either a collective mental illness in the group or the presence of an epidemic hysteria thought to be responsible for an outbreak of panic, the standard psychological explanations for such behavior usually lean toward a clinical diagnosis.<sup>6</sup>

The central problem accompanying the adoption of conventional psychological frameworks to understand a group's apocalyptic impulses is that psychiatric categories reduce an elaborate thoughtworld to a diagnostic level. Employing a form of observation geared to discern the pathological, the misapplication of psychiatric-pathogenic terms to millenarian social movements frames analyses in a "pre-packaged" form ill-suited to shed light on the subject of group belief.<sup>7</sup> In the case of the Church's ranch community, the use of a psychopathological rubric to understand its atypical behavior in early 1990 is unilluminating and leads to an overly-simplistic assessment of causation. In order to adequately answer how the group's "shelter period" came about, it becomes necessary to examine the nature of the powerful, group-specific vision which compelled the Church to undertake its precautionary course of action.

### **The Church's Ideological Roots**

Descending from the metaphysical roots established by Theosophy and New Thought, the Church has a spiritual lineage dating from the mid-nineteenth century. However, it was the "I AM" Religious Activity, founded by Guy Ballard in the early 1930s, from which the Church most directly developed.<sup>8</sup> Ballard's "I AM" movement, which at its peak of popularity may have claimed several hundred thousand members in the United States,<sup>9</sup> virtually laid the philosophical foundations upon which Church Universal and Triumphant would later build. Asserting the existence of a "Great White Brotherhood" of supernatural entities (known as "Ascended Masters") responsible

for the spiritual evolution of the universe, Ballard's "I AM" movement followed in the same occult tradition advanced by such early spiritualists as Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Annie Besant. In this respect, the spiritual basis of the "I AM" Religious Activity, steeped as it was in the metaphysical notion that a powerful, cosmic brotherhood directed human destiny, was not a novel belief. Even Ballard's status as the Messenger of the Ascended Masters, a position he claimed was conferred upon him by the redoubtable Saint Germain, had a precedent in Blavatsky's role as the appointed communicator for the Brotherhood of Masters. However, the unusual variety of millenarianism present in the "I AM" movement separated it from previous metaphysical groups.

Aside from the act of absorbing several rather well-established esoteric concepts (such as reincarnation, communication with the Masters, and recognition of an individualized God-Presence) into a unified belief system, Ballard's group broke ground with its more purely spiritual antecedents by embracing an avowedly political philosophy. Strongly patriotic, the "I AM" movement envisioned a special destiny for America reflecting its chosen status conferred by the Ascended Masters. Fusing together a political worldview which was stridently anti-Communist (and clearly conspiratorial) with otherworldly religion, the group's thoughtworld assumed the form of a total belief system in which the secular and divine converged. Conceiving of a dream for America in which its political leaders were guided by the authority of the Ascended Masters, the "I AM" movement constructed a group-specific image of an idealized America.

Following Guy Ballard's death in 1939, critical attention became increasingly focused on the unusual character of the group's patriotism. The most scathing indictment of the movement came from a one-time member, Gerald Bryan, whose 1940 book, *Psychic Dictatorship in America*, let loose a broadside of charges against Guy Ballard and his wife, Edna. Bryan argued that the Ballards were "Pee-wee Hitlers" who played on group-induced psychological fears.<sup>10</sup> According to Bryan, whose charges of "brainwashing" prefigure the standard tactics later used by "anti-cultists," the Ballards sought to psychologically "reprogram" their adherents for the purpose of creating a political movement capable of toppling a spiritually-impure American government.<sup>11</sup> As theoretically impoverished as the "brainwashing" allegations were, some of the group's practices reveal that its patriotic sentiments were somewhat bizarre. Consistent with the conspiratorialism which pervaded the movement's worldview, Guy Ballard frequently received and conveyed messages from the mysterious Ascended Master K-17, director of the "Inner Secret Service." Appearing through Ballard to report foreign mischief and to alert the group about diabolical plots undertaken by American leaders, the dramatic urgency of K-17's information further reinforced both the sense of chosenness and persecution felt throughout the organization.

Illustrating the extent to which the "I AM" movement sought to initiate political transformation in line with its own conception of an ideal future, special decrees were practiced in order to bring about desired changes. A devotional activity aimed toward invoking the "Mighty I AM Presence," decrees were high-speed chants collectively uttered for the purpose of releasing the Violet Flame, a projection of the individualized God Presence capable of destroying worldly dissension.<sup>12</sup> As a central spiritual exercise for the movement, the act of decreeing must be viewed as a serious and purposeful demonstration of group belief. In this context, the numerous "I AM" decrees intended to eradicate the group's perceived enemies (allegedly including a number of American political leaders) offer a glimpse of the organization's millenarian character.<sup>13</sup> Designed to effect sweeping change so that the world might be more perfectly remade, the decrees offered a psychic vehicle through which the movement's hopes for a new society could be realized.

The salvationism of the Ballards offered a dream of ultimate renewal. Like all millenarian movements, its core beliefs contained both transcendent and this-worldly aspects. Blending elements of a strong social agenda with its concept of the divine, the message of the "I AM" Religious Activity attracted a considerable following at least partially due to its timely appearance on the American historical scene. Emerging during the Depression years, the movement succeeded in tapping into the larger culture's frustration and sense of uneasiness about America's condition. Like other American millenarian followings of its time, including William Dudley Pelley's Silver Legion, with which Guy Ballard had some contact, the "I AM" movement observed an energetic nationalism enmeshed within a sacred framework.<sup>14</sup> However, unlike Pelley, the Ballards apparently did not adopt anti-Semitism as a component of their spiritualism. While never completely shorn of the authoritarian thought associated with other manichean doctrines of the period, the "I AM" Religious Activity adhered to a generally less exclusionary view of the divine.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, the "I AM" cosmology, defined by a unique, non-Christian patriotism, carried with it a powerful civil religious appeal conveying social homogeneity and national pride.<sup>16</sup>

The strong chiliastic tendencies of the "I AM" movement found expression in the voices of others who claimed to receive messages from the Ascended Masters in the years after Guy Ballard's death. Among these new Messengers was Mark Prophet, a young man from Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, whose activities would eventually lead to the formation of Church Universal and Triumphant. One of the several "competing Messengers" who appeared in the vacuum left in the post-Guy Ballard controversies afflicting the "I AM" movement, Prophet had been a devoted student of the esoteric since his early adulthood. Undergoing a personal period of spiritual "seeking" as a young man, Prophet flirted with Rosicrucian teachings and Self-Realization groups, before becoming the amanuensis of the Ascended Mas

ters.<sup>17</sup> Although Prophet was probably never a formal member of the "I AM" movement, he was actively involved with both the Bridge to Freedom and the Lighthouse of Freedom, early "I AM" splinter groups founded in the 1950s.

