Unfinished Sympathy: Embodiment of faith in an American

fundamentalist Christian Intentional Community.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that the work contained therein is my own.

Abstract

Much previous work on Intentional Communities (ICs) tends to fail to fully understand such social forms due to an over-emphasis on the division between theory and practice. One possible methodological route out of this impasse is to apply the paradigm of embodiment.

Embodiment of faith is explored in relation to one such IC, God's Way Community, in southern Missouri (USA). The extent of this embodiment is located within a range of social spheres, including everyday ritual, language, gender, work, and spatial constructs. It is argued that to achieve 'understanding' (in the sense of Weber's *verstehen*) of ICs, and similar types of 'extraordinary' forms of belief, it is necessary to dissolve the theory/practice (and by implication subject/object) divide inherent in much previous work on this subject.

This is also made possible through the application not only of embodiment theory, but also through the use of a number of methodologies which could be loosely labelled 'post-positivist'. This includes, for example, the application of historical analysis and cultural contextualisation. Such methodological approaches also affords an opportunity to challenge the prevailing steretypes of such forms of belief, and so create new levels of 'sympathy' towards them.

For W.B. (without whom . . .)

Acknowledgements

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List of Diagrams

INNOCENCE

Part I

'Can I see another's woe,

And not be in sorrow too?

Can I see another's grief,

And not seek for kind relief?'

- William Blake

(from 'On Another's Sorrow' in *Songs of Innocence*).

Section I

What Is An IC?

The field of communal studies has always been bedevilled by a lack of a coherent definition of its subjects. A number of different words are used throughout general communal scholarship, indeed many writers inter-change them as if they all meant the same. Most notably, we find 'commune', 'cult', 'retreat commune', 'utopian commune', 'communes with missions', 'service communes', 'utopian communities', and 'intentional communities'.

There are a number of reasons why such words should not be interchanged, hence the need for clearer definitions. Firstly, the FIC[1] itself, which is to some extent the 'official' communal organisation, adopts the word IC as its preferred term (although it seems to me obvious from many of the listings in its *Directory of ICs* (FIC 1991) that many of these groups are not ICs). The FIC also clearly separates its members' communities from cults (1991: 31). It is also clear from the work of Kanter (1972) and Hostetler (1974b), who surveyed numerous contemporary and historical groups, that there seems to be a separation of sorts between communes and ICs. This distinction has been made by some (Houriet 1971 and Jerome 1974) within the commune movement itself. Conover (1978: 5) makes a distinction between the two communal forms. Most historians use the word 'utopian communities' although some (Infield 1955) use the word IC. Kanter (1972: 174-212) adopted the word 'commune', but makes a distinction between 'retreat communes' and 'utopian' or ones with a 'mission'. Hostetler (1974b) follows suit. I prefer to label God's Way community an IC because it exhibits what I would argue are key features of an IC,

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[1] Fellowship of Intentional Communities.

such as intentionality and embodiment of community. The use of the term IC also allows us to clearly distinguish God's Way community from other communal forms.

The Intentional Community

If an IC is not a cult or a commune then what is it and how does it differ from other communal types? Just as there are lots of different terms used within the field of communal studies there are also many different definitions available. The FIC, unhelpfully, define an IC as 'a group living and sharing together' with a 'common aim' (FIC 1991: 26). Infield, one of the first to use the term IC, provides a similar definition (1955: 4), although he stresses the importance of social and economic egalitarianism within the group. Kanter (1972: 36-57) lists six characteristics in her definition of 'utopian communes': (1) idea of human perfectibility, (2) order, (3) brotherhood, (4) unity of body and mind, (5) experimentation, and (6) a sense of boundedness as a group. She stresses that these characteristics are all utopian in nature and that utopianism is the central principle of such communities. However, I still feel that Kanter's six characteristics are still too broad and that they could all be equally applied to 'service communes', 'communes with missions', ICs, and some cults. There is also the fact that some of the characteristics are not prevalent in many ICs, such as experimentation and a belief in the perfectibility of man. I suggest that there are five prevalent characteristics found in ICs that distinguishes them from other communal types: (1) community, (2) utopianism, (3) intentionality, (4) embodiment, (5) egalitarianism, and (6) boundedness. Other communal forms may exhibit some of these characteristics but only ICs feature them all.

(1) Community

It may seem rather obvious to state that an IC is a communal structure. However I would suggest that in contrast with other communal forms, such as communes, the idea of community is central. ICs place the community or the idea of community over individuality of any kind. This centrality of community lies within the IC's intentionality (its intentions are achieved partly through communal living) and embodiment (community is embodied within the members and vice versa). 'Retreat' communes and 'service' communes tend to allow expressions of individuality within their social structures.

(2) Utopianism

Both Kanter (1972) and Hostetler (1974b: 1) highlight the importance of 'utopia' as a concept in examining communal forms. As Levitas (1990: 1-5) notes 'utopia' has a myriad of definitions, but there is a common usage of the word in reference to elaborate programs for future-oriented reforms or plans. Levitas (1990:3) describes 'utopia' as a 'vision to be pursued'. Mannheim (1963: 183-185) acknowledges that utopianism is prevalent in culture at an individual level, but he rejects such 'individual expressions' as a less important type of 'utopia'. Mannheim (1963: 185) believes (as does Levitas 1990) that the 'truly utopian' ideas are those which form the 'expression of the will of a social group'. He sees utopianism and the group as inter-linked. It is this sense of 'utopianism', as a belief in a future-oriented plan implemented by a group, that I am using in this text. ICs look to the future and have a clear view (an intention) of this imagined future. They also have fixed ideas on how to achieve this future; whether it be through reforming society, or in an apocalyptic religious form, it remains an 'ideal' future.

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(3) Intentionality

All ICs are founded for an explicit purpose related, as has been said, to a vision of the future. These communities do not exist in a haphazard way but are indeed 'intended'; intended for various reasons. God's Way community, for example, exist because they believe that God instructed their leader to build a community of 'chosen' believers who would survive the Day of Judgement. Other groups intentionally exist because they too seek a specific future and wish to implement the means of achieving it. Obviously many social forms are created with a fixed intention or goal to be achieved. I would argue that such social froms differ from ICs in that the level of commitment among members to the set intention is divergent, whereas in an IC it is convergent. A prison or a hospital may have very clear intentions at an 'official' organisational level, yet these rarely will be fully implemented or achieved in everyday practice. This is because the membership (different levels of staff, clients, and so forth) of the prison or hospital will not share the same levels of commitment to this intention; at various points there will be a divergence of this commitment. A successful IC does not ideally experience any divergence between its over-riding operative 'intention' and its everyday practice, due to the level of commitment of its membership. This commitment is what Merleau-Ponty (1962: xvii-xviii) labels 'intentionality' and which exists at the pre-objective level of perception. It is a stage where the subject experiences/perceives a 'unity with the world' due to the convergence of the individual's intention with a world (as he or she perceives it) which facilitates that intention. The world and the subject perceive a common goal, with no obstacles present in this unified perception. I would argue that this is what members of an IC experience and they achieve this due to the fact that the members embody the community and vice versa. The membership of other communal forms and social organisations will always

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experience some disruption to their sense of intentionality with the world in which they move.

(4) Embodiment

I will be discussing embodiment of community more fully in Section II but a few preliminary remarks are necessary here. It is my contention that the members of an IC exist in a different relationship to their community than that experienced by others in the communal movement, or individuals in social organisations in general. The IC is embodied within its individual members. Each member enters into a subjective relationship with the IC and perceives the IC not in an objective way but in a subjective way. This is applying Merleau-Ponty's notion (1962) of the pre-objective stage of perception; the point when an individual perceives his or her self in a subjective relationship with the world around them. This unity is broken only when what is perceived in the world does not join with our own perception of it. The membership of an IC perceive the communal space around them as in harmony and unity with themselves, it is only on exit from the community that their relationship with their surroundings becomes more problematic. This sense of embodiment works in conjunction with the community's sense of intentionality.

(5) Egalitarianism

ICs are egalitarian structures, characterised by communal power sharing and a lack of formal hierarchies. Because an IC holds the concept of community as central it attempts to eradicate all potential sources of individualism, not only because these may lead to discord, but also because they challenge the community's belief system. However, the extent to which any community can be fully egalitarian is questionable and will be discused in Section II.

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(6) Boundedness

ICs have a profound sense of themselves as distinct from other groups and the 'outside' world in general. The belief in community entails a separation from the 'outside' world in order to define an IC's sense of being an independent entity. The utopianism of the IC characterises the world outwith the community as flawed in some way, and this in turn creates a need for separation in order to prevent 'contamination'. The degree of embodiment of community also predicates itself on a separation from the world 'outside' of the community.

Thus, ICs are communal forms which are created around a utopian view of the future. These groups have a set plan to activate in order to achieve this future. The notions of intentionality and community are central to an IC. Members experience an embodiment of the community and there is a lack of individualism.

Other Communal Forms

The 'Commune'

'Commune' is a label that has been commonly applied to communal froms since the 1960s, although it was originally used in relation to the 'hippie' type of community. Kanter (1972) and Hostetler (1974b), among others, make a distinction between 'communes' and 'ICs'. Both separate 'communes' into 'retreat' and 'utopian' types. The latter appear to refer to ICs, whereas the former apply to the 'hippie' type.

The 'retreat' commune is what I would take to refer to the 'commune' in general. It is a communal form which came into prominence in the late 1960s. They differ from ICs predominantly in their 'retreatist' views, in opposition to the utopianism of the IC. 'Retreat communes', are formed out of a common rejection of contemporary culture, but do not seek reform, revolution nor even future change (as utopianists do). Instead they typically are preoccupied with a 'return' to an imagined rural past: a return to Eden. Hostetler (1974b: 56) describes such groups as being those who are, ' . . *born of rebellion and seek to escape*'. As Houriet (1971) and Hostetler (1974b) have noted such values can be seen in the 'back to the earth' ideology, common in such 'communes', which cherishes the relationship between the individual and the land. 'Retreat communes' reject technology and tend to institute strict gender roles (seen as 'natural'), which is in opposition to their declarations of egalitarianism. The original Sixties 'communes' that we characterise with the word were anarchic, badly organised groups which Cohn (1957) has compared to Medieval bands. Jerome (1974: 7), who claims to have visited over one thousand such groups during that era, defines them as apolitical, ecologically committed, technologically simple, and libidinal. Conover (1978: 5) defines the 'commune' as a group who have pooled their resources and share labour. It would seem that most of the original 'communes' were short-lived and oriented around ideas of retreat, escape and rebellion. Contemporary 'communes' which survive remain retreatist and strongly committed to an ecological ideology, but seem more interested in living in the present or the past rather than the future. Many of the problems suffered by communes lies in their lack of boundedness and idea of community. Communes do not institute a full sense of separation from their surroundings because they have not defined what they are; they have only defined what they are not, i.e the 'outside' world. The lack of order, egalitarianism, boundedness, and intentionality results in the commune being unable to create an

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embodiment of community in its members and probably accounts for the high failure rate.

Services and Missions

Kanter (1972) and Conover (1978: 5) also makes reference to communities involved in service or missionary work, but again I would stress that such groups are not ICs, but reform or welfare groups who adopt many communal organisational structures. Shey (1977) discusses such groups in Denmark, and much has been written about the use of these types of groups in housing and welfare programs. Although they may share a common sense of purpose and communalism, they are oriented by the concerns of the present not the future. Such groups do tend to be very egalitarian, with a strong sense of intentionality, but unlike ICs they lack a sense of separation from the 'outside' world. These communities see their future in reforming the world in which they live, not in creating a new and separate one. This lack of boundedness also calls into question the degree to which the community is embodied in the members of such communities, as the 'outside' world is continually entering their communal world.

Cults

Cults are notoriously hard to define and I do not intend to try to provide an exacting definition here. Suffice to note that the contemporary view of a cult seems to be that of a group controlled by psychological or punitive means, typically for sinister purposes. Cults are a broad category in themselves. Some are obviously fronts for various nefarious activities; others are run by individuals who are authoritarian and socially dysfunctional; some genuinely serve to provide loving and secure environments for their members. It would seem that the cult differs from other

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communal forms by typically having a single leader, usually charismatic, who seeks total compliance from members for whatever reasons. Cults are defined by their leaders and their own particular worldviews, and can be future, present or past oriented. However, cults are not egalitarian and typically assert control forcibly, via the use of psychological methods or violence. Cults are very bounded social forms and their members experience embodiment of community at probably the same level as members of ICs. I would suggest that cults are the closest communal form to the IC, with both having embodiment of belief, boundedness, intentionality, and a central principle of community. However, cults are not egalitarian and their intentionality and sense of community is defined through their leaders and not through the idea of the community as a thing in itself.

The Field of Study

God's Way community is an IC and exhibits the characteristics listed in the previous section, but it is an IC which is religious in origin and orientation. The community's utopianism relates to a vision of the future in which it will be the inheritor of a post-apocalyptic world. The community members inherit this world due to their status as God's 'chosen'. In order to achieve this vision of the future the community must continue to live the 'correct' way. The religious dimension of the community is as important as its IC status. It is therefore not only important to locate this work within the field of communal studies, but also in relation to some aspects of the field of religion.

Rexroth argues (1975: 1-10) that communal living, whether through necessity or as ideology, is as old as humanity itself[2]. Writing about communalism is not quite as old but survives in fragmented records of early settlements. Fragments mentioning the practices and beliefs of early religious brotherhoods (Persian and Roman) can be found scattered throughout the historical writings of many Greek and Roman writers, such as Pliny and Herodotus. These are, by their nature, fragmentary and limited. The first well documented, if still not fully 'understood', community is that of the Essenes at Qm'ran. Although several Jewish writers, such as the historian Josephus and the philosopher Philo of Alexandria, make reference to the Essenes the greatest source of material on their lives is contained within the Dead Sea Scrolls produced by the Essenes themselves (Vermes 1995). The Dead Sea Scrolls give the picture of a community that was most definitely IC in nature.

Through communal history, in Europe and America, accounts are divided between those produced by communities themselves and those written by outside observers. The formal academic study of communal forms developed much later. In the European case early forms of communalism were labelled by historians in contrastive ways: to be seen as peasant groups, revolutionary groups, or as Cohn (1957) describes left to be hidden away in curio sections until writers 'rescued' them. The historical works of Webber (1959) and Rexroth (1975) are two of the few that trace European communalism as a continuous historical movement, with multi-various forms, yet retaining basic tenets adapted from early Christian ideas concerning 'community'. In Europe and America, academics outwith the discipline of history only became 'interested' in communalism following the post-Sixties boom

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[2] His ideas concerning prehisotric communalism are by their nature highly speculative.

in communal activity. Yet as has been previously noted much of this contemporary work is muddled due to a lack of clear and workable definitions.

The American Work

I will now concentrate more fully on the work produced within the field of American communalism. I intend to focus on the American work as this remains relatively unknown to the European reader. I also intend to draw the reader's attention to the major works in utopian writing which can be seen to work in relation to ideas of communalism (Mannheim 1963 and Levitas 1990). As in Europe, writing about community has existed since its inception. If we survey the literature there are distinct stages.

Royals and Reformers: 1776-1860

The early phase of communal studies in America has similarities to the 'armchair' theorist stage of anthropology (Kuper 1975), where 'actual' anthropologists or theorists stayed at home and extrapolated their ideas from accounts relayed to them by a variety of field researchers, travellers, missionaries and other 'amateurs'. Similarly in the field of American communal studies one can see work divided between that published or supplied by interested 'amateurs', who visited such communities, and theorists who remained at 'home'. These 'amateurs' were predominantly Europeans who were travelling around the USA and sought to produce detailed chronicles of their travels through this 'new' nation. Two of the most extensive are the two-volume work of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt (1800), which is an account of his two years of travel through America, and the two-volume chronicle by the Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach concerning his one year American journey (1828). Both contain a myriad of facts concerning very early

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communal settlements and give much detail of the religious fervour and utopianism of the time. Both are still useful. There are other primary sources of historical data which are less detailed, such as the passing references to communal experiments contained in De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835). The majority of these travellers were European and took their material back to Europe for publication.

These accounts of communities were used as raw data by the growing group of utopian communists/socialists of the period in Europe[3]. 1820-1847 was the golden age in Europe for 'utopian' communism, which was the dominant reform movement of the time, and many saw it as the practical application of Enlightenment values. 'Utopianists' sought the peaceful reform of society, believing in the perfectibility of man and the need for order (as opposed to revolution). They suggested that the reform of society was possible by creating 'micro-societies', or communities, in which experimental social forms could be tried. If such new social forms were successful they could then be adopted by nations, ultimately creating a better future for all. Thus 'utopian' reformers used accounts of communities to gain practical ideas for their various 'experimental' social forms.

Leading utopian communists of the age included Saint-Simon, who was exiled from France as a revolutionary and was the main influence on later theorists such as Owen and Cabet. Etienne Cabet had over half a million followers at the peak of his success (Goodwin and Taylor 1982). He was also exiled from France. Cabet's *En Voyage En Icarie* (1840) was later used as the 'blueprint' for a series of Icarian communities in the USA. Saint-Simon and Cabet both influenced Robert Owen, the British social reformer and industrialist, who was the leading promoter (and publisher) of the ideas of 'utopian' communists. Owen also founded 'utopian'

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[3] All communism was originally 'utopian' in nature, indeed the utopianist Cabet coined the word. A split occurred in 1847 between the 'utopians' and the 'scientific' communists led by Marx and Engels. The 'Scientific' communists sought reform through revolution and Marx saw the 'utopianists', who had originally influenced him, as '*dreamers*' (Goodwin and Tayor 1982).

communities, first in Scotland (New Lanark) and later in the USA (New Harmony). Another 'utopianist', Charles Fourier, had his idea of 'Phalanxes' converted into 'real' communities. Many such 'blueprints', for example the Icarians and the 'Phalanxes', were implemented in the USA after the decline in the popularity of 'utopianism' in Europe. Such reformers saw the political utopianism and physical space of America as ideal for their plans. This period did not see the study of communities as social forms in themselves but rather as raw data or as curiosities.

The Great Chroniclers: 1870-1910

Following the disruption of the Civil War, and the decline in political utopianism, communal scholarship changed. The 'community' was no longer used as a 'tool' for reform-minded philosophers, but instead it was now seen as a social form to be studied in its own right. The sheer scale of the phenomenon before the war had led to a rise in interest. In this period we see the publication of a series of comprehensive works which extensively chronicle the communal experiments of the pre- and post-war years, by individuals who actually visited these communities. These writers interviewed members and studied communal documents. Two of the most distinguished works are by Charles Nordhoff (1875), who visited all of the one hundred plus communities featured in his book, and William Hinds (1975) who visited all but two of the in excess of one hundred communities that he describes. The works are still used as primary source materials within contemporary communal scholarship. Although neither writer theorises to any great extent, the material features the 'voices' and opinions of the communal membership providing us with first hand accounts, in an ethnographic style, of the people's lives and beliefs. Nordhoff and Hind's methodological practice of actually staying in communities, albeit for limited time periods, and actually interviewing members was a new approach for the subject. A similar approach is also used in the smaller works of

Albertson (1973) and Bushee (1905). Also at this time we see the popular trend of communities themselves producing their own documentary information, due to the rising public interest of the time.

This period, probably prompted by turn of the century angst (see Schwartz 1990), saw a renewal of interest in utopianism, which has always been linked to communalism. Kaufman's *Utopias* (1879) was not only a review of past utopian theories (such as those of More, Bacon, and Campanella) and schemes (such as Fourier's and Cabet's communities), but also a call for social reform through utopianism. Kaufman (1879) does not see utopianism as an end in itself, as many previous theorists did, but as a critique of society from which one could then construct a realistic plan for reform. Morley's (1885) work was similar to that of Kaufman in that it provided the reader with a review of the links between utopianism and communalism through history. Levitas (1990: 9-34) points out that neither work was very successful at the time but both were rediscovered in the 1950s and inspired a new generation of utopianists who in turn would inspire the communalism explosion of the late 1960s.

More crucially during this period there was a huge surge in the publication of literary utopias, such as Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1887), Morris's *News From Nowhere* (1890), and Wells's *A Modern Utopia* (1905). Rooney (1985: 16-18) states that at least one hundred and nineteen novels with a utopian theme were published between 1888 and 1900. He goes on to suggest that the majority of them were prompted by Bellamy's (1887) work. The majority of these literary utopias had at their heart ideal communities living seemingly perfect lives. The relevance of these works to communal studies is that they demonstrate a turn in people's interest in utopianism. Previously theorists, and the public in general, were interested in 'living' utopias as demonstrated by the vogue for IC formation and communalism in general during the

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1820-1860 period. By the turn of the century 'practical' communalism was no longer seen as a reforming tool due to widespread disillusion caused by the failure of so many communities. Utopianism once again became 'theoretical' and literary, but the popularity of these novels demonstrates the continued popularity of utopianism and communalism.

Pragmatics and Socialism: 1910-1950

The turn of the century saw a rise in the popularity of Socialism, which continued through the Depression until the end of 1930s. Because of this we see a number of studies (for example Bushee 1905 and Gide 1930) which use data from communities to theorise about Socialism. Again these theorists were not interested in communalism itself but rather in what it could demonstrate for wider theoretical principles. One work does stand out: Mumford (1923) who successfully tried to tie communalism in America with the utopianism prevalent in American culture, in general. However this work did not make an impact within the field of communal studies until its rediscovery after the Second World War. Similarly, Herztler (1923) and Mannheim (1936) both published examinations of utopianism's relationship to communalism, and its role as a reforming force. Hertzler (1923) links utopianism to rational decision making and sees the utopianist as a rationalist who critiques society and offers the potential for reform. Mannheim (1936) links utopianism to the group, defining it as an 'expression' of the group's reforming desire. Both Mannheim and Hertzler received little recognition until after the War when both their works became incorporated into the growth in utopian studies in the 1950s. Studies of communalism during this period remained piecemeal and typically served to substantiate ideas within other disciplines.

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The post-war era saw the establishment of American communalism as a subject in its own right. This began with a renewed interest, by historians, in this aspect of American history. This scholarship was led by Bestor (1950) whose sustained work in this field prompted much renewed interest. The work of historians such as Cross (1950), Holloway (1951), Infield (1955), and Webber (1959), all contributed to a reopening of old documents and surveys. The work of these historians, and others, were predominantly surveys; tracing origins, ideas and describing practices. The majority were historians and few attempted to study community as a practice in itself.

What is also crucial to this period is the growth of utopian studies which I believe feeds directly into communalism. A number of theoretical works on utopianism were 'rediscovered' during this period, for example, Kaufman (1879), Hertzler (1923), Mannheim (1936), and Mumford (1923). Negley and Patrick (1952) studied utopias through history and indentified them as intrinsically linked to social reform. Levitas (1990) provides a useful and thorough review of the impact of these works on post-War utopian studies. There were also new works, for example, Morton (1953) who also reviewed utopian and communal history and saw the two as catalysts for social change. We also see the return of writers theorising about utopianism and how this can be applied to social reform. Two of the most influential works (Levitas 1990) were Bloch (1955 and 1959) and Skinner (1962). Bloch (1955 and 1959) identified utopianism as a universal human characteristic and argued that utopianism was a 'not yet becoming' consciousness. He contended that in recognising the process of this consciousness it was possible to attain the utopian vision in question. Skinner's (1962) *Walden Two* novel which described a fictitious utopia achieved through the implementation of Skinnerian behavioural

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marked a return to literary utopias influencing the foundation of actual communities. Twin Oaks community (and subsequent off-shoot East Winds community) were direct implementations of Skinner's ideas. On the other hand there were also writers who did not view utopianism in such a positive light. Popper (1945) and Hayek (1944) identified utopianism as very dangerous and that the consequence of creating a utopian society was totalitarianism. This connection between communal utopianism and totalitarianism still prevails in much of the writing on communities, in particular that concerning cults. This identification of utopia with totalitarianism arises partly out of a misinterpretation of the relationship between the member-subject and his or her community. This renewal of interest in utopianism and communalism can be seen to sow the seeds of the proliferation of communal forms that would occur in the next decade.

This period also saw the splintering of communal study, with specific groups typically the more distinctly 'ethnic' ones, such as the Hutterites (Bennett 1967, and Hostetler 1974a), and the Shakers (Desroche 1971 and Andrews 1953), being the focus for particular individual study. There is, however, the beginning of anthropological interest in some communal forms at this time. Much of this was prompted by the work of Hostetler, who followed his original work on the Amish (1963) by pursuing extensive and long term work amongst the Hutterites (1974a). He and Huntington (1967) spearheaded a two decade study of the American Hutterite communities, which prompted others to follow. Such works are ethnographic and conducted by participant observation and provide a 'living' sense of communalism. However, they are, on the whole, descriptive and few attempt to theorise greatly. Much theoretical work was left to other writers who used Hutterite data to extrapolate theory, for example the mental health and socialisation studies of Kaplan and Plaut (1965). It also served to separate off the Hutterites from the study

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of communalism as a whole. Hostetler (1974b) would later survey communalism more generally.

The Explanation: 1970-present

The counter-culture communal explosion of the late 1960s gave rise to a more mainstream academic interest in communalism, most notably from sociology and psychology. Because of the myriad of forms described and the confusion of definitions, it is hard to quantify this work. These confused definitions remain and flaw much work on the subject, particularly in sociology.

However, in 1972 we see the publication of Kanter's *Commitment and Community*, which remains a landmark text, in spite of criticisms of her methodology and empiricism, due to it being the first work to attempt to integrate the theory and practice of communalism. It was also one of the few (along with Hostetler 1974b) to seek distinctions between communal forms. Kanter (1972) surveyed the data of ninety one historical communities and proceeded to explain how they were able to survive, or fail, beyond their initial foundation via her idea of 'commitment' mechanisms. She provides a definition of community (she uses the word 'commune', but it is apparent she is talking about ICs) and also incorporates contemporary communal data within her review.

Kanter's work is meaningful and important because it was the first to try and get into the workings of community, beyond mere description, and then attempt a theoretical explanation. Her findings and analysis were used by Hostetler (1974b) in his survey of contemporary communities. Bennett (1975: 92) found her book so *'splendid'* that he realised that he need not start the book on western communalism that he had been about to begin. That Bennett did not proceed with his book and merge the

wider western trend of communalism with Kanter's sociological analysis is disappointing, as is the failure of Kanter herself to build on her initial work. Although she followed this book with another (1973) and a series of articles on communal topics, her interest became markedly oriented toward the investigation and explanation of communal principles in relation to group interaction and the application of such ideas within mainstream institutions, most notably business. Kanter, now a professor at Harvard Business School, went on to do this at the expense of future communal research.

Kanter contends that when an individual joins a community they have to go through six stages towards 'full commitment' (1972: 74) these involve the prospective member renouncing the 'outside' world for that of the group. She proposes that the new member is led through these stages by the use of 'commitment mechanisms' which are implemented by the group, for example, the adoption of a new name, the wearing of a uniform, or the disposal of belongings. The success or failure of the group depends on the strength of commitment to the group engendered by the mechanisms.

Critics of her work, Hechter (1987 and 1990) and Hall (1988), have focused on her 'commitment mechanisms' theory and her methodology, rather than on her essentially functionalist model. Hechter (1990) replaces Kanter's 'commitment' mechanisms with his (and to an extent Hall's (1988)) 'negative reinforcement' mechanisms; yet both serve the same purpose. Kanter is not wrong in her analysis, indeed, it is possible to present an analysis of God's Way community in terms of 'commitment' mechanisms. However, I would contend that such an analysis would not go far enough into aiding our understanding of the workings of an IC. 'Commitment mechanisms' can explain the workings of many social organisations, for example, a prison. Yet, as I have said before, such organisations differ from ICs

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in their levels of member commitment. Kanter's analysis ignores the role of communal intentionality and presents the members as passive participants in their commitment process. IC members, unlike prisoners, choose to join their communities. Although Kanter's 'commitment mechanisms' aid their socialisation into the group it does not explain the level of commitment exhibited by IC members. This level of commitment is produced by the embodiment of the community's belief system into each member. Embodiment theory not only focuses on the most crucial aspect of IC existence; intentionality, but also presents a more active model of community. I will discuss the notion of embodiment more fully in Section III

I believe that Kanter's use of 'commitment mechanisms' continues to suitably explain the operation, on a pragmatic daily level, of communal life. However, she does not fully succeed in achieving the complete picture of communal life because the idea of commitment is not explored in relation to the wider utopian goals of the IC. Ultimately these goal are behind all communal activity and belief, and thus, behind all commitment. Kanter gives us only half of the story.

Current Themes

As Michael Barkun (1992: v), editor of *Communal Societies* (the journal of the CSA[4]) notes: '*The majority of communal scholarship remains historical*'. If we survey the lists of topics of doctoral theses on American ICs (listed in *Journal of American Studies, American Quarterly* and *Communities*) we see that nearly all show a historical bias and interest. Most work remains focused on past communities, whether it be the in-depth study of one group, such as Smaby's (1988) work on the Moravians, or more general surveys of many groups, such as Fogarty (1972) and Oved (1988). There remain few studies of contemporary groups. I

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[4] Communal Studies Association.

believe that much of this has to do with the partnership between the FIC and the CSA, in which the FIC seems to produce most of the data and current theory about the contemporary movement. As Kanter (1972) and Hostetler (1974b) have both noted, this can make accounts notoriously biased, and in reading most of the articles produced by the FIC there is a sense of virtues being extolled, rather than an 'insightful' examination of communal life. Most work produced by the FIC is also oriented towards providing practical advice for those seeking to establish, join, or maintain intentional communities. There has been some focus on the more sociological aspects of communalism, such as the work of Zablocki (1971) and Shenker (1988), but these follow Kanter (1972) and predominantly focus on 'commitment' issues .

Anthropology and Communalism

Anthropologists have tended to focus only on those communal groups which are particularly 'ethnic', such as the Hutterites, Mennonites, and Amish. The greatest amount of anthropological work conducted on communalism remains that on Kibbutzim (see for example Bowes 1989) which, again, is a specific form, and differs from American types. Much of this body of work is very ethnographically based, focusing more on description than theory.

II - Writing and Studying Religion

I do not intend to attempt to survey all of the work available on the topic of religion, but instead will focus on that material which relates directly to the fundamentalism and apocalypticism of God's Way community. It is one of the contentions of this work that God's Way community is not to be located outwith the mainstream of

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American culture or religion, but rather it is part of a historical and cultural stream within it. Part of this contention lies in a critique of the notion that American society is essentially secular. For this reason I wish to focus on secularisation theory, and also on how fundamentalism presents a challenge to it.

Secularisation Theory

Secularisation theory contends that secularisation is a prevalent feature of modern life. Wilson (1982: 91) defines secularisation as a 'social and cultural process by which non-religious beliefs, practices, and institutions replace religious ones in certain spheres of life'. This theory originates with Weber's (1930) examination of the relationship between Capitalism and Protestantism. He contended that Reformation emphasis on thrift, diligence, good works, sobriety, frugality, and hard work as proof that salvation can be attained (brought about by Calvin and Luther's placing of salvation in the hands of the individual) encouraged a Protestant work ethic which in turn fuelled Capitalism. This inter-linking of commerce and religion marks, for Weber, the beginning of a movement towards a more rational form of society. Indeed Weber saw the institutionalisation of rationality as inevitable (1930 and 1947). If we link these ideas with Weber's (1947) notion of society moving from a simple, inter-related form of organisation (*gemeinschaft*), to an artifical, impersonal, and complex type (*gesselschaft*) it is possible to suggest that religion must inevitably lose its power. Durkheim's (1915) analysis of religion as a social resource that maintains cohesion and continuity in small scale societies is also predicated on a view that as society differentiates and expands adherence to religious values weakens. The similar Weberian and Durkheimian views of religion, and its decline in society, became incorporated into a sociological theory of religion which remained the dominant theoretical force in the examination of religion in modern society until the post-War period.

Subsequent theorists (for example Parsons (1949) and Wilson (1982)) echoed Weber's original contention that society experienced a social and cultural process whereby religious beliefs, practices and institutions were replaced by non-religous ones. Wilson (1982: 128-130) sees the rise in science, the growth of the mass media and the internationalization of the world as all responsible for the decline in religion in modern society. He defines religion as providing the 'prospect of salvation' and 'appropriate guidance for its attainment' (1982: 27). In modern society science offers a more 'rational' form of salvation and a more accessible sense of attainment of this salvation (Wilson 1982). Such sociological theories were supported by a psychological approach to religion, instituted by Freud (1913), that contended that religious belief was an illusion, prompted by irrational belief and emotion. This view sees the decline of religion in modern society as a 'healthful' process. Such a theory proposes that the decline in the 'superstitious' adherence to religion is prompted by the adoption of rationality within modern society (see Parsons 1949 and Berger, Berger, and Kellner 1973).

Is Religion in Decline ?

Secularisation theory associates the decline in religious belief with the expansion of modern society; the traditional social forms which held small societies together collapse when society begins to expand, and as a result society becomes fragmented. New social forms may replace older ones. This is a seductive theory and it holds some truth. The power of religious institutions has declined and religious bodies rarely have access to the powers that they previously used to govern and dictate to their members (Glock and Bellah 1976); even the Catholic church admits this to be a fact (Palladino 1992). However, the decline in church power does not necessarily imply a decline in religious beliefs. Secularisation theorists have a tendency to cite statistics, for example, the decline in church attendance, church marriages, and so

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forth, to prove that the process of secularisation is ongoing. Martin (1978) and Glock and Young (1976) both point out that such statistics do indeed demonstrate a decline in religion as an institution of power. However, these statistics do not provide conclusive evidence that religion is in decline. At the same time there is evidence to suggest that religious beliefs are as strongly held as ever. A succession of Gallup polls (see for example 1986, 1989a, and 1989b) have demonstrated that the majority of Americans still maintain a set of beliefs that adhere to traditional Christian doctrine. Such polls should also be put alongside the rise in many 'alternative' or formerly 'fringe' types of belief, such as fundamentalism, apocalypticism, and New Age-ism (Wuthnow 1976).

New Religious Forms

A number of theorists (see Wuthnow 1976, Tipton 1984, and Glock and Bellah 1976) suggest that in order to locate the presence of religious beliefs in modern society it is necessary to look at the many 'new' religious forms that are emerging in society, as the more traditional approaches to belief appear to be in decline. They locate this rise in new religious forms within the late 1960s Counter-Culture examination of 'traditional' values. Tipton (1984), in particular, makes this link between the late 1960s and 'new' religious forms. I think that although this period did provoke a challenge to orthodoxy, and a re-examination of beliefs in general, it can not be seen as the defining period for many of these so called 'new' religious forms. Secularisation theorists are correct in connecting the decline of institutional religion with modern society. If we take this contention to be correct then the creation of 'new' religious forms would begin at a much earlier stage than the late 1960s. Fundamentalism in American religion is a case which proves this. Sandeen (1970) demonstrates that the birth of fundamentalism within American Protestantism, during the late Nineteenth Century, was the outcome of a rejection of

the modernisation of Protestantism, a reaction to Liberalism, and a sense of identity loss. The important point is that all the 'new' religious forms prevalent today were formed through a variety of interacting cultural and historical factors, and it is too superficial to identify the Counter-Culture of the 1960s as the defining moment in the liberation of religion from its institutional ties. Indeed, as Lippy (1994) discusses, popular religion, which he defines as any non-institutional form, has been prevalent at the fringes of orthodox belief since the beginning of American Christianity. He sees such 'folk' forms of religion as gaining supremacy in today's religious environment due to their easy accommodation within contemporary society (Lippy 1994). Thus, it is too simplistic to characterise a society, such as the USA, as secular because polls seem to suggest this; nor does the expansion of modern society inevitably entail a decline in religious belief. Evidence suggests that religion is as pervasive in society as ever before (Lippy 1994). What has changed is that religion has become less institutionalised, more adaptable, and often based around a more 'folk' style of worship. It is the responsibility of the researcher to locate belief within the suitable cultural and historical context.

Fundamentalism

The dominance of secularisation theory within discussions of religion and modern culture has led to a specific view of fundamentalism being produced. The growth of fundamentalism within a society (Ammerman 1991), such as the USA, presents a problem to secularisation theory. If society is becoming more secular why are 'extremist' forms of belief, such as fundamentalism and apocalypticism, increasing? The response from the secularisation theorists is to define fundamentalism as a reaction (typically irrational) against modernity (Hofstadter 1963). Berger, Berger, and Kellner (1973) see fundamentalism as the consequence of human discontent, provoked by the gap between material prosperity and spiritual or emotional scarcity.

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Other 'extreme' forms of belief, such as cargo cults and millenarian activites have also been analysed in this way. Worsley (1957) views millenarian movements as a response to cultural change and stress. Burridge (1969) and Cohn (1957) stress the need to locate such movements not only in terms of social discontent, but also in terms of specific cultural views of independence, power, and redemption. It is too simplistic to locate beliefs, such as fundamentalism and apocalypticism, within a theory of modernization. It is necessary is to locate individual movements within their historical and cultural context.

Although as Wuthnow and Lawson (1994: 28) acknowledge the majority of work concerning fundamentalism has been either historical analysis (see for example Cole 1931, and Dollar 1973) or too descriptive (see for example Boone 1989 and Rose 1988), there does appear to be a growth in studies which contextualise particular movements. Barr's (1977) theoretical overview of fundamentalism and Sandeen's (1970) examination of the origins of Anglo-American fundamentalism remain key texts in the study of fundamentalism. Some writers, such as Marsden (1980, 1984, and 1987), Fowler (1989), Wuthnow (1988), and Dobson (1981), have begun to produce insightful examinations of fundamentalism as an American cultural and social phenomenon of the modern period. These writers successfully relate contemporary forms of fundamentalism to the myriad of external forces with which such groups interact, as well as to the more general historical trends of the movement. There remains relatively few ethnographic works on fundamentalists. The most outstanding is Ammerman's (1987) study of an inner city fundamentalist group. She conducted participant observation and her central aim is to present an image of fundamentalists which corresponds to their own self-image and which challenges prevailing stereotypes. My aim is to follow Ammerman in presenting, or attempting to present, God's Way community in their own right and through this establish a challenge to such stereotypes. The field of fundamentalist studies is at a

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stage whereby the ethnographic approach is being merged with a wider cultural and historical approach (Marty and Appleby 1991). This is the framework which the Fundamentalism Project (Marty and Appleby 1991) is adopting in its ambitious attempt to 'make sense' of fundamentalism as an international phenomenon. This massive (it will consist of six volumes) undertaking already demonstrates, in its early volumes, the insight achievable by rejecting the view that fundamentalism is merely a reaction to modernism. Instead the Fundamentalism Project shows that fundamentalism (and by implication similar religious movements) needs to be located and studied within a framework of historical and cultural contextualisation. This ethnography of God's Way community will adopt this approach.