Following a quarrel between Prophet and Lighthouse of Freedom leaders over the alleged editing of his message, Prophet established The Summit Lighthouse in 1958, a Washington, D.C.-based organization devoted to teaching and publishing the word of the Ascended Masters. Sharing most of the doctrinal beliefs of the "I AM" Religious Activity, The Summit Lighthouse built upon the esoteric precepts adopted by the Ballards in the 1930s. Included prominently among the similarities between the organizations were the patriotic civil religion, pointing to the emphasis on the concept of American exceptionalism, and a view that the group constituted a new spiritual elect.

Mark Prophet's marriage in 1963 to Elizabeth Clare Ytreberg, a twenty-one year old student at Boston University, would mark the start of a growth period for The Summit Lighthouse during which the organization's membership increased and its publication efforts expanded. In many ways, Elizabeth Prophet's personal life paralleled that of her husband's. Growing up in modest circumstances in New Jersey as the daughter of Russian immigrants, she exhibited an early spiritual precociousness. Like Mark Prophet, who as a young man rejected his strict Pentecostal upbringing, Elizabeth also turned away from her Christian Science background when she reached adolescence.<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth was attracted to the mystical aspects of the "I AM" literature and the works of Theosophical Society. Her quest for esoteric enlightenment remained a source of inspiration during her days at Boston University where she met Mark Prophet at a stop on the Summit Lighthouse's speaking tour. Sharing similar beliefs about the spiritual vacuousness of mainline religions and the corrupt political condition of America, the Prophets' thoughts on these matters would soon be reflected in the philosophy of their religious organization.

Interestingly, while Mark Prophet's patriotism and belief in a special destiny for America probably extended directly from his past exposure to "I AM" teachings, it is likely that Elizabeth came to this same position by way of more personal experiences. Working as a student-intern at the United Nations while attending Boston University, the young political science major soon lost her faith in the value of international politics. Disgusted with what she saw as "the self-serving and corrupt nature of politicians and bureaucrats,"<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth walked away from her U.N. experience convinced "that only God could save America."<sup>20</sup>

The Prophets' stewardship of The Summit Lighthouse during the early 1960s proved successful, as indicated by the organization's slow but steady growth. In 1966, following several relocations in the Washington, D.C. area, the Ascended Masters directed the Prophets to move the Church to Colorado Springs. Purchasing a mansion and a small tract of property at which special

gatherings and services were held, The Summit Lighthouse established its worldwide headquarters at this scenic location at the foot of the Rocky Mountains.<sup>21</sup> The Church's move westward, however, also represented an important turning point in the psychological worldview of the organization. As opponents of what they saw as the decadent and depraved interests of the Eastern, monied class, the Prophets' brand of populist, New Age religion was not well-suited to Washington. They were distrustful of politicians, and wary of the birth of an "International Capitalist/Communist Conspiracy" designed to subvert the American way of life,<sup>22</sup> and it is probable that the Church's move symbolized the co-leaders' suspicions about Eastern political culture and a shadowy power elite.

While the image of the political enemy remained much the same as that of the "I AM" movement, The Summit Lighthouse began to introduce more unusual foes by the time it relocated to Colorado. Adding to the air of impending crisis on the secular plane of America's political activity, the organization's literature revealed concerns about the alleged endeavors of extraterrestrial beings. Mark Prophet's belief concerning the existence of alien enemies poised to interrupt humankind's path to spiritual perfection was made clear in his 1965 book, *The Soulless Ones*. Dictated to Prophet by "Master R" to uncover a startling truth unknown to humanity, *The Soulless Ones* recounts the story of ancient astronauts from a distant star system who came to earth in order to conduct genetic experiments on human beings. Claiming that these malevolent visitors created a counterfeit race of soulless automatons designed to control "the real people of earth," the book reveals a diabolical, cosmic-level conspiracy.<sup>23</sup> Maintaining that the genetic experiments spawned a race of evil mutations disguised as humans who often "worked in high places,"<sup>24</sup> the Messenger's warning seemed to nicely complement the populist spirituality of The Summit Lighthouse. While probably influenced in part by the UFO theories of amateur archaeologist and active "I AM" member George Hunt Williamson, Mark Prophet's account of the aliens' motivations carries much more ominous overtones. Whereas Williamson made the case that extraterrestrials were "space brothers" helping to usher humankind into a New Age of Aquarius,<sup>25</sup> Prophet's interpretation conveyed the message that the visitors were would-be conquerors.

Expanding its operations throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, The Summit Lighthouse established a regional headquarters in Santa Barbara, California which served as the site for Ascended Master University. Later renamed Summit University, the school conducted regular sessions for more advanced members and featured a curriculum which included teachings on Cosmic Law and God-Government.<sup>26</sup> By this period, the organization's adoption of a psychological withdrawal from the perceived decay of the surrounding culture became a clear component of the group's thoughtworld. Frequently touring the country to speak about America's decline, Mark

Prophet's lectures often focused on the dangers of the hippie lifestyle, a way of life he thought responsible for the moral unravelling of the nation.<sup>27</sup>

Mark Prophet's untimely death in 1973, coming as the result of a massive stroke, left the leadership of The Summit Lighthouse to thirty-three year old Elizabeth, who had been functioning as a co-Messenger for several years. In a repeat of Edna Ballard's declaration of Guy Ballard's "ascension" following his death, Elizabeth immediately announced that Mark Prophet had assumed Ascended Master status as the guardian "Lanello." Shortly after her husband's passing, Elizabeth began to receive and deliver his messages. Exhorting the membership to prepare itself for the possibility of cataclysmic events on earth, Lanello dictated through Elizabeth an image of dark days ahead.<sup>28</sup> Revealing an early "survivalist" strain of thought, the emphasis upon group preparation for disaster suggests a premillennial conception of the future in which "the chosen" must endure a sweeping catastrophe before the establishment of a new "golden age." Viewed in the context of a chiliastic dream for society's redemption, Lanello's call for the birth of a "new civilization"<sup>29</sup> reflects an alternative vision of life for a group awaiting a cosmic reckoning.