The Way Forward?

I believe that in order to truly 'understand' intentional communities it is necessary to focus on their intentionality. This intentionality is the fundamental motivation for their existence. An IC can not exist without such intentionality. Kanter (1972) provided the way forward by analysing the internal structure of such communities for the first time. However, her 'commitment' mechanisms are meaningless unless one also looks at the wider issue of how intention (whether religious faith/beliefs/ or reforming ideals) is embodied in these communities. The idea of embodiment as a useful paradigm for understanding ICs will be examined in the next section. It is also relevant to the study of an IC, like God's Way community, to locate its religious beliefs within a wider cultural and historical context. This process will be discussed in Section III.

Section II

Embodiment as a Paradigm for Understanding
or Converging Theory and Practice

As was outlined in the previous section the flaw with most theoretical studies of ICs are their inability to examine truly the intentionality of the community (enshrined in their belief system). Most studies focus on the divergence between the aims of a given community, i.e. its aims and beliefs ('theory'), and the everyday practice or activity of that community ('practice'). How communities resolve or 'fail' to resolve the divergence between theory and practice becomes the central concern.

Kanter's (1972) 'commitment' mechanisms 'explain' how on a functional, observable level community is sustained by practice, but they 'fail' to explain how belief is embedded within each individual member in the 'deep' way that it is. Kumar (1990), in his analysis of theory and practice, and the attempts by the Owenite communities of last century to resolve divergence between social ideals and everyday practice, fails to get beyond the conclusion that groups must seek a convergence between both in order to become viable. This obvious conclusion derives from the separation, by the author, of theory and practice into two separate objective entities. Sallnow (1989: 241) notes that analyses of theory and practice remain resolute in their division of 'practice' and 'ideology' although as his own research demonstrates it may not always be insightful to do so.

All organisations have a divergence between their over-riding aims and beliefs ('theory'), and the everyday operations ('practice') that support this theory. Typically, the two are found to be not completely reconcilable. The extent of this divergence is controlled by the power of the 'commitment' mechanisms, whether

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positive or negative, operated. Yet there will always be some degree of divergence. Such divergence is caused by the nature of most social organisations which tend to involve members who are present within them for a myriad of reasons. Many of these reasons may be in conflict with each other. Thus, a prison is run with the over-riding aim of control and rehabilitation. Yet amongst the prisoners and staff there will exist a multitude of individual motivating 'theories'. Some staff members may view the prison as a source of personal economic gain, while others may maintain a desire to aid rehabilitation. The prisoners, themselves, may or may not support the prison's ultimate goals. At no one point will all these different aims converge and so the prison will always be unable to fully achieve its ultimate intentions.

However, with ICs the situation is very different. All IC members 'intend' quite explicitly, to be there. The community itself is intended, unlike the haphazard development or creation of many other organisations. Intentionality is then the key idea. This intentionality brings the membership together in a way which cannot be fully explained via the idea of 'commitment' mechanisms. The theory and practice of community are too inter-twined to allow explication by this strategy. The paradigm which affords a possible movement forward from this impasse is that proposed by Csordas (1989): the paradigm of embodiment.

As Csordas (1989) noted, most conventional studies of religious phenomena fail to grasp the nature of such phenomena in the way that their authors would like because they 'fail' to explain how to resolve theory and practice. Geertz (1973), for example, used the idea of religious states and symbols in his definition of 'religion', yet he 'failed' to explain fully how such symbols, which are cultural objects, produce these states in the subjective experience of the religious believer. An objective and a subjective experience are always portrayed as distinct and separate.

The problem lies with the inaccessibility of internal states. At some level the experience of the subject is internal and inaccessible to the observer. The orthodox sociological approach to this problem of interiority, as Bilmes (1993: 7-20) discusses, was to focus on notions such as 'intention' and 'motive' as topics in themselves. This approach originates from Weber's sociology of action (1947) which supposes that all behaviour is meaningful and that the explanation of meaning partly lies in the motivations and inner states of the subject. The observer accesses meaning through theorising about 'motive' and 'intention'. The flaw with this approach, as Bilmes (1993: 3) highlights, is that it involves speculation about the inner state of the subject which the observer can never prove or access. Yet Weberian notions concerning behaviour and motive remain within sociology. Parson's (1949) suggested that the role of the sociologist was to get into the head of the subject. It is not only Parsonian sociology which follows Weber's ideas on action. Schutz's phenomenological approach (1967) is also based on ideas originating in observer introspection, and so is Mead's interactionist (1956) view of sociological enquiry (Bilmes 1993).

The problem is that we can not enter the heads of the subject, nor speculate wildly on his or her's 'motives' or 'intentions'. Bilmes (1993) suggests that we end such speculations and instead focus on discourse; what are participants, including the subject, saying about their actions, motives, and emotions. He sees inner states not as topics in their own right, but as resources which subjects use to discuss their interaction with their world and each other; Bilmes labels this a 'discursive approach' (1993: 3). It is an approach useful for studying religion as too often observers wish to enter the mind of the subject. Instead of attempting this impossible act, the observer needs to focus instead on what the participants, for example in a ritual, are saying and doing as an interacting group. This is the approach which Csordas adopts in his study of demonic possession.

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Csordas (1989), in attempting to examine the phenomenon of demonic possession among American charismatic Christians, rejects conventional analysis which is framed by the view that demons are objects which travel across bodily boundaries and afflict the subject, whose experience we cannot reach or grasp[5]. The focus is typically on the demon as the active object, whereas the subject (the possessed individual) is that on which things are done, implying a passivity on the part of the subject.

However, Csordas (1989) found that the important part of the phenomenon was not to be found in the discussing of demons as 'things' in themselves, whether real or not (therefore eliminating the desire to reopen the rationality debate), but in the active experience of possession as interpreted by the subjects and those around them. Csordas focused instead on what the participants in the exorcism were saying about possession and demons. He saw this (in an approach similar to that of Bilmes 1993) task as more important than attempting to locate the 'demon' as a subject of study in itself. Csordas found (1989) that during possession subjects talked about demons in relation to their own bodies and sense of self. Demonic possession must then be perceived as a subjective state, the focus being on the possessed subject. The demon is not now important in its own 'right' but in its personal and subjective relationship to the 'afflicted'. The use of the 'discursive approach' has allowed us to focus on the experience of the subject in terms of embodiment, rather than by discussing such inaccessible topics as demons. By abandoning the impulse to objectify the possession process a new route to understanding the experience is created. Religious phenomena require a paradigm which acknowledges that they are primarily subjective experiences. This entails a paradigm that collapses the dualism of subject and object.

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[5] This recalls Evans-Pritchard's (1965) concluding remarks concerning Nuer religion. He 'failed' to reconcile the objectivity of outward practice and the subjective, interior states of the Nuer. He saw the only way forward being in the handing over of work, at this point, to the theologian and an abandonment by the anthropologist.

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Such a paradigm is also needed in studying intentional community. Community is not an object in itself to which members relate in the way that a non-member would. Rather, community is within each member. It is a subjective, lived, and active experience in which all are engaged. The theory and the practice of communal life, as perceived by the members, are joined in an indivisible way. This is not to dismiss the useful idea of 'commitment' mechanisms. Such mechanisms are always needed, especially for educating new members and the young; as I will show in later chapters there are often occasions when they are needed. However, for most adult members community becomes embodied within themselves, at a fundamentally physical and subjective level.

The situation between theory and practice within intentional communities, is rather like the equilibrium process in chemistry. In a chemical equilibrium two elements combine in a complex interaction of environmental and other unknown factors, to produce a compound. The elements must be equal and balanced. If the equilibrium fails, due to an imbalance of the elements, no compound is produced. This differs from most typical chemical reactions where there is always 'something' produced, however useless. In an equilibrium if there is no balance there is no end product. Similarly, without the subtle interaction of theory and practice there would be no community as it is desired or intended. Csordas (1989) achieves his paradigm of embodiment by combining the work of two theorists: Bourdieu (1977) and Merleau-Ponty (1962).

Bourdieu (1977: 94) saw the body as an important element in culture. The body, for him, is part of an individual's subjective experience and memory. The body contains cultural knowledge within it, via its interaction with the world. An individual's interaction with the world involves the body in a fundamental way. Therefore, to ignore the body as a holder of culture is to ignore an important

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element. Synott (1993) reiterates the importance of the body by stating that it is at the heart of social interaction and identity, and goes on to argue that different conceptions of knowledge are based within the body.

How the body is 'inscribed' within culture, is explained by the idea of *habitus*. Rather than separate culture ('theory') from practice (interaction with the world), Bourdieu (1977) combines the two in the process of *habitus*. *Habitus* is the set of unconscious (being in the body) dispositions which generate and structure practices and representations (1977: 72). The *habitus* allows the convergence of the everyday practice, of say community, with the over-riding 'idea' of community and the need to establish such a community. Bourdieu eliminates, at a base level, the division of subject and object, by including the unconscious and the body as important active elements in all of this engagement in the world. The *habitus* generates and unites social practice and social theory. For Bourdieu embodiment is involved in practice, whereas for Merleau-Ponty embodiment is related to perception.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) defined the act of objectification as being at the end of the process of perception. For him perception begins earlier than at the point normally recognised, i.e. the point of objectification. Rather, perception begins in an earlier, pre-objective state, contained within the body. Perception begins with the individual subject's interaction in the world. Thus, the basis for all perception is subjectivity. This is not to deny the process of objectification, rather Merleau-Ponty regards this as an event which occurs when the individual views a problematic within his or her world. We do not, for example, see our bodies as objects but rather as part of ourselves, i.e. fellow subjects. It is only when our bodies become a 'problem' to us for whatever reason and therefore cause an alteration in their engagement with the world in our eyes, that objectification occurs. Merleau-Ponty

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(1962) uses the example of a boulder. A boulder is initially perceived as part of our subjective world. This perception changes if the boulder's relation to us, in our world, becomes problematic, i.e. if it blocks our route. At this point it is no longer a subject of identification, but an object to which we now relate differently through the work of culture. We now must decide how best to deal with this 'obstacle'. Culture provides the variety of solutions. This describes the individual's perception and relationship with the world but what of the group?

Merleau-Ponty (1962) contends that as children we are not aware of the 'private subjectivities' of others. It is only when we become adults that we realise that all around us are subjectivities which differ from our own. However, Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggests that it is still possible for a shared perception of the world between individuals. His notion of intersubjectivity sees separate subjectivities broken down through communication of commonalities. This breakdown of private subjectivities forms a perception of 'co-existence' in which individuals perceive each other as sharing common goals and beliefs. Yet this world of co-existence does not allow for a complete sense of group perception; there will always be some degree of separation between individuals. However, the degree of co-existence achievable between individuals is related to their level of commonality. I would suggest that an IC achieves this sense of co-existence to a high degree due to its shared vision of the world.

Csordas (1989) calls for an analysis which incorporates both theories, because for him religious phenomena involve the work of religious practice (through Bourdieu's *habitus*), i.e. healing possessed victims, and religious theory (which involves perception), the ideas concerning demons, and demonology. Csordas (1989) achieves this fusion through his paradigm of embodiment. The demon is described by the victim as being part of his or herself, it is not a separate object at the initial

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stage of 'diagnosis', thus we have Merleau-Ponty's (1962) pre-objective stage of perception. Only later through the act of *habitus* can the demon be 'diagnosed' and then cast out. This is not to deny that demons do not exist externally, they do as objects in demonologies, but within the context of healing, demonic possession and its 'diagnosis' involves subjective experience. Everything involves practice and perception and so Csordas (1989) uses both to collapse the separation between subject and object within embodiment. As Csordas (1989) notes, such an approach allows for the discussion of such 'difficult' topics, like emotion, irrationality and so forth, because it rids us of having to make distinctions between objects and subjects. This approach incorporates Bilmes vision of a discursive sociology (1993). Csordas is led to locate embodiment as a useful paradigm due to the discussion of the body by participants in the rituals that he describes. We can apply this approach to God's Way community. What the community say (or do not say) concerning their sense of community allows us a framework with which to investigate community. It will be demonstrated that the community's practice and discourse show their sense of embodiment of community.

If we apply this idea of embodiment to God's Way community we can greater understand their way of living. For us, the community is an object, to be surmounted like Merlau-Ponty's boulder. Communal ideas, such as divine predestination and divine visitation, cause problems for us to work out within our perception. However, this is because we separate our subjective existence in the world from theirs, which we objectify. For them, life is lived by direct experience, it is subjective. They only objectify their communal life when problems occur.

An IC like God's Way community is both a mental and a physical space. Communal life calls for a subordination of the individual to the group in an extreme way, that makes the community paramount and greater than any individual member.

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This process does not, however, call for members to objectify the community, but instead primarily to interact so that community as 'lived' is an active subjective experience that all share. It involves an interaction of mind and body that cannot be analysed by separating the two. The practice and theory of community converge in the living of community (*habitus*). The people, the land, and the everyday activity of 'living' are not distinct things but rather are joined and combined together. Their *habitus* unites them. To overlook this embodiment would be to deny the totality of their engagement with the world. For example, when community members drink the water from their well, it is a special act (*habitus*) with accompanying sayings and actions. A conventional analysis would begin at the end, so to speak, by objectifying the water as an entity in itself. Instead, we need to see the water as a subject, a part of the entire community, which is not separate in their eyes, as for example 'outside' water would be. Water from the 'outside' would be instantly objectified, an objectification which would be due to members' perceptions of 'outside' water as problematic. The community is perceived by the membership as a whole 'entity', not as a series of separate objects. This belief is held within each member and is demonstrated through the way they interact daily, through their practice. Community, as a perceived thing in the world exists fundamentally for IC members as a subject holding the same place within their perception; it is same not different or separate.

It is necessary, if analysis and understanding are to be made possible, for us to get beyond the description of typical organisational 'commitment' practices and move toward an examination of how this commitment is embodied within members. If the concept of embodiment is adopted, focus moves from the idea of community as the main object of study, with the members relegated to essentially passive roles[6], towards an exploration of community as a subjective state.

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[6] This perception of passivity may explain the portrayal of communalists, in much of the literature on the subject, as 'zombies' or 'automatons'.

Although I contend that God's Way community is intentional and embodied it is necessary to discuss the limits to these states. As I mentioned in my discussion of embodiment full intersubjectivity is not possible in the sense of Merleau-Ponty's view of perception (1962). The individual remains a force in any community, and as Benhabib suggests (1992) the self is realised through interaction with the human community; without the 'voice' of others we can not become aware of the presence of these 'others' in our world. Thus, she suggests that the very act of communal living entails the recognition of individuals. However, I feel she over-generalises on her view of the interaction between the self and 'others'. She contends that engagement in the world, whether through confrontation or conversation, affords the recognition of independent selves. But there are different types of engagement in the world. Conversation and sharedness are more likely types of engagement-in-the-world, within a communal structure, than confrontation. Therefore the implication must be that the form of this engagement-in-the-world by independent selves must determine the relationship between these selves. Individual members of a community engage in the world through commonality and thus through this process must have a tendency to locate 'others' as more alike than different to themselves.

I agree that even within communal structures the self is distinct, but I would contend that it is not realised to the extent it would be in other social forms. This brings us to the entire notion of intentionality. How intentional can a community be? It is impossible to discover the level of intentionality exhibited within a community. Intentionality, in Merleau-Ponty's (1962) sense of unity with the world, is the goal of an IC, but this goal is never fully realised due the limits of co-existence and the presence of individual subjectivites. It is also impossible to locate the degree of co-

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existence because we are dealing with internal states and our evidence for the success of a community comes from our objective observations of behaviour and practice. MacIntyre (1970: 118-122) highlights the fact that subjects do not always follow the rules that they say they follow; likewise they often follow rules which they do not believe. However we can not access the individual and discover whether they are fully adhering to the communal idea in their everyday practice. The route that we must take is follow Bilmes (1993) and listen to what the community say and actually do in their everyday practice. What I would contend from this ethnography is that evidence for a lack of intentionality does exist, but only in an area where communl practice and theory diverge: status. I will examine (Chapter Three) the fact that although the community profess to be completely egalitarian they do appear to have an informal hierarchy of authority based around ideas of status. Within this hierarchy status is defined according to whether the individual is married and/or a parent. The fact that those members who lack status demonstrate resistance to communal totality by the adoption of marked gender identities gives some indication that some rules of communal practice are not being followed. Such evidence proves Merleau-Ponty's (1962) contention that when commonality breaks down it causes intersubjectivity to collapse. It is within the sphere of status that God's Way's members realise their full sense of personal self. The fact that it is only within one area that the community appear to demonstrate a break from their commonality suggests that they achieve co-existence and therefore intentionality to a high degree.

I will be demonstrating in the ethnographic chapters, in Part II, the different ways in which community is embodied and the different practices (*habitus*) which incorporate this. Csordas (1989) unites perception and practice to 'explain' via use of the paradigm of embodiment. My bafflement and curiosity during fieldwork occurred because the practices that I saw differed from those I knew. This caused

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me to perceive the community not as part of my subjectivity, but as an object to 'surmount'. By using the paradigm of embodiment this bafflement can be reduced (although not necessarily eliminated) by focusing not on community as object, but community as perceived subject, embodied within members. By adopting this stance we can rid ourselves of the need to raise questions about rationality or veracity. Whether demons, for example, exist 'in the world' is not important because in the course of healing, the demon is not an object but part of the subject, and so it 'exists' in the minds of the participants and the 'afflicted'. Such subjectivity is the essence of the process. Thus, by adopting this 'tool' movement towards the second goal of this thesis: 'understanding' and 'sympathy', is possible

Understanding Sympathy

'Worlds everywhere are complex fusions of what we like to call modernity and magicality, rationality and ritual, history and the here and now.' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 5).

As was said in the *Preface*, the aims of this work are twofold: to use the paradigm of embodiment as a useful 'tool' for examining ICs, and secondly to allow us to use embodiment, and other methods, in order to create a framework of 'understanding' from which a movement towards 'sympathy' is possible. I wish to begin by examining these two important words: understanding and sympathy.

Understanding: is defined by the *OED* as *'an ability to sympathise with another's feelings, to have insight.'* It does not require an individual to 'believe' in the experiences of another, or to even fully incorporate such experiences into their own perception. Rather, it requires an individual to gain some degree of insight into another's life. Weber (1947) used the idea of *verstehen*, typically translated as 'understanding', as a central element of his methodology. The German word for

'understanding' is, perhaps, more useful than the English because it implies more of an interpretative approach, or a worldview. Weber saw *verstehen* as a methodological tool and an orientation from which a researcher could proceed. For Weber *verstehen* was the goal of any methodology. There are two types of *verstehen: aktueller* and *erklarender.* The former type is concerned with direct observational understanding of a given event or practice, whereas the other type, 'explanatory understanding', focused on the meanings attached to a cultural event by the members of that culture. Weber never fully defined the distinctions between the two types of *verstehen* and their use remains arbitrary and ambiguous throughout his work. Despite this it remains a methodological concept which can be useful.

Crucially, it should be noted that *verstehen* does not imply discovery of 'the truth' but rather the creation of a framework which can be used to obtain some degree of insight. This is the aim of my use of 'understanding' as a methodological 'tool'. Tyler (1986: 129) points out that postmodernist ethnography is not seeking 'true' truths, because these are not achievable (if one accepts the ideas of 'Postmodernism'); rather we should seek some level of 'understanding' from which we can gain insight or 'meaning'. It is the suggestion of a movement towards an other, rather than the 'old' anthropological notion of 'putting oneself in another's shoes'.

'Understanding' should be twinned with the notion of 'sympathy', rather than the idea of 'empathy', or putting yourself in someone else's shoes. *Sympathy* is defined in the *OED* as meaning '*a capacity for being sympathetically affected with the same feeling as another, or the tendency to share, or state of sharing, another person's or things emotion or sensation or condition*'. The creation of 'sympathy' involves the recognition of commonality within an experience, yet it always maintains an implication of distance between the individuals involved in the relationship of

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'sympathy'. *Empathy* calls for an individual to project his or her personality into, and so comprehend, another's experience. Much 'traditional' ethnography was written with the implication that empathy was achievable if one lived with 'a people' long enough. Full 'understanding' was made possible by pretending to go 'native'.

However, my suggestion (following Clifford 1986) is that it is necessary for anthropology to continue to rid itself of this idea and instead work towards the creation of new methodologies. Methodologies which allow for a 'sympathetic' relationship, which can still provide insight, but maintain the reality that truly 'true' experience is only possible through living the experience first hand. By applying the notion of 'sympathy' it is possible to create the framework of *verstehen* that Weber (1947) envisaged. For Weber 'understanding' appears to mean gaining access to a worldview which is shared by subject and observer. This worldview can be seen as a framework in which interpretation is possible.

An actress preparing for a role does not become the character as written. This feat is impossible, unless one is acting a role that one has created and is based on one's own experience. Instead the actress draws on her experiences, direction, and other people's ideas, to create a 'new' character with similarities and sympathy to the one created by the writer. Yet her portrayal will always diverge, in some ways, from the original scripted version. All subsequent portrayals of the character, by different actresses, will also differ from the writer's original as well as from each other. This process does not change the character completely, if done well. This is similar to my process of 'writing' about the community. My portrayal of God's Way community is not the 'truth', but an attempt, as Tyler puts it (1986: 125) *'to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible*

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world of common-sense reality, and thus to provide an aesthetic integration that will have a therapeutic effect.'

I adopt a methodology in this work that could be labelled 'postmodernist'. However I find this word troublesome as it has become a catchword for 'anything goes' faddism, and in its more extreme forms creates the sort of nihilistic, amoral, and apolitical stances that many have found distasteful and troubling (see for example Ahmad (1987), Scheper-Hughes (1992) and Said (1993). Much of this lies with the term itself which has evolved from Lyotard's (1984) usage (of a modernism that defines itself against previous modernisms, allowing for a movement of analysis and historical study of modernisms) to now cover a myriad of ideas and meanings. Another problem with postmodernism is its propensity for obtuse language and jargon which often serves to mystify the reader, which ironically works against one of its cherished aims - the demystification of the written. Moore (1994: 347) accounts for such misuse and abuse of postmodernist concepts (and language) in the fact that such ideas have been brought into anthropology (and other disciplines) by the wholesale 'importing' of literary theory without the practical knowledge or experience to make such ideas work usefully outwith their subject of birth.

Weiner (1995:14-15) also warns of the excesses of postmodernism, yet states that anthropology has much to gain from postmodernist thinking, and similarly much to lose in its rejection. Weiner (1995) and Moore (1994) both point out that an awareness of the ambiguity of postmodernism is a crucial guard against its more excessive tenets.

Many of the original ideas of postmodernism such as the study of process rather than product (Derrida: 1976), and the viewing of modernist concepts of 'reality', 'truth', 'fact' etc. as historical constructions are useful to anthropology (Foucault 1973a,

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Bourdieu 1977). Perhaps more salient to this particular discipline is the postmodernist privileging of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981), and the acknowledgement of history, power, and global interaction (Fischer 1987)

However, the faddish adoption of postmodernism (Gellner 1992 and Said 1993) across the board, with little critique, has left it as an often tyrannical ideology, which has thrown out and dismissed much older work which can still be useful. It can also create work that is more obtuse and complex than that which it critiques (see critique by Gellner 1992). I prefer the term 'post-positivism' (Shweder 1991) which recognises a movement away from the stranglehold of the positivism that has dominated social science, but which does not imply a rejection of some of the strengths of modernism, and which disassociates itself from the excesses of postmodernism. It should be noted that postmodernism will eventually become recognised as yet another passing movement through the academy, from which strengths will be taken and weaknesses abandoned.

In my methodology I incorporate Derrida's (1976) idea that space and meaning are involved in a continually evolving process and that what we need focus on is the process at work. I do this in relation to the wider context within which God's Way community can be placed. That is their place within American history and culture; communal history and evolution; as well as their wider connection to Western religious history and ideology as a whole. If we include such processes and changes, and connect the community to the 'outside', instead of sealing it off into a closed cultural 'box', then it is possible to achieve a greater level of understanding of their 'culture'. As Fischer (1990: xxiv) states: *'Cultural interference (interference, transference, and [interdependence] on cultural alter egos) is basic to the evolution of any tradition. More importantly it is a way of eliciting alternative meaning structures or interpretations.'* Said (1993) has criticised postmodernism

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for being ahistorical and too preoccupied with theory and word play to properly incorporate history, and in some cases this would appear true. My aim is to incorporate history where appropriate, remembering that God's Way community have a curious relationship to their external cultural connections. I also share with Shweder (1991) the desire to move away from the blanket acceptance of all 'irrational' cultural forms as unique objects in their own right, and instead seek to place such forms within appropriate traditions, which may add meaning. I want to incorporate the ideas of interaction, transference, and history into my methodology, to place God's Way community back into a number of movements, historical and cultural, which move them closer to us as 'outside' observers, and so closer to creating relationships of 'understanding' and 'sympathy' within us. Yet as Tyler highlights (1986: 136), *'The point anyway is not how to create a post-modern ethnography or what form it ought to take. The point is that it might take any form but never be completely realised. Every attempt will always be incomplete, insufficient, lacking in some way . . .'.* The strength of recognising the limitations of any approach, as Tyler suggests, is that this gives a movement forward towards greater 'understanding', by cherishing such incompleteness and using it to examine cultural knowledge.

The previous two sections have outlined my theoretical approach to the community and the ethnography that will follow. At this stage ('Innocence') the appropriateness of this methodology for the God's Way ethnography ('Experience') is not fully apparent. Post-Modernism is a methodology which seems at odds with the notion of 'Innocence'; this is true. However, all theory and every methodology is initially 'Innocent' prior to its interaction with ethnography ('Experience'). I would contend that a Post-Modernist methodology is actually one which moves within the realm of 'Redeemed Innocence', continually reconciling 'Experience' and 'Innocence' in order to afford an examination of both states.

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Section III

Methodological and Ethical Considerations.

Methodology

'No person ever sees more than part of the truth . . . the contribution of one sex, or one culture, or one scientific discipline that may itself cross both sex and cultural lines, is always partial, and must always wait upon the contribution of others for a fuller truth.' (Mead 1949: 22)

I try to put myself into this ethnography, following the work of Clifford and Marcus (1986) who among others, call for the anthropologist to be identified within texts. They also propose that the process of fieldwork be acknowledged as the dialogic process which they suggest it is (Clifford and Marcus 1986, and Fischer 1987). However, I do not accept the idea of incorporating Bakhtin's (1981) heteroglossia within texts.   I feel this is too idealistic and denies the ultimately authoritarian creation of text by author (Foucault 1973a).   I acknowledge the need to examine self within the dialogue of fieldwork and the factors which affect that dialogue.

In this ethnography, although the members are most definitely present, either through direct quote or through a retelling of their activities, ultimately it must be recognised that the overall voice and construction is mine.   Even though the fieldwork experience was one in which many 'voices' interacted and 'new space' was created (Barnes 1979, Tedlock 1983, and Hastrup 1992), as Bourdieu (1988) and Foucault (1973a) point out, the privileged and distinct 'voice' that remains is that of the author.   Bakhtin's (1981) famous dinner party idea of all the 'voices' talking together ignores the fact that at most dinner parties power is held by the host or other key participants, who manipulate and control the voices of those present.

Ultimately, individuals are given 'space' to speak, but that 'space' is controlled by the host, or in this case the author. Tyler (1987: 66) summarises the situation thus:

'... dialogue is the source of text, but dialogue rendered as text, which must be the consequence, is no longer dialogue, but a text masquerading as a dialogue, a mere monologue about a dialogue since the informant's appearances in the dialogue are at best mediated through the ethnographer's dominant authorial role.'

However, it is still crucial (following Okely and Callaway 1992) to examine the fieldworker within the field context, accepting that the work will further change once the field environment becomes the writing one, confused by experience and institutional concerns, that may not be noticeable in the field.

When I went to God's Way community it was as a prospective member as well as a field worker. This was not a ruse but a genuine feeling at the time. For several years prior to my fieldwork I had gone through a period of some spiritual exploration and my interest in ICs was guided by this process. At that time the idea of communal living and a return to a simpler form of Christianity appealed to me. When I wrote to God's Way community I did so genuinely as a prospective member. I identified my role more in terms of my desire to, possibly, join the community rather than as a fieldworker. I felt that if I adapted to and enjoyed communal life I would stay there and not return to write my thesis. I decided not to tell the community of my mixed intentions because at that time such issues were confused in my own mind and I did not feel it would be easy to explain them to other people. Therefore the denial of my identity as a fieldworker seemed to be the best part of a difficult choice. I did not disclose my secondary 'motive', field work, to the community members, partly because I wanted to be recognised primarily for what I saw myself to be at the time, a future member, rather than a note-taking foreigner. I felt that it would not be possible to identify myself as both, so I chose one. I will explore the ethical considerations of this shortly. It certainly has not

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been an easy decision with which to live, especially as during my stay I moved away from a sense of identification with the community and indeed communalism in general. By the end of my fieldwork I had no intention of staying as a member or of pursuing communalism elsewhere. This way of life no longer holds any attraction for me, although I still believe that there are many merits to be gained from this lifestyle. In effect my fieldwork 'experience' has removed my idealism or 'Innocence' concerning communalism and religious belief. I would define my present state as moving towards a reconciliation of this fact and, hopefully, towards a sense of 'Redeemed Innocence'.

I had already established a long relationship with the community by a correspondence with one member, Rachel Zion, a single member who was my age. My initial letter of request had been passed to her and for the year and a half prior to travelling to the USA we corresponded. I suspected my letters would be shared by the members (rightly) and thus, by the time I arrived, I was not a complete stranger. They knew much about my background: age, gender, status, ideas, family, much miscellaneous detail, and my education, more in fact than I knew about them. Rachel included much gossip about the community in her letters, and I soon realised that our relationship had become that of confidants, which it would remain throughout my stay. My correspondence created excitement within the community and when I did eventually arrive I was not treated as a stranger or even guest, but as a friend. As Isaac, their leader, wrote in his last letter to me, '*We look forward to seeing our long distance friend soon*'.

This already established relationship made entry into community and communal life much easier, as I knew their routine and who everybody was. However, there was still much to learn. I always attempted to fully participate in the community, as an

unmarried woman of initiation age. I worked on their chicken crew and my full participation in this work enabled me to become recognised as a committed member more fully and quickly than if I had not participated. Okely (1992: 16-17) talks about the importance of anthropologists participating in work as an effective way of being accepted into a cultural group, and she cites her own experiences among rural farmers in France whose astonishment at a 'professeur' milking cows soon turned to respect and acceptance. Although the community's members would tell me to take a break, or remind me that I was under no obligation to do their work, my insistence in doing the same tasks as the other members, despite aching back and blistered hands, won me much praise and acceptance. Indeed it was following an horrendous two weeks of crew work at night, a month after my arrival, that Rebekah Zion put her arm round my shoulders and announced that I was *one of the family now*. I doubt it would have been so 'easy' if I had refused to do the work and had hung about back at the community.

Even as my initial enthusiasm for joining their community waned, I did not lessen my participation within the community. It was quite clear that the first few months were ones of mutual examination and study, with people being concerned about how long I was staying or if I planned to leave. After two months such questions stopped, and I was openly declared *one of the family*. I particularly noticed this change in relation to the children who stopped being shy towards me. Soon mothers handed the kids to me as often as to anyone else. I became another person to be included on the shopping list, and someone to be reprimanded as well. I changed from honoured and exotic friend into family member, with the same responsibilities and expectations of the others. I shared a room throughout my stay with Rachel Zion, in the house belonging to Isaac, their leader, and his family. I was identified with his family group, which did not give me any privileges, but did put me at the centre of communal activity.

At God's Way community the most important identity placed upon me was not my gender (although I had to adapt my behaviour slightly, especially in interacting with the older men), but through my age and my marital status (single). As I will discuss later, age and marital status, are the two criteria for designating people in the community. My single status slotted me with the other single adults, who had to defer to the married adults, yet my age (early twenties) put me in the group between children and 'full' adults. Thus, I was not a child but not a 'full' adult either, which led to much difficulty in managing the situation. I did not always appreciate this categorisation, and often forgot, or did not realise, that I had to defer to my elders, especially to the older women. Often I found my role ambiguous, sometimes neither identifying with the other unmarried members or with the married ones. I soon realised that it was very important for me to choose a group within the community with which to be identified. Once this was done it became easier to adapt to communal life, as I was no longer confused as to how to act. Similarly the other members were able to adopt what they deemed the most appropriate behaviour in my presence.

My methodology was to live as a member as completely as possible. I began their initiation process, but did not complete it. My decision to commit to the process did not alter my relationship to the people, as they already saw me as a member in the sense that I appeared committed. Beginning the initiation process did not allow me to participate any more fully in the world of the older people. My categorisation, by age and marital status, led me to be excluded from some aspects of the 'adult' world, which I still can not fully realise, yet in studying my work, there seems a sense of things missing, or questions unanswered that may have been answered, if I had had greater access. However, my situation allowed me access to the private worlds of the children, single people and widowed members, all of

whom would not have allowed me the freedom to explore their worlds if I had been an older and married person.

Ethical Concerns

'I see and approve of the better things; I follow the worst'. Ovid.

The ideal situation for any truly ethical anthropology is to follow the guidelines of the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA) (1987: 4), and the suggestions of writers such as Jorgensen (1971: 333), and that is to operate a system of full disclosure and informed consent. Informed consent, by field subjects, to conduct field research is indeed the ideal situation, but as even the ASA (1987) and other field handbooks, such as Ellen (1984) admit, too often the field situation and ethics are more coloured than black and white. As Fetterman (1983: 222) states all fieldwork involves at its heart *'Guilty knowledge and dirty hands'*. The practice of 'studying' other people is fraught with complications. The situation calls for a flexible approach, as Barnes (1979) suggests, which recognises the need for a universal discipline-wide standard, but which realises at the same time a need for a personal taking of responsibility in regards to ethical decisions. The latter situation is envisaged by Blok (1973: 97) and Barth (1974: 100) who call for a less idealistic approach and call for a hands-on experiential ethics, that makes the best of a bad situation. Becker (1967: 239) also takes this idea and suggests that the way to operate through this ethical minefield is to pick a 'side' to be on and then stick with it; As long as one declares the flaws and prejudices of this situation, one can proceed from there. As Barnes (1979) points out the field situation is manipulated by all sides, including those outwith the direct environment, to negotiate all of these concerns can often be difficult and usually produces lapses of ethics.

My approach is to adopt the experiential ethics of Barth (1974) and Blok (1973), in order to make the best of a bad choice. My decision to withhold information and consent (although we need to acknowledge that just because consent is given this does not then suddenly make work ethical) was driven by two concerns. The first was the personal consideration that I wished to be identified as prospective member rather than fieldworker, especially in the beginning. Otherwise the relationship with the community would have been very different, if impossible. The second concern, is that of entry. Entry to communal forms is fraught with complications and suspicion. Much of the best work has been done by 'covert' means, especially in relation to cults and communes. Given the controlling nature of communal groups, and their stereotypical view of the outside, few would be willing to allow anthropologists or other field workers long term residence. Hostetler (1963 and 1974a) managed his study of the Hutterites and the Amish because of his Amish background. Most studies of cults are done covertly, and often in dangerous situations. It still remains true that most work on ICs is written by actual members, with the biases that entails. I doubt that if I had fully declared my intentions I would have gained entry to God's Way community or any other IC for a long term period. The management of the IC image is typically total.

The solution is to proceed carefully utilising safeguards. In my case I adopt the use of pseudonyms for all names; personal and geographic, barring non-important ones such as Missouri and St Louis. It is impossible to locate God's Way community from the information in this work. The other safeguard is to openly declare my allegiance with them and with my attempt at all times, though not always successful, to let them speak, so that their views and 'voices' are heard. Although not ideal in any way this redresses the balance of representation to some extent. However as Bronfenbrenner (1952: 453) states: ' . . . *the only way to avoid violating principles of professional ethics is to refrain from doing social research altogether.*'

The people of God's Way community speak English as a 'mother' tongue. However, they do so by incorporating their own particular linguistic style and accent. Obviously the most correct methodological route would be to transcribe their speech phonetically, but as this is not a linguistic work nor am I a competent enough linguist, I have not done this. Instead, I have chosen to transcribe their direct speech in a way that attempts to capture the style of their speech, although admittedly with the limitations of being transcribed as I perceive them to speak, rather than what is phonetically or phonologically accurate.

I feel it is important to attempt this because, as I will examine in *Chapter Five*, their speech and language use are important parts of their embodiment of faith and community. To cite their language in the form of Standard English would be to rob the words of much of their meaning. There is also the consideration that the community do not speak RP English[7] nor do they write using Standard English (the correct and standardised grammatical way of writing English). To 'correct' their speech, to make it 'proper', would be to quieten their voices, by making them speak a somewhat foreign language.

I am not suggesting that the community use a unique language. They are English speakers, but their style of speech differs from mine and for that reason needs to be interpreted and translated. Their speaking style is shared with that of most of the Missouri population, mixing the standard Midland American English of the Midwest region (Kurath 1972), with some features peculiar to the southern states area (Kurath 1971: 18-19). However, it has been noted (Wells 1987: 471) that the

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[7] RP stands for Received Pronunciation, or as it is also referred, 'Queen's English' or 'BBC English'. It is the 'correct' form of English speech. It is the one taught to non-English speakers. It is characterised as formal, correct, and polite, and as being accentless. Linguist use RP as a tool with which to compare accents and dialects.

Ozark region holds linguistic features in common with other Southern Mountain accents, as well as having a number of phonological features which are unique to the region itself. Thus, the speaking style of the community ties them into the 'hillbilly' style of speaking commonly found in mountain settlements of the south, characterised as being 'hillbilly', such as are also found in the mountain areas of West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Their speaking style is slow and stilted, with every word seemingly carefully considered before being spoken. Thus, there is a need to try and capture their own peculiar way of speaking.

A number of anthropologists (see for example Gmelch 1977 and Cohen 1987) have attempted to capture the essence of a particular culture by transcribing the speech styles as they appear to sound, rather than in a phonetically correct way. More importantly sociolinguists also use their own interpretations, as in the work of Labov (1972) and Trudgill (1983). It can also be seen in literature, in the works of authors such as D. H. Lawrence and Thomas Hardy, among many. All of these authors and writers perceive linguistic difference, yet realise the importance of the speaking style for meaning, thus they have attempted to capture some essence of the speech they have encountered. Although authorial presentation of speech in this way is not correct phonetic transcription, it is often the best way of giving some sense of meaning across to the reader.