Throughout the next several years the Church continued to expand, numbering some 25,000 members by 1975.<sup>30</sup> Renamed "Church Universal and Triumphant," the organization again underwent a process of relocation from Colorado Springs to Los Angeles, and then to Pasadena and Malibu, respectively. The Church's 218-acre estate near Malibu, designated as "Camelot," served as the international headquarters for the organization through 1986. During the decade following her husband's death, Elizabeth Clare Prophet emerged as the charismatic spiritual leader of a religious movement whose prospects for growth appeared promising. Writing numerous books, lecturing on worldwide "stump tours" for the Church, and capably handling media relations, Prophet competently assumed the responsibilities of organizational leadership.

Most of the media accounts of the Church during its stay in California took one of two forms, neither of which penetrated the more esoteric nature of the organization's perceived identity. First, a number of stories focused upon the more positive New Age aspects of the Church. Concentrating on issues such as the group's metaphysical devotion, its observance of ancient wisdom, and Elizabeth Prophet's engaging, charismatic persona, these accounts typically were framed in a sympathetic manner by writers who were impressed by the Church's novel character. More common, however, were the stories about the alleged misdeeds of the organization. Overtly hostile, these accounts charged the Church with extorting money from its members and building a financial enterprise for the purpose of supporting Elizabeth Clare Prophet and her inner-circle of advisers. Trumpeting a growingly-popular "anti-cult" position, regionally-based papers such as the Los Angeles *Times* and the San Francisco *Chronicle* focused attention to the increasing number of defector



accounts about alleged irregularities in the Church.<sup>31</sup> Following a protracted legal battle with state officials over the zoning laws governing the development of its Malibu campus, the Church sold the property to a group of Japanese businessmen for \$20 million in 1986.<sup>32</sup> Having slowly acquired sizeable tracts of land since 1981 in southwestern Montana, including a 12,000 -acre ranch formerly owned by Malcom Forbes, the Church had clearly intended to pursue a communal existence in a region still bearing strong traces of an untainted, primal frontier. The decision to move the Church's headquarters to Montana was not arbitrary. The Teton Mountains, located nearby the organization's ranch, have always held a special importance for spiritual groups following in the "I AM" tradition. Believing the Tetons to be the hollow dwelling-place of Saint Germain, portions of the "I AM" movement routinely visited the site during the 1930s in the hope that the opening of the mountains would allow the faithful to ascend to the ethereal plane on which the Great White Brotherhood resided.<sup>33</sup>

Equally significant as a motivating factor behind the relocation to Montana was the Church's perception of impending disasters. Citing astrological signs pointing to the arrival of a potentially dangerous "karmic acceleration," Elizabeth Prophet's book, *Prophecy for the 1980s*, discusses the strong possibility that the decade would be marked by cataclysmic events. Forecasting the prospect of international warfare, revolution, and natural disasters (such as earthquakes and tidal waves) on a scale never before seen, Prophet saw the 1980s as "the most challenging decade man might ever face."<sup>34</sup> Bearing a strong resemblance to the bleak picture of the late twentieth century prophesied by Edgar Cayce, Prophet's book built on the Church's already well-defined image of political "dark forces" by adding the threat of natural catastrophes to the group's world view.

### Blavatsky and Cayce as **Apocalyptic** Seers

The Church's historical attachment to the ideas of disaster and decisive conflict has its origins in the long and varied millenarian tradition. Scholars interested in millenarianism (also interchangeably referred to as millennialism or millenarism) have generally distinguished between two views of history and corresponding perceptions of world transformation. In the broadest sense, the distinction between the two major variations (which religious scholar Catherine Wessinger has termed "catastrophic" and "progressive" millennialism)<sup>35</sup> can be found in their contrasting views of how salvation will be achieved. Typically, scholars have looked toward the process by which the arrival of a new dispensation is made in order to denote two differentiated perspectives on the coming of a perfect age.

Broadly viewed, the separation of millenarian belief into two types takes place in the world outlook of the believer. Conveying a pessimistic view of history, catastrophic millennialism suggests a gradual worsening of earthly

conditions until the time of a great, cleansing catastrophe. Brought about by the hand of divine judgment, the earthly cataclysm is both unavoidable and necessary. World events, as pictured in this context, reaffirm the existence, and steadily-growing power, of the forces of darkness in a corrupt human society. This threatening image of the world, perceived by the believer as an inevitable descent into the impure order of things, mandates the arrival of a total apocalypse inspired by supernatural or superhuman agencies.<sup>36</sup>

Unlike its more cynical variation, progressive millennialism points toward the realization of a perfect age through a gradual process. In this mode of thought, the millennium is ushered in by a progression of human events which increasingly lead to the betterment of earthly conditions until the final arrival of the perfect age. Displaying a fundamentally optimistic and hopeful outlook on history, progressive millennialism parts ways with the catastrophic version's attraction to notions of destructive upheaval and the steady decline of the terrestrial order.

Although these broad definitions do not encompass the full range of historical millenarian expression, the Church Universal and Triumphant's adherence to dualism (manifested through the organization's dichotomization of pure good and evil),<sup>37</sup> and the emphasis upon disaster preparation lean toward a catastrophic worldview. Given the Church's widely-acknowledged New Age orientation,<sup>38</sup> catastrophic beliefs might appear, at first glance, incompatible with the popularly-held New Age idea of "positive transformation" leading to the Age of Aquarius. Yet, there exists a discernible pattern of apocalyptic thought in the philosophies advanced by some precursors of the New Age.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1813-1891), founder of the occultly-based Theosophical Society and an influential writer in psychic circles, unveiled an esoteric theory of history which foretold massive earthly catastrophes. In her 1888 masterwork, *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky provides a sweeping account of the lost truths from ancient traditions which have been ignored by modern man.<sup>39</sup> Writing during a period when Darwinian science began to fuel widespread religious doubt in the western world, Blavatsky offered an alternative evolutionary explanation of socio-biological theory by presenting a cosmology based on a synthesis of esoteric science, occult wisdom, and knowledge from mysterious ancient texts.<sup>40</sup>

In *The Secret Doctrine*, apocalyptic events (resulting from polar shifts in the earth's axis) were seen by Blavatsky as natural and predictable episodes in the earth's history. Each of these cataclysms, according to Blavatsky, represented the equivalent of the close of one chapter of the planet's history and the opening of another. In her estimation, these periodic events carried meaning far beyond the geological changes wrought by sudden "axial disturbances." From Blavatsky's perspective, which was largely responsible for transmitting the concept of "earth changes" to the New Age movement, the

cataclysms were divinely orchestrated so that new forms of humanity ("root races") might displace declining races, and thus continue the evolutionary course toward the Godhead.<sup>41</sup>

Blavatsky's account of the divine cycle of destruction and rebirth reveals an on-going, upward process by which man progresses toward full perfection. Underscoring the visible strains of Darwinian thought evident in Blavatsky's Theosophical analysis of planetary life, *The Secret Doctrine* purports to recount the physical and spiritual transformation of mankind from its first incarnation as an ethereal spirit form through successive cycles of upward evolution. Each of these stages of evolution, claimed Blavatsky, corresponded to sudden, race-extinguishing disasters unleashed by changes in the inclination of the earth's axis.<sup>42</sup> Relying upon "ancient geological and astronomical facts" derived from occult sources,<sup>43</sup> particularly Egyptian astronomical records and the Book of Enoch, Blavatsky rewrote the chronology of earth history and humanity's development using arcane, esoteric science as a guide.

Rejecting the time lines of history observed by either Biblical theologians or Darwinians, Blavatsky devoted much of her attention to what she referred to as "anthropogenesis," a pure scientific Darwinism with theological overtones. Examined in this light, *The Secret Doctrine* envisions the operation of a divine force steering the course of mankind's development through a lengthy ascent to divinity.<sup>44</sup> Although sweeping in scope, Blavatsky's "anthropogenesis" can be summarized by saying that man's evolutionary struggle toward life on a higher plane of existence is part of a seven-stage cycle. Appearing in a spiritual form as the future seed of humanity, the first root race initiated the process to physical materialization. As humankind gradually developed from lower life forms to more advanced stages of physical and spiritual being, Blavatsky claims that the first "really human race" took shape some 18 million years ago.<sup>45</sup> Occurring during the third stage of the earth's seven-part evolutionary cycle, the arrival of modern man took place on the continent of Lemuria, which Blavatsky asserts stretched from the Indian Ocean to Australia.<sup>46</sup> Destroyed by subterranean fires following an abrupt polar shift of the planet, the Lemurian civilization (which Blavatsky maintains was scientifically advanced) succumbed to the cosmic force of "survival of the fittest" as a divinely-orchestrated cleansing began the cycle of life anew.

From Blavatsky's viewpoint, the human race continued its growth through a fourth incarnation on the continent of Atlantis, a great island territory believed by many occultists to have been located between modern-day Europe and America. Falling victim to the same lengthy process of apocalyptic revolution as that which destroyed Lemuria, the continent perished in a great deluge several million years ago after a succession of changes in the earth's axis.<sup>47</sup> Consistent with the cycles of death and rebirth characterizing Blavatsky's pre-millenarian conception of history, the destruction of Atlantean culture led to the cosmic initiation of human life on the European continent.

Referred to by Blavatsky as the "Aryan root race," this fifth stage in humanity's upward path marks the point at which mankind, having completed prior steps toward higher being, begins to become free from matter.<sup>48</sup> Tracing the development of the Aryan root race from its birth about 850,000 years ago, Blavatsky declares that this stage is presently the one in which mankind is located.<sup>49</sup>

Since *The Secret Doctrine* teaches that the earth must undergo seven apocalyptic changes prior to the achievement of humanity's perfection, Blavatsky views the process of cosmic transformation as unfinished. Drawing upon astronomical calculations, *The Secret Doctrine* forecasts the next cleansing period as arriving in 18,000 A.D.<sup>50</sup> This inevitable episode, as perceived by Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society, was linked to the power of Karmic Law. Dictating a clear predestination for the history of the planet, Karmic Law (also called "the great adjuster" by Blavatsky) guides the spiritual transmutation of the world through consecutive cycles. As she states, the ancient doctrine of Karmic Law, which is embodied in all esoteric teachings, reveals a purposive "cosmic plan" for the direction of humanity:

Thus we see in history a regular alternation of ebb and flow in the tide of human progress. The great kingdoms and empires of the world, after reaching the culmination of their greatness, descend again, in accordance with the same law by which they ascend; till, having reached the lowest point, humanity reasserts itself and mounts up once more, the height of its attainment being, by this law of ascending progression by cycles, somewhat higher than the point from which it had before descended.<sup>51</sup>

While Blavatsky's Theosophical writings are generally viewed as having exerted a strong influence on the later shape of New Age thought, a mysterious figure from rural Kentucky would also further advance the threat of cataclysmic events in the New Age. Edgar Cayce, who would come to gain considerable fame as "the sleeping prophet" (a title earned for his practice of undergoing self-induced trance), foretold of a future marked by profound geological, climatological, and spiritual changes.<sup>52</sup> Unlike Blavatsky, who claimed that her knowledge of the past and future came from spiritual masters in discarnate form, Cayce's reported source of information was the so-called "akashic record." Comprising a vast body of "thought energy" surrounding the earth, the akashic record is viewed in esoteric circles as a storehouse of mass knowledge capable of being "accessed" by psychics in their efforts to obtain paranormal information.<sup>53</sup>

Cayce's psychic discourses, most of which were recorded between 1923 and 1945, were directed at subjects ranging from medical diagnoses to dream interpretation. However, the most startling of his clairvoyant feats involved his predictions of the geophysical changes that were to impact earth during the last days of the twentieth century. For Cayce, like Blavatsky, "earth changes" took the form of geological-climatological events which periodically took place in accordance with the universal law of karma.<sup>54</sup> Transpiring

in order to "sweep clean" from earth's history a previous cycle of human development, Cayce viewed the "karmic patterns" of man as being responsible for periodic seismic disturbances resulting in changes of the planet's geography.