EXPERIENCE

Part II

'I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen;
A chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this chapel were shut,
And 'Thou shalt not' writ over the door;
So I turned to the Garden of Love
That so many flowers bore;

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tombstones where flowers should be;
And priests in black robes were walking their rounds
And binding with briars my joys and desires.'

- William Blake
('The Garden of Love' from *Songs of Experience*).

Chapter One

'Out of Time'

I want to begin by locating God's Way community in time and history. Firstly, I will be looking briefly at communalism in its general Western form, and then, in more depth, at the specific American communal type (the IC) that developed from this general Western form. God's Way community will be located within both traditions. Part of this exploration will suggest that the IC is a product of particular aspects of American history and culture. Secondly, I focus more specifically on the history of God's Way community, which can be used as a 'tool' with which to explore their beliefs.

Section I

Western Communalism

' . . . people in the Western tradition have sought to escape from the tensions of acquisitiveness, amorphous freedom, and social hierarchy, toward the sharing of possessions, decisions, and brotherly love.' (Bennett 1975: 64).

Rexroth (1975) in his survey of Western communalism has demonstrated that it is a very ancient and continuous phenomenon. Although we know of Roman and Persian religious communities, Rexroth, along with Bennett (1975: 63-64) and Hostetler (1974b: 1-2), trace Judaeo-Christian communalism as the prevalent western form of communalism from the foundation of the community of Essenes at Qm'ran. All three see the western tradition as unique, continuous and tied to Judaeo-Christian ideals. Many (See for example Bestor 1953) oppose this viewing

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of all western communal forms as related, but to take this stance is to overlook the prevailing themes and trends within the tradition. We can view a continuous dynamic dualism within western communalism between revolt from society and reform of society, centred around profoundly utopian (in the sense of future oriented) ideas. This relationship between communalism and utopianism was discussed in Part I (Section I). Bennett (1975) contends that the tradition, based on Judaeo-Christian ideals, conform to Simmel's idea of a social form, i.e. a set of traditions or institutions which can vary depending on circumstances of place and time, but which generally feature some universal traits[8]. By adopting this view we can disprove the critics who suggest communalism in the West is a series of disjointed and unrelated phenomena, by showing that there are continual themes flowing through the western communal tradition.

Bennett (1975: 64) explains this communal quest as a specifically western dualism between self and group. This is speculative; more convincing is Rexroth's (1975) stipulation (backed by other work, such as Cohn 1957) that it is due to a suppression of the communal traditions within Christianity and Judaism. The deliberate exclusion of communalism from church doctrine created a tension whereby communalism, and also apocalypticism, became expressions of revolt and reform against the orthodoxy. Communalism can be seen as a fringe or 'popular' form of religious expression (see Lippy 1994). This argument becomes convincing when we survey the historical evidence.

Although this phenomenon begins with Christianity, we can see the idea of revolt and a desire to return to fundamentalist principles in the example of the Essenes. The influence of the Essenes can be seen in early Christian communal settlements. The Essenes are still a little known community. They were a breakaway Jewish

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[8] In the case of communalism, such traits as communal child-rearing, living and labour, as well as shared property and a high degree of interpersonal interaction would be included.

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group who established a settlement in the Dead Sea area at Qm'ran, cutting themselves off from their surroundings and constructing their own form of faith from a mix of Jewish beliefs as well as their own practices. They were also apocalyptic, founded at a time when Judaism was playing down this and other aspects of faith. The information which the Dead Sea Scrolls give us (Vermes 1995) about the community read like a description of a typical IC, with shared living, property and beliefs, as well as communal rituals and scriptures.

However, the tradition really begins with Christianity, which formally incorporated communalism in a way not present in Judaism, although Judaism with its emphasis on predestination and tribal loyalty has a strong communal ethos. The famous words of *Acts 3: 44-46* are often interpreted freely suggesting that the early 'primitive' Christian church of Christ was overwhelmingly communal, and that the words instruct Christians to create communities. Although Jesus endorsed communal ideals, it is assumed by most interpreters that he was not proposing strict communalism. However, the early scattered and underground church sought a communal life out of necessity. St Paul was deeply anti-communalist and his epistles are rife with derogatory comments concerning communal living. His wrath was probably less to do with ideology than with his power struggle and rivalry with the 'Jerusalem' church, supposedly led by Jesus's brother James. This community led a strictly communal life, following the letter of *Acts* closely. Subsequent 'heretical' communal sects, such as the Ebionites and the Nazarenes, claimed descent from James's group.

The 'Jerusalem church', from what we know, successfully fused strong Judaic practice and belief with the teachings of Christ - the two were seen as interacting rather than in conflict. Fundamental to this was communal living. They rejected Paul's teachings and his stress on the need for church organisation and foundation.

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Some have asserted that this was the truest form ever of Christianity and the closest to Jesus's own vision, but this is speculative. As would be found in later groups the 'Jerusalem' church was profoundly millenist and apocalyptic. Already we can see a tension created between established power structures and future oriented communal reform groups, determined to create their own interpretation of belief and society.

The establishment of Christianity as a state religion under Constantine, and its reorganisation and foundation at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, saw the now established church focus on church power and abandoned (under threat of excommunication) many of its early tenets, namely apocalypticism (see *Chapter Two* for a fuller discussion) and communalism. Rexroth (1975) notes that the two most fundamentally communal rituals, the Eucharist and baptism, were changed to refocus the power from the group to the role of priest (symbol and executor of church power). The Eucharist became a ritual practised by priest onto the observing laity, and not, as previously, a shared ritual between believers. Baptism became infant baptism, which served to tie a family to a parish. Later reforming groups, such as the Anabaptists, would seek to reinstate adult baptism, and change the communion style.

However, a specific form of communalism was retained within the tradition, in the form of monasticism. Despite monastic reforms by both St Benedict and St Francis to re-emphasise the words of *Acts* within mainstream Christianity, neither went the whole way and their orders only stressed a community of poverty but not of goods. Monasteries became places of privilege and knowledge. The early universities were monasteries. Rather than be the home to a Christian ideal of pure communalism they were places of shelter and education, for a privileged few. As Webber (1959) and Cohn (1957) demonstrate, 'heretical' groups continued to break away from the establishment and create their own communal orders. Some did so out of belief,

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others in order to revolt against the power of the church and state. Groups like the Waldenses in France, were persecuted and later excommunicated for calling for both a community of poverty (which some monastic orders, such as the Franciscans, already preached) and one of goods (which was never adopted by the monastic orders). Other groups flourished throughout the continent: the Lollards in England, the Cathars in France, and the Labadists in Holland. There were also a host of less organised collections of groups wandering the continent following various mystics and teachers (see Cohn 1957).

The Reformation brought some refocusing on community, which is demonstrated in the creation of many churches around more sharing principles, such as the communal bureaucracy of Presbyterianism, or the communal worship of Quakerism. However, this revolution did not really affect communalism within the mainstream. At this time there was the rise of the Anabaptist groups; the Hutterites, Taborites, Amish and so forth, who did create communal settlements and saw their faith as intrinsically tied to the communal life. However, they experienced tremendous persecution and many emigrated to America. The peasant revolts of this period were also communal in character but this included a more prevalent element of necessity.

There was a decline in communalism in Europe following the Reformation. The move into the industrial age saw communal ideals and revolt channelled into socialism through the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries. The Twentieth century saw a rise in communalism, due to the import of communal ideas from America, especially after the late Sixties.

The Judaeo-Christian tradition offers, on the one hand, an essentially utopian idea that heaven can be created on earth. This Heaven on Earth, can be created by living

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as a community of believers, with a common sharing of goods and property. Such a vision is a classic utopia. Yet institutionally the Church denies this communal ethos, by its assertion of church authority and heirarchy. This denial had led, throughout European history, to the utilisation of communalism as a tool for revolt and/or reform by groups rebelling against the prevailing power structures of church and state. This is the root motivation behind Western communalism, although specific forms adapt this idea to their own ends. God's Way community are linked to this long tradition, which lies at the heart of Christianity, in both their revolt against American society (by adopting a communal life) and their future plans for its reform (by living communally). It is now necessary to examine the nature of the American communal movement, of which God's Way are a part.

American Communalism

'No single area of the world has been, in the past, as hospitable to "utopian" communities as the North American Continent'. (Infield 1955: 111).

As I have said, Europe has had a long communal tradition, albeit one typified by persecution. I want to argue, following Infield (1955), that America has a unique communal tradition and that it is the only western country to accommodate communalism in the way that it has. Although it has obviously been influenced by European forms it has gone on to create its own unique types. Communal traditions are not an exclusively western phenomenon, and can be found in India, Japan (Plath 1966), and in Africa (Barrett 1977). However these forms are culturally specific and do not share the same characteristics of the western type.

The centre of this argument lies in the idea of America itself as a 'utopia'. There are two inter-related reasons why communal experimentation occurred in the USA, on a

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scale unprecedented in Europe. The first is pragmatic and deals with space, the second is ideological and relates to the issue of America itself as a utopia.

'They Needed a Country Big Enough for Their Dreams'[9]

In comparison with Europe, America was and still is larger and has far more 'free' space. The idea of the seemingly never ending 'Frontier' was a dominant element in the tales concerning America that were relayed back to Europe by travellers and explorers. However, the idea of 'space' is not to be confused with the idea of the 'Frontier', which Turner (1894) suggests is the key element in the process of creating the 'American Spirit'. The 'Frontier' did not become a meaningful concept until the Nineteenth Century and the organised expansion into the western states. The creation of the 'Frontier' is inextricably caught up in ideas about colonisation (of both the wilderness and the Native American populations), and nationhood (Turner 1894). The original view of America's 'space' had been that it was empty and waiting to be filled. The idea of 'Frontier' was not one of 'free' or 'empty' space but of space that was already 'filled' (by Native Americans) but needed to be conquered. Fundamentally a 'Frontier' is a boundary or barrier, physical or ideological, separating and marking off different areas.

The sheer scale of the country, mostly perceived by Europeans as uninhabited wilderness until the last half of Nineteenth Century, afforded a 'space' for all kinds of immigrant groups. The specific requirements of communal builders: isolation, agrarian land (for self-sufficiency), distant neighbours, etc. were easily obtained in America. Even today there remains sufficient 'space' for communal building, although the areas of settlement have changed. If we look at settlement locations[10]

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[9] Slogan for *Far and Away* (1992), the immigrant film epic. The slogan encapsulates the duality of physical space and ideological space characteristic of American utopianism.
[10] See unpublished research paper *Beginnings* (1992).

for the general pattern of communal construction through the past two hundred years, we can see communal locations steadily moving westward, as eastern areas became populated, and western states afforded the required isolation. Today, the greatest concentrations of communities are in the states of California, Oregon, Washington, and Missouri, whereas earlier settlements predominated in New England and New York State.

Also we should consider that land in America was not owned or ruled by the crown, aristocracy or feudal systems; instead, much of the land was offered quite readily to settlers. People could obtain tracts at reasonable prices without the landlords or rents characteristic of the European system. James (1993) suggests that this availability of land, without the feudal 'baggage' inherent in Europe, has an important part to play in the development of the 'American Spirit' which he characterises as preoccupied with personal liberty. However, available land is not enough to explain the success of the IC in the USA, instead we need to look into the pervading American ideology of utopian space/freedom that allowed such an environment to be established. If we look at other supposedly 'free' spaces, which were being 'opened up' to settlement, in colonial Africa, Australia and so forth, we do not see the same settlement patterns.

America as Utopia.

'The history of the United States is in some respects the chronicle of a contest of overlapping, competing perfectionist experiments. Some have been official, some not; some have been enduring, most not; some are professedly mainstream, others oppositional. Virtually all have claimed a unique ability to realize, reform, criticize, or supplant the one big utopia: America itself.'
Guarneri (1994: 74)

Guarneri (1994: 72) points out that over the past twenty years American historical and cultural scholarship has demonstrated the centrality of the concept of 'utopia'

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within American culture and history. Even the most superficial survey of the development of the nation reinforces this view.

America was portrayed as a utopia from its original discovery. As Jones (1964) traces, this evolution can be seen as starting from the letters and reports sent by the early explorers, such as Columbus and Vespuccio. Columbus described America as an 'Arcadian Bliss'. This image became portrayed in art of the period and later in the literature. America was labelled, quite literally, 'The New World'. This 'New World' was peopled by Rousseau's Noble Savages (the Native American populations), and did not appear to have the 'peculiar' animals found in other new worlds, such as Africa or Australia. Thus America was more identifiable in European minds than other 'new' areas. Although it is too generalising to deny that Europeans did not find equal elements of Eden and Hell in various lands, depending on place and time, it is possible, if we look at the general historical trends, to suggest that Europeans had an identification with America more than other areas. Despite being a 'new world', it was one that could be settled. Indeed, it was portrayed as a utopia, or new Eden, in contrast to popular European images of parts of Africa and Australia which were seen more as hell-like on the whole.

The earliest settlers, beginning with the 'Mayflower' voyage, were religious non-conformists, seeking freedom of worship in return for helping settlement of the new colonies. These early settlers literally saw themselves as like the Israelites rebuilding Jerusalem in the wilderness (Noll 1992). However, it is with the establishment of America as a political state in 1776 that we see 'utopia' become fully integrated into the idea of America itself, and into the character of 'being' an American. As Parrington (1964), among others, has demonstrated the founding fathers of the new nation - Jefferson, Washington, Paine, etc. - were followers of Enlightenment philosophies. Their commitment to Enlightenment ideals of

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equality, justice, order, democracy and freedom showed them to be utopianists. This period was also one where Enlightenment values were being applied to social reform by the utopian socialists, such as Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Cabet. These mixed values were applied in the creation of America. As James (1993) states, the founders of the USA sought to create a nation out of the ideals of the Enlightenment. It was to be a giant social experiment. Jefferson (Kraushaar 1980: 17, and Jones 1964) openly saw America as an agrarian utopia. De Tocqueville (1835), one of the few European enthusiasts for America, commented on the 'mania' for freedom and utopia among the people and the state.

Hansen (1946) notes that when the great waves of immigration occurred in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries the people were drawn to specific ideas of freedom, space and opportunity, i.e. they held deeply utopian views of the country. This idea continues to persist in the idea of the 'American Dream'. Vidich and Bensman (1968) and Caplow *et al* (1982), both record, among their research into American families, that the essential utopianism of the American persists despite changes in the nation's fortunes.

Much has also been made of the utopianism 'built' into various American cultural forms: Marin (1984) demonstrated the utopian ideals built into American public buildings and street plans, while Kraushaar (1980) and James (1993) have examined the utopian elements within American art and literature. Thus, we have a nation which has essentially a utopian element within it and which was created as a form of utopia. It could be argued that communal building, which is itself a form of utopianism, was made truly possible, with a great degree of freedom, due to the essential utopianism of the USA.

Many writers (Bestor 1950) refuse to view American communalism as one continuous historical movement. However, if we adopt Bennett's (1975) usage of Simmel's idea of a 'social form', we can view western communal history as one continuous movement involving a myriad of communal forms, who share more commonalties than differences. The style of communities may differ but their essential elements, for example, egalitarianism, utopianism, communalism, and intentionality, persist through time.

Beginnings: 1620-1776

Communalism and the establishment of what would become the USA are inextricably linked (Hinds 1975 and Noll 1992). When the 'Mayflower' pilgrims landed at Plymouth in 1620 they founded a communal settlement based on the communistic principles set out in *Acts* (Hinds 1975 and Noll 1992). The aim of this and subsequent non-conformist immigrant groups was to establish themselves in the new land and practise their own brand of faith free from the harassment found in England. The religious freedoms (which were not yet enshrined in law but existed due to the need of the colony to attract settlers) brought successive waves of Protestant non-conformist settlers (Noll 1992: 38-62). However, these settlements soon evolved into conventional villages and towns, as groups no longer needed to live communally. As Holloway (1951) points out most of these groups adopted communalism out of necessity, in order to establish themselves in the colony.

The success of the Puritans brought the immigration of further religious groups from Europe, especially after the establishment of Pennsylvania in 1681, which enshrined religious freedom within its statutes (Noll 1992: 65-67). Again most of these

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groups used communalism as a form of survival and then later abandoned it once they became established. Stoeffler (1976) lists the arrival of Quakers, Mennonites, and various Baptist groups during this period. Also, during this period the very first intentional communities began to be formed by groups wishing to practise their faith within a communal settlement based on ideas about 'primitive' Christianity. One such group was the Labadist community, founded in Maryland, by a group of Huguenots led by Jean de Labadie. Their rather extreme form of communalism is detailed by Holloway (1951). They went so far in their organisation as to regulate how many slices of bread members could eat per day. This group was established in 1683 and lasted until 1730. There was also the foundation of the Ephrata community of German Pietists in Pennsylvania in 1732, which many (Hinds 1975 and Nordhoff 1875) list as the very first American IC 'proper'. The community, led by Conrad Biessel survived until 1907, making it one of the longest lasting. The group practised strict communal sharing, and labour (Holloway 1951). Finally, we also see the arrival of the Moravian groups who founded a community at Bethlehem (Pennsylvania) and also maintained a strict communal life (Smaby 1988).

However, the pattern during this period was for groups to found communal settlements out of necessity. The communal population was boosted by the arrival of already established European communal groups. No 'indigenous' American forms appear during this time, despite the first series of religious awakenings in the 1730-1740s (Bumstead and Van de Wetering 1976) which saw great disruption to the established churches and the subsequent development of new ones.

Post Independence Awakenings: 1776-1810

The immediate post war period saw three important developments in relation to religion and communalism. The first was, obviously, the establishment of the

American state, which gave rise to a period of nationalism, and was a time preoccupied with trying to define what was meant by the term 'American' (Bailyn *et al*: 1977). Secondly, we see the decline of the established colonial churches, such as the Anglicans, who had often been caught up in the conflict and tended to be seen as partisan. Following the war many of the colonial churches became identified as 'foreign'. Also these churches suffered loss of property and wealth because of the war. This disruption began the characteristic lack of denominationalism (Noll 1992) within American Christianity and left a 'free' space for experimentation. Lastly, the period from 1795 until 1810 saw a series of religious awakenings and revivals. Historians are divided whether to see this period as one continuous awakening or whether to classify it as a series of perhaps inter-related ones (Noll 1992: 166). However, for the purposes of this work it is enough to say that this period was one of tremendous religious fervour.

Such religious awakenings gave rise to indigenous forms of faith - rise in camp meetings, charismatic leaders, and new churches. The first 'American' ICs were formed during this period, typically around the charismatic leaders of the Awakening. Groups such as the Jerusalem community in New York state, centred around the mystic Jemima Wilkinson (Holloway 1951), which was established in 1788 and ended in 1825. There was also a continued growth of already established groups, such as Ephrata, which grew enough to produce an offshoot at Snowhill (Holloway 1951). However, this period still sees very few truly indigenous groups, and most religious fervour is expressed within camp meets and ended when each awakening subsided.

During this time immigrant communalists continued to arrive, for example the Shaker sect from Manchester in 1787 (Andrews 1953) who went on to form eighteen colonies, with over six thousand members, and still retain one colony today in

Maine, making them the longest surviving American communal group. The Shakers fitted well into the religious environment of this period, with their focus on ecstasticism. The period also saw the arrival of George Rapp's Harmony Society of Separatists (Hinds 1975) from Germany who settled in Pennsylvania, and later Indiana, which had eight hundred members at its peak. The trend remains in this era for immigrants to found communities but we do begin to see some indigenous forms.

The Golden Era: 1820-1860

The first half of the Nineteenth Century was the golden age for American IC construction. Many writers (Bestor 1953) see this as the final part of the American communal history of ICs and believe that later forms were intrinsically different; such writers refuse to acknowledge the movement as a continuous related historical one. However, I disagree with this view of IC history and, as I have already discussed, prefer to see it as one continuous historical movement.

The success of ICs during this period was due to two influences. The first and most important was the arrival of utopian socialism or communism from Europe. The second was a further period of religious awakenings. It is during this period that we see the construction of the first secular communities and the continued construction of religious ones.

Utopian socialism arrived in the USA with the turn of the century. Predominantly European reformers, such as Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, and Etienne Cabet, either established communities themselves (Owen's New Harmony), or laid out detailed plans for the construction of such communities (Cabet's *Icaria* and Fourier's Phalanxes). These reformers believed that communities could be used as micro worlds to experiment with ideal social forms which then could be adapted by

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the outside society and therefore used for peaceful reform. Many of their ideas were adapted from older European and American groups. Owenite groups were established throughout the 1820s, for example Kendal, Yellow Springs, and Blue Springs (Kanter 1972 and Hinds 1975). The Owenite communities were the first to be constructed and they greatly influenced American reformers (at that time the anti-slavery and pro-female suffrage movements were beginning to gain popularity), many of whom went on to build their own communities, such as Frances Wright's Nashoba community in Tennessee which included in its population emancipated slaves. Like the Owenite groups these American versions rarely survived due to lack of control and a divergence between theory and practice (Kumar 1990). In the 1840s the Fourier influenced Phalanxes were hugely popular throughout the decade. Over twenty phalanxes were constructed, with a total population of several thousand (Nordhoff 1875 and Hinds 1975). In the 1850s and 1860s we see the arrival of Cabet influenced Icarian groups. Although these movements seized the imagination and were very popular, none survived long due to lack of organisation and an inability to put theory into practice. Later American reformers would encounter similar problems, such as at Brook farm and Fruitlands (Holloway 1951) which were top heavy with academic ideas but lacked the pragmatism required to survive. However, some groups who adopted elements of utopianism (particularly its idea of perfectionism and order) mixed it with the religiosity of the age and produced very successful groups, such as John Noyes's Onedia (Carden 1969) which, although religious in origin transformed itself into a very successful secular community. On the whole the success of most of the secular reform communities was mixed, with few surviving long. These large movements had layman's societies, operated extensive leafleting, conducted lecture tours and so forth. This was also a period when many communal network organisations were formed.

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The awakenings of the 1840s were prompted by the appearance of apocalyptic and millenarian groups, such as the Millerites, which produced a further period of religious fervour, and inspired the formation of many new groups (Noll 1992). However, I would suggest that rather than producing a significant number of new communities this fervour merely allowed those groups that existed to recruit new members, as was the case for the Shakers (Andrews 1953). The Millerite revivals were shorter than previous ones. Also, we see the continued emigration of European communal groups, such as True Inspirationists from Germany who founded the Amana colonies in Iowa, and the arrival of Keil's group from Germany who founded the communities at Bethel and Aurora (Hinds 1975).

This period began to end before the disruption of the Civil war, due to the obvious failure of the communities that had had so much hope attached to them, and reformers sought out new routes of reform. Much reforming fervour was thrown into the issues that would ignite the war, such as slavery, rather than in building communities. Most of the groups who survived the disruption of the war were religious.

The Invisible Years: 1865-1914

This period, as Fogarty (1975: 144) points out is one which many writers (Bestor 1953 and Holloway 1951) regard as devoid of much communal activity and therefore of little interest. However, as Fogarty's survey of the period (1975) shows, it was one of marked communal activity. There are a number of reasons why this period of communal history is too often overlooked by researchers: the lack of sources, the 'failure' of some writers to view the history of communalism as a continuous entity, and the lack of any outstanding leaders of the period. There

were no Owens or Noyes' to pin groups to, so they remained nameless (Fogarty 1975: 154).

However, we see the development of three forms of group. The first type of group were a variety of social reform groups, typically socialist or co-operative, which became popular due to the twin events of the rapid American industrialisation of the post-war period and the arrival of socialism from Europe. Thus, many reformers saw communalism as still plausible but that it had to be adapted to the age (See Fogarty 1975). The second category was oriented around spiritualism and mysticism, prompted by the turn of the century vogue for Spiritualism which developed on the back of the revivals in fundamentalism and apocalypticism (see Sandeen 1970). The third group ordered around another fad, that of Perfectionism. The belief in science as social saviour and its related ideas of perfectionism, applied in such 'sciences' as eugenics, gave rise to Perfectionist groups who combined reform with experimentation. The turn of century, typically for such periods, brought a popular enthusiasm for utopianism prompted by a preoccupation with the future. This can be seen in the popularity of such writers as H. G. Wells, and books such as Bellamy's *Looking Backward* which was hugely popular and influential in turn of the century America. As Fogarty's article (1975) highlights, as do other sources (Nordhoff 1875 and Hinds 1975), these groups rarely lasted more than a few years, and none appeared to catch the public imagination in a way that say the Phalanxes or Owenite groups had.

This period saw the continued survival of many long-established groups and the arrival of further emigrant groups, such as the Hutterites in 1875 who are now the most studied communal form, and the largest, in North America. It is also a period notable for the beginning of 'serious' study of the communal phenomenon, and we see the publication of the work of Hinds (1975) and Nordhoff (1875).

Between the Wars: 1918-1939

The First World War saw a decline in the communal activity of the turn of the century and again reform and agitation were channelled into the war effort. The years following the war are perhaps the sparsest for communal study, and few writers mention them. According to my own research[11] there were only seven new communities in North America formed during this period and information concerning them is scarce. They were generally reform groups trying to practise a form of communism. The reasons behind this decline may be attributed to a number of features of the period: the rise in state socialism and co-operativism brought about by the New Deal, the decline in popularity for communism following the revolutions in Europe, and the Depression induced cynicism concerning reform.

Immediate Post war: 1945-1965

The Second World War brought a slight increase in communal activity, probably due to radical groups trying to escape the war effort, but these remain relatively unknown. The immediate post-war period saw a renewed rise in communal activity. This period which saw the elevation of science as a 'way forward' for society, saw a rise in groups using scientific, and especially, psychological ideas of perfection, such as Twin Oaks which was based on Skinner's *Walden Two*, and Dr Laubach's Koinoina community founded on ideas of experimental education. Science was seen as progress and this was mixed with a sense of urgency prompted by the prevalent apocalypticism of post-war America (See Boyer 1992). There is also a slight development in 'escape' communities prompted by early 'beatnik' ideas, prior to the counter-culture explosion.

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[11] See unpublished research paper *Beginnings* (1992).

This period also sees the foundation of communal networks that would evolve and become the recognised 'face' of communalism. In 1940 Community Service Inc. was founded to aid the development of ICs. In 1948 the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) was created out of a conference of the Community Service Inc, to be a network organisation for contact and information between communities. The FIC began, in 1962, to publish its directory of ICs, which still is a primary source of information and contacts concerning American ICs.

The 'Explosion' of the Counter-Culture: 1965-1975

The end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s saw an explosion in communal forms, most prompted by the 'drop-out' ideology of the late Sixties counter-culture in the USA, which reacted to a perceived cultural malaise by adopting an ideology, not of reform but predominantly of escape (Hostetler 1974b). The social situation appeared so bad in the USA at this period that escape was seen as preferable to actual reform. This period is hard to distinguish clearly as much of the activity going on, although communal, was on the whole a different kind from the previous types and, I believe, (in conjunction with Hostetler 1974b, Houriet 1971 and Jerome 1974) should be classified differently. Before the end of decade explosion, there were already communal forms being produced out of the 'beat' ideology, of the early Sixties, which sought escape and experimentation. The late decade trend for this appears to have been merely a mainstream adoption of an already flowing undercurrent. This social phenomenon attracted mainstream academic attention for the first time, obviously due to its size, but many of the problems with the academic study of communalism stem from this period and its lack of exacting typologies (see Part I, Section I for discussion of problem of communal typologies). However, many originally escapist groups (Hostetler 1974b) evolved into smaller, longer

lasting communities who sought social reform or at least social alternatives, in a way that continues.

The Communal Studies Association was founded in 1975 (originally the National Historic Communal Studies Association) for the academic study of American communalism. The following year the Center for Communal Studies was established at the University of Southern Indiana, to provide a focus for communal research and a storage facility for communal archives.

The Present

Following the communal explosion of the counter-culture, there has been a rise in mainstream academic study, especially within psychology and sociology. Anthropology has maintained an interest in groups that have a more 'ethnic' identity, such as the Hutterites, Amish, and the Kibbutzim. However, many of problems with the current work has been due to a lack of specificity about the subject at hand, with a myriad of communal forms being discussed as if they were the same in origin, structure, or motivation. American communalism remains very strong and indeed the statistics show (FIC: 1991) that it continues to be a growing trend, especially with the rise in environmental awareness and more recently, millennium malaise. The Directory of ICs published by the FIC lists a number of smaller communal networks and resource organisations, further suggesting a healthy movement. Mainstream theorists and newspapers focus on communal ideas and forms. Management and industrial study has utilised many practices from communalism (FIC Newsletter 1992).

It is hard to define the contributions that any movement has made within history, but the role communalism has played in American history appears to have had two recurring strands. The first is that is has played a crucial role in the foundation of colonies and settlements, a characteristic of the 'Frontier', and secondly it has played, especially in the Nineteenth and late Twentieth Centuries, an important role in releasing reform ideas outwith the mainstream.

God's Way community are an IC, a communal form peculiar to the American cultural environment. They not only belong to a long historical tradition, but are members of a prosperous contemporary movement.

Section II

The History of God's Way Community

'The past is my heritage, the present is my responsibility, the future is my challenge.'
(from a piece of needlework which hung in the communal dining hall, creator unknown).

God's way have a long history for an IC[12]. Their history exists for them as a seemingly never-ending collection of stories, quotes, and sayings. Most of these stories concern their founder Abraham Zion, and most of the quotes and sayings are attributed to him. As I will argue later (see *Chapter Five*) the community is predominantly an oral culture. Writing and reading are not easy activities for the members, nor are they an especially meaningful way of transmitting knowledge. Instead they privilege storytelling and other oral 'arts'.

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[12] God's Way community has survived sixty eight years. The average life span of a contemporary IC is roughly sixteen years (see unpublished research paper *Beginnings* 1992).

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Not a day passed without someone mentioning Abraham or recounting one of his many 'adventures'. The stories are significant in many ways. They keep Abraham 'alive' as a source of inspiration for the members. More importantly the stories teach and reinforce the reasons why the community exists. As I began to realise the obvious importance of these tales, I decided to attempt to construct a history of the community. I colluded in this with the community's school-teacher, who had previously tried to write a communal history in the belief that it could be used as an educational tool for the children, who clearly enjoyed these stories. As the history existed orally as a collection of stories, we decided to work as a group with the children, who eagerly participated. We all set about talking to different members about Abraham and the community in general. This was run as a school project with the children illustrating their work with drawings. After several weeks we collected everything and I set about piecing all the different parts together.

I decided to incorporate some of the narrative by writing the history in a Biblical style. The history, along with an 'exhibition' of the drawings were displayed in the dining hall for everyone to see. The pictures were a great success with members commenting on how like Abraham the drawings were. Members would pass comment on the colours and posture of the people and animals in the pictures. There was little divergence between the children's depictions of Abraham and those which hung in the chapel. However, my history was not so popular. Members passed comments such as *'it is too short'*, *'so much is missed out'*, and *'that date is not right.'* The children and I were disheartened by this and the history was soon hidden away in a drawer. It was not that the history was essentially wrong, but as Sarah Zion put it, *'Bare bones don't make good soup.'* We had the base but nothing for 'taste'. Our soup had nothing to nourish the people.

What had gone wrong? As Tonkin states, *'Putting an experience into words is an inevitable alteration of an experience,'* (1992: 41). Whereas I was looking for specific dates and events, the membership revel in the fact that their history is fluid and changing. Oral histories, by their nature, evolve and change (Finnegan 1992). Although characters and events stay constant, with each recitation features and dates may alter. This creativity is one of the ways oral traditions are maintained. Abraham and his life are recounted by each member in his or her own way, through a shared knowledge of the man. It is what each member gains or takes from his or her particular 'version' that is insightful.

However, despite the obvious limitations of the history, as I wrote it, it is still useful in that it provides a source of some 'basic' historical information concerning the community and its creation. The history can still provide much insight into its founder, creation, and central tenets. What follows is the actual document that I wrote. This was the history that the members read. The only alteration to the text has been to change all the names, which are now pseudonyms.

'It may be history, it may only be legend, a tradition. It may have happened, it may not have happened: but it could have happened. It may be that the wise and the learned believed it in the old days; it may be that only the unlearned simple love it and credited it.'

Mark Twain, Preface to *The Prince and the Pauper* (1881).

Abraham Zion was the founder of God's Way community, which he led for forty-eight years. He was formally known as 'Father' by his followers, and informally as 'Papa'.

Abraham Zion was born in St Louis, Missouri, in 1895. He was born the eldest of the eleven children of an Irish immigrant father, who had crossed the Atlantic as a child, and had been brought up in the slums of New York. Abraham's father left the 'paganism' of Catholicism and converted to Methodism, which opened his eyes to the sins of the city, and caused him to leave the East and search westward for purity. His father arrived in St Louis. St Louis had once been a beautiful Midwestern city built by French and Italian immigrants, with elegant buildings and spacious streets. However, much of the city was now occupied by slums where the thousands of factory workers lived, and by sprawling textile factories and the huge breweries which had caused the city to grow at a rapid rate and which employed these people. Abraham's father settled in the city and got employment in one of the breweries. He became a lay preacher at his neighbourhood church and would preach while working in the brewery. His father would often journey into other parts of the city to preach and spread the 'word'. A devout man, he brought his family up in a strict faith. Family life revolved around daily Bible study and private prayer. They would often fast and the children, when old enough, would accompany their father on his devotional visits to other quarters of the city.

Abraham left school at eleven and went out to work to help support his family. He had a variety of jobs, including delivery boy, messenger, and bell hop. Most of his jobs did not last long as his father continually found them unsuitable for his son, whom he hoped would become a Methodist preacher. His jobs gave Abraham

freedom to roam the city's less desirable areas and working in the big hotels had exposed him to travellers, gamblers, and other less than 'holy' people. At this time St Louis was the gateway to both the western states, or down the Mississippi, to the southern states, and hence saw a tremendous number of people passing through.

Tired of the city and his father's strictures Abraham decided, aged fifteen (in 1910), to leave St Louis and travel south and westward to Arizona, still a frontier state where he hoped to find adventure and work that was more exciting than delivering liquor to hotel rooms or sides of ham to fancy houses. In Arizona he found work on a cattle ranch, near the small town of Frances where he hoped to learn cowboy skills. Instead, Abraham spent most of his time in the kitchen helping the continually irritated Mexican cook. Abraham's disillusion with his work on the ranch was made up by the environment that he was living in. The ranch had many interesting characters. Also, the surrounding area, which was still predominantly a wilderness, saw a great flow of people pass through it. It was a highly mobile population, all looking for 'something'. The personality of the area was quirky and colourful. One of the characteristics of the frontier was the myriad of travelling salesmen, medicine men, and preachers - all of whom were promoting their own particular brand of salvation.

A particularly strong Frontier faith was Pentecostalism, perhaps due to the high degree of performance associated with Frontier and backwoods Pentecostalism. Just as many people went for the 'show' as for the 'message'. Pentecostal meetings would last for days during which time its participants would become more involved and more frenzied. At these meetings people would speak in tongues, and dance while holding snakes. Others would perform strange feats, such as bending spoons or walking on fire. Some would dance and wail 'like heathens', while others would

cut and stab themselves, without feeling any pain. A few would fall into coma-like states.

Abraham began to go to Pentecostal meetings and he converted to this faith. He experienced walking on fire and would always feel the need to dance uncontrollably at meetings. In 1911, after a year as a not too successful ranch-hand, Abraham joined the company of a travelling medicine man, one Josiah Pentana, as his assistant, with the intention of learning his skills. Medicine men were a common feature of the frontier life. Some were charlatans and showmen pursuing easy money from gullible local people, many others were genuine healers who had a knowledge of, typically, herbal and folk remedies, many learnt from local Native American peoples. These genuine medics travelled around the new settlements that were being established throughout the West and they provided medical treatment and aid. For the next three years (1911-1914), Abraham travelled throughout the Southwest of America with Pentana, learning as he went.

In 1914, aged nineteen, Abraham returned to the town of Frances where he had previously stayed. He was tired of travelling and had decided to set up his own medical practice in Frances. He soon became the resident medicine man, administering to people and animals alike. He began to have close ties with the local native American groups from whom he learnt skills and obtained the right medicinal plants. Abraham often spoke out for the rights of the American Indian. He lived in Frances by himself, running his practice and continuing to participate in Pentecostal meetings.

When he was twenty-one, in 1916, he experienced a vivid dream, in which God appeared to him and instructed him to leave the town and retreat into the wilderness. God told Abraham that in the wilderness he must live simply and

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preach God's word. Abraham abandoned his practice and his Pentecostal faith and moved into the nearby wilderness. He lived in a small cave that the wind had carved out of a large rock formation. The townsfolk thought he was mad and made fun of him. Yet they continued to visit him for healing. However, few would listen to his words about God and faith. After a year of living in the wilderness, he became disheartened, feeling that God had abandoned him because he had failed to make any converts.

Abraham was too ashamed to return to the town in the face of his failure, so he decided to return to his parents' home in St Louis. His stay was short, as he and his father argued about their differing religious beliefs and his son's claims to have been contacted by God. Abraham left St Louis and travelled to San Francisco, where he had heard that there was plentiful work and good money to be made. He got work as a seaman on a freight ship that travelled up and down the California and Mexican coasts. He lived in the rough dockland area of the city and saw more poverty and depravity than he ever had before. This suffering all around him rekindled his faith and he became involved with the local Methodist church, although he did not join them as a convert. He ministered to the local area with the church. The Methodist minister encouraged him to study the Bible, which he did, especially on his long sea voyages. Abraham soon became very zealous and he would read the Bible and preach to his shipmates on voyages. When not at sea he would assist the Methodists in their charity work and their recruitment drives. It was during this period that he found his preaching skills. His activities both on and off shore led to him being victimised by his fellow seamen. In 1920, after living and working in San Francisco for three years, he was severely beaten while trying to break up a street brawl. News of his condition reached his parents and they insisted that when fit enough to travel he should return to St Louis. They sent one

of his brothers to help him make the journey home. Abraham somewhat reluctantly did as they asked.

Back in St Louis he found work in one of the big breweries, which he hated, especially as he was contributing to the fall of man brought about by alcohol. He loathed the work and also fought constantly with his father, predominantly about religion. A few months passed and he decided to head south and west again to Arizona. He returned to the town of Frances staying with an old friend with whom he had maintained a correspondence. Once he was settled in, he re-established his old medical practice and again found success. His ambivalence toward organised religion led him to shun the local churches and he focused on private Bible study and prayer. His feeling of duty led him to begin preaching sermons to anyone who would listen and after a while he became a prominent and popular figure. He was a good speaker, and was famous locally for his ability to make the complicated simple through his use of appropriate parables. Soon he developed a local following and he established organised weekly sermons on his ideas on God and faith. In 1925 he married Sarah Becker, the daughter of one of his many followers. The first of their fifteen children was born the following year.

In 1927 Abraham was out collecting roots for his medicines in the scrubland outside the town when he was bitten by a deadly snake (probably a rattlesnake) and he developed a raging fever which subsided and then Abraham fell into a deep coma-like state. He remained like this for six days. On the seventh day Abraham awoke to reveal that he had had visions. Some of the visions had been terrifying, as God had shown him the Apocalypse. Other visions had been beautiful, as they had shown how the 'chosen' would live. God had also instructed him to leave Frances and go out into the wilderness and build a community of believers there.

Abraham wrote down everything that he had seen in his visions. This collection of revelations became known as the <u>Book of Truths.</u> Abraham sealed the book on its completion and vowed that it should not be read until the 'right' time. He thought that the images in the book were so terrible that they might send people insane with fright, or even kill them. He also believed that the more beautiful images might encourage believers to be complacent in their work. Abraham declared that the first sign of the coming apocalypse would be the spontaneous combustion of the book.

Abraham told his followers what had occurred and gave them an outline of his plans. Most revealed themselves as unbelievers, and only a few decided to show their true faith and join the community building plan. One such true believer was a local bachelor named Dan Martin. He owned a small homestead, with some cattle, outside of the town. Dan donated the property to Abraham and the community. The property had a small central dwelling house where they all could live, and it had space for more cattle and for some crops. Abraham named it 'God's Way'. The names of the true believers were Abraham, his wife Sarah, and their two infant daughters; Dan Martin; Samuel Zebulun, his wife Hannah and their four young children; Shel Simeon, his wife Elisabeth and their two young sons. These good people sold all of their property and assets, and placed them into the communal pool that Abraham had established. Initially it would be a struggle for them, as all of the children were under the age of eight and only one of the men was an experienced farmer. They realised this but trusted in God. Proof of their trust was demonstrated by Abraham's vow that their first task had to be the building of a chapel, which would be of wood and would be located in the dead centre of the property.

Local people still continued to visit the community, usually on Sundays to participate in their Sunday worship, and after worship Abraham would practise his medical skills. They entered a period of trials, where God tested how deep their faith was by making the chapel difficult to build, taking their time away from the ranch. Crops failed due to drought and the cattle became sick. Money ran out and the dream of self-sufficiency began to look more tenuous. Abraham became frustrated by his inability to attract more followers to the community. God was truly testing them.

Yet still every day at dawn and dusk, no matter what the weather or what jobs had to be done, they would assemble at the holy circle of rocks that marked the foundations of the chapel. As Abraham stated, the circle is a shape that has no corners, thus nothing can be hidden in a circle. Circles are open yet they contain whatever is in them - they are truly holy. Circles are unity. They stood at the circle and prayed in silence and then Abraham would read from the Bible and interpret it. The Bible needed to be interpreted very carefully by the true believer as it had been much changed by the men who had translated it over the years, men who belonged to pagan religions and could not be trusted with God's word.

After seven years of struggle, they were hit with a series of storms. First came dust storms and then flash floods. The storms destroyed the fragile chapel, along with most of the other buildings. Those left standing were uninhabitable. God was punishing them, said Abraham. Abraham must have become vain and proud, in God's eyes. Abraham's pride had been hurt because he had failed to attract followers, and he had been obsessed with the chapel and its decoration. He had glorified himself and not God. Abraham instructed the others to return to the town, where friends took them in. Abraham was lost and he became drawn to the wilderness, where he wandered for six days. On the seventh day in the wilderness,

he lay sleeping out in the open. While he slept he had a dream where God came to him and showed him their future. They had been tested but they still believed and they would be led to the chosen place. They were to travel to Missouri and there seek out a valley in the south of the state where they would settle and rebuild. The valley would be very green and lush, the land fertile and they would prosper. When the dream ended Abraham hurried to the town to tell the others. All were gladdened that God had not deserted them and they packed what they had left and readied for their journey to Missouri.

Their journey took them first to St Louis, where they stayed with Abraham's family. Once in the city they realised how impossible their task seemed. How would they find this valley? Abraham stated that they should head south and that God would guide them. They set off with one wagon carrying all of their belongings and the smallest of the children; everyone else walked, their 'trek' as it later was called, began. By the time they had reached the southern Ozark region of Missouri they had little money and all were sick. They were in such a state that when they arrived at the town of Winterholm with no money for food or shelter, the local Baptist preacher put them up. At the insistence of the preacher they decided to stay in the town for a while, during which time they would recover their health and earn some money for their continued journey.

A local bachelor, one Ocran Asher, lived with his two sisters, Page and Ruth, on a ranch outside of the town. The Ashers were a devout family but were disillusioned with the Baptist church to which they belonged. Ocran came to Abraham and listened to his revelations about the community the planned to build and of how God had chosen him and his followers. Moved by Abraham's words Ocran offered him his family's ranch to be used to establish the community and that he and his sisters would join them. Although moved by Ocran's generosity, Abraham doubted if this

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would be the suitable place; after all God was to lead them to their 'valley", yet he had given them no signs. Being practical, Abraham decided that they would use the Asher ranch as a base where the main body of the group could live, while a few could continue the search for the valley.

Ocran took Abraham to the ranch and it seemed to look like the place that God had shown him in his dream, but was it his heart's desire and not God's? Were his eyes betraying him? As the two men walked through the main gate of the property, Abraham trod on a deadly copperhead snake. The shoe he wore was worn through and was held together by some cloth, yet this most aggressive of snakes did not bite him, it slithered away. The men fell to their knees and thanked God. This was a sign. This was the place. They returned to the town and informed the others. After much praising of God they began to pack.

On the sixth day of April 1935, the twenty seven 'chosen' moved into the new 'God's Way'. To their ranks were added the Ashers and a local bachelor, and trained blacksmith, Amos Joseph. The chosen were six men, five women, and sixteen children. The promised place had a mild climate, conducive to crop growing. They had sufficient land to grow a mixture of crops and keep livestock. It had a well of the purest water. There were a number of buildings, all well built with the best wood. Thick woods surrounded the property providing natural security. Situated on top of an Ozark, a valley separated them from their nearest neighbours, and the town of Winterholm was a good distance away. The chosen were truly grateful. The only thing that had to be changed on the ranch were the removal of the pigs that the Ashers had kept. Abraham sold these pigs, as they are deemed unclean animals according to Leviticus 11: 7.

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Abraham had learnt much from their past experiences and although their first task would be to build a chapel, they would take care not to neglect the running of the ranch. A small house would be the chapel while they took their time. Eventually each family would have its own dwelling house and they would share a communal kitchen and dining hall, but until this could be accomplished, all would stay in the large central ranch house. Maybe God would provide a school later. They would pace themselves; self-sufficiency was far more important an aim and that required attention to ranch work. It was hard but they progressed. After three years God saw fit to bring to them a new member, one Abe Benjamin, a carpenter.

On the twenty first day of November 1939, while taking his turn on the night watch, as all the men did, Abraham was taking a brief rest in the watch hut, reading his Bible. All of a sudden a blinding light filled the room and he heard a voice. It was speaking Hebrew and it was God. He knew no Hebrew, yet God's gift allowed him to write down all that was said and to understand it. The little notebook in which he wrote Bible interpretations soon became filled during the twelve hours that God spoke. As quickly as it had come the light left and Abraham collapsed with exhaustion. The others found him the next morning. Their alarm soon turned to joy when Abraham told them what had occurred and when he read from some of the passages.

Abraham set himself the task of writing the words of God into a book. Once his task was completed, the book was bound and placed in the chapel. Abraham told the people that from now on this book was their testament; that God was no longer revealed in the Bible; that it could not be taken as truth. Now God had given them the 'true' truth. All their services would use the book as the centrepiece.

Exactly seven days after this divine revelation, Abraham was sitting in the chapel reading from the book when he felt the overwhelming urge to write; it was God's will. Songs filled his head and he wrote them down. God was singing to him. For ten hours he wrote the songs - one hundred and fifty in all. God had completed the task he had started by revealing the truth. Now he had given them music with which to exalt him. Abraham showed the others and again they were transcribed clearly, and Abraham bound them together with the other book - this finished book became the <u>Books of Abraham.</u> From that day community members would chant these songs during services and to make work lighter, they would chant them. As the years went by, some chosen would write music to accompany the words.

Following the divine revelations, the community entered a great age of prosperity. For the next thirty years they prospered greatly. They built a great many buildings, including a chapel, and a dwelling house for each family group. The land was very fertile; the people learnt a great many skills. New members were brought to them and the population grew as members married and had children. The summers were warm and the winters mild. A few left but they did so with Abraham's blessing. After ten years of study Abraham qualified as a lawyer in 1960. This gave them power and they were no longer at the mercy of those outside who had such knowledge. Abraham drew up a constitution for the community which proclaimed their beliefs, aims, laws, and fiscal details, for all to read. All those who were over the age of eighteen signed it to demonstrate their adherence to it. It was hung up in the chapel to be seen by all.

Although there was great prosperity at this time, the prosperity brought its own temptations. The community could afford luxuries that they had not had before. Also the outside world exerted great influence on the weakest members. Outside evils encroached, tempting the young with drugs, alcohol, and satanic music. Many

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began to leave. The 'outside' began to visit them more than ever before. Representatives of the state that they did not recognise sought to search their property, believing that they were evil and refusing to see the real evil that existed in their own world. The 'outside' spoke of a new spirituality, evoking the pagan astrology saying that a new age, the Age of Aquarius, had begun. This was a false belief. This test of faith was all the greater as Abraham began to fall ill, his mind wandering and his health weak. His beloved wife Sarah died and Abraham felt the loss deeply.

As Abraham grew weaker over the years, he had to watch his sons vie for leadership. Fortunately, God saved him from witnessing the ripping apart of the community and the flames of Satan that would destroy what he had built. At the age of seventy-eight, Abraham collapsed and when he awoke God had taken from him the power of speech. He was put to bed and until his death at eighty, would remain in a delirious state, where he was incoherent and rambling. God had saved him from having to witness the devil's work.

'We are as significant as dust'. Abraham Zion.

The Testament of Isaac and Joshua: The first and second sons.

Isaac Zion was born the fourth child and blessed first son of Abraham in the year 1930. Raised like any other community child he respected his father as the community's leader, and he obeyed and honoured his elders. He was forced by the 'outside' to be schooled by them, a schooling he rejected as soon as he was able. He was educated about God and their mission by his father and elders. As a child, like all of the others, he worked hard on the community and studied the <u>Books of</u>

Abraham. When he came of age he committed himself formally to the community, a joyous event. Soon after the 'outside' required him to serve in their armies; being honourable, he went. Like his father before him, he became a seaman and travelled the world for two years, during which he saw the 'outside' in its full depravity. He saw whores, the excesses of alcohol, poverty, men kissing men, and other unnatural passions. Once he had completed this service to the 'outside', he travelled home to work on the ranch. As practical as his father was philosophical, Isaac used the many skills he had learnt from the outside to help reshape the community. They started new construction projects and drew up new plans. Isaac suggested that each man should be encouraged to 'use' the 'outside' to learn trade skills that could be used in the community. Isaac had a natural ability at figures and soon became the community treasurer and planner, allowing the community to grow physically through hard work, while his father concentrated on their spiritual growth. Isaac was a modest and shy man who never saw himself as anything but the son of the father.

Abraham and Sarah had had a second son who had died in infancy. Their third son was Joshua, six years Isaac's junior. Joshua was a sickly child, who spent much time alone in bed reading due to his fragile state. His illness prevented him from doing much hard ranch work and he became a studious man, well versed in the scriptures. When the 'outside' required Joshua to join their armies, he refused on the grounds of his beliefs and he was left alone. Joshua was as questioning as his brother was not. As Isaac implemented measures to bring prosperity, Joshua warned of a loss of spirituality. Joshua questioned the direction they should go on. He believed that they should abandon all luxuries and return to a more simple way of life. Joshua called for a renewed spiritual zeal. Many members agreed with Joshua, but as Abraham was still the leader, nothing came of such disputes.

The conflict of faith between the two brothers remained unspoken until the night their father collapsed and was subsequently unable to lead the community. Who would lead them? Abraham's Constitution made no mention of succession and the man had never mentioned successors. Isaac, as the first son, assumed the role of leader, in honour of and duty bound to his ailing father. Some questioned this, as Isaac had not been chosen. They believed that they should await a sign from God, and until that time, the oldest male of the community should be leader. Joshua believed that they should not have a leader - surely God was their leader and that to have a leader was a blasphemy before God. This dishonoured his father and many were shocked by what Joshua spoke. Joshua held sway over a number of the community and many believed that his ideas to return to a very simple life would benefit them.

As the days passed, the people split into factions. Regular meetings would be held to debate; these fell into dissension. The chosen were divided. Soon the different groups could not bear to be with each other. They ate and worked at different times. Younger members would actually hit each other or verbally abuse their fellow chosen.

Isaac, seeing that all this conflict was leading the community nowhere, called a meeting in the chapel. Once again none could agree on the right path. Joshua announced that they, the true righteous would establish another community elsewhere. Joshua demanded that he and his followers should be given their share of the community's property and wealth. Isaac refused, stating that the constitution clearly stated that all property was commonly held by all members and that no one individual holds claim over any part of it. The constitution also makes clear that any member who leaves cannot take any community property with them. Joshua, on hearing this, elected to stay, as he had no choice. Members of the Simeon

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family, whose father Shel had been an original founding member, announced that they intended to leave the community and live in Winterholm with relations. The family asked for some assistance from the community to aid their departure. As members of the family had already left the community and were living locally, their request was not so excessive; but Isaac, young, angry and proud, refused the loan of a truck and some household items. The meeting broke up in a mood of bitterness.

Days passed with the same simmering resentment in the community. On the sixteenth day of June 1973, Joshua and the Simeons all left the community. Isaac and his followers helped move them using community trucks. The break away group stayed with friends in the town. After a time Joshua rented a large house and they all moved in there, and established a new church. Over the next four months of the Summer and Fall of 1973, rumours emerged in town. God's Way were accused of being Satanists; they killed new born babies; they had orgies, took drugs, copulated with animals and participated in dark rituals. At these dark ceremonies they would drink blood and cast spells. They would have sex with their own children at these ceremonies. Each new day brought some new official from the 'outside' to investigate the community and its affairs. Many officials threatened to remove the children from the community. Trips to the town brought verbal and physical abuse. One day the Baptist preacher led his congregation to the community and they threw holy water around the boundary fences to keep the community's 'evil' inside and so protect the 'outside'.

On the seventeenth day of September they awoke to find dead pigs strewn throughout the community land. There was a carcass in every building. The swine had been cut up and their blood and entrails had been smeared over the walls and furniture. The community was filled with the terrible impurity of the swine and

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Isaac led the adults around the community, removing the remains and cleaning each building with their pure well water and readings from <u>Leviticus</u>. and the Books of <u>Abraham.</u> Evil truly was at work.

On the night of the eighteenth of September, they were awakened by a crash - it was the community's watchtower collapsing. Windows opened and they smelt the smoke and heard the noise. In the smoke walked people carrying torches and setting fire to the buildings and smashing machinery. Joshua was cleansing the community with fire. Isaac and the others were roused only to find that their exit was barred - the doors had been bolted shut. Doors were knocked down with axes, but two men died saving their families. While the children were taken for cover, the adults battled to save what they could. Joshua and his people did not wait around for a confrontation. Once their deed was done, they left as swiftly as they had come. Joshua did not even take time to take his two youngest children, both infants, whom he left. The infants were rescued from a burning house just as the roof was about to collapse. Neighbouring farmers had seen the flames and fire-fighters arrived from the 'outside' but they only saved two buildings. Next morning as smoke still rose from charred wood, they surveyed the damage. All the buildings were damaged, but the central building was habitable, and by a miracle the building which housed the chapel was unscathed. God had saved them, he had been watching. All their machinery was damaged. Their horses had died locked in their stables, while the one thousand chickens they kept were roasted alive in their two huge sheds. The lives of two of Isaac's sisters' husbands had been taken. Many others had suffered burns and all were shocked. The 'outside' law-men came, but despite Isaac speaking the truth and naming the culprits, no justice was met out. The word of a good man is not enough evidence.

Joshua, who believed in God's law, sought to use the law of the 'outside' against his brother. He stood in their court of law and asked for half of all the communal wealth and for the constitution that his father had written to be ripped up. For two years the lawmen of the 'outside' argued the case. Both sides struggled to support this action. Despite being unholy, their court of law saw the righteous path and told Joshua that he had no claim, that his father's written constitution was true and that when he had signed it, he had made it valid as any other. There was no more Joshua could take from them. His failure led to his followers parting.

Joshua, his wife and eldest child joined a community in Tennessee, which is supposed to be holy. Abraham's third son, Joel, took his family to another supposedly holy group in South Dakota. Isaiah Zion, the fourth son of Abraham, left to join a group of people seeking the new age in Wisconsin. The Simeon family settled in Arkansas, where they farmed and abandoned the religious life. The Zebulun family, who had been among the original founders, split up and scattered around the midwest, most leaving the religious tradition and joining the 'outside' life.

Isaac was left with twenty-eight chosen and the task of rebuilding the community with little means to achieve it. The years that followed were unhappy and hard. Brother had betrayed brother and families had been split. Yet God was with them. The children, as soon as the 'outside' no longer required them to attend school, were needed to help rebuild, and so few finished school or gained the skills that their forebears had. They struggled by. A further blow was the death of Abraham, their founder, leader, and father, on the twentieth of September 1975. He was eighty. On that day Isaac truly became the leader, a role he had never wanted nor felt prepared for. Over the next few years, they would rebuild, using whatever materials they could get. Isaac's ingenuity won out. New members were brought

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by God and new families were created. The chosen remained chosen and their faith remained resolute. Isaac trusted in God.

Joshua still sends his brother tapes of his sermons, trying to show Isaac the error of his ways; it is the only communication between the two sons of Abraham.

'Life was not meant to be easy; God gives us what we can handle'. Isaac Zion

Making Sense of History

' . . . the absence of writing means that it is difficult to isolate a segment of human discourse and subject it to the same highly individual, highly intense, highly abstract, highly critical analysis that we can give to a written statement.' Goody (1977: 13).

The history of God's Way community which has just been transcribed can only be useful as a document if we realise three problems inherent in its production. Firstly, the authorship of the history, secondly, the nature of history itself, and thirdly, the consequences of writing that exists as an oral 'text'.

Authoring History

It cannot be stressed enough that the author of this history is me and not the community members. As I have said, the members felt no identification with the resultant text, and ultimately rejected it.

My agenda in constructing the history had been to produce a linear, chronological history of the community, i.e. a 'conventional' history. This was partly because it

was methodologically impossible to collect all the stories as they were performed[13] and I also because I felt a methodological need to lay out the history of the community in order to be able to place it within wider cultural and historical movements. I shared this agenda with the community's school-teacher. Although she wished to use the history for educational, rather than ethnographic purposes, we shared a common goal. Under the guise of 'history project' the children were enthusiastic accomplices, helping to collect the 'data'.

Our methods had been for each child to ask a particular adult member for any stories, phrases, or anecdotes concerning the community's past. They then wrote down whatever they were told. When any of us heard different 'unsolicited' material that was also written down. This method was open to the vagaries of memory (informants' and child collectors'), writing ability, and the general willingness of the adults, which often varied. Most adult members participated, seeing the exercise as '*good for the children to learn 'bout the old times*', as Sarah Zion put it. Eventually all the stories and fragments of stories were surveyed by myself and the teacher. The task of editing the material and trying to place events and people in chronological order then began. We selected those dates, events, and names which recurred the most, and decided that these must be the most important to the history, on the assumption that to have such names or events recur continually suggested that they held some importance to the community members. Because we were assembling a 'traditional' history we edited out the colourful background descriptions which abounded in the stories, as well as anything which seemed irrelevant.

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[13] To have collected the stories would have required audio or audio-visual equipment which I did not have. However, recording is not always the most fruitful of methodological practices if we consider, as Finnegan (1970 and 1992) points out, the constantly changing and adapting nature of oral 'poetry'. What is more important are the cultural symbols contained in the material.

I decided that in writing the history I would try to recapture the overwhelmingly Biblical tone of the language and narrative used in the stories. This adoption of the Biblical 'genre' was an attempt to make the history seem more 'true' to the members. The history was also written in the form that they wrote, i.e. non-standard English.

The finished product was not appreciated by the members, who highlighted omissions and endlessly told us of facts that we had missed. This continued for many weeks following the 'exhibition'. This 'correcting' was not done in a crowing or angry fashion, but rather in the style of adults patiently correcting the errors of children. It should be noted that the stories, although shared by all the members, tend to be recounted by the older members, like Sarah Zion, to the younger ones. When younger members tell stories they do so in the presence of an older person, to whom they will turn for confirmation of the accuracy of their storytelling. If younger members are telling stories without a senior member present, they qualify the story by saying something like, '*Sarah said that Papa did...*' or '*I heard Isaac say that Papa once . . .*' The younger members are perceived as not having yet learnt the stories 'fully', or how to tell them 'properly'.

The children's response to the history was negative as they saw it as yet another type of school book. They did not demonstrate the same thrilled enjoyment at reading the history as they did in listening to the stories. The history was ultimately an object of little or no meaning to the community. The only people who attached any significance to it were myself and the school-teacher. Why this should be has roots in the nature of history, and in the orality of the community.

History in the western tradition is typically associated with the recording or discovering of historical facts in the world. Aristotle distinguished between poetry, and history. The former was concerned with the philosophic and the creation of universal truths. History was seen as specific, constrained in and by time. This view has persisted. Goody (1977: 140) writes that there can be no history without archives and evidence to reinforce facts. In essence he suggests that we associate history with collecting and reinforcing truth. Samuel and Thompson (1990) continue this theme, pointing out that we tend to associate history with reality. If we can perceive it as real, then it happened. They also discuss the importance of corroboration for history. It is this preoccupation with evidence that makes history a literate tradition *par excellence*. As Goody (1986: 78) discusses, it is harder to corroborate that which only exists as oral tradition; it is 'easier' if it is written down. Literacy, as Goody (1986: 78) suggests, has important consequences for the way we view truth and knowledge.

Part of the problem with writing God's Way's history is related to their orality. There exists no evidence to support their stories. Truth is left unsubstantiated. 'Conventional' history would deem the stories as myth or fable to be dealt with by a suitable specialist. The Comaroffs (1992: 5) make the point that this western view of history denies a historical consciousness to other cultures. Typically, oral cultures are deemed ahistorical and concerned with myth. The Comaroffs go on to suggest that history and historical representation may take different forms cross-culturally. Such variance does not deny history, rather it demands a different type of history and historical methodology.

The problem and solution lies in how we view history. The historian Hayden White (1973) suggested that history be viewed as a narrative discourse, and subsequently, like any discourse, it should reveal cultural motifs. 'Academic' history is a collection of significant dates, events, and people. It leaves a lot out. What is included is deemed important to the specific culture, however insignificant the actual event was in terms of 'real' historical influence. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) have effectively demonstrated the manipulation of history and its subjects in order to create myths of nationality and sovereignty.

The issue that concerns 'conventional' history (although it is not only a problem faced by historians) ultimately centres not on what is true or false, but rather what can be proven to be true. However, if we assume history to be narrative, the question of truth fades from importance, and the question of why is this particular narrative important to these people becomes central. This is the view of history which I have adopted in producing and studying God's Way's history. What are the significant and recurring events and motifs? Why are they significant?

Writing Speaking

I would label God's Way community as being an oral rather than a literate culture. I want to more fully examine the idea of God's Way community as an oral culture in a later chapter, but it is necessary for the present discussion to make some preliminary remarks. Although the community may be a group who privilege speech over writing this is not to deny that they read, write, or have important written texts. As Finnegan (1992) highlights, the oral versus written dichotomy is too rigid a division, and both forms typically co-exist. The emphasis on separating and distinguishing between the two is a product of an over-emphasis on literacy. Tonkin (1992) stresses that although a culture may hold writing (and literacy) in

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esteem and as the dominant form, there will be variations in the written competency of individuals. Also the oral-creative abilities of people within an overwhelmingly literate tradition may vary. Tonkin (1992) discusses the great emphasis placed on being able to tell stories and jokes within working class environments, and how this ability is a mark of social standing. To be a bad story-teller is to fail socially within such environments. Conversely, literate skills are not as important and indeed are often scorned. God's Way's members are literate. All the members have had some level of education. All of them have attended school to at least the age of fourteen. Everyone can read and write, although competency varies.

Orality

To return to the question of orality. The stories told about Abraham and his sons are not a fixed 'code' to be repeated verbatim, like the ritual recitation of the *Qu'ran* in Islam (Eickelman 1978). The veracity of the stories is not the issue, rather, the 'message' of them is important. As Goody (1986: 9) points out, flexibility is characteristic of oral traditions. The stories are actually a seemingly infinite number of anecdotes, quotes, phrases, and tales concerning Abraham and the community. As a whole they inform the members about their founder, the creation of community, and its ultimate destiny. Finnegan (1970: 109) found that African oral stories, particularly epics, did not exist as whole, structured entities, but rather were, '. . . *a loosely related bundle of separate episodes, told on separate occasions and not necessarily thought of as one single work of art.*' Linear, chronologically structured facts are not the crucial point in many forms of oral poetry. Goody (1987: 86) highlights the fact that not all orality is concerned with verbatim memory recitation. This is an important point concerning many oral traditions. They are open to the vagaries of memory. This is where 'Academic' history has a problem in dealing with oral cultures; the whole idea of truth and corroboration is

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very hard to impose. With many oral 'texts' comes a creativity and fluidity, with parts of stories changing through time, depending on speaker and audience. The nature of memory has an important role to play. Freud (1960) suggested that memory is highly selective and revisionist through time. We often remember what we want to remember rather than what actually happened. Thus, fact in an objective historical sense is not possible, necessary, nor desired. The importance lies with what the stories are trying to 'say' to the people involved.

The Problems of Writing Speaking.

Let us recall Tonkin's (1992: 41) earlier quote: '*Putting an experience into words is an inevitable alteration of experience*'. This alteration is an inevitable part of orality, and indeed of committing what exists orally to paper. The colour, the humour, the emotional engagement, etc of the stories which seem superfluous to the scribe are edited out, with the consequence of removing much of what made the stories entertaining and relevant. This was what happened in my zeal to construct a community history. Goody (1987: 93) states that transcribing oral poetry causes it to lose much of its force. The 'failure' from the community's point of view of my recording had been to cut out all the colour of the stories, to limit them to a sparse string of events, dates, and names.

By writing down what were a collection of stories that existed orally and in the collective imagination, I had succeeded in making them practically meaningless to the people who had created them. The act of bringing the events together, with the inevitable removal of the colourful background to the many stories, removed the richness of them and by attempting to impose chronology (thus making them 'true' in my eyes) on the tales I succeeded in removing their truth for the people by showing up the falseness of some of the dates. An oral tradition is no longer useful

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to people when it is committed to paper, partly for the reasons already mentioned and also because orality is about performance. All narratives, written or oral, have an audience to be performed for, but they are performed to people within that tradition, and when we take a narrative from the one tradition and perform it in another there is a reduction in the power of the narrative. God's Way's history is meaningful when performed within the community by its members, but once it is placed within the written tradition, much of its potency is gone, just as jokes and anecdotes, which were so funny when acted out or spoken, seem slightly tedious when written. We may still see the humour but it is a lesser version.

A text now exists, a text made for the analysis of people who were not part of its authorship or ownership, a text I constructed. The text exists so that people who were not party to the oral performance of the history can still share it. But how? If we remember White's (1973) point that history is a narrative, made up of symbolic motifs, then we can begin to see a way forward. As Finnegan (1992) points out, oral poetry is concerned more with symbolism than facts. By attempting to 'decipher' this symbolism we can begin to appreciate the text in a useful historical light. With this in mind we can approach God's Way's history as a collection of significant cultural motifs which are appropriated by the members as knowledge.

Learning from the Testaments

'Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:
And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.' Genesis 12: 1-3

The first thing that is apparent from the community's history is the sense of their own movement, as a group, through the three stages of 'Innocence', 'Experience',

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and 'Redeemed Innocence'. Their initial construction of community was a failure due to a lack of communal 'Experience', but they reconciled their plans with this 'Experience' and successfully founded another community which was a success. This act can be seen as a one of achieving 'Redeemed Innocence'. However, the history then proceeds to show the community again having to reconcile 'Innocence' and 'Experience' through their prosperous period and then the Schism. Once again the community managed to negotiate and reconcile the two states and the present situation of the comunity is one of 'Redeemed Innocence'.

Abraham, Moses, and Abraham

The first thing that strikes one when hearing the stories, or reading the history, are the 'borrowings' from the Biblical genre, not just in tone and language style, but also in the recurrent use of Biblical motifs and symbols. In particular, the history appears to 'borrow' greatly from the books of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, and in a sense merges the key motifs from each. Abraham Zion, like the Patriarch Abraham, is 'chosen' to lead God's 'people' to a 'chosen' land. The state of Israel, the 'chosen' land of *Genesis*, becomes God's Way community in the *Books of Abraham*. However, like the Hebrews, the community suffer a series of trials and setbacks, which entail an exodus. The exodus of the Hebrews was a return home, whereas the exodus of the community was a journey to a new home. Moses, according to the *Book of Exodus*, led the Hebrews from their Egyptian exile back to their homeland of Israel. Abraham Zion led the community of God's Way from a failed 'chosen' land to a new improved one, where they prosper. The community, according to their history, are divinely predestined in the same way as the Hebrews of the Old Testament. In *Genesis* God makes a covenant with the Patriarch Abraham to lead the Jews as a 'chosen' people. According to the history of the community a similar covenant is made between God and Abraham Zion. Abraham

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Zion, like both the Biblical Abraham and Moses, is the human link between God and the people. They are not divine leaders, nor are they divine made flesh, as Jesus was, but rather they are mortals gifted with charisma and leadership qualities. Just as God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, to seal the relationship between the Hebrews and their God, so the history reveals that God gave the *Books of Abraham* to Abraham Zion. Both are the direct words of God, transcribed by the mortal go-betweens, to guide the faithful. The community themselves recognise this similarity between their founder and the Abraham of the Old Testament. However, they do not go so far as to suggest that their founder was a successor or a descendant of the Biblical Abraham; rather, they see their community as the 'new' renewed covenant with God, which the Jews have lost. They do not see themselves as kin to the Hebrews of the Old Testament but rather as the new 'chosen' assuming the role that the ancient Hebrews had.

Numbers, Dreams, and Signs.

More subtle 'borrowings' are also prevalent in the history. The number seven, which is the Judaic holy number, recurs throughout the history of the community, just as it does throughout both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Abraham awakes from his revelatory coma on the seventh day. His walk in the wilderness ends on the seventh day, and the *Books of Abraham* are given seven days apart.

Abraham's spiritual awakenings are guided by signs (typically snakes) and dreams, which recall not only the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Joseph in the Old Testament, and Jesus in the New Testament, but also the 'apprenticeships' of shamans (Eliade 1964), magicians (Mauss 1950), and witches (Lessa and Vogt 1971) in other cultures.

Similarly, Abraham's walks in the wilderness, periods of spiritual doubt, endurance of tests and trials, and so forth, all echo Biblical stories. It should also be noted that they also follow the pattern of religious narratives in many other cultures, such as in Indic and Hindu beliefs. The cynic could suggest that the history has been expertly constructed or edited, by a person or persons well versed in Biblical or even more general religious narratives. Abraham Zion with his background in Frontier travel and showmanship, coupled with his knowledge of the Bible, and experience of a number of religious denominations, as well as with Native American beliefs, would seem the most likely candidate. Whether Abraham was a 'fake' or not is of no concern here, as the objective veracity of the history is not under consideration. Rather, it could be suggested that the Biblical narrative, style, and symbolism of the stories serves to validate them for the community members.

Abraham Zion

Abraham is the key figure in the history. His sons, who interestingly appear as two halves of the whole that was their father, play only a small part. Joshua and the Schism were rarely mentioned in public; indeed, I collected this segment of the history during private conversations. The Schism and its part in the present troubles of the community was played down. The fact that the community live a economically unstable life reliant on the 'outside' for help is due to the departure of most of its labour force and the destruction of a great amount of its assets during the Schism, yet no members ever related the economic decline of the community to the Schism. Significantly, people referred to the death of Abraham as the event that brought about the community's spiritual and material downfall. When Joshua was mentioned in public it was in reference to the proselytising tapes with which he occasionally bombarded the community. His infrequent attempts at converting them were derided and caused great amusement. Isaac's role in the community's

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history was also rarely mentioned. When he was referred to it was in relation to his reluctance to assume the role of leader and his struggle to live up to his father's greatness.

Abraham was the figure talked about most frequently. Indeed, the history is made up predominantly of stories concerning him and his life. He is important due to his dual role as founder and leader of the community - a role, it should be noted, that was given to him by God. Thus, Abraham is intrinsically linked to both the creation and the destiny of the community. Abraham remains mortal, yet he is set apart from the other members and the history portrays him as having the qualities of the typical charismatic leader. Weber (1947: 358) defined charismatic authority as, '. . . *applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men, and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.'*

Charismatic leaders are prevalent in religious and apocalyptic movements, and also within the IC movement (Kanter 1972). As Shils (1965: 203) points out, charismatics appeal to us because they appear to create order from chaos. They tend to have a number of specific qualities which inspire awe: great oratory abilities, powerful personalities, enigmatic qualities, androgyny, and special skills, such as magic and healing. If Abraham's oratory powers and healing skills are recalled we can see two such charismatic qualities. Paglia (1992) suggests that charisma is found within individuals who manage to construct an enigmatic and often androgynous persona, in other words the charismatic makes himself appear as everyman and yet no man; if we consider the history, the character of Abraham remains an enigma, like Jesus in the Gospels. Although we know significant events from both the lives of Abraham Zion and Jesus, their 'true' essence remains elusive. Those features which would make them more human, such as passions and vices,

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are missing. Charismatic leaders tend to become embodiments of their beliefs. Similarly, Abraham Zion, in the telling of the stories, becomes a symbol of the community and its development.

Clues, Creation, and Destiny.

The stories serve as clues to the origin of many of the community's ideas and beliefs. For example, their view of the 'outside' can be seen to be shaped by Abraham's early life in St Louis and later travels in the West. The anti-Catholicism of the community must have some root in Abraham's father's rejection of his family's Catholicism. Abraham's experiences of the Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches must have served as fertile sources for his creation of the community. Their use of spontaneous worship, adult baptism, and a strict moral code must be adaptations of practices from these churches. The source of the community's use of folk medicine and their respect for the Native American populations is also obviously grounded in Abraham's experiences in Arizona.

Most importantly for the members, the stories serve a number of purposes: they educate the young in the history of the community, they entertain, they allow them to keep Abraham 'alive', and they act as fables to inculcate moral principles. However, the stories' most important function is to allow the members to recall and reaffirm their creation, which in turn refers to their destiny, i.e. their survival following the Day of Judgement. When the members tell a story about Abraham they are ultimately making reference to their divine predestination to which Abraham is explicitly tied, as founder of the community.

Now that the community have been located within time and space, it is possible to locate and examine their beliefs and religious practices.

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Chapter Two

As Significant as Dust

In the previous chapter God's Way's place in the history of western communalism was located. This chapter will explore their position within the mainstream of Christian history and tradition, with reference to a number of features of their faith. God's Way community's belief system, which includes ideas concerning predestination and apocalypticism, may at first appear eccentric. This is particularly persuasive when we consider that they are a group of only thirty-four Christians living an intentionally isolated existence in the middle of America. However, a more detailed examination of their beliefs, which contextualises them both historically and culturally, can demonstrate that they are far from eccentric. Indeed, their beliefs actually lie at the heart of Christianity. In Section I the community's non-conformism and fundamentalism will be discussed. There will also be a detailed description of their beliefs and practices. Section II focuses on their place within the Christian tradition through reference to their apocalypticism.

Section I

'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people of God . . . ' I Peter 2: 9-10

'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.
For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.' Psalm 23: 13-14.

God's Way community could be labelled an American non-conformist, fundamentalist Christian community. All of these elements mark their beliefs. To

understand the community's style of belief it is necessary to review the nature of American religion, and in particular Protestantism.

In God We Trust

De Tocqueville (1835) wrote that *'there is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America'*. Yet America, perhaps more than any other western nation, is associated today with the secular rather than the religious. This is partly due to a number of inter-mixed cultural factors, including the lack of a state church, the constitutionally enshrined religious freedom and so forth. Cultural stereotypes should also be considered, namely the association of America with materialism and pop culture. It is also related to the identification of the nation as future-oriented and preoccupied with progress and change rather than with tradition or superstition.

However, this superficial identification of the USA as a secular nation belies the statistical evidence and says more about the dominance of Secularisation Theory (see Part I, Section I) than it does about religiosity in the USA. More than one hundred and fifty years after De Tocqueville came to his conclusion about American religiosity, polls show that over forty five percent of Americans worship weekly (Gallup 1986). Only one other western nation (Eire) exceeds this figure. Traditionally devout countries, such as Spain and Italy reach weekly attendance figures of only thirty percent. Polls (Gallup 1986, 1989a, and 1989b) also demonstrate that even those Americans who do not actively participate within a formal religious setting do still hold strong beliefs and express discontent with the organisation and structures of the established churches rather than with the message they broadcast. Indeed, the majority of those polled express beliefs which could be categorised as profoundly fundamentalist.

Ironically for a country famous for its separation of church and state, and for its religious freedom, religious matters carry a great deal of weight within public debate. America needs to be viewed as a nation which on the one hand is associated with the secular, yet on the other is deeply preoccupied with religion.

American Protestantism

Protestantism was the leading form of Christianity in America from the colonial period up until the Civil War (Stoeffler 1976 and Noll 1992). The thirty years following the Civil War saw the largest period of mass immigration to the USA. Among the immigrants were large numbers from traditionally Catholic countries, such as Ireland and Italy. This influx of Catholicism saw the supremacy of Protestantism within American Christianity threatened (Sandeen 1970). American Protestantism reacted in a number of ways, including the development of new forms such as in the case of Pentecostalism and Spiritualism (Noll 1992). One feature of this period was the development of a fundamentalist wing within Protestantism which continued to rise through the turn of the century and held considerable sway, especially in the Southern and Mid-Western states up until the Second World War (Ahlstrom 1975 and Sandeen 1970).