Blending ancient mystery religions with Christian teachings, Cayce's metaphysical thought synthesized the distinctive spiritual traditions of East and West by incorporating the concepts of reincarnation and karma into an apocalyptic Christianity.<sup>55</sup> Strongly influenced by the Biblical books of Daniel and Revelation, Cayce perceived cataclysmic changes in the earth's geography as advance warnings of Christ's Second Coming. The approaching Millennium, according to Cayce, would arrive as a consequence of the vast accumulation of karma compiled over time through man's misdeeds. This cosmic law of cause and effect, by which humanity is held accountable for its actions, is laid out by Cayce in his account of Atlantis' destruction.

Cayce's revelations about the fate of Atlantean culture point to the dangers he felt were associated with man's embrace of shallow, secular ways of existence. Functioning as a highly-developed society whose scientific achievements and social order were noteworthy, Atlantean culture increasingly gravitated toward material gratification and moral decay. Having made the conscious decision to violate the laws of karma, Atlantean society rejected the existence of God, and instead adopted a lifestyle based on self-worship.<sup>56</sup> According to Cayce, the decay of Atlantean society continued for countless generations. Choosing to pursue technology and its material benefits over God, the culture began to experiment with the alteration of life forms for the purpose of changing the laws of karma.

Attaining a fantastic level of technological capability, including the mastery of such fields as air travel, advanced surgery, telepathy, and increased longevity, the Atlanteans, according to Cayce, descended from spiritual beginnings to a state of hubris.<sup>57</sup> Using Atlantis as a parable for moral failure, Cayce's discussions of "the lost continent" illustrate his conviction in the mechanism of divine evolution. Forsaking God for material comfort, Atlanteans believed they could break free from the universal laws of karma. It was, however, the sudden reappearance of divine judgment which destroyed the civilization. Having compiled such a staggering quantity of karmic debt throughout its dark history, the civilization was destroyed by an angry God who demanded total annihilation as restitution.<sup>58</sup>

It is conceivable that Cayce's Atlantis "readings" were partly influenced by a spate of writing on the subject during the 1920s and 1930s. Lewis Spence, a Scottish historian, produced numerous studies during this period dealing with the history and culture of Atlantis. In a similar vein, Col. James Churchward, an amateur archaeologist, wrote several volumes on the history of Mu, a "lost continent" he believed to have been submerged in the Pacific around 10,000 B.C.<sup>59</sup> Cayce's Atlantis material, however, deviated consider-

ably from the "scientific" and archaeological approaches used by these early defenders of lost-continent myths. Using Atlantis as a morality lesson to warn against the dangers of forgetting God, Cayce perceived the land's destruction as comparable to the spoiling of the Biblical Eden. Symbolizing the fate that awaited practitioners of "blind science," Atlantis became for Cayce a caveat against humanity's embrace of secular values.<sup>60</sup>

While the apocalyptic currents in Blavatsky and Cayce represent only two examples of the pre-millenarian underpinnings of the New Age, each shaped a lasting vision of imminent world catastrophe in portions of the movement. Conveying a sense of pessimism about the present condition of mankind, these early purveyors of the New Age apocalypse point toward a time when divine judgment will restart the cosmic clock and sweep away all vestiges of the impure past. Yet despite the pre-millenarian imagery of catastrophes and natural disasters evoked by Blavatsky and Cayce, there exists in their respective metaphysics more than a faint glimmer of hope about the ultimate future of man. Beneath the appearance of unmitigated gloom and historical inevitability, there is a positive belief in the wisdom of God. Propelling humanity to higher levels of consciousness, the saga of destruction and rebirth is viewed as a "master plan" initiated to return humanity to its heavenly source.

### **The Millennial views of Elizabeth Clare Prophet**

Elizabeth Prophet's observance of catastrophic themes in earth's cosmic evolution bears striking similarities with the early New Age ideas of Blavatsky and Cayce. Accepting the general theory for humankind's ascendance to the Godhead, Prophet's references to cyclic evolution and karma (two central subjects in her writings) have a firm grounding in the metaphysics of Blavatsky and Cayce. Adhering closely to Blavatsky's original account of primeval root races as the forebears of modern man, Prophet's conception of human history includes periodic "adjustments" of man's condition undertaken by the Lords of Karma.<sup>61</sup> Nowhere is the recognition of this cleansing process more evident than in Prophet's explanation of the rise and fall of ancient civilizations. Depicting Atlantean and Lemurian societies as moral failures "felled under the weight of the karma produced by its people,"<sup>62</sup> Prophet's description of the divine punishment meted out to these cultures corresponds to the "lost-continent" allegory used by other catastrophic millennialists. Demonstrating at once both the innate weakness of man and the on-going changes wrought by Karmic Law, Prophet's view of pre-modern history reveals her belief in humanity's responsibility for its fall from grace.