American Protestantism is characterised by two features (Noll 1992 and Ahlstrom 1975): non-conformism and a profound lack of denominationalism. Such peculiarities are the result of two related historical situations: the emigration of large numbers of non-conformists from Europe during the colonial period; and the freedom of religious worship characteristic of the colonial period and then, following the Revolutionary War, enshrined within the First Amendment of the Constitution. As Noll (1992) discusses, in his survey of American Christianity, the earliest settlers were groups of English non-conformists who sought the space and freedom to

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practise their faith. They were encouraged by a colonial government who sought settlers. These English Puritans were quickly followed by successive waves of European Protestant groups (Stoeffler 1976). Although the colonial period saw the establishment in the colonies of representatives of the English, and later British, state churches these were always overshadowed by the Puritans who quickly gained the upper hand in New England (Noll 1992 and Ahlstrom 1975). These State churches went into sharp decline following the Revolution when they became associated with the British and were therefore deemed 'un-American'.

The absence of a state church due to the constitutional separation of church and state created the environment for a constantly changing and fluid Protestantism that still exists today. Noll (1992) notes that the marked lack of denominationalism created by religious freedom and no state church, allowed for the creation of new churches and religious groups, and that the history of American Protestantism is the chronicle of successive 'experiments' of varying success. In such an environment beliefs become more important than actual practice or formal membership (Ruthven 1989: 2-3). This is a fact borne out by the ever decreasing numbers attending or belonging to churches, in contrast to the consistently high numbers of people claiming to believe what are fundamentally Christian tenets (see Gallup 1986, 1989a and 1989b). As Ruthven (1989: 2) jokes, Americans appear to change their religious affiliations nearly as often as their socks. It should be recalled that God's Way community's Abraham Zion belonged to two different denominations (Methodism and Pentecostalism) before his call to community and such changes of loyalty, in the light of the previous discussion, should be seen as typically American. Indeed the very act of building God's Way and attempting to construct a new religious community is in fact not the peculiar exercise it would at first appear. Instead it is perhaps to be expected within the context of American Protestantism, both historically and currently.

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Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is currently the rising element in many of the 'world' religions. The case of Islamic fundamentalism is well documented and has a certain notoriety, whereas Christian fundamentalism has been typically identified as existing either within a small group of American 'extreme' sects, or as something quite comical.. The latter view (especially prevalent in this country) was promulgated due to the rise and fall, in the Eighties, of the television evangelist in America. However, the media hype surrounding such characters as Jim and Tammy Baker of the 'Praise the Lord Network' should not be used to dismiss the potency of fundamentalism within American and European Christianity.

Successive polls show that fundamentalism is rising across all Protestant denominations in the West (Noll 1992 and Boyer 1992). Many have argued that Catholic fundamentalism is also rising, with the current Pope (John Paul II) being an arch fundamentalist. This fundamentalism can be attributed in part, as Ammerman (1987) and Noll (1992) do, to the rise in political conservatism as a reaction to the liberal trends of the early post-war era, and also to the general rise in spirituality that has been documented world-wide in reaction to the coming millennium (Niebuhr 1989 and O'Leary 1994). Fundamentalism, and its spiritual relation Evangelism, are now growth areas within popular Christianity whose influence, especially in America, is marked - as can be seen in the rise of the politically influential New Christian Right Coalition in the USA since the mid-1980s. The majority of the American Protestant churches are to some extent now fundamentalist (Noll 1992), and as polls (see Gallup 1986 1989a and 1989b) demonstrate the majority of American Christians adhere strongly to fundamentalist beliefs, yet show declining interest in formal church membership and rising ignorance of even the most basic Biblical facts.

It should be noted that fundamentalism in any religion is often associated with poverty and a lack of power (Barr 1977). The adoption of the 'truth' oriented approach of fundamentals encourages a view that the believers, however poor or powerless, will one day succeed over those who are 'untrue'. The fundamentalist emphasis on the community and unity of 'true' believers against the 'outside' also encourages followers among those at the lowest levels of society. The case of Islamic fundamentalism bears this out. Islamic fundamentalism was adopted within a number of Islamic states, for example Iran and Iraq, as a revolutionary force. Amongst African slaves in the southern states of America, fundamentalism was also rife and used as a source of empowerment. Within contemporary American Christian fundamentalism a similar situation is occurring. Fundamentalism predominates within the mid-Western and Southern states, in particular among blue collar workers. Fundamentalism is partly being used as an attack on Washington, and partly against the forces of Liberalism which are perceived to be causing the decay which is seen to threaten the 'heartland' areas of the nation. The rhetoric of the New Christian Right Coalition demonstrates this with a strong emphasis on the gulf between what Washington wants or believes and what middle America does. It should be noted that the first rise in fundamentalism in the USA at the turn of the century (Sandeen 1970) was in reaction to the imagined twin threats of Catholicism (from the great wave of immigrants) and Liberalism. God's Way community obviously gain some element of succour from their view of themselves as 'chosen' over the rest of America who are not. However, unlike other fundamentalists they do not seek to gain power or political influence. The community is too forward looking to be preoccupied with politicking. They know that they will be saved in the coming apocalypse and others will not. Therefore their fundamentalism gives them a strength of conviction, but it is a strength focused within the community and not outwith it.

Despite this growth we should not identify fundamentalism as a modern phenomenon. It has existed within Christianity from the beginning. Once Christianity began to grow and spread, following Christ's crucifixion, splinter groups soon began to break away as disputes over what direction the church should take following the death of its founder. As the church grew into a state recognised power following the conversion of Emperor Constantine, fundamentalism became more common place. The aim of fundamentalists through history has always been to return to a simpler form of worship, based around the imagined ways of the early 'primitive' church as defined by Christ in *Acts*. Fundamentalists adopt this aim in reaction to perceived flaws within the mainstream of the churches to which they belong. Fundamentalism could be viewed as a state of 'Redeemed Innocence' in which believers attempt to reconcile their beliefs ('Innocence') with the forces and threats of ('Experience'). The resulting religious form will neither resemble that from which it reacts nor will it resemble the original form; it will be a new style.

Fundamentalism, as Barr (1977: 1-10) discusses, is in itself too broad and general a term, and one that most fundamentalists would not use in reference to themselves. This is especially true as fundamentalists typically see themselves as the 'true' believers and hence have no need for identifying labels (Ammerman 1987). However, most fundamentalists share some common characteristics.

The characteristics of Fundamentalists are as follows:

(1) Belief in the inerrancy of the Bible.

(2) Distinction between the 'true' believer, i.e. the fundamentalist, and the 'normal' believer.

(3) Belief in the Second Coming of Christ.

(4) Strong sense of 'calling'.

(5) Strong moral values.

(6) A sense of 'separation' from the rest of society.

(Barr 1977) and (Ammerman 1987).

There are obviously many different groups and types which can be located within such broad headings, but God's Way community share these characteristics and aims. Although the community do not believe completely in the inerrancy of the Bible they do believe in the inerrancy of the *Books of Abraham*, viewing the words contained within them as coming directly from God. The community make no reference to the Second Coming of Christ. However, they do believe in the coming apocalypse, traditionally signalled by the return of Christ to Earth. Barr's (1977) remaining four characteristics could all be applied to God's Way's beliefs.

The Calling of the '*Chosen*'

The key to understanding the community lies in their unwavering and unquestioned belief in their divine predestination, i.e. that they are God's '*chosen*' as revealed to their founder, Abraham Zion, by God through the series of revelatory experiences recounted in *Chapter One*. Predestination is a theological term which has a variety of meanings. In its most general sense predestination refers to a 'plan eternally conceived by God, whereby He conducts rational creatures to their supernatural end, that is, to eternal life.' (Palladino 1992: 714). Predestination in the sense that things are foreknown and foreordained by God is a constant theme in both the Old and New Testaments. However, different denominations and faiths use predestination to refer to different things. Catholicism states that all those who are to be saved are already 'chosen' by God, but we can not know this; only God knows this. However, Catholicism adopted the Augustinian view in suggesting that those who try to attain salvation have a good chance of achieving it. The logic behind this

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being that God led them to seek salvation. Protestantism features no unified idea of predestination, although one of the most predominant forms is the Calvinist idea that God foreknows those who will be damned and those who will be saved: Man can not know God's will. Predestination refers to the eternal decree of God by which He has decided on each man's fate. Judaism takes predestination to refer to the 'chosen' status of the Jews. God, according to the *Book of Exodus*, chose the Jews and elected them to a special status (see Palladino (1992) for discussion of predestination). In Judaism the subjects of predestination are aware of their status. In Christianity man does not know his destiny; only God knows. I am using predestination, in the Judaic sense, that is in the sense of a people 'chosen' by God and who know they hold this status.

As Barr (1977) and Ammerman (1987) both note all fundamentalists believe that they have been 'called' either as individuals or as groups. This 'call' sets them apart as 'true' believers in contrast to those who have not been 'called'. Fundamentalists maintain strong boundaries[14], physical, social and mental, between themselves and those they deem '*untrue*'. The adoption of a strong moral code is one way in which boundaries are maintained.

The community's predestination explains their embodiment of faith. God instructed their founder to create the community. The act of living communally and being '*chosen*' are inextricably linked. If the members did not live communally they would not be 'chosen'. Thus, the daily act of living and working in the community expresses their faith. As will be discussed in *Chapter Three* it is the daily routine of work and activity which is seen as significant to belief, rather than the actual weekly chapel service or declarations of faith. The community live faith, rather than debate or ponder it. God's Way's members were not predisposed to discuss their faith very

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[14] God's Way community's view of the 'outside' and their regulation of boundaries will be discussed in *Chapter Four.*

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often. There was, from my point of view, a frustrating silence on most matters spiritual. This silence I initially characterised as demonstration of their ignorance which seemed to reinforce my early impression that they were "stupid hillbillies". This was the view of most of the members that I maintained during my first few months of fieldwork. However, it became clear that their silences were indeed significant and meaningful in themselves. When people hold beliefs to be absolutely true then there is no need for debate or discussion. This is the view that the community held, and it is a view that is shared by most fundamentalist groups.

The members occasionally made passing reference to matters spiritual which typically referred to one of the following: the approaching apocalypse when their destiny would be fulfilled; the behaviour of the *'outside'* which was taken as sign of the ever closer Day of Judgement; and God's vigilance on the behaviour of the faithful. These preoccupations again demonstrate their essentially fundamentalist tenets. If we recall Barr's list of characteristics a preoccupation with a forthcoming apocalypse and with personal and public behaviour, as well as a defined sense of 'true' believers in opposition to a perceived 'outside' are all featured.

An Ever Vigilant God

The community members believe that God is constantly watching them and passing judgement on their behaviour. This belief is most commonly evoked in relation to the misbehaviour of the children, where it is used as a way of keeping them in line. However the adults also believe that they are being watched and typically attribute a spell of bad luck to God's will. This divine will was never seen as punishing the community (God's wrath was kept for the *'outside'*) but of continually testing them. The regular periods of going without income because the local chicken farmers did not need their services (perhaps because they had found someone cheaper) were

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always interpreted as God testing the faithful. *'Complacency is the mark of the devil just as sur' as pride and greed'* was how Jonathan Benjamin put it after we had gone eight weeks without crew work and were living off stored jars of pickled squash in the middle of winter.

Such divine testing was not just reserved for large events but also for smaller more personal tribulations such as back ache or a disastrous attempt at quilting. Such incidents were seen as God's testing of the individual believer. Members examined their recent behaviour in an attempt to gain insight into why God had focused on them. Leah Zion was an expert quilter, whose handiwork fetched good prices and high praise from the nearby town's craft shop. One particular day nothing seemed to go right for her, culminating in her latest quilt becoming unravelled and caught up in her quilting frame, ripping the material. She interpreted this event as God's testing of her, as the day before she had fetched a particularly high price for a quilt. *'He wants to make sure I ain't got proud and all blown up 'cos of the big sale'*. It was not the case that every error was attributed to divine intervention. When one of the children broke something or the dough did not rise, it was put down to human error or just bad luck. However, if the dough did not rise for an expert baker, such as Martha Joseph, then they would seek to interpret the event in relation to God. This constant divine testing was attributed to God's desire to maintain the community at a standard of belief and commitment appropriate for those destined to live after Judgement Day. The community, unlike some religious groups, did not wait for divine decision-making via signs or acts. The members knew that the decisions they made were 'correct' because they were actively living in the way that God had decreed to Abraham. However, they did apreciate that God was watching them and doing so in order to check that they were living appropriately. The community do not feel God is watching them in order to punish them, and they believe completely in their own 'chosen' status. There was no belief in the view

that lapses in behaviour would result in this status being revoked. Members had no sense of having to earn salvation by living 'correctly'. They live 'correctly' because they are 'chosen' not in order to be 'chosen'. They viewed the idea that one could 'earn' salvation as 'proud' and 'silly'. God watches their behaviour and sends trials and tests in order to remind them of their destiny and the importance of the continuing need to live 'correctly'; as God's people.

In relation to this idea of divine vigilance the community also monitored their behaviour through the implementation of a strict moral 'code'. This 'code' served to separate them off from the *'outside'* who were characterised as being highly immoral. This code allows them to live 'correctly' as is deemed appropriate for the *'chosen'*. The 'code' prohibits unmarried sex, contraception, intoxicants (alcohol, coffee, tea, tobacco, drugs, soda pop, junk food, etc.), and swearing, among other things. The members also stress the importance of hard work, respect for elders, discipline, good manners, humility before God, modesty and so on. Many of these ideas are found within the general Christian ethical code, and more specifically within the Fundamentalist wing of Christianity. Although the *'chosen'* are indeed elected by God it is still necessary for them to behave in an appropriate way if they wish to maintain their role in God's eyes.

The Day of Judgement

The community lived the way they did because of their preoccupation with their predestination. Their destiny was to survive the Day of Judgement and ensuing Apocalypse which would destroy the world. They would survive because they were God's 'chosen' and because as 'chosen' they lived correctly according to God's will. At some point in the future, although they did not know when, God would judge the world. The members did not have a fixed date in their minds and refused to commit

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to one. However, the members insisted that the day was coming ever closer. Isaac insisted that there would be plenty of signs to let the faithful know that it was time. The first sign would be when their *Book of Truths* spontaneously combusts. They already knew the result of God's final judgement: the community members would be allowed to live and the rest of the world would be set on fire by God. This divine fire would cleanse the earth of all sinful people, without damaging any plants, animals, or chosen: a sort of divine neutron bomb.

Isaac was very specific that all apart from themselves would be killed in this fire and he delighted in a picture that hung on his study wall which showed the Manhattan skyline lit up by a vivid fork of lightning. *'God's jus' showing us a demo thur'* he would often chuckle. 'What would happen to the community after God's judgement?' I asked. *'God, in his grace, would let us live tha's more than all the rest'* replied Isaac. The community got their information about Judgement Day from the *Books of Abraham*, which continually refer back to the end of the world and the final judgement. In the *Books of Abraham* there are particularly vivid descriptions of God's wrath on the *'outside'*. Amongst this stirring prose, which gives detailed descriptions of the agonies suffered by the *'fallen'* during this judgement, are pronouncements on the fate of the 'chosen' as they call themselves.

My chosen children will live on the quiet land and prosper. They will have much and they will multiply. My true kingdom will be erected on this cleaned land and my joy will be great. This will pass in future times. My judgement will be final and without mercy on those that are fallen into sin. I will make a great fire that will clean the land but will harm no holy thing.

This passage was the most commonly used one to describe the judgement. The *'chosen'* people (the community) will be allowed to live as they do now, but will be able to prosper because the earth is now 'quiet' as everyone else is dead. At this point the true kingdom of God will exist and the *'chosen'* will multiply. This divine

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fire was one that would destroy only the sinners and their chattels but would keep all animals and plants safe as they were holy and without sin. The community members delighted in describing the nature of this final destruction of the world and would often say '*not long now, I reckon*'.

The community's view of the end of the world has much in common with both the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses. Judaism (as recounted in the *Books of Ezekiel* and *Daniel*) states that the final days of the world will be foretold by a number of signs followed by the return of the Messiah. Numerous battles between good and evil will occur and eventually God will judge mankind. The 'chosen' will live after the judgement on Earth where Heaven will have descended. The Christian tradition varies little from the Judaic. The Christian Apocalypse is marked by the seven signs as foretold by John in *Revelations*. Following the customary apocalyptic battles between good and evil, Christ will return to Earth and the Judgement will begin. Again the survivors of the Judgement will live in a Heaven established on Earth.

The community's belief in their destiny did not lead them to have an inflated view of themselves. Their most commonly used description of their relationship to God was that they were '*as significant as dust*' in God's eyes. Isaac ended nearly every Sunday service by repeating this quote from the *Books of Abraham* (which may have been 'borrowed' from the Bible, as *Psalm* 23 uses a similar phrase). They often contrasted their humility , which of course was the humility of the '*true*' believer, with the behaviour of other groups, such as the Mormons and the Jews, who claimed predestination.

The Trials of the 'Outside'

God's wrath was kept for the 'outside' world which, as it was not '*chosen*' like the community, was seen as '*fallen*'. '*Outside*' troubles, such as murders or drug problems, were not seen as God's wrath but the expected behaviour of the '*fallen*' who were devoid of any morality. The periodic reporting in the media of rising illegitimate births or drug related deaths were commented on matter of factly, rather than with shock or surprise. Such statistics were to be expected. A larger, more unexpected calamity, such as a hurricane or particularly bad flooding was seen as God's wrath on the 'outside'. '*When he gets too mad at 'em*' was the usual interpretation, suggesting a God who was usually willing to wait until Judgement Day to vent his anger, but who occasionally got so angry that he sent a small punishment.

View of God

Their God was the typical patriarchal one presented in the Old Testament: the remote father figure, who is at once benevolent yet exacting. This view of God was taken from the Old Testament (in particular *Genesis*) and from their own *Books of Abraham*. The idea promoted in liberal denominations that God could be genderless or even female, was seen as very shocking and further evidence of the spread of paganism. When I suggested this idea to Isaac and a couple of the others over supper one night it, for once, provoked a small debate. They concluded that God was a man for convenience as he had always been 'seen' this way, but that it was not really important, as he was God and did not do the things men (or women) needed to do. I should stress that they did not explicitly reach the conclusion that God was genderless, rather that the idea seemed to make some sense to them, as they acknowledged that God was certainly not mortal and therefore had no need for

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mortal things such as gender. The community do not have marked gender divisions and therefore such a view of God fits with their overall view of the sexes (see *Chapter Three*).

God and Jesus

The members used the *King James* Bible. All fundamentalist groups identify this version as the authoritative one and see all other translations as 'false' (Ammerman 1987), but God's Way community predominantly drew on their own *Books of Abraham..* This was due to their belief that the Bible had been corrupted through the years and could no longer be seen as God's truth. They used the Bible more for a source of story telling, using the stories of the Old Testament as a way of inculcating ideals in the children. After God, the next most important figure was Abraham, their founder and leader. Although not to be confused with God, he did have an exalted status and was mentioned daily. It should be stressed that for them there is no more important figure than God and that other men, like Abraham, are great because God has inspired them. They find the veneration of saints and icons in other denominations as highly offensive. They enjoyed reading and talking about certain Old Testament figures, like Abraham, Moses and David, who were highly regarded.

Jesus was never talked about and the community rarely referred to the New Testament. They did not celebrate Christmas or Easter, seeing both as pagan festivals. The abandonment of Christmas is common among many Protestant groups, for example the Jehovah's Witnesses, who view the Nativity as a corrupted festival. Isaac's only comment on Jesus was to say *'I don't know much about him'* and left it at that. Where Jesus fitted into their faith, if at all, is confusing. Although most non-conformist groups tend, more than orthodox sects, to re-focus

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their beliefs back on to the Old Testament they do usually retain Jesus as an important figure. Also Fundamentalists tend to use Jesus, and in particular his suffering on the Cross, as a rallying symbol for their perceived spiritual struggle. God's Way community are unusual in their removal of him as a key figure. The members also knew nothing about the idea of the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which they saw as some sort of Catholic worshipping of three gods when I told them about it. The abandonment of Christ may be attributed to the more Old Testament nature of the community's style of belief, in the sense of their form of predestination and in the Old Testament style of their history. Christ may be too associated with Catholicism in the community's view which would make him a less desirable figure to incorporate into their worship. Perhaps too, Christ's role as saviour to the world and his promise of Resurrection may present a threat to the community's sense of predestination. In the community's view they will be the only ones 'saved' after the day of Judgement. The figure of Christ presents a vision in which there is a potentiality for all to be 'saved'.

Heaven and Hell

The community members did not express any ideas in common to the typical Christian idea of Heaven and Hell, and no one seemed preoccupied with the idea of an afterlife. I once asked Isaac what he thought happened after death. His answer as always was short and pragmatic: *'I'm not God. Thur's only one who knows and for now he's not telling.'* When I mentioned the typical idea of Heaven cited even in the Bible, he was more enlivened, saying that the Bible says very little on the subject and that all views of Heaven and Hell were invented by the heathen Catholic church. As always he quoted from the *Books of Abraham* saying that God does not make reference to it and therefore it is of no concern to us. This lack of a view of Heaven could be attributed, as in some sects, to a belief that following Judgement

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Day there will be no death and that Heaven will be established on Earth. However, the community did not share this view, finding the idea that God would establish Heaven on Earth as silly. They took the stance, as always, of being quiet on matters that were not addressed specifically in the *Books of Abraham* and refused to be drawn into any debate on the subject. *'We'll know what's gonna happen when he decides an' that's that'* was how Sarah Zion put it to me. This lack of a view of Heaven may be attributed to the community's belief that following the Apocalypse they will remain on Earth and not be elected to Heaven, as is stipulated in Judaic and orthodox Christian apocalypticism. Heaven is not an important part of their apocalyptic vision of the future.

They did not have an elaborate view of the Devil or Hell, although they did talk about certain national figures, such as, President Clinton, being agents of the *'Anti-Christ'*, This is probably more a metaphorical rather than a literal statement. Evil was identified as something which existed, but members did not elaborate on its nature or who was directing it. The community seemed to veer towards a view that there was no devil figure but that man was intrinsically prone to evil, which was portrayed as a somewhat free existing entity that people could absorb if they so chose. This view that man is an individual who decides his own destiny by choosing or rejecting God demonstrates again God's Way's non-conformist roots.

Beginnings and Rituals

The community believed that the world was created by God in the scheme related in *Genesis* and rejected the entire idea of evolutionism, which again demonstrates their connections to the general Fundamentalist movement which has always opposed the teaching of evolutionism (Sandeen 1970). The members did not celebrate communion which was viewed as a somewhat pagan-like act which reinforced their

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idea that the Catholic church were pagans who drank blood and indulged in unnatural and magical acts. They were not aware that many Protestant churches practised communion. The elaborate church rituals, fancy church interiors and the use of crucifixes by other churches, particularly the Catholic church, were viewed as a sign of depravity and evil. Again, such views tie the community's beliefs to the general stream of non-conformist Protestantism, which sought to reject the trappings of Catholicism, and return to a more 'simple' style of worship. Such views also must be partly due to Abraham's upbringing by a father who had rejected Catholicism and embraced Methodism. It is probable to assume that his father had the typical zeal of the convert and is likely to have passed on his criticisms of Catholicism to his children.

My Beliefs Examined

My arrival in the community obviously entailed a period of examination on both sides as the members and I tried to figure each other out. As I had approached them as a prospective believer and as they exist solely as a religious community it was obvious that my religious beliefs would be the most carefully scrutinised aspect of my background and personality. This period of mutual discovery duly occurred, somewhat covertly, during my first months in the community.

My labelling of myself as a Presbyterian did not help as they had very little knowledge of other denominations. A rough description of the style of worship with which I had been raised was identified as like their own, if slightly more formal. However it became clear that something more concrete than descriptions of my religious background would be necessary to confirm, for them, my status as possible membership material. My Bible was the proof that they needed. I had brought my Bible with me on fieldwork. It lay on top of the dresser in the room that

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I shared. A couple of weeks after arriving I was working with the chicken crew and, as usual, was trying to explain the differences and similarities between the faith I had been brought up in and their own. As always these conversations were exhausting, confusing, and ultimately frustrating for all involved. On this occasion David Joseph suddenly announced that I was a *'believer'* because, like them, my Bible was the authorised version (*King James*). Following this revelation and my active participation in their services and everyday working lives I was accepted as a 'true' believer. David's announcement is remarkable because it demonstrates the depth of curiosity and determination to ascertain my level of beliefs. I shared a room in the community, in Isaac's house, with Rachel Zion. David Joseph lived in a separate house and for him or anyone else to have known about my Bible meant that Rachel had opened it, checked it and told the others. Following this initial proof their questioning stopped and my active participation in their lives became less and less as a guest. Instead I became another 'probationary' member of the community with the expectations that entailed. From then on their only curiosity about specific religious practices were to reinforce their own views that other groups were wrong and they delighted in my descriptions of other churches that I had visited or heard about.

Community as Sacred Space

The entire communal space of God's Way can be viewed as sacred[15] and every act within it as an act of worship. God did not just choose his 'chosen' people, but also desired that they live communally. Thus, the idea of community is in itself sacred and to be maintained for this reason. The community has fixed boundaries: social, physical, and mental, in order to preserve its sacredness. Such boundaries can be seen explicitly by the maintenance of boundary controls, such as fences, praying on

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[15] A more thorough examination of the community's spatial constructs can be found in *Chapter Four*.

exit and entry, and control of access and exit, as well as in their defined sense of the *'outside'*. I would suggest that they would not even need specific religious acts of worship were it not necessary to have some communal enforcement mechanisms (Kanter 1972). This point can be demonstrated by the regular cancellation of chapel services, as well as the stress on non-compulsory attendance at chapel or at group prayers. Living and working within the community was itself sufficient demonstration of faith, as faith is fundamentally embodied in the idea of community.

`Formal' Religious Worship

Communal religious worship centres on the chapel and is led by Isaac. Private Bible study and worship, like most individual acts are actively discouraged. All Bibles and religious works are kept in the chapel which is out of bounds except on days of worship. The stress on the group over the individual may at first appear at odds with the common Protestant emphasis on individual worship, and the individual's relationship with God. However, although the community stress that acts of worship should be communal, they still emphasise the idea that the individual must initially decide to choose God. This centrality of worship within the group as a whole needs to be located within their views of the group itself. The group is divinely sanctioned therefore it is appropriate that when they do formally worship God they do so as a community and not as individuals.

Isaac is officially designated the Presiding Minister of the community and in this role he leads chapel services, decides the content of these services, guides membership initiates, and is seen as being the community expert on the *Books of Abraham*. Isaac is aided during the services and in religious matters in general by Jonathon Benjamin. The reason why Jonathon was chosen over the other adult married men is unclear, although his personality may have been a factor. Jonathon,

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in contrast to the other men his age, was an outgoing, charming man who was greatly liked by everyone. He also, in contrast to most of the other older men, had a keen sense of humour. It would appear that he was the popular choice. One could also suggest that he was chosen for the role due to his marital status. Jonathon was married to Sarah Zion, Abraham's eldest daughter and Isaac's sister. Given the authority invested in senior members from marital status this may be part of the reasoning behind Jonathon's role as Isaac's assistant.

The Chapel[16]

The chapel occupies the upper floor of the house of Jonathon Benjamin, his family, and his wife's daughter's family. It is a long dark room with two small windows at the top end which let in only a small amount of light. The room is lit by eight large oil lamps which hang from the ceiling. The lighting gives the room a gloomy, strangely unsettling appearance, especially when the lamps go out (which they frequently do) and emit eerie, smoky fumes. The chapel is the only structure to have survived the Schism fire intact. It is laid out in exactly the same way that it was when building was completed in 1946.

There is a sense of a deliberate design behind it. The lack of window space is unusual compared to the other public buildings, such as the dining hall, which have huge windows. The lamps are hung in such a way as to throw most of their light onto the pictures hung around the walls. A slight platform, in the top right corner, is where the band[17] play, in almost complete darkness giving the impression that the

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[16] See Appendix A for plan of the chapel.

[17] There are seven members in the band: Isaac and Rebekah Zion; Jonathon and Sarah Benjamin; David and Ruth Joseph; and Rachel Zion. They all sing, and some also play instruments: Rachel plays the tambourine, Sarah the piano, David the saw, Ruth the washboard, and Rebekah the acoustic guitar. The band are well known locally for the 'hillbilly' style of music that they play. They perform at the many festivals held throughout the region during the summer and have won several prizes.

music is coming out of nowhere. A lectern stands in the middle at the top of the room and is where people stand to read aloud from the *Books of Abraham*. An elaborately carved wooden table sits to the left of this. Isaac leads the worship from this table. Behind him stands a tall cupboard of dark wood in which the *Book of Truths* remains locked, awaiting Judgement Day. The back entrance of the chapel is behind the lectern, hidden by a heavy red velvet curtain. This entrance is only used by the musicians and Isaac. It allows them to make quite sudden and dramatic appearances.

Four rows of carved wooden pews line the room, four on each side, and here sit the congregation in no specific order, although families tend to sit together, and the adolescent boys typically crowd at the back. At the back stands another wooden cupboard in which are stored the original *Books of Abraham*, a number of Bibles, and sets of photocopies of readings from the *Books of Abraham* which are used in the services. This cupboard is also locked. The main entrance to the chapel is at the bottom left wall and leads down into the living room of the house below. The chapel's interior is wooden and had a curious musty, almost damp smell. There is no altar.

Abraham's background in Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on show and display (Hollenweger 1972) and in the travelling medicine shows, would have provided him with a good training in how to stage events for dramatic effect. He would also have learnt to make good use of lighting, seating, and other 'props'. One can assume that Abraham specifically designed the chapel to create a space within which the congregation's sense of spirituality and awe would be heightened. The gloomy lighting, darkened corners, ever watchful eyes of the paintings, and the smoke from the lamps give those sitting a sense that this is not only a sacred place, but one of some mystery and even slight fear. The children found the chapel a frightening

place and would dare each other to go into it when it was not being used. None of the children ever took up this dare.

The Chapel Paintings

Hung along the walls are a number of paintings all done by Rachel's mother (Vera Zion), the wife of Abraham's second son, Joshua. Vera Zion was a professionally trained artist. The paintings were done between 1968 and 1970, although no reason why is ever given. Vera joined the community on her marriage to Abraham's son, Joshua, so perhaps she began the paintings as a way of incorporating herself into the community. Before the pictures were done, the walls were hung with quilts depicting Biblical scenes. The fate of these quilts is unknown. Vera, like all the dissenters, was never mentioned and it was only in private that the truth of who had painted the pictures was revealed to me by Rachel, Vera's daughter and a talented artist in her own right. Before I had found this out, Isaac had pretended not to know who had painted the pictures, saying *'I guess someone must 'a painted them, but can't think of who'*. He would then enter a game of asking some of the others who would also engage in such speculation. This 'ritual' happened a few times before I gave up.

The pictures dominate the room. They are dramatic and painted in bold primary colours in broad strokes. The siting of the lamps achieves the effect of drawing out specific details from the pictures, in particular Abraham's face.

Abraham is portrayed in each picture. He wears typical mid-western farmer's attire: plaid shirt, blue overalls, heavy boots. He always wears his badge[18]. Abraham is

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[18] This is a religious symbol worn by the members on special ritual occasions, such as initiation ceremonies and weddings. Its origin and meaning are unknown. The badge is a diamond shape consisting of three colours, red, green, and blue.

pictured as having long, flowing sliver hair and an unruly beard, although photographs show that he had cropped hair and a well trimmed beard. He has a silver and gold halo around his whole body. His face has a strange countenance and it is hard to determine whether the face is cruel or kind.

The pictures obviously borrow from religious art, for example in their use of the halo. The portrayal of Abraham follows that commonly found in artistic depictions of Old Testament figures as can be seen, for example in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel figures and in William Blake's many Biblically themed paintings. Indeed it is the work of Blake that is recalled most forcibly when looking at the chapel pictures. The figure of Abraham and in particular his face are very Blakean in their construction. Whether Vera was specifically using the style of Blake or not is unclear. However it can be assumed that she must have drawn on her art college training, and presumably her knowledge of western art history, to produce the paintings as they contain such obvious 'borrowings' from a number of artists and styles.

Three large (approximately fourteen feet by eight feet) canvases dominate: one is hung along the top wall of the chapel, while the other two hang from the left wall. None of the paintings are named. The pictures appear highly symbolic and are obviously intended to communicate to the community 'something' about Abraham and his relationship to God. They do not view these pictures as idolatrous, despite making similar claims about statues of saints and holy icons in other churches.

The pictures have no obvious sequence. They are eye catching and dramatic, but what do they mean? There is a dearth of decoration in the community. Most walls are bare, bar the posters in the children's bedrooms, or the family photographs in the family living rooms. This points towards the paintings being more than mere

decoration. The fascination with the pictures when people were in the chapel was marked. This was most obvious in the children who would shout and point *'there's Papa'* or *'see Papa'*. He was pointed out to the younger children. Obviously they had a role to play in educating the children, but the adults too were engrossed.

As one sits in the chapel one has an uneasy sense of being watched, and wherever one looks one sees Abraham's eyes watching. The pictures symbolically impart meanings to the group, but what are these meanings? As always the community were 'silent' as to the significance of the pictures. *'Thurs just pretty pictures, see'* said Sarah Zion. They were indeed pictures, but were far from pretty and most people expressed a degree of uneasiness about them. In private many echoed Rachel's view that they *'give me the spooks'*. The smaller children, indeed, would often get so scared that they screamed and cried until they were removed from the room. Despite the members' lack of interpretation I think we can extract themes of significance if we assume that the paintings are symbolic rather than commemorative.

The **first picture** hung at the top end of the chapel depicts Abraham in the Garden of Eden. He is surrounded by animals; domestic (sheep, cattle, rabbits etc.) and wild (lions, tigers, monkeys, etc.). In one hand he carries a Bible (we know this because it is written on the front of the book) and in the other he holds a baby. He is shown neither frowning nor smiling, but curiously enigmatic, in a way resembling the conventional portrayal of the Buddha's face. He also has very deep blue eyes which seem to bore into the spectator and follow one around the room.

We see Abraham in the Garden of Eden which we can assume refers to the act of divine creation[19]. We could presume that the creation in question is that of the

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[19] All references to art symbolism are taken from the *Oxford Companion to Art* (1970).

community. Abraham carries a Bible demonstrating himself to be the carrier of the 'truth' (symbolised by the Bible which is the book of truth) and he carries a child. The child although typically a symbol of birth may also be 'read' as something needing to be looked after and protected, something which is very innocent. I believe that this may symbolise the community. Abraham founded the community, i.e. it was in some ways his child. He also was called '*Papa*' a title which reflects the paternalistic role that the members assigned him. This picture seems to be referring to the community's foundation, with particular reference to God's choice of Abraham to lead the community. It also places Abraham in the central role of protector, leader, and intermediary between the community and God.

The **second picture** shows Abraham walking through a river in full spate as a storm rages. On the side he has just left there is a fire raging and on the side he has still to reach there is a rainbow and some trees. He is leading a large grey-white horse, on which is sitting a small baby.

In this picture Abraham appears to be caught between the dangers of the outside (shown by the fire which could be referring to the divine fire of the Apocalypse), and the future promised land (demonstrated by the rainbow, a traditional symbol of luck in its role as follower of the storm). The river in full spate in which Abraham stands demonstrates the perilous journey that he, and presumably the community, will have to follow before reaching the safety of the future. Again I feel that the child in the picture refers to the community. The inclusion of the horse is curious as Abraham had a life-long fear of horses following a bad fall from one in childhood. The horse within the western art tradition tends to be used to symbolise authority and power (Baskett 1980). Presumably the authority in question is that of God's which the child (the community) follows, but significantly has to be guided along the way by Abraham. It should also be noted that within Greek art and mythology, the horse

also symbolised wild, bestial passions. This depiction could also be read as the community being continually in danger from departing from the 'right' path and so in need of leadership from Abraham if they hope to reach the promised land. Again, the picture is reinforcing the key elements of God, Abraham, and the community and their respective roles.

The **third picture** depicts Abraham riding a huge grey-white horse, surrounded by a garden. The garden is framed by events and achievements from world history, such as the development of flight, the discovery of the USA, and so on.

In this picture Abraham is actually riding the horse, something which we know he would never do in real life. Within western art convention this symbolises him as a leader. The significance of the world events framing the picture or the garden within which the figure stands is unclear. Perhaps as the figure of Abraham upon the horse is considerably larger than anything else depicted it demonstrates that he is far more important than any of the other events featured. As Abraham stands central and the other depictions are around the frame on the periphery of the picture this seems a likely interpretation. Thus, the picture seems to be demonstrating Abraham's centrality within the world of the community and also within the greater scheme of things.

There are also four much smaller canvases dotted around the walls between the larger paintings. The four are as follows:

Picture One - Abraham is standing on the crest of a rainbow.
Picture Two - Abraham is writing at his desk, while a bright light shines in the corner.

Picture Three - Abraham is laying the foundations of the community by cutting a huge log in half.

Picture Four - Abraham is standing with his arms out stretched in a welcoming gesture.

The Four Small Paintings

Pictures **two** and **three** are clearly depicting two actual events from Abraham's life - his divine revelations and his foundation of the community. The members openly see these two paintings as directly recounting history. The other two pictures are more ambiguous. Picture **one** suggests power and mastery, with Abraham riding on the rainbow, a somewhat impossible feat. The rainbow as a symbol of luck and good fortune may also suggest that those who follow Abraham will find good fortune in the future. Picture **four** suggests Abraham being willing to welcome all, as his gesture is that of welcome, although it may also be referring to Abraham as giving love to the members, or of Abraham as symbol of a community of love.

Basic information concerning the canvases, such as whether the different sizes of the canvases are significant and in which order they were painted, is unknown. Indeed, it is not known whether the pictures were specifically 'commissioned' or whether they are the end result of years of 'hobby' painting by Vera. It is impossible to truly know what Vera Zion's intentions were in her creation of the pictures, and indeed what she was trying to impart with her use of various symbols. Many readings can be made. We cannot know, for example, if the depiction of Abraham is literal or whether Vera Zion used him as a symbol of the community as a whole, which would give a different reading to many of the canvases. It seems certain that all of the canvases appear to be communicating information about Abraham's role as leader and founder of the community. Yet the dearth of information about them prevents a

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more thorough investigation of their meanings, and this is compounded by the community's apparent reluctance to discuss the pictures. However the community's insistence that the pictures are mere decoration does not convince when one considers that they do not find decoration a necessity for other buildings in the community. It should also be recalled that they frequently condemn other religious groups for having elaborate decoration in their churches, which they view as indulgent and immoral. It is also intriguing to remember that Vera Zion was a dissenter, indeed the wife of Joshua, leader of the dissenting group. If the pictures were mere decorations it would surely be likely that following the Schism they would have been removed having been painted by a leading dissenter. I think the paintings were probably begun by Vera as a way for a new bride (she joined the community circa 1966/1967) to ingratiate herself into the community led by her husband's father. The paintings, presumably, came to gain some significance in the eyes of the members, perhaps Abraham particularly liked them. It is probable that the paintings have come to be used to remind them of Abraham and of their destiny as a community.

Worship

Services are held every Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. However, work commitments come first and if there is chicken work to be done, then people will miss the service. If many will be absent, the services are cancelled. No one was too concerned about the cancelling of services. Most people seemed to enjoy the services more for the music and the chance to see everyone than for a need to practise their religion, further confirmation that faith is perceived as something to be lived not contemplated. *'God's around all the time, don't see no need to sit in no chapel when my back aches so'*, was how Ruth Joseph explained her regular absences. Sarah Zion saw the emphasis on strict attendance in other churches as an

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actual mark of their lack of faith: *'They need to force folk into church, when true chosen have got God all the time'*.   My own family's lack of regular church attendance, due to their lapsed church membership, was seen by Isaac as a mark of their true faith when I told him about it.

Sundays are special days, but not just because the service is held. The service starts at eight in the morning and everyone gets up even earlier than usual in order to have a shower and get dressed up. For some it is the only day they will wash properly. The battle for the bathrooms is fierce and often leads to some being too late and having to go to chapel in their everyday clothes, to be gently mocked. The women, who typically wear trousers during the week, put on dresses and skirts and style their hair. They wear scent and the younger women will adorn their 'best' dresses with flowers or ribbons. The men put on their suits and brush their hair, and some shave for the only time that week. Everyone is neat and clean and despite having got up even earlier than usual, without any breakfast, are happy and relaxed. After service everyone has a huge lunch which, if they can afford it, will have extras, like dessert, fruit and occasionally meat. No one does chores on a Sunday. After the lunch dishes are cleared everyone relaxes. Some go for walks, others do hobbies or read. It is not a day of rest as such, but rather a day when other more 'enjoyable' activities can occur. Few Sundays are like this due to work commitments.

The Sunday service starts at eight, while the mid-week one is at seven. Not everyone attends, whether due to work or inclination. No one comments on this unless a person is missing a number of services, then questions will be asked. Everyone sits in the pews, while the band stand in their shadowy corner. The members greet each other as if they had not seen each other for a long time. The greetings are accompanied with lots of hugs and kisses. Isaac and Jonathan Benjamin enter last. Isaac is the presiding minister, while Jonathan is his assistant.

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They sit at their table. The community's musical band perform three songs from the *Books of Abraham*, while people sing along. While they do this, Isaac and Jonathan hand out photocopies of the passages to be studied that day. The actual *Books of Abraham* are only available to Isaac. Photocopies of relevant pieces are used by everyone else. Once the band finish, everyone moves to the table where Isaac sits and everyone kneels, holding hands. Isaac chooses someone to say a prayer and they all pray. Everyone then returns to their seats and Isaac, aided by Jonathan, reads three passages from the *Books of Abraham.*

Often Isaac selects a person from the congregation to read at the lectern. The children sit in dread of being picked. After the readings, Isaac and Jonathan go over the writings which usually takes the form of them reiterating everything just said and agreeing with it. They ask people to volunteer remarks and comments. Such comments are always in agreement with the writings. There is no critical discussion of the texts. During this part the younger children become restless and noisy and start to wander around. The adults ignore them. This section drags on as there is always a great wait for people to speak. There are lots of pauses. The service ends when Isaac decides. A final song is then performed. The whole service ends with another group prayer. Both services are the same, except that the mid-week one does not see everyone dressing up. The chapel is out of bounds to everyone when not in use for the services. The *Books of Abraham* are not freely available and everyone relies on the passages selected by Isaac.

Prayer

Prayer, as I have already said, is public. Before every meal, however small the community thanked God for what they were about to eat. In fact the community's members would thank God even if they were only about to eat an apple or have a

drink of water. Before meal times when most people had gathered in the dining hall, or at the work bus if during crew work, someone was selected to say the prayer. Everyone joined in at the end with the 'amen'. The pre-food prayers were always short and centred around the community thanking God.

When members left the community by car or foot, they stopped at the boundary fence and again someone was selected to ask for God's protection on their journey. On their return a prayer of thanks would be given. After I had been in the community for around three months I suddenly started to get asked to compose prayers when needed, a further sign of my acceptance by the community.

These public prayers are seen as very important and people talking during them or making some noise are frowned at. In contrast, they do not approve of the idea of private prayer (although members give private prayers during work to help get through it). Isaac saw private prayer as dangerous, in that it could lead to the individual believing that God loved only him and thus give rise to pride and egotism. It was also suspected that the person who prayed in private did so to hide 'something'. The ability to make up a short prayer, when requested, was an ability present in even the youngest child.

Religious Instruction

There was no explicit religious teaching to the children, they learnt as they went along. The only time that the individual has to specifically learn anything is during the initiation process. This involves the individual (just turned eighteen) going through a series of steps to become a full member. Part of this process involves the individual having to memorise, by heart, three carefully selected passages from the *Books of Abraham*. It took me three months to learn my passages which focused on

the role of the community in God's eyes and about the power of God. The process of learning is one of memorisation not interpretation. Isaac handed me my three passages and then left me alone in his study to learn them. We did not sit and discuss them.

The children attend a communal school, which is located in the nearby town. The school is run by a born-again Christian school teacher who runs the school to cater for the children of very devout Christian parents who do not approve of the state school system. The community's children attend a couple of days a week, from the age of twelve. The teaching is based on Christian beliefs and so some elements of secular education, such as evolution theory and sex education, are prohibited. The school teacher devised the curriculum for the community with the assistance of Isaac. The community were not entirely satisfied with the teacher, especially as she was divorced, but it was the only legal way for them to take their children out of the public school system.

Other Faiths

God's Way community's members believe that they are the only 'true' believers and so they automatically place all other faiths and denominations below themselves, and view them as meaningless and pointless. They do hold a certain amount of respect for the local Protestant denominations, such as the Baptists, Methodists, and Amish, whom they see as zealous, if misguided in their beliefs. Criticisms of these groups focused not on doctrines, but more on assumed characteristics. They made fun of the Amish for supposedly having big feet, while the Baptists were assumed to talk too much. Their laughter was good natured and rarely malicious.

They view all non-Christian religions as heathen and pagan. They accuse the Jews of rewriting the Old Testament, killing Christ (curious as they do not appear to revere Christ) and of generally perverting God's will by claiming to be 'chosen'. We should put such views within the context of Christianity, as a whole, which has always included a degree of hostility toward Judaism. Fundamentalists, in particular, have either venerated the Jews as the 'chosen' people or else has been openly hostile toward them (Barr 1977).

However the community's greatest ire was saved for Catholicism. They view Catholics as idolaters, who revere saints and the Virgin Mary, rather than God. The Catholic church was accused of rewriting the Bible. Press reports of clergy in sex abuse scandals (several were publicised during my stay) further reinforced their views. They viewed the celibacy of the Catholic clergy as unnatural, and believe that the Pope works for Satan, as the Pope appears to be a man who pretends to be God and lets people revere him. The members also abhorred the ornamentation of Catholic churches. Anti-Catholicism is also commonly found among Fundamentalist groups and within Protestantism in general, but we should keep in mind that Abraham's father rejected the Catholicism of his family and converted to Methodism - the zeal of the convert was probably transmitted to his son.

The more proselytising sects, such as the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, were despised by the community's members because they would walk into the community and refuse to leave. They were seen as rude and disrespectful. The community did not read about other faiths, nor teach their children the idea of religious tolerance. The community did not proselytise, believing that God brings future members. My arrival in the community had been interpreted thus. Explicit declarations of doctrine were absent and questions concerning their beliefs tended to

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bring silence rather than discussion. The members prefer to demonstrate their faith through their everyday activities.

Constructing Faith

Although God instructed Abraham to found the community, he omitted to give details about practice or beliefs. Abraham had to construct his own version, although he would probably insist that it was God's work through him, rather than his own. This construction of faith can be seen in the 'borrowings' from other faiths, especially those, such as Pentecostalism and Baptism, that Abraham had been involved in at an earlier age. This construction can be seen to follow the Blakean schemata of reconciling and merging 'Innocence' (Abraham's views of religion) and 'Experience' (Abraham's experiences with different forms of belief and communalism in general) to form, in this case, a new style of worship ('Redeemed Innocence').

The design of the chapel, and the style of the chapel services are similar to those found in American Pentecostalism (Hollenweger 1972). Their history and expectation of divine revelation also ties them to Abraham's Pentecostal experiences. The full body immersion of initiands, which concludes their initiation process, is similar to that found in a number of non-conformist groups, in particular, the Baptist church. Their rejection of elaborate church ritual and ornamentation links them to the general Protestant tradition, as does their focus on one central text. We can never know the full extent of the construction process that Abraham participated in, but it is possible to see clues to this construction.

It can be seen then that God's Way community not only conforms to the prevalent historical style of American Protestantism in the USA, but also very much a

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fundamentalist group. Their fundamentalist beliefs are shared by an ever increasing number of American Protestant denominations. However, it should be noted that God's Way community do not see similarities between themselves and other groups. In their view all those who do not join them are not *'true'* believers, despite appearances of piety. In the next section God's Ways' apocalyptic beliefs and place in the wider Christian tradition will be examined.

Section II

'And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.
And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new . .' 21 *Revelation* 3-4.

God's Way community have, as was discussed in the previous section, profoundly apocalyptic beliefs. The belief in a coming apocalypse is perhaps one of the most extraordinary convictions to be held by people, in the West, in the late Twentieth Century. This century, perhaps, more than any other has been characterised as secular, progressive, science-dominant, and overwhelmingly modernist. The belief that the future can be controlled, manipulated, and ultimately made 'better' than the present has been prevalent for most of the century.

The idea of an apocalypse - a word heavy with Biblical association - on a set day when God will judge mankind seems ludicrous. Such beliefs are held by the lonely figure of the man carrying the 'End is Nigh' placard around busy urban streets, or associated with the comical sight of the Millerites standing on crowded hills, hands stretched out to welcome the divine rapture that they expected to come. Less comical, were the thousands of Native Americans who danced their Ghost Dance

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believing that it would bring about an apocalypse during which their ancestors would destroy the Whites and restore the strength of the Indian nations. Their apocalypse occurred at Wounded Knee but it was not prophetic. In more recent memory there were the Branch Dravidians at Waco whose apocalypse was fulfilled, possibly aided by the interference of federal authorities, in a tragically fiery end. Are we then to associate apocalyptic beliefs with the most desperate or marginal sections of society holding on to deluded dreams?

When I first arrived in America I stayed briefly in a Hutterian Bruderhof. One night during my stay I was discussing Hutterian beliefs with the youngest daughter of the family with which I stayed. A carefree, energetic teenager, she was continually getting into trouble for her typically boisterous behaviour. Having been censured once again for what seemed to be nothing more than childish misconduct, I suggested that she not take the punishment to heart quite as much as she obviously was. Her reply to this was to ask the question, *'But what if tomorrow's Judgement Day?'* If it was Judgement Day she would be in trouble, as her most recent misdemeanour would have been duly noted by God. Therefore behaviour always had to be above reproach, as no one, except God, knew when the apocalypse would occur. Such a statement from a member of a strict religious order may not be so surprising but coming from the mouth of a fourteen year old it still has a power to shock me. However, such beliefs are not to be characterised as those held only by isolated, minority religious populations.

As I travelled from upstate New York to southern Missouri, it became clear that a lot of people in America were preoccupied with the end of the world. Highways were dotted with billboards declaring that the 'End is upon us', or instructing the passing traveller to 'Repent Now'. Local radio and newspaper adverts screamed similar messages. Notices of Bible classes and camp meets to convince the 'unbeliever' of

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the coming apocalypse and aid their conversion proliferated in the small ads sections of local newspapers. Some of my fellow travellers carried Bibles, while others proffered the details of their conversion to God. The further I journeyed into America's 'heartland' the more regular such pronouncements appeared. It often seemed as if the only thing people were talking about, or interested in, was the end of the world and the need to be 'saved' before it happened.

Again it could be suggested that the religious convictions of the Mid-West are peculiar to the fundamentalism of that region and should not be taken as representative of America as a whole. However, a reading of Boyer (1992) or O'Leary (1994) and their account of apocalyptic beliefs and discourse within American culture and politics during this century, may change that assumption. Both effectively demonstrate the continual and prevalent use of apocalyptic references and symbolism within American culture. I will expand on this later, but one rather telling, and chilling example, is that given by Boyer (1992). During the Cold War, both the USSR and the USA employed Biblical scholars to study and interpret the apocalyptic writings of the Bible for clues concerning the nuclear apocalypse that both sides were convinced would happen. The hope was that an approximate date, as well as strategical clues would be forthcoming. It could also be strongly suggested that the current obsessive drive among Western governments to devise schemes to mark the coming second millennium since Christ is partly tied to 'echoes' of apocalyptic Biblical ideas[20].

Apocalypticism indeed appears to be all around. I want to examine several aspects of apocalypticism: (1) The nature of Apocalypticism in general, (2) Apocalypticism within the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and (3) American apocalypticism which I will suggest is tied to the utopianism of American culture.

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[20] See Schwartz (1990) for a detailed survey of cultural trends influenced by apocalyptic thoughts in the West, and in particular current developments.

Apocalypticism

'Every culture that has developed a myth of its divine and cosmological origin has sought to peer ahead toward its own ending.' (O'Leary 1994: 4).

All cultures have eschatological beliefs, just as they hold beliefs concerning birth and creation. Apocalyptic beliefs are part of this wider group of beliefs about death and the afterlife. The word 'apocalypse' is Greek in origin and means 'revelation' or 'unveiling'. Apocalyptic beliefs relate specifically to beliefs which give ' . . . *details of the future course of history and the imminence of its divinely appointed end.'* (McGinn 1979: 3).

Beliefs in the end of the world and in an idea of a final day of divine reckoning are widespread both cross-culturally and historically. End of the world myths are as common as creation myths. Just as we are unable to fully answer the mysteries of creation, so we find similar blanks when faced with death and the future. End of the world myths and beliefs are intrinsically linked to beliefs or predictions concerned with a future time. They fulfil our desire to control the future in some way. Most revolve around the idea that at some future date, cataclysmic change will occur and a new order of things will be established.

Early Indic, Babylonian, Teutonic, Aztec and Greek cultures all believed that the world was caught in a divine cycle of birth, growth, decay, and then destruction. The final destruction was a righting of the cosmic order by the Gods, brought about by the imbalance of good and evil which had occurred (Eliade 1963: 54-74). Hinduism has the myth of *Kali Yugo* who will judge and destroy the world (O'Flaherty 1976), while Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, hold similar beliefs oriented around the idea of a final day of reckoning where God will judge mankind.

Apocalypticism is not only held by peoples past or by the 'World' religions, as O'Leary (1994) demonstrates - they are also prevalent cross-culturally.

Apocalypticism is not only held as part of the dogma of a specific religion, but also has been used through history as an empowering resource to fuel a variety of socio-political movements.   Such a use of apocalyptic ideas is centred around an appropriation of Judaeo-Christian apocalypticism, which maintains the idea that there are 'chosen' who will survive the Last Judgement and 'fallen' who will not. This idea can then be manipulated by a particular group to portray themselves as 'chosen' and everyone else as 'fallen', and thus justify their actions.   O'Leary (1994), influenced by Derrida (1984), suggests that apocalypticism must also be seen as a political discourse whose rhetoric is concerned with appropriating symbols and motifs from Judaeo-Christian apocalypticism and applying them, through various manipulations, to the particular set of circumstances and desires of a specific social or political group.   He maintains that this has occurred throughout Western history, since the beginning of the Christian age (O'Leary 1994: 7).   Boyer (1992) provides similar examples of such manipulations within post-War American culture.   The power of apocalyptic language imbues any debate with a potency and sense of urgency lacking with other rhetorical devices.   For example, when environmentalists urge for action to offset a perceived imminent 'green apocalypse' they know that a sense of urgency will be given.   They also know that it will bring into the debate a sense of divine right, and an implication that those who are in the wrong are as 'fallen' as those within the Biblical context.   As Boyer (1992) discusses, throughout the Cold War, references to the Biblical apocalypse were rife, with both sides portraying themselves as good against evil (if we recall President Reagan's identification of the USSR as the 'evil empire') in their struggle of ideologies.   This rhetoric was obviously given added potency due to the prohibition on religious worship by the Soviet Union, and the championing of Israel by

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America, against the support of the Arab states by the USSR, thus placing much of the debate within the Biblical lands where the Biblical Armageddon is supposed to occur. The fact that nuclear weapons appear to fulfil the words of the 'little' apocalypse of St Matthew which talks of 'fires from heaven', made the rhetoric all the more potent.

The appropriation of such beliefs can also be seen outwith the western context by peoples obviously influenced by the Christianity imposed upon them by colonialism. Worsley (1957) and Burridge (1969) both examined the phenomenon of the Melanesian 'cargo cult', which concerned the many groups of colonised and disenfranchised Pacific islanders who adopted a belief in a coming period of spiritual salvation, where God or the ancestors would return and the 'chosen' (i.e. the islanders) would live in eternal bliss. The phenomenon can only be understood within the context of the islanders' lack of power or control over their lives. The Ghost Dance movement among the Native American peoples in the late Nineteenth Century was a similar phenomenon (Burridge 1969). The Ghost Dance, like the 'Cargo Cults', was concerned with defeating perceived foes and returning the 'chosen' to a state of bliss.

Apocalypticism is not only a prevalent set of beliefs, but also a powerful political resource. Christian apocalypticism in particular has always commonly been used outwith its original context and an examination of the origin and development of this particular form of apocalypticism now follows.

Judaeo-Christian Apocalypticism

Any examination of Christian apocalypticism must begin with a study of the Judaic form. The Christian apocalyptic vision is a development of the original Jewish

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version, not only through its direct references to the earlier Jewish writings but also through borrowings of style and symbolism. Burkitt (1914) and McGinn (1994: 3) urge that apocalypticism is first and foremost a literary genre, with particular stylistic devices and form. In this sense the genre originated within Judaism, and Christian apocalyptic writers (versed in Judaic writings) adopted it later.

Religious scholars disagree over the exact circumstances of the development of this literary form within Judaism, although there are suggestions that it grew out of the earlier genre of prophetic writing from which it heavily borrows. Many also believe that it was influenced by a number of traditions outwith Judaism, including Mesopotamian Wisdom Circles, Caananite mythology, and a variety of Hellenistic writings. Whatever the exact origins McGinn (1994: 4-5) identifies five traits of the genre: (1) the apocalyptic revelation is conveyed to mankind through a heavenly mediator, (2) the revelation is typically made to a human sage. In the Judaic apocalypses the writer adopted a pseudonym, typically that of a long dead, yet great Judaic leader (the use of pseudonyms was common within literature of the Hellenistic period), (3) the revelation is typically spoken to the writer, although this can occur during a variety of events, such as in a dream, a vision, etc. (4) apocalypses are laden with symbols, and are essentially symbolic writings, and (5) although the revelation is spoken the apocalypse is essentially bookish in manner, as the writer is always urged by the revelator to write down what has been revealed.

If we adopt the view that Judaic apocalypticism is indeed a literary genre, which its readers would identify and understand, it becomes clearer as to what these often obscure (to the modern reader) texts are trying to 'say'. The difficulty the modern reader faces in trying to understand them is not only due to the fact that the writings are laden with Judaic symbolism, but also because they were addressed to a specific audience and are reactions to specific political and cultural events. It is for this

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reason that Judaic apocalyptic writing flourished during the Intertestamental period (McGinn 1994: 17). During this period Judaea was under almost continual occupation by foreign powers. The period was one of great persecution and Judaism was under considerable threat of extinction. If we briefly examine apocalypses of this period it becomes clear what their writers were discussing and who their audiences were. Although there are at least sixteen apocalyptic Judaic texts (Burkitt 1914), including the books of *Isaiah*, *Enoch*, *Ezram*, *Daniel*, and *Ezekiel*, only the latter two are pertinent to Christian apocalypticism. Contemporary Christian apocalypticism still makes reference to these two works.

The *Book of Ezekiel*, which foretells the Jews' restoration to their land and the destruction of their enemies, was written at a time (597-586 BC.) when Jerusalem had been captured by the Babylonians and many Jews were taken into exile to Babylon. The Temple in Jerusalem had been sacked and their king killed.

The *Book of Daniel* was written at a time (Second century BC.) when the Hellenistic Syrian King (Antiochus IV) had captured Judaea and was attempting to spread his influence throughout the region. He openly attempted to destroy Judaism. Following the king's death a Jewish resistance grew. Jerusalem was recaptured and the Jewish religion reinstated. The writer of this book adopted (as was the tradition with Jewish apocalyptic writing) the identity of Daniel, a heroic figure from Jewish history, and set his work four hundred years earlier during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. Again, the book talks of a time when the people will be restored to the land and their enemies punished by God.

Both books were addressing themselves to an 'audience' who were facing their possible extinction as a culture. Through reference to Jewish history and the use of elaborate symbolism the writers of both are trying to urge the faithful to resist.

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Each also offers the hope that this struggle will be a final one which will destroy their enemies completely and usher in a new era of peace and prosperity. The books are essentially calls to faith, imbuing the struggle as one of good (the 'chosen', i.e. the Jews) against evil (the 'fallen', i.e. the Babylonians, Syrians, and Greeks).

It has been argued (Burkitt 1914: 3, and Eliade 1963: 64) that although we can find the phenomenon of apocalypticism cross-culturally and through history, the nature of the Judaeo-Christian Apocalypse is distinct. As has already been noted the Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and other Near Eastern peoples all maintained a cyclic view of the birth and death of the world. Within these surprisingly similar schema the divine forces which ultimately destroy the earth do so to remove the cosmic chaos brought about by the an imbalance between good and evil. Thus, the end of the world is brought about by group actions and not by individual behaviour. The end of the world is also not a true ending but the ending of yet another cycle. Some peoples, such as the Greeks, maintained that with each cycle the world declined further (McGinn 1994: 5).

However, the Jewish vision of the end of the world differs profoundly from these ideas. The contrast between the Judaic apocalypse and other ones of this period centres on two distinct features: their view of time and their view of the final judgement. Judaism adopted a linear view of time, in contrast to neighbouring faiths. Eliade (1963: 64) suggests they were the first people to develop this idea. Such a view of time, with a belief in a distinct beginning, middle, and ending, is predicated on 'something' happening at each distinct stage, especially the beginning and end. In Judaism the particular 'something' that will occur at the end is the final judgement of man by God. Although the Jewish apocalypse retains the essential battle of good against evil commonly found in the apocalypses of other cultures of this period, it differs in that God judges every individual in turn. In this schemata

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everyone's actions and beliefs are important. A belief in a God figure punishing individuals is not in itself unusual, but the Judaic vision also maintains that this judgement will be followed by the 'righteous' being 'saved' and allowed to live on in the heaven that will be established on earth following the apocalypse, while the 'fallen' will perish. This belief in a final judgement where God corrects all wrongs is in Burkitt's words a *'peculiar conception'* (1914: 22). It also contrasts greatly with the beliefs of the other cultures of this region at that time, a fact which surely must have helped reinforce the Judaic belief in their own divine predestination.

Judaic apocalypticism went into decline during the Roman period, as threats against Judaism lessened to an extent. Although Judaism retains a belief in a final day of judgement, apocalypticism has not held sway within the mainstream of belief in quite the same way as has happened in Christianity.

Christian Apocalypticism

'Apocalyptic - since the teaching of Jesus cannot really be described as theology - was the mother of all Christian teaching',
Ernst Kaseman (quoted in McGinn 1994: 2).

Christianity is a profoundly apocalyptic faith. Indeed, the creation of the new religion was predicated on the acceptance by believers that Jesus was the Messiah as foretold in the Old Testament, who had returned to Earth to lead the righteous. Following Christ's crucifixion his followers believed literally that his return was imminent.

There are two apocalyptic writings maintained within the Western[21] canon: the *Book of Revelation* and the 'little' apocalypse contained in the *Gospel of St Matthew*.

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[21] Eastern Christianity continued to produce apocalyptic writings and maintained the genre within non-religious texts (McGinn 1994: 26).

However, the *Revelation of St John* is by far the best known of the two. The book adopts all of the characteristics of the earlier Judaic genre, except that the writer, John, breaks with the earlier convention of adopting a pseudonym. His reason for doing so is obviously to strengthen his message as he identifies himself as a fellow sufferer of the Roman persecution of the early Christians. Like the Jewish apocalyptic writings, John is addressing a specific audience. The work dates from 81-96 AD. At that time the early Christian church was scattered and an underground, secret faith. Christians faced persecution from the Roman authorities, who sought to assert absolute power through the adoption, by all, of the cult of emperor worship. The Christians literally faced extinction, as failure to participate in emperor worship was regarded as an act of treason, punishable by death. The book foretells the final judgement of God and the punishment faced by the unbelievers. The unbelievers in this situation are of course the Romans, and John uses a variety of references and symbols that his readers would instantly have recognised. Again, this work is a call to faith in the face of terrible suffering. It promises of an end in sight for the believers and a terrible retribution, by God, upon those who do not believe.

Christianity retains the Judaic concept of a final day of divine judgement and the promise of an afterlife, where heaven will be established on Earth, ruled by the returned Christ. All foes will be destroyed. Thus, Christian apocalypticism is not unique in either its picture of the end, maintaining the same vision of the end of the world as Judaism, or in its description of the end as essentially a battle of good against evil that characterises most apocalyptic beliefs. However, it is perhaps, unique in its adoption of apocalypticism as a defining characteristic.

The early Christian church was essentially a millenist faith. The early followers of Christ maintained that he would return to Earth within their lifetimes. St Paul

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stressed this view, as can be seen in *Thessalonians*. 2: 1-12 and 4: 13. This belief, coupled with the very real persecution faced by the church, led them to be very "future - occupied". As the original disciples and followers, who had actually known Christ, died and the time from Christ's death elapsed, such beliefs wavered, but did not completely recede.

The crowning of Constantine as Emperor in 312 AD brought about a new era of tolerance for Christianity. The new emperor became a patron of the church and many church institutions and clergy were endowed with public funds. The Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, where church creed was codified, was presided over by the Emperor. This Council demonstrates how far the religion had come. It was now large enough to require a degree of uniformity and organisation. It was also now an 'open' religion. The Council preoccupied itself with church organisation and the formulation of church law and ritual. The belief in an imminent apocalypse was played down.

The trend to play up the centralisation and power of the organised church and play down its apocalyptic beliefs had began. When the now-Christianised Roman Empire fell in the fifth century AD there was no new wave of apocalypticism, as might have been expected. In the early Fifth Century, Saint Augustine suggested that the *Books of Daniel* and *Revelation* should be taken to be allegorical rather than literal. He called for the church to preoccupy itself with the everyday matters of faith and belief, and not waste time on some future apocalypse. The Council of Ephesus in 431 AD saw the adoption of Augustine's views and the condemnation of millenialism. Successive Biblical translators pondered whether *Revelation* should not be dropped from the Bible altogether. Thus, by the Fifth century the established church had rejected its early apocalypticism.

However, apocalyptic views did not disappear.   As Cohn (1957) points out apocalypticism was part of the central beliefs of the individual Christian.   Hermits, 'would be' messiahs, prophets and so forth continued to be popular throughout Europe.   The aspect of hope contained in apocalypticism was an ever present part of the medieval Christian's beliefs.   Medieval art, music and drama demonstrates this with its common use of end of the world imagery, most obviously seen in passion plays.   The threats of the Plague and the rise of Islam were both events which provoked wide-spread apocalypticism.   The advent of the first millennium of Christ in 1000 AD also produced a resurgence in apocalypticism, due to the belief that Christ would return before the first millennium of his death.   It is also during the Medieval period that we begin to see the adoption of apocalyptic rhetoric within the political and social debates of the times.   The numerous struggles between imperial and papal power in many European states were couched in apocalyptic terms.

This use of apocalyptic rhetoric achieved new heights during the confusion and disarray of the Reformation period which also brought with it a new rise in apocalypticism.   The struggle between Protestant reformers and the Catholic authorities was seen as profoundly apocalyptic, with each side labelling the other as agents of the 'Anti-Christ'.   The birth of the Industrial Age, with its accompanying decline in church power and the advent of the secular, brought with it an even greater lessening of apocalyptic beliefs within the established churches.   More and more they are preoccupied with the present rather than the future.   The position appears to go even farther than St Augustine's allegorical stance to one of almost complete denial of the words of *Revelation*.

This situation has been put to good comical effect in numerous Biblically inspired books and films of the horror genre, for example the *Omen* series, *The Seventh Sign*, and *The Exorcist*, where there is typically a scene between the hero, brandishing his or her copy of *Revelation* at some representative of the Church (typically the

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Catholic church), in a vain attempt to convince him that the strange events occurring all around are portents of the arrival of the 'Anti-Christ' and the end of the world. The 'lurid' and 'obtuse' language of *Revelation* merely seems reinforce the view that it has no contemporary relevance.

However, two points need to be stressed in relation to the position of apocalypticism within contemporary Christianity. Firstly, although played down by the established churches (following the Augustinian view), the non-conformist and in particular fundamentalist churches maintain a literal position in respect to the words of *Revelation* and indeed the other apocalyptic writings of the Bible. The ever rising fundamentalist population, particularly in the USA, cannot be dismissed as a fringe group. Secondly, apocalypticism remains as persuasive as ever in its use as a rhetorical form. For these two reasons apocalypticism remains ever present within Western culture.

Boyer (1992), McGinn (1994), and O'Leary (1994) suggest that apocalyptic rhetoric has never been as 'popular' within cultural and political discourse than in the late Twentieth Century. O'Leary (1994: 7) pinpoints two events that may explain this rise in its use: (1) the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and (2) the advent of the Nuclear Age. The significance of the former event may at first seem obscure. Its significance lies in the fact that the re-establishment of the homeland of the Jews is foretold in a number of the Biblical apocalypses and most fundamentalists take this as the first sign of the coming apocalypse (Boyer 1992) as it proves the veracity of the Biblical scriptures. The significance of the rise in nuclear power relates to the words of the 'little' apocalypse of St Matthew and in particular chapter 24: 29 which seems to be describing a scene very similar to the 'winter' which follows a large-scale nuclear attack. Additionally the sheer power of nuclear weaponry, with

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its ability to literally annihilate entire populations has led to it being seen literally as a 'doomsday' harbinger.

It is perhaps not surprising then that the Cold War period is an excellent example of secular culture adopting the apocalyptic vision. The proliferation of books, films, and art concentrating on the end of the world during the 1950s and 1960s, at the height of the Cold War when annihilation was as much a reality as it had been to the early Jews and Christians, demonstrates this. We can see this in the imagery of the period. It is no accident that both sides of the Cold War portrayed this struggle as a battle of good versus the evil for the 'soul' of the other. The political rhetoric of the period was rife with Biblical allusions (Boyer 1992). Since the end of this period the secular apocalypticism of the late Twentieth century remains a strong undercurrent within western cultural and political discourse[22]. O'Leary (1994: 6) suggests that apocalyptic rhetoric is particularly powerful within American cultural discourse. The reasons why this should be are tied to a number of features which will be examined in the next section.

America as Chosen.

I suggested in the previous chapter that America has a profoundly utopian identity, in its own and others' eyes. This is related to a merging of European views of the nation with the ideals of its founders. Related to this utopianism is a belief in America as a 'chosen' nation. It often portrays itself as a secular Israel. As Melville put it: *'And we Americans are the peculiar chosen people - the Israel of our time'* (quoted in Ruthven 1989: vi). Just as Israel had a divinely sanctioned role, so America has been perceived as being almost a secular version, as redeemer of the world.

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[22] See Boyer (1992) and O'Leary (1994) for more detailed examples of secular apocalypticism.

Since its foundation America has believed in itself and portrayed itself as such, i.e. as a special 'chosen' nation. The early settlers (Noll 1992) were predominantly religious and had emigrated with the purpose of founding a country where they could worship freely. It is no accident that William Bradford, leader of the 'Mayflower' landing party, stood on the beach at Cape Cod and compared himself to Moses when he led the Jews from Egypt. The Atlantic Ocean was his Red Sea. The nation was immediately given a sense of predestination, where out of the wilderness a new 'Holy Commonwealth' would be created. This was the belief of the original Puritan settlers.

Although successive immigrants would not view their new home as a holy kingdom, the religious beliefs that had founded the nation converted themselves into a secular version, in which America was still the promised land and the 'American Dream' a reality. Whether new immigrants adopted the sacred version or the secular one, both were appropriating versions of *Exodus* and its promise of deliverance into a new land.

As Bloch (1985) points out this idea of election and predestination was present at the creation of the nation as an independent political entity. The role that the Enlightenment values of the founders of America (as an independent polity) played have always been stressed. However, the role that religious beliefs, such as the ideas of election and predestination, has been underplayed. Yet as Bloch discusses, they played a vital role in energising the populace to rise against the British :

'The basic millennial vision of future worldly perfection was, however, malleable only to a point. Far from merely reflecting or transmitting other components of revolutionary ideology, millenialism provided the main structure of meaning through which contemporary events were linked to an exalted image of an ideal world'. (1985: xiii)

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Thus, much of the support for the Revolution was gained by infusing the struggle with a sense of a battle between good versus evil, in which the Americans were the 'chosen' and the British were evil. George III was often portrayed as the 'Anti-Christ'. The belief that this was a chosen nation continued to be popular and merged with the actual political constitution to form an 'American' ideology.

The rise of the USA as a world power during the Nineteenth Century and then a superpower following the Second World War, saw the idea of being 'chosen' proliferate. Many notoriously American idiosyncrasies can be linked to such beliefs, for example, the insularity of the nation and the absolute belief in the Constitution (the 'law of the 'chosen'). America's perception of itself as the 'world's policeman', and so forth, are all predicated on a belief of having been elected and 'chosen'.

It is also this belief in being 'chosen' that makes apocalyptic rhetoric so prevalent within American political and cultural discourse. Because America is 'chosen' then any threats to American sovereignty, also perhaps threaten the whole world order itself. This may explain to some extent the continual meddling by America in the affairs of other countries. It may also partly explain the preoccupation with morality within American politics and culture, if we view it as a struggle for the 'soul ' of the 'chosen'.

With the end of the Cold War and the decline in the strength of the USSR, the adversary of forty years in that particular battle between 'good' and 'evil', two new international situations have replaced the Cold war scenario as possible harbingers of the apocalypse. The rise in Islamic fundamentalism and the foundation of the European Union have both been interpreted by American fundamentalists as portents of the end of the world (Boyer 1992). Biblical scripture is again interpreted as

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referring to the rise in both these powers, and their threat to the state of Israel. Although within American international affairs the end of the world is not taken as literally related to these situations, nevertheless the political rhetoric, especially in relation to Islamic fundamentalism, is profoundly apocalyptic. The 'evil empire' of the USSR has now become the 'evil empire' of Iraq, Iran, or Libya. This view of its destiny has allowed American culture to become suffused with an apocalyptic rhetoric which is absent in other western nations.

Commonalties

God's Way community's apocalypticism not only places them within the heart of Christian doctrine, but also ties them into a more recent rise in apocalyptic beliefs in contemporary America. Apocalypticism itself is not to be associated with the voices of the marginalised but as part of the mainstream discourse within western and in particular American culture and politics. Although apocalypticism can never by its nature and style ever lose its power to shock, it can perhaps lose some of its mystery if we view it in part as a rhetorical form.

Now that God's Way's beliefs and place in history and culture have been located, the next chapter will allow the focus to be more clearly on the community as an active social form in itself and not just as a set of beliefs.

Chapter Three

God's Cowboys and Feeling like a Woman

'To share with friends is to see twice the beauty'. Abraham Zion (*Books of Abraham*).

In the previous chapter the focus was upon faith as thought and believed. In this chapter the move is away from the philosophical towards faith as it is lived on an everyday basis. As was noted in the previous chapter the community members do not philosophise or debate their beliefs, rather they prefer to live faith, believing actions to be better than words. The words and ideas are fixed. What is at stake is whether the members can maintain their faith at the required standard on a daily basis. The struggle is therefore not philosophical but practical. This stress on the practical has its roots partly in their essential fundamentalism which maintains that God's truth is inerrant and therefore practice is the key to being a 'true' believer. However, a perhaps more crucial part lies within the very idea of community itself. In *Part One* the idea that faith is expressed by living communally and that community represents faith was explored with reference to the paradigm of embodiment. It was suggested that the members embody their faith and express it by living communally through every activity, important or trivial, in which they participate. Therefore if their faith is embodied in this way it is understandable why practice rather than theory is paramount in their lives.

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In Section I the community's work activities will be examined to explore this embodiment. In Section II God's Way's views on the family and gender will be discussed in light of this idea of embodiment.

Section I

One of the first things that struck me about God's Way community when I first arrived was the constant activity of its members. People were always busy, whether it was with the tiring group work of the chicken crew, who hired themselves out to the local poultry farmers for cash, or more individual pursuits such as quilting or chopping wood. Work never seemed to stop, no matter what hour of the day it was. The division between 'work' and 'leisure' was virtually non-existent and the only members who were prone to idleness were, unsurprisingly, the children. To be a 'full' member was to relish work and desire activity. There were no days of rest or holidays. The rare 'leisure' days, featuring trips to the cinema or a local park, happened occasionally for the benefit of the children. Only a bare minimum of adult members would participate in such excursions, usually as escorts to the children. When communal chores or work had been done the members were expected to participate in purposeful activities, such as riding, painting, quilting, or learning other craft skills. What are we to make of all this activity?

It has long been recognised by economists (see for example Argyle 1972) and anthropologists (Wallman 1979: 1) alike that people do not participate in work merely to subsist, but also gain other benefits. Work activities often hold the cultural and ideological values of a specific culture within them. Malinowski (1922) demonstrated this in relation to the production of yams, seemingly for subsistence, in the Trobriand Islands. He found that as well as being a staple of the islanders' diet, the yam was also highly symbolic and that its production and exchange was used by the islanders to denote wealth, status, and other social distinctions. Cohen (1987) in his examination of the importance of crofting in the Shetland islands found that although the economic importance of the croft to the island economy was now negligible, its symbolic importance for islanders' identity was still central to Shetland culture. The central importance of work within capitalist societies as a source of social identity has long been identified and the link between unemployment and social dysfunction long established. Work therefore provides not only subsistence but a domain in which culture can be expressed, maintained, and reinforced. Thus work has social, psychological, and ritually symbolic elements as well as economic.