Where Elizabeth Prophet's worldview deviates significantly from Blavatsky and the Theosophists, however, is over the role of evil forces in directing the flow of history. Whereas Blavatsky relied upon precise calculations drawn from esoteric data to explain past and future earthly events, Prophet

recognizes the lasting presence of dark powers which exert a controlling influence in worldly affairs. Evolving from the history of fallen angels, this "race" of humanity is believed by Prophet to reincarnate perpetually, without the possibility of ascending back to God.<sup>63</sup>

By casting these Fallen Ones as the ultimate source of humanity's problems, Prophet's interpretation of the cycles of history takes on the appearance of a call for vigilance against timeless foes. In this respect, her acknowledgement of forces of darkness controlling and manipulating the progeny of God differs from the Theosophist's perception of an inexorable cosmic process guiding man toward a higher state of being. Although Blavatsky recognized the power of Karmic Law to intervene when civilizations approached their evolutionary "dead-ends," her philosophy was largely based upon an understanding of an impersonal, sweeping, and periodic process of earthly change.<sup>64</sup> For Prophet, the variable of absolute evil is introduced as a determinant in the story of man's progression through time.

Attributing to these Fallen Ones the culpability for humanity's ills, Prophet offers her own profile of their characteristics and activities in direct terms:

Alike in their origins and in their ends, they also operate the same in the middle: And once you've got their number, you can't miss them. They stand out like a sore thumb. See parading through the lives of our best biblical friends the same personalities with the same bad character traits, physical stature, and archetypal psychology—the proud, the heartless, the ambitious, the abominable. There they go, the spoilers with their unmistakable aura and vibration—a seething vortex of blackness and world condemnation.<sup>65</sup>

It is through such characterizations of defineable evil that Elizabeth Prophet assumes the role of deliverer of God's warning, a task also adopted to some degree by Cayce but rejected by Blavatsky.<sup>66</sup> By exhorting the pure of heart to remain faithful to God despite the corrupting designs of forces of darkness, Prophet establishes herself as a teacher of morality. Yet in doing so, she moves well beyond both the "rational calculations" of Blavatsky and the New Age Christianity of Cayce by providing a tangible, permanent foe against which humankind is fated to do battle.

### **Changing Apocalyptic Dynamics**

The Church's recognition of a new multifaceted vision of impending crises in the post-Cold War era permitted a perpetuation of the group's apocalypticism during challenging times. While the Church saw in the Cold War a long-lasting struggle symbolizing the eternal conflict between good and evil, the rapid dissolution of the Soviet Empire and Communism represented the apparent loss of a key "enemy." Having used the spectre of "Godless Communism" for years as an ideologically-based "other" to which conspiracies and

anti-American activities could be attributed, the Soviet system's implosion mandated the Church's re-evaluation of its foes.<sup>67</sup> As the 1980s wore on and the Cold War ended, the Church modified its category of "international threats" to include the new "rogue states" seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction and engaging in support of terrorism. While these were hardly imaginary dangers, as evidenced by the national security establishment's growing interest in these areas, it is surprising to see a New Religious Movement delving into these concerns at a highly-sophisticated level of analysis.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to the ranch community's strong interest in strategic defense and other national security issues,<sup>69</sup> there remains a deeply-rooted conviction in the existence of a powerful world conspiracy. Although faintly resembling the current Constitutionalist movement's interpretation of political history, Elizabeth Clare Prophet's explanation of historical conspiracies (from the assassination of Lincoln to the actions of the "Trilateralists") begins in a religious dimension. Conceiving of an international power elite descending from the Biblical fallen angels, Prophet considers this element of global society, including those involved in high-level finance and government, as life forms having emanated from another race.<sup>70</sup> According to Prophet, who participated in a 2-hour panel discussion with "conspiracy expert" Anthony Sutton at a 1989 Church forum, "the power elite represent true evil."<sup>71</sup> In her estimation, these "highly-placed internationalists" have accumulated such a vast quantity of negative karma in their past embodiments that "they have no use for God."<sup>72</sup>

Elizabeth Clare Prophet's obvious fascination with esoteric interpretations of "hidden knowledge" offers some insight into the Church's concept of a clear distinction between good and evil. In this respect, the Church diverges from the more optimistic character of New Age belief in which a potential for divinity exists in all of humanity.<sup>73</sup> The organization's perception of threatening outside forces (whether political, social, or stemming from "earth changes") does, however, directly correspond to the psychological dynamics of "enemy" recognition practiced by the Ballards. With the context of the conventicular Royal Teton Ranch, the belief in ever vigilant "dark forces" instills in the community a sense of besiegement. Like the Ballards' efforts at galvanizing their organization by introducing the threat of formidable foes, Elizabeth Clare Prophet's conception of "a decaying American civilization"<sup>74</sup> provides the Church with a unifying objective against which its spiritual struggle is waged.

The cloistered nature of the Church's ranch offers a habitat conducive to ideological homogeneity. While there is a moderate degree of interaction between members of the staff and the surrounding community, the communal ranch fosters a closed-information system in which ideas tend to be reinforced in a small collectivity. In such an atmosphere where the mirror-imaging of thoughts reifies the group's worldview, the result is the establishment of an



intellectual "hot-house" where uniformity of belief effectively quells dissenting opinion.

Recent developments within the ranch strongly suggest that the organization is undergoing a period of considerable stress. In late 1996 it was reported that Elizabeth Clare Prophet and her husband, Edward Francis (the Church's vice-president), had filed for divorce, and that many of the ranch staff would be leaving as a result of organizational "right-sizing."<sup>75</sup> Former staff members have maintained that it was the Armageddon panic of 1990, and the Church's long-standing practice of psychologically preparing members for an impending apocalyptic event which ultimately resulted in numerous defections and budgetary problems.<sup>76</sup> As an ardently patriotic organization historically attached to a Cold War-driven political outlook, it is likely that the image of post-Soviet security threats proved less plausible as an enemy. Indeed, for those accustomed to the Church's considerable efforts at mobilizing its membership against Soviet-inspired subversion and the spectre of nuclear war, the more uncertain nature of current geo-political realities might well have appeared as less than convincing threats. In any case, rogue states and nuclear weapons proliferation do not convey the same, easily-digestible imagery of an irredeemable foe as that a militarily robust Soviet Union.