Work is very important in ICs, indeed almost continual activity appears to be characteristic of most communities, God's Way included. Obviously some of this activity can be explained due to the demands of economic subsistence and physical maintenance tasks, yet the stress of the practical over the philosophical is deeply ingrained within most communities. The importance of work in ICs has been typically examined in relation to its role as a social 'mechanism'.

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Kanter (1972): sees work in ICs as an important 'investment' mechanism in that everyone pools his or her resources and relies on each other for material gain. Hechter (1990: 151) makes a similar observation, seeing such group sharing and involvement as a way of establishing 'obligation' amongst members to each other and the group. Kanter (1972: 95-97) goes on to view work as also a 'communion' mechanism which enhances group solidarity and identity through shared labour. Miller (1985: 17) elaborates on Kanter (1972) by suggesting that such shared participation in labour symbolically reinforces the group's ideology and legitimates it. Members of these communities express and make meaningful their group ideology through work activity.

As has been noted previously (see *Introduction*) the problem with analysing ICs through the idea of positive (or negative) 'commitment mechanisms' is that it presents only a superficial explanation. Analyses which rely on social mechanism theory relegate the membership of these communities to an essentially passive role in which they have things 'done' to them, rather than by them. Conversely the community is made into an entity in its own right which somehow exists independently of its membership. An analogy would be to the demons 'as things in the world' which Csordas (1989) discusses as the flaw in 'traditional' analyses of demonic possession. It is pertinent to recall that ICs are indeed 'intentional' and that their members actively wish to live communally with each other. The desire to maintain and live community is the over-riding one. Thus the problem is not one of commitment, as the commitment is already there, but rather is concerned with reproducing the group on a daily basis. This group reproduction is not only economic but social and symbolic, as the idea of community - the *raison d'être* of an IC's existence - is continually expressed and actively maintained. This, in part, explains the delight in activity rather than with philosophy among IC members.

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The creation and smooth maintenance of a viable economy poses one of the biggest problems for ICs. Kephart (1974: 131) lists the establishment of a communal economy as one of the five possible 'problem' areas for communal foundation and maintenance. This is not only because failure to establish a source of subsistence will hasten the end of the community, but also because members are restricted in their choice of sources of income. ICs have a number of social aims which conflict with economic goals. Many ICs seek isolation from the surrounding society and to this end their ultimate goal is self-sufficiency. Many groups strive for self-sufficiency but this is very hard to achieve. This means that most groups have to depend to some extent on the 'outside' world and this is threatening to the group, as Cooper (1987: 1) points out. To achieve such self-sufficiency the majority of ICs, past and present, are rural and run agricultural businesses[23]. Agricultural work also allows all members to participate in the communal economy which helps to enforce the egalitarian sentiment at the heart of most ICs.

However, economic self-sufficiency is difficult to establish, particularly if members wish to maintain some 'outside' standard of living, i.e. the use of electricity, water, transport, and so on. Also, many ICs are required to pay state and federal taxes. The success of IC economies depends on the size and viability of the land, and many of the smaller ICs find that they have to seek out income from other sources. Groups also prefer to avoid letting highly qualified members seek employment outside the community as this can be potentially divisive. Many communities also

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[23] 60% of contemporary ICs are rural based and run agricultural businesses. In a similar survey of historical groups, 100% were rural and economically dependent on agriculture. See unpublished research paper, *Beginnings* (1992).

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have environmental and ethical considerations in considering forms of work and again these may place limitations on income. Therefore in planning their economies IC members need to consider many factors, some beyond their control. Subsequently many of the smaller communities are poor and exist well below regional and national poverty standards. God's Way is such a community.

God's Way like other ICs is based on a ranch in an isolated rural area. The community is a potentially rich one with twenty acres of currently fallow agricultural land and some surrounding woodland. It has a private fresh water well, and space and buildings for livestock. However the economic potential of the ranch is largely untapped due to the continuing effects of the Schism. The members often vent their frustration at their inability to fully exploit their holdings.

Like many ICs they strive for complete self-sufficiency, as a way of separating off the group from the *'outside'* and also in an attempt to avoid dependency on others. Whether any groups actually have achieved full self-sufficiency is debatable and often depends on their own criteria regarding quality of life. Before the Schism the community was very close to being self-sufficient. They were involved in no outside labour. Members commercially raised chickens for local export. This chicken work brought cash income to purchase those commodities, such as fuel, electricity, and so forth, which they could not produce themselves. They were self-sufficient otherwise: they had their own water, fuel source (wood), cattle, a large crop (which they could produce because they had a greater labour pool), and the chicken work.

The Schism removed a large part of their able workforce, many of whom had been skilled[24], destroyed the chicken enterprise (in the fire), damaged machinery and tools, and much of their infrastructure. They went from being a relatively wealthy, almost self-sustaining, group to an economically devastated community, with a small labour pool, no materials, and no tools. As a result they had to look outwards for work. They also suffered a skills crisis because their adolescents had to be removed from school in order to help rebuild the community. Consequently there was no opportunity for them to attend trade school and develop skills that might have helped the community to create new forms of wealth.

Today, God's Way community maintain self-sufficiency by eating a restricted diet based on own grown produce, and by leading a relatively frugal existence. However, in order to get cash for essentials, like fuel, electricity, and so forth, they have to go in search of external work. This has lain them open to the vagaries of capitalism and their position oscillates between boom times (when in particular there is lots of chicken work) and bust times (when the chicken work has dried up).

Communal Accounting

The community receive their income from a number of sources, each of which are equally valued, although some like the Chicken Crew work earn more than others. The members see money not for an end in itself but rather as the facilitator of their way of life in the face of their own failure to be fully self-sufficient. Members are not distinguished on the basis of their ability to bring in money for the community

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[24] Most of the adult men on the community, prior to the Schism, had served in the military. They often returned to the community with useful skills, such as mechanics.

and those who do little, due to ill-health or age, are no less valued than those who do much.

Work can be divided into that done for money and that done for the daily running of the community. All income is placed in a common fund and no one receives a private allowance. The community finances and budget are controlled and run by Isaac and Rebekah. They are the only ones with access to the community's accounts and all transactions, bills, cheques, and so on must be done by them. The actual accounting is done by Rebekah. However this does not, I believe, imply that members' access to community funds is restricted or controlled by Isaac and Rebekah. Pragmatically someone has to have their name on the bills and cheques and have authority to draw on the account. It would not be possible to have thirty four names on every financial document. Yet the actual bank account held by the community is held in the name of God's Way Community, not by individual names, and Isaac and Rebekah have special status as signatories to cheques. All monies are spent for the benefit of the community as a whole and as will be shortly discussed all adult memebers have an equal 'say' in where the cash will go. Comunal accounts are openly surveyed and discussed. Isaac became leader on his father's death, but this was not seen as inevitable, as demonstrated by the conflict over the succession during the Schism. After the Schism, I think, Isaac was made their leader due to his experience of running the community under his father's direction. Rebekah does the accounts because she is recognised as the member who is best with figures, and not because she is Isaac's wife.

Isaac and Rebekah divide the accounts into those concerned with the domestic running of the community and those related to bringing in income to the community.

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Rebekah deals with the former and Isaac with the latter. Thus it is Rebekah who plans the monthly shopping trip in town. She asks each distinct family group what things they would like purchased in town. Rebekah then adds these items to her own list of community essentials. The list of things required by the community on a monthly basis is kept pinned to one of the kitchen cupboards and each member adds to it as things are recognised as needed. Rebekah then has to decide which items can be bought and which must wait. She makes her decisions before the trip to town so that anyone who must go without something will be told. Meanwhile Isaac concentrates on the running of the community's many money generating enterprises. Despite this central control of funds all adult members have an opportunity to ask about the running of the economy and, if they wish, to question any decisions. There is no 'formal' structured discussion of the economy, rather it is discussed at length on a daily basis, most often at supper. Members do not hold back their opinions concerning the community accounts and if someone disagrees with a decision then it is expressed. Before any decisions are made concerning the management of the community, whether domestic or commercial, both Isaac and Rebekah will have discussed them with the other adult members. Isaac meets with all the adult men every Sunday after chapel. At this meeting everyone provides feedback concerning the running of the different businesses, and problems are discussed. Similarly Rebekah is in constant discussion with the other women during the week, typically, while preparing supper. Any economic decision is therefore carefully discussed by all members to some extent before it is taken by Isaac or Rebekah. All economic discussions are conducted in public and everyone is conscious of a right to complain or protest, and often they do.

At the beginning of each month Isaac, Rebekah, and often one of the other women drive into town and buy the community's supplies for the month. Most things are

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bought in bulk from wholesale markets. On this trip they collect everything they need for the month and if anything is forgotten then the community will go without until the following month. Individual members do not receive any income from the community and the only people who directly carry or handle money are Isaac, Rebekah, and any members who are involved in community business transactions. If individuals have something that they wish, that is not needed for the whole group, such as a new book or a hair brush, they tell Rebekah before she makes the next monthly shopping trip to town. Most requests are answered, but during times of hardship 'extras' disappear. The economic system appears at first to be run by two individuals, but I would stress that they do so more in the style of managers, rather than as autocrats.

The only division that is made between different forms of work is that between the chicken crew and everything that needs to be done in the community. The different forms of work done within the community, whether they are done for cash income or not, are all classed as 'chores' to be done. They view the crew work differently because it is done off the community. The chicken crew work gains the most income, but is loathed. All the members participate in domestic tasks around the community. Women do slightly more domestic tasks and men slightly more 'outdoor' ones, but we should not assume this is a strict gender division of labour; instead, it ties in with their belief that women need to protect themselves from too much physical exertion (see Section II), but this concern is often overlooked and appears to be most rigourously applied only in connection to the younger girls of the community. Yet there are many domestic and outdoor tasks that are done by both sexes, and most often gender divisions become blurred during large tasks. The important thing to stress about communal work is that everyone contributes as they are able.

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The chicken crew work was the idea of Abraham. According to Isaac, his father had considered for some time during the early 1950s a way of earning money for the community that would involve as many of its members as possible. The community had operated as a successful ranch up to this point. They raised cattle and cash crops. However, many of the members were excluded from the ranch work because they did not have sufficient skills or they found the work too physically demanding. The community raised enough capital from their ranch and from a federal grant[25] to buy five hundred chickens and to build a huge chicken shed. The chickens were bred to be sold to local retailers and food processors. The business became a success. On the eve of the Schism (in 1973) they had over one thousand chickens and had built a second shed. The work was their biggest source of income and nearly all the members participated in it in some capacity. They continued to run the ranch as a going concern but it was run by only a small group of skilled members.

Isaac told me that the chicken work was chosen because it did not require much skill, it needed team work, and it involved a variety of jobs. Each job had varying degrees of difficulty, so even the oldest and youngest members could play some meaningful part. I have already discussed how ICs tend to adopt work programs that can involve all their members and it is clear that the chicken crew work was devised by Abraham for this reason.

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[25] Sarah Zion's late husband served in the army during the Second World War. He was able to claim a grant from the Federal government under the terms of the postwar GI bill which was set up to provide training and educational opportunites for ex-servicemen.

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The pre-Schism chicken work was based in the community and run by Abraham and Isaac. Following the Schism the work moved away from the community and under the control of a number of different individual farmers (referred to by all the members as 'them big boss men'). The community has great ambivalence towards the crew work. They need the money it brings in order to survive at the material level that they wish. They could, technically, survive on the produce and raw materials from their ranch, but they enjoy certain 'outside' utilities, such as electricity, telephones, and transport (which needs fuel), and because of this they require a certain level of income. It should also be stressed that the community are required to pay state and federal taxes and it is doubtful that the small income they get from their craft sales would cover these.

However, their participation in the crew work places them in a position of dependence on the 'outside' which they despise. It is a position which leaves them completely powerless and at the mercy of 'outside' forces. Their ambivalence is manifested in the uncharacteristic reluctance of non-crew members to join the crew during periods of extra loading when as many workers as possible are needed. Normally, members enthusiastically volunteer to help others in their work and lighten the load. Also members rarely, if ever, complain or moan about work no matter how tiring or dirty it may be. Yet the chicken crew moaned continually before, during, and after work. Surprisingly, no one censured them for doing so. This loathing and moaning about the work is uncharacteristic and again demonstrates the depth of uneasiness felt by the members towards the crew work.

The chicken work operates without contracts and few guarantees. The local poultry farmers hire them because they will work for lower wages than any other groups, but

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the high rural Missouri unemployment figures mean that there is always an alternative labour pool available. *'We're the cheapest and boy they know it'*, Isaac would curse at supper following one of his regular meetings with the farmers at which the hiring fee had been cut again.

The crew consists of all the adult members, except the married women and three of the men (Ishmael Zion, Peter Simeon, and Jonah Simeon). Outwith school hours the children are expected to join the crew work, in particular the older children who attend school on a part-time basis in order to provide extra workers on the crew. The local poultry farmers hire the community crew to service their chickens, making them ready for export to large food processing plants out of state. The work is erratic and organised on the basis of a phone call from a particular farmer requiring their services rather than from an established working relationship. Once a farmer has called them, the crew journey to the specific farm in the crew bus, which is a converted school-bus. The nearest farms are only a thirty minute drive, while the farthest one was over two hours away. The crew are involved in three set tasks each done on separate occasions with the same birds: penning, vaccinating and debeaking, and loading.

(1) <u>Penning</u>: This occurs when the new stock of birds has begun to grow and needs to be moved to a cleaner shed, in order to begin a new feeding regime. The crew have to move one shed of chickens into another neighbouring shed. This is done by establishing a series of pens and tunnels between two sheds. The members then literally chase the birds through into the new shed. This is the easiest and quickest of all the chicken work, and the crew have some fun in chasing the birds. The work is done with such speed that the crew can always have breakfast before leaving and

nearly always return to the community in time for lunch. Penning is the cleanest and least tiring of all the crew tasks.

(2) <u>Vaccinating and Debeaking</u>: This, like penning, always occurs during the day. The bus will leave the community before breakfast to drive to the required farm. This work involves penning, vaccinating and then removing the beaks of each bird. The vaccine protects the now almost fully grown birds from a variety of diseases and is administered by injecting the bird under its wing. One member will pen groups of birds and then hand a bird to another member who injects it. This bird is then handed over to the person working the debeaking machine who will debeak the bird, while another member drops some analgesic and antiseptic fluid into its eyes. The community have to supply their own debeaking machines which are very old and often break down. The birds are debeaked to prevent them from pecking each other to death. Obviously this work is harder because the birds continually struggle and the whole process takes many hours. The work does go quickly as everyone has a set job and a certain work rhythm is established.

(3) <u>Loading</u>: Loading is the most dreaded crew work. It always occurs at night and is the most tiring and time-consuming. It is done when the chickens are fully grown and ready to be transported to a factory for slaughter. The crew must literally load the chickens into cages and then put the cages into a lorry which the driver will have parked nearby. The chickens are trapped in a series of pens. The crew must catch the chickens and then pass them to other members who stuff the birds into cages which are then pushed into the lorry. The work is very tiring and back-breaking and punctuated with lots of stops and starts as cages have to be moved and chickens caught. Often loading will go on from early evening through the night and often

past dawn. The crew tire quickly and tempers become frayed, especially those of the members who have been asked to join the crew to help add extra hands to the loading which is very labour intensive. The struggling birds scratch hands and faces which adds to everyone's annoyance. It is the dirtiest and most tiring of the crew's tasks.

The farmer does not pay the crew when they finish but will send Isaac a cheque at a much later date. Isaac nearly always has to send reminder notices to the farmers and the delay between work and payment is often quite long. However the crew know that if they make too much fuss about the late payment by certain farmers then the farmers will simply go elsewhere. The crew are expected to do their share of communal work as well and are not treated any differently because of the work that they do.

Other Sources of Income: *'Chores'*

The three men who do not do the chicken work participate in hired labour for specific farmers and companies, which they have done for a long period of time. They are allowed to do this solo work partly because it takes advantage of specific skills[26] that they have and partly because each is seen as slightly bad tempered and anti-social. Isaac justified their absence from the crew (although not from other group tasks) as stemming from their temperament and from a desire on his part to

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[26] Ishmael Zion is a qualified mechanic and earns money from local farmers for repairing machinery. Peter Simeon holds a heavy vehicles licence and drives lorries for local haulage firms. Jonah Simeon is a trained stockman and tends stock for a local dairy farm.

'keep the peace'.   Each man's income, like the chicken work is directly paid into the community's bank account.

Various members earn money from quilt-making and other crafts.   These are sold in a crafts shop in Winterholm and often further afield.   The married women all make quilts which the craft shop owner sells quickly and this provides a steady if small income.   Other crafts such as Jonathon Benjamin's wood carvings or Rachel Zion's paintings are made less frequently due to their commitment to the chicken crew, yet these too bring in much needed income particularly at slack times.

The other main source of community finance is brought in by Isaac in his capacity as a sales representative for a national health food catalogue producer.   His involvement in this sales work came partly through the possibility of earning large cash bonuses and partly due to the community's interest in health food and their own consumption of vitamin tablets to supplement their diet.   As a rep, Isaac receives free products.   Isaac is also able to juggle his rep work with his job as manager of the community much more easily than if he worked on the crew or did other communal work.

All work that needs to be done actually in the community is divided amongst the members.   The married women who are exempt from working the chicken crew due to their childcare commitments do all the 'domestic' chores, such as cooking the evening meal, cleaning, washing, and so forth.   The women also tend the vegetable garden and do all food preparation and storage.   They also carry out minor repairs and try to spend a large part of each day quilting.   The girls help the women in these

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chores, while the boys have special responsibility for the rabbits that the community raise for meat. The boys also help the men with their chores. Wood cutting, large repairs, and heavier tasks are done by the men. Yet it should be stressed that this seemingly gender division of labour is not absolute. The married men cook, serve and clear away breakfast every morning, while the women gather fire wood and light the wood burners in each house. All members join in when large numbers of workers are needed and quite often the women do men's jobs such as chop wood and the men do women's jobs such as laundry. The community's chores are done more on a pragmatic basis rather than a gender basis with tasks suited to the abilities and strengths or each individual rather than on some preconception concerning them. The community's ideas on gender will be expanded on in Section II.

God's Way Community's Work Ethic

God's Way community do not have a clear division between work and leisure. Members try at all times to accept all tasks given to them without complaint. This is not to suggest that the members 'enjoy' all the chores that they must do, rather it is part of their belief system to embrace work, however unpleasant, with what Sarah Zion described as '*a willing heart*'. When members did tasks that they did not enjoy they would not express their feelings against the task at hand, instead they would turn it back against their own lack of faith. For example, Leah Simeon hated having to help Sarah Zion do the twice weekly ironing of the community clothes because she found it a boring job and also because it exacerbated problems with her back. However, instead of cursing the task for causing pain and boring her, she would say that ' . . . *you only feel pain when your heart is not open. I've got to fill my heart with the joy of this task.*' Embracing the joy of a task, however unpleasant,

was the key to the members' philosophy regarding work. As Isaac often pointed out a *'heavy heart'* soon shows itself not only in that a task will be done badly, but also in that it shows a lack of love and respect for the community.

God's Way's members learn not only to seek out work or meaningful activity, but also go about their tasks in a very specific way. Members endeavour not to complain or moan about work, however unpleasant, and signs of fatigue or boredom are hidden. Tasks are accepted without reluctance even if they are loathsome ones. Aches and pains gained from work are dismissed as minor. David Joseph fell from the roof of Isaac's house while repairing it and was later found to have broken his arm. Yet, he picked himself up off the ground, climbed back up and continued to work despite not being able to move his left arm. It was only later that day, when he had finished all his jobs, that he allowed his arm to be examined and reset. He continued the following day to do his work complaining not about any pain, but that the arm was slowing him down. Similarly, during periods of tiring chicken crew night loading work the crew members were still expected to do almost a full day's work as well, instead of sleeping late or resting. Despite the very real tiredness of crew members, yawns were stifled and sore backs dismissed as trivial.

Such stoicism of the members was not commented upon or lauded, and often appeared to go unnoticed. Of course it was not, but to have drawn attention to such behaviour was deemed unnecessary as this behaviour was that expected of an adult member. However members, especially the younger ones, who did resent the relentless work schedule, received fierce reprimands from other members which would often be relentless. Those adult members, such as Eve Reuben who always moaned about work found themselves continually volunteered for the worst tasks

and the other members would respond to her complaints in the way they responded to the children, much to her chagrin.

As has already been noted the members did not draw much distinction between time spent doing '*chores*' and 'leisure' time. From a young age the children are encouraged to pass time in 'purposeful' activities, rather than watch television or play games. Instead members learn crafts, paint, read, or horse ride. Members choose to do what they wish in those periods when '*chores*' are over, but nearly all will pass the time engaged in an activity which will not only give pleasure to the individual concerned but will also probably contribute to the community in general.

However, some skills are not seen as important. In particular, all sporting activity was seen as a waste of time and energy. The adolescent boys often wanted to join sports programs in the local town. Isaac would not let them join any of these because he viewed sport as a pointless activity which, although it encourages team spirit and fitness, serves no actual purpose. Isaac wanted the boys to channel their energies into productive activities that would ultimately benefit the community. The occasional impromptu game of football or baseball amongst the teenage boys in the outfields would be quickly broken up. Even such seemingly leisurely activities as watching television or a video were given a sense of purpose. When large groups of members sat in Isaac's sitting room to watch television they were there to watch an educational programme, typically on history or wildlife, usually on the public service channel. They rarely watched purely for entertainment. Likewise most videos were either educational or family-oriented films which reinforced the community's own views on the family.

We can see behind all of this activity a desire to contribute to the group and also to participate and express the beliefs of the community. In essence each task when executed in the correct way, i.e. with a *'willing heart'*, is an expression of faith as it is embodied within each member. In the next section the expression of faith and its connection to the social reproduction of the group will be explored with reference to family life.

Section II

'There ain't no real difference between men and women. See, if the Lord had made 'em too apart they'd have never got on!' Sarah Zion.

If the perpetual activity of the community's membership is an embodiment and, ultimately, an expression of their purpose (through the daily tasks which enable the community to be reproduced and maintained on a social and physical level), then the community's ideas concerning biological reproduction and family life should also provide an insight into this embodiment.

In this section it will be argued that God's Way community do not ascribe markedly different gender roles for men and women, at a commonly held group level. Also, it will be demonstrated that the roles of 'man' and 'woman' are not as meaningful to the community as the dual roles of 'spouse'/'parent'. However, elaborate and divergent gender identities are maintained among some of the membership (the unmarried) and it will be proposed that for them gender is a locus for public dissent. This dissent being expressed specifically via the adoption of a variety of gender models.

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In approaching gender I want to adopt three important theoretical perspectives. Firstly, I want to stress the importance of contextualising gender studies within specific contexts and in relation to specific ideologies. This is the approach that Sanday and Goodenough (1990: 1) adopted in response to the limitations, they perceived, in earlier theoretical perspectives which focused on cultural universals (1990: 4). The work of Sanday and Goodenough (1990) follows on from earlier work by Strathern and MacCormack (1980), Oakley (1981), and Strathern (1987b). Such contextualisation avoids ethnocentrism and demonstrates the diversity of different representations at local levels.

Secondly, I want to present gender categories as fluid, changing with context and through time. Indeed, I want to argue this a step further by suggesting, from my own work, that gender categories may not always be good 'to think with' and that God's Way community do not maintain elaborate gender representations or ideologies. Contemporary gender studies have shown the fluidity of gender categories, for example, recent work on masculinity (Seidler 1991, and Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994).

Lastly, I want to focus on the complementary relationship between the sexes rather than stress the difference between them. Many writers (Strathern and MacCormack 1980, Strathern 1987b, and Sanday and Goodenough 1990) have expressed dissatisfaction with the oppositional logic of earlier work (for example, Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974, and Ortner and Whitehead 1981) finding it inappropriate to use in

their own research contexts.   Sanday (1990: 12), for example, found in her work amongst the Minangkbau that the oppositional approach, which stressed difference and opposition between male and female, was not suitable as the Minangkbau stress the mutual relationship between the sexes.   Sanday goes on to make the point that, '... *we can say that men and women and their different activities could also exist in their mutual relation to one another - not just in spite of but because of one another.*' (1990: 12).

The idea that the sexes could live in a harmonious and complementary relationship is a particularly salient notion in relation to egalitarian cultures, such as intentional communities, where equality is often a central founding principle.

These three points characterise the theoretical orientations of many contemporary writers on gender (for example, Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994) and represent a shift in theoretical perspectives from previous gender work which had three problematic concerns: (1) it tended to focus on one sex to the exclusion of the other, (2) research was preoccupied with 'finding' universals, and (3) one sex would be located as being in opposition to the other, with both sexes presented as homogenous categories (see for example the work of Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974, and Ortner and Whitehead 1981).   Moore (1988: 191) sees recent trends in gender research as a necessary and inevitable development in anthropology, demonstrating a movement away from focusing on women's (or men's) studies to a 'real' anthropology of gender which encompasses both sexes.   The earlier approach, as Moore discusses (1988: 11), was a consequence of the relationship between the early phase of modern Feminism in the 1970s and the development of gender studies.

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'... *it is by no means to be automatically assumed for other societies as perhaps it is for our own that men and women will be always divided by social interest*' (Strathern 1987b: 9).

Moore (1988) is right to stress the relationship between the development of an anthropology of gender and the rise in the 1970s of modern Feminism in the West. The early theoretical approaches to gender in anthropology (and other disciplines) were profoundly influenced by contemporary Feminist philosophy. Western Feminism concentrated on the situation of women in capitalist industrial society, focusing in particular on the very real need for social and political equality between the sexes in many western nations. However, the assumptions that were made by researchers at that time (that women were universally oppressed; that women were the 'other' in relation to men; and that both sexes were homogenous categories, unchanging through time or context) were applied as culturally universal. Subsequent work has challenged these assumptions for a number of reasons.

Strathern and MacCormack (1980), and many of the contributors to their book, challenged such oppositional 'othering' as a very Western concept and that to apply it elsewhere was ethnocentric. Others have drawn similar conclusions, for example, Atkinson (1982) and Evans (1982). The claim of ethnocentrism was also levelled at the whole notion of a universal oppression of women. Within a capitalist ideology women are an exploited and oppressed group but this raises the issue of other ideological contexts . This point has been raised in particular within the context of religious cultures, and especially Islam. Many Muslim ethnographers (for example the work of Abu-Lughod 1988 and Tucker 1993) have taken western feminism to task over its blanket assumptions of oppression without seeking to understand the relationship experienced by many women to religion. It is also pertinent to make

the point that many writers (Reiter 1975, and Brittan 1989) have made that within capitalism all those who do not own and control the means of production are oppressed and that power is the crucial factor not gender. Many authors (Chapman and Rutherford 1988, Brittan 1989, and Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994) have also stressed that men too experience exploitation and control and that they should not be seen as an homogenous group.

Inequality, exploitation, and oppression of groups within a given society is commonplace and undeniable. However, it is not always to be assumed that their situation is solely as a result of their biology, nor that they identify themselves as being oppressed. Our idea of equality is not necessarily universally translatable to every cultural situation.

What of equality in relation to God's Way community's members? There appear to be two areas of communal life where inequality could exist: government and work. Although Isaac is the leader and presiding minister, I want to stress the essential egalitarianism of the community. Superficially he seems like a total leader: he makes the 'big' decisions, controls the finances, leads the chapel services, supervises entry and so forth. However, if we look more closely, Isaac's style of leadership is more akin to the role of a chairman of a committee rather than that of an autocrat. He co-ordinates community life, gathering the opinions of the other adult members and discussing plans with them. It should be noted that Isaac's role is not divinely chosen, unlike his father Abraham, and therefore he is technically replaceable at any time. Also there are a number of senior members (Sarah Zion, Jonathon Benjamin, Leah Zion, and Peter Reuben) who are probably held in as much esteem as Isaac, due to their individual knowledge, experience and personalities. In particular

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situations it is often one of these members, rather than Isaac, who shows leadership initiative. All initiated adult members have an acknowledged 'say' in communal affairs and a right to be heard.

ICs typically organise, decision-make, and operate on an *ad hoc* basis. Power lies with all the members, regardless of 'formal' leaders. Informal situations tend to be the locations for communal politicking. In God's Way community evening meal times were the favoured place for communal discussions, probably because most members were in attendance, and it was a relaxed environment. Ideas concerning communal economics and future plans were always first introduced at supper, when Isaac would pass on ideas to a few of the more senior members, typically Sarah Zion and Jonathon Benjamin. These ideas would circulate informally around the family tables and members with particularly strong opinions would talk to Isaac. The plans would slowly disseminate around the rest of the membership, and over the next few nights would be discussed and argued. Often several members would discuss budget or work plans between tables, shouting over the voices of others more preoccupied with their dinner or other communal gossip. Similarly, people would discuss communal affairs while at work, or relaxing in smaller groups, although if someone had a particularly strong objection to a new plan for the community they would make sure that they told Isaac rather than discuss it in private. Members did talk about each other in smaller private groups, but people were always very wary about being too critical or gossipy. When someone appeared to go 'too far' concerning the opinions or foibles of another he or she would be reminded of his or her own failings. God's Way community had set meetings: weekly chapel, and Isaac's Sunday all-male meetings on work, but importantly these did not feature discussion of major communal decisions. Chapel was solely concerned with

matters spiritual, and the Sunday meet between the men, after chapel, was a forum where the previous week's work was reviewed.

Zablocki (1971: 220-223) noted a similar lack of formal power structures, with the emphasis on informal government, (in particular through everyday talk), among the Bruderhof. Hechter (1990: 147) suggests that the role of gossip, informal chat, and implicit power sharing in ICs is crucial if groups hope to attain and maintain group solidarity. Many ethnographers of Kibbutzim, such as Oz (1973) and Bowes (1989) have also stressed the powerful role of gossip in such groups. However, God's Way community's members did not use gossip to the same extent that is often found in Kibbutzim, where it is a potent policing mechanism of members' behaviour (Bowes 1989).

Intentional communities are fundamentally egalitarian structures whose leaders hold a precarious position. The whole ethos of communal life stresses community not hierarchy; sharing not authority. Historically, their leaders have regularly been ousted once acceptable degrees of power were exceeded. For example, John Noyes at Oneida (Olin 1980: 285-300) was famously ousted by his entire community despite having founded and organised it for over twenty years, once he attempted to gain more power through amending their constitution. Perhaps one of the most obvious differences between ICs and cults is that the latter centre authority in the hands of one individual who exercises power without consulting his or her membership. The leader of an IC would be unable to maintain power for very long without consulting his or her members. ICs exist because their members believe in communal life, with everyone being equal and related. When someone assumes

absolute power such harmony is disrupted and the 'intended' community is therefore no longer existent - it has become something else.

However, as was noted in Part I the idea that a fully intentional community can exist was doubted, due to the fact that individuals can not fully co-exist in a shared intersubjective world. The suggestion was that the members of ICs were able, due to their strong sense of commonality, to live to a varying degree in a co-existent world. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) notes people can achieve different levels of intersubjectivity depending on the closeness of their communication. However, as Benhabib (1992) stressed, group interaction is predicated on the subject realising the difference of the 'other' and so even in seemingly total communal structures individuality exists. It would appear from the God's Way Community material that the communication which establishes group co-existence of perception of the group breaks down around the sphere of status.

Although God's Way profess to be egalitarian and they are structured around this notion, there exists an informal (in the sense of unprofessed) hierarchy. This point illustrates what MacIntyre (1970) noted concerning the fact that individuals do not always follow the rules which they claim to follow. The community's hierarchy is based around the status of initiated adults and is assesed on two criteria: marital status and parental status. Although all initiated adults have a 'say' in community, some have greater 'say' than others, based on whether they are married and/or parents. This informal hierarchy is perceived by the single members and they rebel against it via the adoption of marked gender models, which will be discussed later in this section. I would stress that this hiearchy is not gender based.

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Work is often structured around a gender based division of labour and God's Way community appears at first to organise its labour this way. Indeed, one could argue this point, but it would be to ignore the community's interpretation of the situation. At first it appears that the men all work outdoors, in the grounds of the community, doing particularly arduous physical tasks, while the married women organise all domestic matters, and are occuppied more with 'lighter' physical tasks. Such a division is based on communal ideas concerning female physiology, but this is not, I feel, a rigidly enforced system. Again this echoes MacIntyre's theory (1970) on the divergence between rule adherence and practice . It should be noted that the women who remain 'at home' and do the majority of the domestic work are all married with children. The unmarried adult women all work outside of the community, doing the same, often physically demanding, tasks as the men. This division of labour only exists in relation to the work that the community does for economic reward, for example, the chicken crew work. The community, as was previously discussed, has to look outward for employment. If the community was able to run their ranch fully it is without a doubt that all the members would participate in both the domestic and the economic work more evenly, as they demonstrate on non-crew days when all memebrs share the communal tasks, each to his or her abilities. The division of labour as it stands is based not on gender but on pragmatics related to their views of the sexes.

Someone has to look after the pre-school age children, while the others work outside of the ranch. The married women assume this responsibility because they are deemed to be less physically strong than the men. Therefore they would be less productive than the men at the chicken crew work. As it is in everyone's interest to complete the work well, and as quickly as possible, it makes more 'sense' for the men to do it. Yet it should be noted that the unmarried women participate in the

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crew, as do the children (during school holidays), both groups which are supposedly 'weaker'. The rationale behind this division has nothing to do with arguments concerning women's 'natural' ties to home and child. This is demonstrated by the fact that the women who do work on the crew do the same work as the men. It is also shown in the equal sharing of child-care when all the members are 'at home'. As was noted previously, the community see all work as equal and that everyone's contribution is worthwhile, however small. The married women are not seen as lesser for remaining at home. Indeed there is a certain amount of envy at their position. Most members given the choice between staying at home and working 'outside' would choose the former. The division of tasks, of all types, is based on what a particular person can achieve in relation to their physical capabilities and knowledge. When the others returned to the ranch they shared the domestic chores and child-care that the women had been doing. Similarly, their weaker physical status did not prevent the married women from doing arduous physical tasks; for example, during the Spring they constructed a huge green-house by themselves while the others laboured with the chickens. Work, like power is operated on a daily, informal, and ultimately pragmatic basis. The community do not have a marked use of gender as a form of identity and to label their division of work as a sexist system is to force our cultural norms on to their social organisation when it is not appropriate.

Marriage, the Family, and the Community

Collier and Yanagisako (1987) argue that we cannot study gender without also including kinship. Indeed, the two have an important inter-relationship. Kinship is a useful starting point for studying gender because the only fundamental gender

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differences, indeed the only conclusive ones, are the biological, related to reproduction, and that all essential gender structuring begins there. This, as I will show, is particularly pertinent for studying God's Way where the two are inextricably linked. I want to suggest that in God's Way community, it is kinship representations and models which are the useful categories for describing the society, rather than gender. It cannot be stressed enough that egalitarianism is the central pivot of the ordering of these groups. ICs often are quite genderless affairs. Instead the 'real' problem is how to reproduce the group yet maintain a balance between public and private interests.

All communal societies must at some stage face the 'problem' of how they intend to increase or at least maintain their population. This is a particularly thorny issue, not only because if it is not confronted then the community will die out, but also because it gives rise to a variety of different and difficult choices that need to be made. If a community chooses to allow its membership to biologically reproduce then a number of logistical questions must be answered. How will partners be chosen? How will sex be regulated? Will marriage be instituted? Will children be raised communally or in nuclear family units? Sex, marriage, and family life threaten the autonomy of the group as a cohesive functioning unit. Communities must devise a system in which the needs of the individual are balanced with those of the group. Some groups maintain nuclear family units, based on monogamy, but raise the children communally, for example, the Bruderhof (Zablocki 1971). Others adopt group marriage, while still rearing children communally, as was practised by the Oneida community (Carden 1969: 21). Many groups have chosen to abandon marriage altogether and instead have instituted various systems of group sex, with any children produced being identified as belonging to the group as a whole, for example, in the case of the Sunrise Hill community (Jerry 1973: 147). Most

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communities maintain communal child-rearing, while practising a variety of different 'marriage' forms.

The alternative choice would be for a community to impose celibacy upon its members and thus eradicate many of the private versus public issues raised by family life. This is often the best solution, with many of the most successful communities in history, for example, the Shakers and Ephrata, being celibate; although as Muncy notes (1973: 36-50) celibacy has its own complications. Celibacy also requires that a community devise ways of recruiting outwith the group which often brings its own set of problems.

Whatever choices a community makes the issue of sex and marriage will remain problematic. Kephart (1974), in his analysis of why ICs fail, stresses (1974: 136-137) the problems raised around organising primary group needs, such as sex and reproduction, within the context of the greater needs of the group. He concludes that the successful organisation of such needs, without challenging the group's order, is a key factor in communal survival. Kanter (1973: 287-307) raises similar issues, noting that the group needs to allow for some space for individuals to maintain as private, either through actual family quarters, the maintenance of family names, family property or through allowing family groups some level of autonomy. Kanter (1973) points out that groups can either choose to allow some separation between the nuclear family and group as a whole, or they can go to the other extreme of either being celibate or else placing the needs of the family within the context of the group; thus, sex and parenting become group activities[27]. Kanter *et al* (1975) found that

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[27] In a survey of twenty two historical (pre-1900) American ICs I found that 23% were celibate, 9% practised group marriage, and 68% maintained conventional marriage. Of these groups, 90% had communal childrearing while 10% had a nuclear family structure. Half of the groups had a communal sleeping arrangement. In a similar survey of two hundred and thirty seven contemporary

many communal members felt a great loss of privacy and control when they first joined their communities. However this sense of loss later became one of liberation as child-care and parenting became a shared responsibility and not one solely resting on the shoulders of the biological parents. Kanter (1973: 287-307), drawing from research on Kibbutzim children, points out that communally reared children often find themselves unable to fully experience deep and intimate interpersonal relationships, particularly with one other person. It would seem that getting the balance right between the needs of the group and the needs of the individual will always be less than perfect. Shey (1977: 607-611) and Hechter (1990: 145) both demonstrate that the most long-lived communities are those that strike a good balance between public and private rights, so the very existence of the community can often be at stake. A good illustration of getting the balance 'right' is God's Way's celebration of birthdays. A birthday is essentially an individual event, with the festivities typically centred upon one person. The community celebrate birthdays communally. All those born in the same month share a party held on the last day of that month. This enables the emphasis to be placed back onto the group.