While many of Elizabeth Clare Prophet's writings suggest a basic conflict between the Church's politicized values and those of society,<sup>77</sup> it is not political disenchantment which attracts members to the ranch. Despite charges made by critics that the Church's conservative social and political orientation reveals traces of a right-wing mindset,<sup>78</sup> there is little evidence that politics serves as a deciding factor for Church members joining the ranch staff. However, once working as part of the spiritual community, the staff member is immediately exposed to Church teachings which carry particular judgments about the social patters of the secular world. In this manner, members of the community are presented with a divine spiritual message with abundant implications for culture and society. Furthermore, because these social and political aspects of the organization's teachings are extensions of the group's religious thoughtworld, there is little room for the advancement of alternative opinion on such matters. In such an environment, where the conventional wisdom of the community betrays a high level of concern about the future, it is not difficult to envision the group's perceived need to adopt a psychological disengagement from an impure world.

Operating at a sub-stratum level in the Church's outlook since its creation, the revelation of decisive conflict and disaster reached its apex in the early 1990 "shelter period." In terms of its historical linkage to the apocalyptic impulse, the construction of the shelters merely represented a logical next step in the organization's response to perceived dangers. Inherited from the Ballards' comparatively unrefined approach to "othering" outside enemies,

the Church retained this general practice and modified it over time to fit modern circumstances. The Church's extensive usage and occasional transmutation of enemy and disaster imagery, however, has always had a deeper purpose beyond preparing its faithful for earthly cataclysms. While media accounts of Prophet's predictions of disaster have unfairly portrayed her ranch community as a "doomsday cult," the actual use of sobering prophecies serves as a means to achieve group unity. As a necessary corollary to a spirituality which reaffirms the cosmic divide between forces of light and darkness, the externalization of prevailing beliefs outside the community fortifies the group's self-identity.

Although a group's act of invoking looming dangers seems to naturally convey a sense of desperation, apocalyptic visions of total change more often reflect the anticipation of a perfect world. Examined from this vantage point, the apocalyptic group's apparent fixation on impending disaster may obscure from view its ultimate goal of attaining revitalization. In this sense, cataclysmic events represent signs of change on the horizon which will inevitably lead to the destruction of the existing order, and the dawn of a new "golden age." In the case of the Church Universal and Triumphant's ranch community, the on-going war against the forces of darkness is thought to ultimately end in victory, and the realization of a more promising future.<sup>79</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

1. Gordon Melton, "The Church Universal and Triumphant: Its Heritage and Thoughtworld," in James Lewis and Gordon Melton (ed.), *Church Universal and Triumphant in Scholarly Perspective* (Santa Barbara: Center for Academic Publication, 1994), 20.

2. Interview with senior staff member of the Royal Teton Ranch. July 2, 1994.

3. See Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *The Astrology of the Four Horseman: How You Can Heal Yourself and Planet Earth*, Livingston, MT: Summit University Press, 1991) for further detail of Soviet intentions. Interestingly, Prophet continued to treat the former Soviet Union as a unified empire in her book despite its obvious political disintegration by 1991.

4. Interview with a senior Church Staff member at the Royal Teton Ranch, July 3, 1994.

5. Gary Shepherd and Lawrence Lilliston, "Children of the Church Universal and Triumphant: Some Preliminary Impressions," in James Lewis and Gordon Melton (ed.), *Church Universal and Triumphant in Scholarly Perspective* (Santa Barbara: Center for Academic Publication, 1994), 91.

6. Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millenium* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 18.

7. Ibid., 18.

8. Gordon Melton, "The Church Universal and Triumphant: Its Heritage and Thoughtworld," in Lewis and Melton (note 1), 2.

9. David Stuppel, "The I AM Sect Today: An Unobituary," *Journal of Popular Culture* 8: 897-904.
10. Gerald B. Bryan, *Psychic Dictatorship in America* (Burbank, CA: The New Era Press, 1940), 207-215.
11. Ibid., 212
12. Gordon Melton, "The Church Universal and Triumphant: Its Heritage and Thoughtworld," in Lewis and Melton, 11.
13. Gerald B. Bryan, *Psychic Dictatorship in America*, 242.
14. Rick Berchiolli, "Civil Religion in the Age of Aquarius: A Sociological Analysis of the Church Universal and Triumphant," unpublished Senior Honors Project Paper undertaken at Westmont College (CA), 1988.
15. Gerald Bryan, however, indicates in *Psychic Dictatorship in America* that the "I AM" movement did practice a policy of selective membership. Additionally, in a 1991 interview with a reporter from *Gnosis Magazine*, Elizabeth Prophet suggested that Edna Ballard refused to open the group to blacks, and pregnant women.
16. William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 106.
17. *The History of The Summit Lighthouse*, (Livingston, MT: Summit University Press, 1994), pg.3. This is a short pamphlet produced by the Church to accompany its promotional video.
18. Rick Berchiolli, "Civil Religion in the Age of Aquarius: A Sociological Analysis of the Church Universal and Triumphant," pg.17.
19. Interview with Elizabeth Clare Prophet at her private residence on the Royal Teton Ranch, July 5, 1994.
20. Ibid.
21. *The History of the Summit Lighthouse*, 5.
22. / *Believe in the United States of America*, (Los Angeles : Summit University Press , 1980). This is a recording of a July 4 speech delivered by Prophet at Camelot to a large gathering of Church members.
23. Mark Prophet, *The Soulless Ones: Cloning a Couterfeit Creation* (Los Angeles, CA :Summit University Press, 1965), 107.
24. Ibid., 107.
25. George Hunt Williamson, *Other Tongues— Other Flesh* (Albuquerque, NM: BE Books, 1990 reprint of the 1953 original), 16.
26. *The History of the Summit Lighthouse*, 6-7.
27. Ibid., 7-9.
28. *Pearls of Wisdom*, May 27, 1973, vol. xvi, no.21, 90-92. This is a weekly publication produced by the Church and sent to its worldwide membership.
29. Ibid., 92.
30. David Stuppel, "The I AM Sect Today: An Unobituary," 900-902.
31. The media accounts of the Church during this period begin to reflect the growing public attention devoted to the so-called "cult-phenomena." For several years (from the mid-1970s through the early -1980s) Church Universal and Triumphant was viewed by the media as one of the most controversial New Religious Movement in California. It was during its stay in California that the Church first became subjected to intense media scrutiny.

32. Rick Berchiolli, "Civil Religion in the Age of Aquarius: A Sociological Analysis of Church Universal and Triumphant," 17-18.

33. Gerald Bryan, *Psychic Dictatorship in America*, 75.

34. Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *Prophecy for the 1980s: The Handwriting on the Wall* (Malibu, CA: Summit University Press, 1980), 121.

35. I am indebted to Catherine Wessinger for her much-needed refinement of the heretofore awkward and artificial scholarly categorization of millennial belief into the categories "pre-millennialism" and "post-millennialism." These terms were grounded in a Christian-inspired context, which was shaped by a conviction in Christ's appearance either before or after the arrival of the millennium. As Wessinger points out, the terms do not accurately apply to non-Christian belief systems. See Wessinger's "Millennialism With and Without the Mayhem: Catastrophic and Progressive Expectations," (forthcoming) in Tom Robbins and Susan Palmer (eds.) *Millennialism, Messiahs, and Mayhem* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

36. Catherine Wessinger, Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (Lewistown, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 20.

37. A good example is the hidden knowledge found in the ancient Aramaic Enoch material, allegedly written by an early ancestor of Noah. The story revolves around the misdeeds of God's fallen angels, whose sexual intercourse with earthly women led to the perpetuation of evil in the world. Elizabeth Clare Prophet has published her own volume based on the Enochian story.

38. For a discussion of the Church's New Age character, see Gordon Melton, *New Age Encyclopedia, First Edition* (Detroit, Gale Research Inc., 1990), 360.

39. Michael York, "The Church Universal and Triumphant," *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol.10, no. 1, 1995.

40. Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: A History of the Mystics, Mediums, and Misfits Who Brought Spiritualism to America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1993), 52. It should be noted that Washington's approach to his study is harshly critical of Blavatsky and the other "mystics" he examines.

41. John White, *Pole Shift: Predictions and Prophecies of the Ultimate Disaster* (Virginia Beach, Virginia: A.R.E. Press, 1980), 329.

42. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine, Vol.3 Anthropogenesis* (Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Press, 1952), 329.

43. Ibid., Volume 4, 294.

44. John White, *Pole Shift*, 329.

45. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Volume 3, 22.

46. Ibid., 20.

47. Ibid., 314.

48. Ibid., 21.

49. Ibid., 152.

50. John White, *Pole Shift*, 336.

51. H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, Vol. II—Theology (Pasadena, California: Theosophical University Press, 1972), 268.

52. John White, *Pole Shift*, 200.

53. Ibid., 188.

54. Noel Langley, *Edgar Cayce on Reincarnation* (New York: Hawthorn Books,

1967), 10.

55. Thomas Sugrue, *There Is a River: The Story of Edgar Cayce* (Virginia Beach, Virginia: A.R.E. Press, 1942), 305.

56. Noel Langley, *Edgar Cayce on Reincarnation*, 135.

57. *Ibid.*, 175.

58. *Ibid.*, 136.

59. James Churchward, *The Cosmic Forces of Mu* (New York: Paperback Library, 1934), 17. Churchward and Lewis Spence each wrote a series of volumes on "lost continents" and their civilizations. Spence's *The History of Atlantis* (1926) is the best known "classic" study of this esoteric subject. Churchward's research focused on the legends, traditions, and technology of Mu, an ancient "super civilization" he maintained was once located in the middle of the present-day Pacific Ocean.

60. Thomas Sugrue, *There Is a River*, 315.

61. Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *The Great White Brotherhood* (Colorado Springs: Summit University Press, 1976), 245.

62. Interview with Elizabeth Clare Prophet, July 5, 1994.

63. *Ibid.*

64. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol.3, 319.

65. Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *Forbidden Mysteries of Enoch: Fallen Angels and the Origins of Evil* (Livingston, MT: Summit University Press, 1983), 268.

66. Anonymous sources familiar with Prophet's intellectual interests cite Edgar Cayce as having profoundly affected her ideas on Christian metaphysics and prophecy.

67. This transmutation of perceived outside "dark forces" has provided the group with great flexibility in terms of its ability to invoke threats to the community. At this particular juncture, the Church's ranch community seems equally concerned with environmental (organic) cataclysms as with the possibility of nuclear war.

68. For some perspective on this matter, see Elizabeth Clare Prophet's *The Astrology of the Four Horsemen*, 419-438.

69. Since its move to southwestern Montana, the Church's international headquarters has conducted yearly conferences at which featured speakers deliver presentations on topics reflecting community interest. Over the past several years, the ranch community has hosted several experts in the field of international security and military affairs. Featured prominently among past speakers have been: Soviet defector Gen. Jan Sejna; national security and counter-narcotics expert, Dr. Joseph Douglass; and SDI authorities Gen. Daniel Graham and Dr. Dmitry Mikheyev.

70. Jay Kinney and Richard Smoley, "War on High: The Gnosis Interview with Elizabeth Clare Prophet," *Gnosis Magazine*, Fall 1991, 12-22.

71. Interview with Elizabeth Clare Prophet, July 5, 1994.

72. *Ibid.*

73. Michael York, 1995, 81.

74. Interview with Elizabeth Clare Prophet, July 5, 1994.

75. "Trouble in Paradise," *Bozeman Chronicle*, Nov.24,1996, and "Prophet, Francis Plan to Divorce," *Billings Gazette*, Nov.23, 1996.

76. *Focus*, October 1996. This is a monthly newsletter produced by Peter Arnone, a former member of the Church Universal and Triumphant, for distribution to other ex-members of the organization. The newsletter is strident in its opposition to the Church's current leadership.

77. Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *The Lost Teachings of Jesus: Good and Evil—Atlantis Revisited* (Livingston, MT: Summit University Press, 1986), 6-39.

78. Chris Roth, "A Prophet in Her Own Compound," *Grey City Journal*, Jan.7, 1994, Vol.1,#11. Roth's article alleges that the Church has extensive ties to right-wing groups.

79. Jay Kinney and Richard Smoley, "War on High: The Gnosis Interview with Elizabeth Clare Prophet," 17.