At God's Way community they have chosen to maintain some degree of structural space between family groups and the community as a whole, through family living quarters and the retention of family names. Their system is similar to that also used by the Hutterites (Hostetler and Huntington 1967) and the Bruderhof (Zablocki 1971). Yet the community counterbalance this retention of the nuclear family in two ways. Firstly, all the children are raised and educated communally. Although they have specific parents, all children may be reprimanded, punished, or shown affection by any adult. Parents do not assume specific responsibility for controlling

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American ICs 10% were celibate, 3% had group marriage and 22% had conventional marriage. 82% had communal childrearing and 44% had communal sleeping arrangements. (Survey conducted in May 1992 for unpublished research paper *Beginnings*)

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or punishing their offspring, rather children are held to be the responsibility of every community member. Secondly, the community manage to control the threat to the group that marriage poses by maintaining a strict 'code' of modesty concerning all matters sexual. It was seen as a sign of modesty for couples not to show affection in public and they never did, a situation which made it particularly difficult to work out who was related to whom during my early period of fieldwork. Yet at meal times it was common for all members to embrace and kiss before saying the pre-dinner prayer, so we cannot view such modesty as a regulation against desire; instead, it reinforces that love and affection, when expressed publicly, is for the whole group and that any such feelings for a specific individual should be kept private and hidden from view. It is a way of maintaining group cohesion. Individuals were also forbidden to have pre-marital sex. While I was there Leah Zion had her son John. Her pregnancy was a communal event and not a day would pass without someone touching her 'bump'. Everyone constantly discussed the pregnancy and what the baby would be like, and how it would be in relation to its siblings. The actual birth was an open event where all the members walked in and out of the delivery room during the ten hour labour, all offering support and aid. No shame or modesty was attached to the pregnancy, or the birth. The public aspects of parenthood - pregnancy, birth, discipline, and socialisation - were everyday topics for endless conversation among the adults. There was complete silence on the more private aspects, such as sex and menstruation. I never once publicly heard such topics discussed and in private it was only with my closest confidante Rachel Zion, and with Naomi Simeon (who had been to college and was believed by the other members to be 'liberal' in her views). To some cultures, including our own, pregnancy remains to an extent a private event. The community on the other hand see nothing immodest about allowing all members to attend a birth, as pregnancy, like parenting is something public. However those aspects of an individual's life which cannot be effectively controlled by the group, such as sex or menstruation, are

kept hidden by the modesty 'code'. I have been referring to this sense of modesty as a 'code' but it was not one that was explicitly stressed by members; rather, it was intuitively known. Explicit declarations concerning the inappropriateness of public displays of affection between couples were invoked while watching television shows and films. If a couple were shown holding hands or kissing in public all the members watching would screw up their faces in disgust and comment on how 'gross' it was to see people carrying on like that. Similarly, if on one of the rare trips outside of the community someone saw an 'outside' couple acting affectionately in public he or she would soon tell the others who would react in the same horrified way. It soon became clear to the observer what was deemed 'appropriate' to the community and what was not.

I would suggest that gender in communal groups tends not to be the real issue but that kinship, (reproducing the group), is more important. Intentional communities are typically egalitarian, and extend this equality to ideas concerning gender and ethnicity. Historically they were linked to the development of the early Feminist and civil rights movements in the American Nineteenth Century (Muncy 1973: 1-8, 9-12). It is rare for ICs to differentiate between the sexes in any great way. They typically view both as equal and lack elaborate gender categories. Such an undifferentiated view of gender can be seen in the adoption of unisex uniforms at Twin Oaks (Kanter 1972: 23) and at the Zoar community (Hinds 1975: 104). Similarly group work is done by all who are able, rather than based on gender. Many groups adopt rotation of labour so all tasks are done by all members. Communal government tends to be by consensus rather than being based on the authority of individuals. Typically, ICs differentiate along the lines of age rather than by gender. ICs seek to avoid creating difference between their members. Differentiation threatens the essential goals of such communities.

God's Way community obviously acknowledge a difference between men and women. However, unlike many groups they do not ascribe different roles to the sexes dependent on cultural or social ideas concerning gender. The only differences, and restrictions, maintained between the two lie in their differing reproductive roles. Men are acknowledged as physically stronger than women, but as was discussed previously, this difference in strength does not prevent women from participating in essentially the same work as men. More crucial is women's role as bearer of children. The community believe that the female reproductive organs are 'fragile' and so need to be protected, particularly in younger girls. Because of this the women of the community carefully monitor the activities of the younger females, in particular the play of the girls. However, beyond these ideas the community maintain that there is no 'real' difference between the sexes. Sarah Zion's quote at the start of this section perfectly summarises their view of the situation. The mental, social, and moral capabilities of men and women are deemed equal. Particular individuals may have specific talents, but these are based on their character rather than on their gender. Jonathon Benjamin had persuaded his daughter-in-law (Leah Zion) to teach him how to quilt, a task usually done by the women. No one saw his desire to do this as 'unmasculine'. Rather it was seen as 'typical' of Jonathon's personality, as someone who liked to learn new skills and keep busy. He soon became an accomplished quilter. Yet such a personal achievement was not seen in terms of a male triumph (as may have happened in other societies), but for what it was - a personal triumph.

The community's view of the sexes departs from the conventional view expressed in fundamentalist Christianity and, to lesser degrees, in more established dogmas. Although I do not wish to elaborate greatly upon the links between religious doctrine and the development of gender identities in Western culture (see Wolff 1974, Trible 1976, Coward 1983, and Heath 1982 for a discussion of the relationship between what is written in *Genesis* and the subsequent positioning of the sexes) there are a few points to be made. The *Genesis* myth of creation contains two key events in terms of the development of ideas concerning gender. Firstly, there is the act of creation itself. Adam is made by God as a creature in his own right, whereas Eve is created from a piece of Adam (his rib). Eve is not afforded her own separate identity in the world - she exists due to her relationship to Adam. From the beginning the two are deemed as unequal. Secondly, there is the Fall of man and the subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This event presents us with the moral characters of the two actors, who up until this time have been somewhat colourless beings. The drama that unfolds, with its conclusion in man's removal from Paradise, has three key actors: Adam, Eve, and the Serpent. Yet blame for the expulsion is rested upon Eve's shoulders. She manipulates and tempts Adam, signifying the gullible, morally dubious, and perhaps ultimately dangerous nature of woman which would become adopted into subsequent gender ideologies, first in Judaism and then Christianity. An alternative reading could suggest that Eve was as manipulated and tricked as Adam, and that the Serpent is the true culprit in all of this. Adam too, one could suggest, should take more responsibility for his own actions within the drama, indeed one could see Adam as an equally weak individual for giving in to Eve's temptations.

However, such alternatives have not destroyed the myth and it remains the supreme myth of origin for Western gender notions. It is also pertinent to note that another

consequence of the Fall is that Eve is divinely punished, having to endure not only menstruation but painful childbirth, thus establishing not only woman's primary role (to carry children) but also her weaker and more polluted nature. Although both Judaism and then Christianity have based their view of the sexes upon this story, and others scattered throughout the Old Testament which reinforce the view of men and woman it established, Judaism still maintained the importance of marriage and the family in a way that Christianity has found more problematic. Unlike Islam and Judaism which both prize parenthood and family life, Christianity has typically maintained that celibacy is the correct route for the devout. The New Testament indirectly reinforces this view. There is a dearth of families among its stories. Christ is the product not of conventional family life but of a 'virgin' birth. Despite his words concerning children there are no passages which extol the virtues of family life or its importance. Unlike most of the other key Biblical figures Jesus does not marry or reproduce. His disciples are all single men. Whereas the Old Testament provides information, in often lurid detail, concerning the family lives of its characters, the New Testament does not.

The early Church prized celibacy among its followers and marriage was deemed a lesser state established for those who could not control their carnal natures. Even within marriage the Church called for restraint, insisting that sex should be for the procreation of children. Although such strict views concerning marriage have lessened with the decline in church power, echoes of these ideas remain strong within the Catholic church and fundamentalist denominations. Both prohibit pre-marital sex and contraception, thus reinforcing the view that sex is for the production of children within marriage.

God's Way community takes its inspiration from Abraham rather than the Bible. Isaac told me that Abraham had expressed great dissatisfaction with the Old Testament's view of the sexes and that he had found so many contradictions throughout the Bible that he chose to ignore it when he saw fit. *'Too much tamperin''* was how Isaac expressed it. Abraham had been warned by God (in his revelation of 1939) of the tampering that had been done with the Bible and that Abraham should take it with a 'pinch of salt', so to speak, and use his own judgement at all times. Sarah Zion saw the creation of Adam and Eve as *'plain silly'*, not because she doubted God's creation of humanity, but because she could not believe that Eve was created from Adam. She maintained that each sex had been created in their own right - a view that other members seemed to agree with. *'It ain't natural otherwise, one can't exist without t'other'*. The first chapter of the *Books of Abraham* makes explicit that the 'chosen' should take Abraham's word (and by implication God's word) before that of the Bible because of the rewriting of the Bible that had been done by successive 'heathens', such as the Catholic church and the Jews.

Father/Husband and Wife/Mother

As was previously noted power within the community is held by all initiated members[28]. Initiated members have an acknowledged 'say' in the running of

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[28] The initiation process begins when a member turns eighteen. By declaring their desire to become initiated they are demonstrating their commitment to the community. The whole process takes about six months and involves the individual learning, by heart, several passages from the *Books of Abraham*. Once he or she have done this and recited these passages at a chapel service the individual is then baptised, fully clothed, in a pool constructed for this purpose in the community's grounds. Once baptised the individual is now deemed to be a 'full' member. People do not have to become initiated, but those who do not will not be allowed a full 'say' in communal affairs, and their position seen as quite odd. The individual should be initiated when he or she feels ready, regardless of their age. All that is necessary is some declaration of future intent.

communal affairs. Uninitiated members, are quite literally children, who must respect their elders and abide by their decisions. This view of the uninitiated is common cross-culturally. Male initiation ceremonies tend to mark the movement of boy to man, with access to the world of men, which is often also the world of political and economic power. Female initiation ceremonies often mark the adult status of girls by the marking of their reproductive careers (La Fontaine 1985).

Esau Zion and I both began the initiation process during my stay. Despite our ages, nineteen and twenty-four respectively, we both were aware of our lack of participation within the community's government. Being initiands we received more information about communal affairs than the children did, but such access did not extend to actual decision-making. We were both in a liminal stage between child and adult. However, despite their initiated status there were some members who still were not afforded a full 'say' in communal affairs in the sense that their opinions, although heard, did not receive the respect that those of others did. Similarly such members, however skilled or talented, would deem the abilities of others as greater than their own. Such members fell into two groups, the single initiated adults, and the two widows. Their one common feature was their unmarried and 'childless'[29] status. Marriage and parenthood combined is then the most prized status for an individual, affording him or her full access to communal power. Although there were no childless couples in the community, I would suggest that they would hold a status somewhere between that of the unmarried, and married members with children. Again it is common cross-culturally for parenthood to be a highly prized social status, conferring on individuals full acceptance within a society, to an even greater extent than marriage. Many cultures stigmatise childlessness, whether intentional or not, and often marginalise those who

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[29] Both widows, Rachel Bejamin and Ruth Joseph, did have grown children, but I am using the term 'childless' to refer to members not actively raising children within a family unit.

fail to become parents. Women in north India gain acceptance and later significant power within their husbands' families through the production of many children (Sharma 1980). A similar situation has been noted among Mediterranean cultures (Peristiany 1965). Often the childless are pitied, as among the Asante (Rattray 1923). If we consider the dominant stereotype of the spinster (and to a lesser extent the widow) within British culture until recently, we can view similar cultural attitudes to those individuals who do not marry and reproduce.

God's Way community's view of marriage is that it exists for the production of children. Their model of a good father and mother is based much on remembrances of Abraham's parenting style, which Isaac often described as *'tough enough love'*. Old Testament images of both fathers and mothers were also invoked. Parents were expected to be strong yet kind. Children were expected to obey their parents. Both parents are deemed as of equal importance. The following quote from the *Books of Abraham* was frequently used to describe the equal contribution of each parent: 'A *flower will only bloom if it has water and light, if it is denied one it will wilt.'*

The community's attitude towards marriage and parenthood has divine sanction. Most references in the *Books of Abraham* to the roles of the sexes are in relation to marriage and parenthood. There is a constant stress in the text of the need to marry and have children (the two are inextricably linked, with communal censures on pre-marital sex, contraception and any form of sexual activity that is not procreative). Men and women become 'whole' as husband and father, wife and mother. As one passage from a section of the *Books of Abraham* puts it:

'Man and woman shall become husband and wife, then father and mother. I am the lord, your father, and you are all my children. The children you have are mine and you shall care of them for me. A child is the greatest gift of creation.'

Many of the readings selected by Isaac for Sunday service revolved around this theme. This 'message' was explicitly conveyed in other ways too. When on those rare occasions that members actually sought passive entertainment in front of their televisions, the videos or programmes that they watched would typically centre on idyllic stable families and their struggle through life. Popular films were *Little Women*, *Swiss Family Robinson*, and a variety of Disney offerings. The happy families featured in such television shows as *The Cosby Show* and *Home Improvement* were both enjoyed and praised, whereas the more dysfunctional clans featured in *Roseanne* or *The Simpsons* were condemned and banned. Similarly the communal book collection, which was scattered between the community's buildings, consisted predominantly of what could be called children's classics, featuring titles such as *Treasure Island, Robinson Crusoe, Black Beauty*, and so forth. As well as these fictitious works there were also a number of collections of illustrated Bible stories (again aimed at children) and a series of good conduct manuals (with titles like *Modesty, Manners, Humility*, and *How to Deal with Rudeness*). When members were watching or reading about these fictional families they discussed the behaviour of the characters. Images of family life surrounded members. However, it is perhaps when we consider the more 'hidden' means by which this 'message' is transmitted it that we can see its centrality in communal life.

As has been previously noted, initiated members only receive a full 'say' within community life once they have become spouses and parents. Yet this fact of life is not explicitly stated; indeed everyone stresses that it is the completion of initiation

that allows an individual to become a full member. However it was clear from everyone's behaviour that this was not the case. The unmarried members would find that older members' opinions were listened to much more than theirs. Often their opinions were frustratingly repeated by older members only to have Isaac accept them. David Joseph, arguably a more skilled chicken crew member than Peter Reuben had to defer to Peter over crew management. His sister Martha, an expert baker, always went through the apparent charade of asking for advice about her dough from the other women. Similarly, she was never asked for advice or help in the bread making of the others. Instead she volunteered suggestions which would be accepted once another older woman had agreed, after some deliberation, with her. With marriage and parenthood comes access not only to power but knowledge and skills. It was often frustrating for those members who were not married (including myself) to cope with this situation.

However parenthood does not appear to convey instant status on an individual. A good parent has to work hard, learn from others, and constantly strive to do better. Isaac's daughter Eve is a good example of the lack of respect afforded a 'bad' parent. Eve who was quite immature despite being the mother of three (she had married at sixteen) was continually berated by the other women for her parenting style. Often her babies would be left crying while she, as her mother described it, *'liked to sit on her rosy butt and watch television'*. She liked to avoid chores and seemed slightly too happy to let someone else look after her children. She was often described as not being a *'proper'* mother. The other married members treated Eve in much the same way as they treated the single adults. Her opinion was not fully respected and she was always the first adult woman to be volunteered for crew work. The community children also must have realised this situation as they quite

often ignored Eve's censures or commands, in a way that they would never have done with one of the other adults.

Rules and Restrictions

All the members loved children and even the smallest child could care for a new baby. It is hardly surprising that the community's younger members desire to marry and have children of their own. Not only are they surrounded by family life, real and fictional, but they also must at some point realise the restrictions upon access to communal power and respect caused by their single status. There is also the issue of personal desire for an intimate relationship. Although the community maintain a prohibition on pre-marital sex, it is probably more due to the community's isolation and control over entry and exit that prevents the younger members having personal relationships outwith the community. Some of the older boys who had slightly more freedom of access claimed to have girlfriends in town, but no one believed them. Due to the community's modesty 'code' I found it very difficult to ask individuals questions concerning their attitudes to sex and relationships. The longer I stayed there the more I too adopted this 'code'. Perhaps too the sense of maintaining some personal privacy in the face of everyday communal life made such questioning seem inappropriate. However, it is probably true to say that all the single members were living celibate lives.

Although everyone did wish to marry and have children there were a number of restrictions which prevented individuals from achieving this goal. God's Way community is endogamous by rule, yet most of the community is already related by

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descent[30]. Those members who could possibly marry each other are either too young or too old. The community rarely recruits new members so the chances of a prospective partner joining the community are slim. If the community did allow exogamy it would still be problematic as members rarely leave the community, except for work, so it would be almost impossible for younger members to meet people in town. The net result is that spouses are few and far between and this causes problems for the unmarried members who can not become 'full' members without marrying. It is at this level that we see gender identities being forged as individuals seek new ways of being men and women.

Alternatives?

I want to suggest that this group of members (the unmarried) appropriate alternative role models which allow them to construct identities which are meaningful to them. Such identities also allow them to express their dissent with communal ideology. This idea is of course only necessary if there is an actual problem expressed. The adults will not discuss where their children's spouses will come from; the stock answer is that '*God will provide*' (this was true as all the marriages since 1980 had been with people who had come to join. Indeed, I found my presence interpreted in this way and became embroiled in a planned marriage). The single adults and the children talk about marriage continually. Unlike the adults who discuss it in terms of parenthood, they discuss marriage in terms of the spouses they will have and how they will find them. They were not interested in the actual state which was most commonly described as '*stoopid*', but with how to achieve it. They were

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[30] See Appendix B for kinship diagrams.

preoccupied with this. Saying *'stoopid'*[31] out loud may not seem a great act of rebellion, but to display publicly such irreverence for such a revered and important institution was greeted always with a swift clip round the ear. Such irreverence on the part of the children and such physical punishment on the part of the adults was rare and gives us an indication of the depth of the problem and the level of anxiety.

Role models are adopted by children and adolescents and indeed anyone in a similar structural position, i.e. the position of learner. Such models achieve many things. They provide ideals to strive for; they are safe zones in which to express rebellion; anxiety, confusion; they provide an neutral environment for experimentation; and, they allow individuals to work through issues of identity at crucial developmental stages. Psychologists and educationalists have long recognised the positive and negative aspects of such models. With this in mind I want to look at the various role models and identities forged from them operating at God's Way and discuss how these demonstrate the public dissent over the issue of being mateless. Although there are a number of different role models operating amongst the community's single people (including the widows), I want to focus on only two due to the constraints of space.

Single Initiated Women (18+ years)

Rachel Zion, Martha Benjamin, Mary Simeon and I constituted the four single adult women who were either initiated or were going through the process during my stay. Although Rachel, Martha and Mary conformed to the behaviour and did the tasks of

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[31] None of the comunity members used 'bad' language. *'Stoopid'* was used by all as an expression of extreme displeasure.

Although Rachel, Martha, and Mary conformed to the behaviour of the other adult women they were often discontented, a feeling commonly expressed by Rachel and Mary as feeling unfeminine. 'What's feminine?' I would say. *'Skirts an' stuff* was the typical reply. In a community where clothes were almost unisex[32] in their drabness and functionality, it was perhaps possible to feel this way, yet the older women did not. Trying to *'feel like a woman'*, as Rachel frequently put it was about trying to be more feminine. She and the others viewed femininity in a very idealised, romantic sense. It was about being beautiful and being pursued by men; it was essentially a passive state. They tried to beautify their appearance, make dresses, design new and more elaborate (and highly impractical) hairstyles. Money was saved and then pooled to buy luxuries like hand cream and hair conditioner. They physically tried to become female, in some sense. None of the three were girls anymore yet they were not 'women' either in the eyes of the community. Instead a new type of female was being created.

In private they continually discussed men and boyfriends, not in terms of getting one because all knew by now the reality of the situation, but in terms of what these men would look like and how they would act towards them. Hours were spent inventing new and even more detailed scenarios of how unsuspecting men would stumble across the community and sweep them off their feet. Such daydreams were embellished by romantic fiction (by Barbara Cartland, Catherine Cookson, Judith Krantz, and others of that genre) and glitzy television mini-series, such as *Danielle Steele's Jewels* and *Jackie Collins' Lady Boss* which were watched in the relative

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[32] Everyone wore plaid shirts, denim jeans and heavy boots as everyday wear, both sexes and all ages. It gave everyone the look of a uniform, with only the colour of the shirts varying. All the clothes were bought from the same warehouse so they had the same cut and style. My clothes (bought in New York on arrival in the USA) stood out with their name brands. On wash day I would find most of my clothes being worn by Rachel or Mary as a way of 'standing out'. As my clothes were non-community, they were deemed feminine, even my Levi jeans which varied very little from their own.

privacy of Ruth Benjamin's house. The younger girls were criticised for being tomboys. *'You'll never get a husband'* was a common refrain from Rachel to the younger girls when they were running wild on one of our group walks (they would always reply *'don't wanna man anyhow, they're stoopid'*). The other women were highly disdainful of such attempts to create an alternative version of femaleness: *'Watch you don't chip a nail'* or *'pretty skirts are all very well but a chicken don't appreciate no difference of skirts and overalls'* were common "put downs".

We can read into this elaborate gender construction the drama and anxiety facing these women in their structural position. Unlike the young girls who could happily pursue their tomboyish ways, these adult women could not abandon their female identity in such a cavalier way. Yet they could not act like the older women, whom they saw as unattractive and dowdy, because those women already had husbands and families. These single women needed to find husbands, but they saw no way of accomplishing this. Instead they attempted to create their own version of the passive, stereotypical female characters of the romantic fiction which they devoured. Such women always succeeded in getting their man, without any real effort on their part except be feminine.

The Uninitiated Boys (5-18 years)

The community's boys; Jacob Zion, Adam Zion, Luke Zion, Joseph Benjamin, Levi Simeon and Daniel Simeon, saw themselves as 'cowboys'. Cowboys were their obsession. They were regarded as the epitome of manhood. The cowboy as Lawrence (1982: 32) points out has long been a symbol of American masculinity.

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It has been suggested (La Ferla 1989) that the cowboy is one of a dozen categories of masculinity that American men can choose from to emulate, and thus define themselves. The boys made fun of the older men trapped by work, commitment, the communal boundaries and so on. They talked about freedom and space, about 'real' skills that were not mundane, like chicken tending. Women and family life were rarely mentioned. They interpreted the older mens' silence as passivity.

It is also currently very fashionable, in America, to be interested in cowboys, as shown by the rise in popularity of western films (Zoglin 1993), country and western music (McLeese 1993), and cowboy fashion styles (Robbins 1993). The boys devoured mail order Country and Western clothes magazines. They chewed tobacco (banned on the community), saved up for Stetsons and other cowboy clothes, and made up cowboy games, such as knife throwing, lassooing, and so on. They constantly discussed what they would do if they had a good horse and some good equipment, where they would go and about how good a cowboy they would be. Attempts to channel this mania into learning real horse skills were ignored. As Jonathan put it: *'Wanna be cowboys who sit on the couch and wear hats so big they would fall offa the hoss because they wouldn't see whur they was going'*. Being very masculine and 'free' was important, as the boys appeared to find assimilating into the world of men, which was silent, tough and about constant, usually tedious, work, quite difficult. The older boys in particular appeared frustrated by their lack of 'say' in communal life, and their 'invisibility' within the world of the older men.

The boys wanted to learn martial arts and participate in contact sports, which the community were against because they saw no need to develop aggression and strength unless it was to be used within the community. Thus the gentle man, the

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father, was being rebelled against. The adoption of the cowboy as a role model from which to forge a masculine identity allowed the boys to create an identity which was the opposite of that maintained by their fathers and desired by the community. The cowboy is independent, and loves space and freedom to the detriment of social ties. The cowboy relies on no one but himself and lives by his own rules. Cowboys also live by physical strength and impose their will through violence. In contrast to the community men who rule through discussion and mutual respect, the boys, unable to be accepted fully into the community's affairs, or mature enough to enjoy the settled and stable lives of the older men, sought out its opposite to give their sense of identity some meaning.

God's Way community's members do not have stressed gender differences, they are complementary and relate to their interpretations of the biological facts of kinship. I wish to clarify this point by highlighting the word 'stressed'. I am not trying to suggest that gender is non-existent - it quite obviously is present. However what I am trying to emphasise is that gender is not used as a means of strictly organising, dividing, or enforcing the community. There are perceived gender differences between the male and female members and these are acknowledged. Yet so are the many other differences between the membership, in terms of personality and physical abilities. The community instead of stressing difference between members rather emphasises the need for each memeber to complement his or her fellows. Again the need to focus on unity is prominent. However, in studying the ethnography there are hints towards the presence of an age-based hierarchy, which gives the more senior members more authority and 'say'. My position within the community as an initiand restricted my access to the workings of this hierarchy and therefore limit the ethnographic material. How members justify such inequality (however informal) would be intriguing to know. It would possibly orient around

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their ideas concerning respect for elders which is stressed in the *Books of Abraham* and their general 'code' of conduct.

Delineated gender is utilised by the voiceless single people. By appropriating outside models of gender they construct a way of defining themselves and of rebelling against the community, a way of silently voicing their concerns at a sense of being let down by the community in not providing for them better. Ardener (1975) suggests that muted groups (and we could view the single people as muted in that they do not have a 'full' voice in the community) as having alternative models of the world; but, these models are muted because they either remain silent or are filtered through the dominant ideology. This seems to be the case at God's Way community where models are created in direct rejection or acceptance of the dominant model of mother/father and husband/wife.

In ICs conformity and uniformity is the ultimate goal. In God's Way community they face a potential crisis due to their marriage rules. This is resolved by the adults ignoring the 'real' problem and indulgently allowing the younger members their fantasies. It *'does no harm to be silly, s'all'* is commonly said in reference to such eccentricities of the young. The adult members know what is going on and they allow it. *'Once they settle, they'll settle'* was what Isaac made of it. *'Papa himself was silly as a young man, headstrong and such, but he turned out alright'*, was what Sarah Zion had to say. Again Abraham was invoked to tell everyone that it was 'okay' to act in this way. God's Way community's approach allows their unmarried members to express dissent and hold alternative models of behaviour but this could become dangerous to group cohesion in the future, as the problem becomes worse with the maturation of the younger members.

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The importance attached to reproducing the group is great. Indeed it is divinely sanctioned according to the *Books of Abraham*. The members are the community and their children are symbolic of its survival. Biological reproduction is also social and spiritual reproduction. The community, divinely predestined, survives through reproduction; biological and social. Reproduction itself therefore becomes spiritual and thus communal. The community is fundamentally embodied even at a biological level, in the sense that parenthood is highly prized. The social parenthood imposed upon all members, by communal child-rearing, also demonstrates the embodiment of communal ideas within each member. All members are mother or father to each other.

In this chapter the embodiment of communal ideas, at the deepest level, has been explored. In the next chapter the embodiment of community will be discussed in terms of its physical and social environment, with reference in particular to the community's view of the 'outside' world.

Chapter Four

A Chicken ain't a Hoss.

Salus Populi Supreme Lex Esto

'*The welfare of the people shall be the supreme law.*'   Motto of the State of Missouri.

In the previous chapter the idea of embodiment of community was explored with particular reference to the faith and identity (the two being inextricably linked) of God's Way community.   But what of their relationship to the 'outside' world?   The community's view of the 'outside' is predicated upon a belief in their own sense of sacredness and inherent 'purity', in contrast to the 'impurity' of others.   Such a view is typical of fundamentalist groups, indeed it is one of their defining characteristics (Ammerman 1987).   However, God's Way community take this idea of separation and difference to a much greater extreme than is typical of most fundamentalists. The strong boundaries that the community maintains between itself and the 'outside' world will be examined in this chapter.   The spatial constructions of the community will be shown to express the sense of embodiment of community highlighted in previous chapters.

In Section I the spatial constructions of the community: physical, social, and mental, will be examined.   These constructions will be shown to demonstrate a strong sense of boundedness and separation from the rest of the world.   In Section II the community's relationship with the '*outside*' will be explored through reference to their use of animal symbolism.

Section I

*'... behaviour and space are mutually dependent ... space defines the people ...
people define the space.'* (Ardener 1981: 11-13).

Meaningful 'Space'

How does something as ambiguous as 'space' become meaningful as a concept?
Indeed what is to be meant be the word 'space'? Heidegger (1971: 154) insists that
all space is without meaning unless 'something', whether physical, social, or mental,
is constructed within it. Lefebvre (1991: 13) reiterates this view by stating that
'space' has no 'reality' without 'energy' being deployed within it. If space then
entails the construction of 'something' it can be supposed that this 'something' must
contain within it purpose and meaning. As Rapoport (1969 and 1990) points out
spatial constructions may at first appear random but few in fact are. The task,
necessary for understanding, is to locate these constructions within their cultural
contexts. As Lefebvre (1991: 12) notes, *'Space considered in isolation is an empty
abstraction'*.

Bourdieu's study of the Kabyle house (1973), Littlejohn's similar study of the
Temne house, (1967), and Gilsenan's examination of street spaces in Egypt (1990:
164-171) are a few examples of cultural insight achieved through studying spatial
concepts. Indeed, Rapoport (1986), looking at seemingly 'empty' urban wasteland,
and Noyes (1991: 196) examining colonial space, have both demonstrated that even
'empty' space may in fact have an important role to play for a cultural group.

God's Way community, as an IC, which is in all senses a 'deliberate' construction,
has many important spatial constructions. ICs are particularly salient examples of
spatial construction because they are deliberately, indeed, 'intentionally',

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constructed. Thus, we can expect to find their ideals and beliefs 'built' into their construction and organisation.

I intend to follow Foucault (1973a) and Lefebvre (1991: 11) by examining these spatial considerations under three headings: physical, social, and mental. Neither writer defines these headings with any great specificity. I am taking 'physical' to refer to the 'actual' physical environment of the community; its buildings and land (following Lefebvre 1991: 11). 'Social' and 'mental' are harder to define and separate. There are obviously grey areas between the two. Foucault (1973a and 1973b) does not make a distinction between the two. Lefebvre (1991: 11 and 38) suggests that we take 'mental' to refer to *logical abstractions* and symbols, whereas 'social' refers to that *conceptualized by society*. Such a distinction is a hazy one, but if one is wary of its limitations, it has some use. I will be taking 'social' to refer to social ordering, rules, organisation, and so forth. That is those structures which are 'visible' within communal ordering of space at a 'surface' level. 'Mental' will be used to refer to their conceptualised views of space, focusing especially on the process of 'othering'. Mental spatial constructs are less visible than social ones and are accessible through the study of a number of symbolic devices, such as animal symbolism and language use.

Physical Space

The State of Missouri

We must first locate the community within its wider geographical context. God's Way community is located in the southern tip of the state of Missouri, in the area known as the Ozarks. It is important to acknowledge the community's location within Missouri (and indeed the USA in general) as many of their views of the world

and others are related to their geographic location. Although their belief system has a greater part to play in their worldview it is still important to note those views which the community shares with other groups. Many of the community's views of the *'outside'*, such as their dislike and distrust of urban areas, connect them to the views of many groups on the *'outside'*. In some ways their separateness demonstrates their very connection to the *'outside'*.

Missouri is the most central state in the union, bordered by eight other states. To the south are Arkansas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Kentucky. To the east it borders Illinois. Its western border is with Kansas, and its northern border Nebraska and Iowa. At once it has southern, midwestern, and great plains influences in its cultural environment, reflected, for example, in its variety of accents (Kurath 1972). The state has always been viewed as a cross-roads between different areas and cultural traditions. Missouri was the starting point for western pioneers, as well as the gateway to the south for the more western territories. Its position as a cross-roads is partly due to its two great rivers: the Missouri that cuts across the state, and the Mississippi which travels down the entire eastern state line.

Missouri became a state in 1821 and has always been hard to categorise due, in part, to its geographic and cultural mix. Ambiguity and cultural fluidity has remained a trademark since its inception. Although seen as a 'slave state' and marginally aligned to the south, it did not join the confederacy in 1861 and remained in an ambiguous position, with both sides of the Civil War using the state for strategical ends (Bailyn *et al* 1977). Missouri has always been politically Democratic, largely due to the urban vote, yet it also remains the home for the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, and has a large Fundamentalist Christian population.

The state has a population of just over five million[33], of which the vast majority (four and a half million) are White. The small (around half a million) African-American population, as well as other minority groups, are centred in the urban areas, predominantly St Louis (almost a fifth of the city's population being Black). The state has an immigrant population of around 1.6%, compared to the national average of 7.9%. Although Jefferson City is the state capitol, St Louis is the largest urban centre (the seventeenth largest in the entire country), with almost half of the state's population living there. This once elegant city, built by French and Italian settlers from the South, now has some of the worst urban problems in the USA, with a quarter of its population living below the federal poverty level. The state is ranked eighth in national security payment figures, and twelfth in the national violent crime figures; two sets of statistics which further demonstrate the problems which beset the urban areas. Apart from St Louis, Kansas City, to the north east, is the only other city with over one million inhabitants.

The majority of the state's population are urban and involved in the manufacturing or service industries. Although only a small percentage of the population are involved in agriculture, there are over one hundred thousand farms, which make Missouri the second largest farming state in the union, after Texas. Thus, once away from St Louis, the state has an overwhelmingly rural, midwestern character. The rural areas also face a number of social problems, such as high rural unemployment and ever dwindling returns for the small farmers. Large numbers of small farms go bankrupt each year.

Missouri is a state with a tension between its urban population, who are in the majority, and its scattered rural communities. The urban areas, St Louis in particular, control state resources, politics, and administration. The 'image' of the

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[33] All statistics from the U. S. Bureau of the Census (1993).

state is also defined by these urban centres, whose crime and welfare statistics are nationally known. Whereas the urban areas see themselves as more connected with the Eastern states and the nation in general, the rural areas tend to be more inwardly focused. The rural communities feel that their own particular problems are not treated seriously by the bureaucrats and politicians in Jefferson City. There is also a strong sense that the rural communities who 'live right' are overlooked while the '*cityfolk*' who are stereotyped as Black, poor, possibly criminal and probably drug addicts receive all the money and attention. I often heard such sentiments expressed by the local townspeople, as well as by the community's members. Local newspapers and radio stations echoed this feeling. From my travel within America's rural midwest such sentiments are commonly expressed, indeed one could suggest that they are typical of rural communities in industrialised nations who feel marginalised and isolated from the centres of power and finance. Conversely I found that '*cityfolk*' tended to stereotype the rural areas in much the same way. While staying with friends in St Louis I often heard the use of the word 'hillbilly' in a derogatory way. Rural populations were identified as '*backward, dumb, and prejudiced*'. God's Way's members often pointed out that this view of the countryside held by the '*cityfolk*' pleased them as the crucial fact concerning being 'hillbilly' is that although others think one is dumb due to a lack of education, the 'hillbilly' is in fact ingenious and cunning. The 'dumbness' is to some extent a guise.

God's Way's members share the views of their immediate neighbours in relation to their sense of isolation from the state's government and bureaucracy. They also expressed a similar distrust of Washington and federal bureaucracy in general. If Missourian government was distant, badly run, and ineffective, then Washington's incompetence was beyond adequate expression. The MidWest region tends to see itself as ignored or even abandoned by the national power centres of Washington,

New York and Los Angeles. Similarly the region tends to be stereotyped as distant, backward, and isolated.

The Ozark region includes southern Missouri and northern Arkansas. Taking its name from the myriad of small mountains (Ozarks) found there. The area is also known for its great beauty, with it being predominantly forested. There are a number of state parks and much of the area is given over to tourism. Apart from tourism, the majority of the population is involved in agriculture, especially livestock production. The people of this region are predominantly White, Christian, rural, and from a traditionally Irish-Scots heritage. The natural shelter and privacy provided by the physical environment of the area has long resulted in it being a shelter for everything from Ku Klux Klan activity, smuggling (originally moonshine and now drugs), and various other nefarious activities. On a less sinister note the area has always been known as an 'escape' and for this reason it is one of the top five states for IC construction in the country (FIC 1991).

'Hillbillies'

The Ozark area has a distinctive cultural identity, most commonly referred to as 'Hillbilly'. This identity is shared with other 'Mountain Whites', most commonly those in Apalachia and West Virginia. Kalikoff (1993: 98), who has done some of the most significant ethnographic work on 'hillbillies', notes that this identity stresses plain speaking, practicality, distrust of outsiders, and a general adherence to traditional rural values. Being 'hillbilly' is more relevant to the Ozark region's identity than being identified as Missourian. It is hard to express the sense of isolation and insularity among the Ozark communities, an isolation that is reinforced by the topography of the region. The isolation of mountain communities has played

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a large part in the formation of 'hillbilly' culture, particularly in its sense of separation from the rest of the USA (Harless 1970: 23).

The idea of a distinctive 'hillbilly' identity is still greatly disputed (Williamson 1995: 27-28) with some characterising 'hillbilly-ness' as the typical values extolled by rural populations throughout the USA. Kalikoff refutes this view (1993: 91) stating that the isolation, poverty levels, original ethnic composition, language use, and the historical development of the 'Mountain Whites' in states, such as Kentucky, West Virginia, and Tennessee, makes them a specific cultural group. Linguists (Wells 1987: 471 and Kurath 1971: 18-19) have identified these peoples as a group acording to specific language forms and usage, while ethnomusicologists and historians of American music have also labelled 'hillbilly' music as a unique form (Harless 1970: 27). There are two centres of research into 'hillbilly' music and history at the University of Kentucky and at the University of Tennesee. However, there remains less research into this particular cultural group than others in the USA although the inclusion of Kalikoff's work on Apalachian 'hillbillys' in the *Encyclopedia of American Social History* (1993), which is an ethnographic and historical survey of American ethnic groups and sub-cultures, shows that 'hillbilly' culture is beginning to be 'taken seriously' (Kalikoff 1993: 86).

Williamson (1995: 31) states that the 'hillbilly' is an important figure in American cultural discourse. The 'hillbilly' is at once loathed and admired; as Williamson notes 'filthy yet free' (1995: 32). The 'hillbilly' can be seen as a representation of all that is best in American culture, for example, individuality, freedom, innovation, and resourcefulness, or it can be used to represent a darker vision of the nation, as isolated, backward, too individualistic, and perhaps out of control. Representations of 'hillbillies' are prevalent throughout American popular culture, from the comedy heroes of the successful television show *The Beverly Hillbillies* to the darker, more

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sinister figures in the film *Deliverance*. The peculiar feature of 'hillbilly' culture, according to Williamson (1995: 35), is that 'hillbillies' appear to relish the stereotypical portrayal of their culture by 'outsiders'. Stereotypes of 'hillbilly-ness' serve to reinforce 'hillbilly' values, such as distrust of 'outsiders' and their sense of isolation. Kalikoff (1993: 95) notes that 'hillbillies' are one of the few American cultural groups who do not, typically, challenge contemporary stereotyping of their culture. He suggests that this is because such stereotypes are an important part in reinforcing their cultural identity.

God's Way community's members proudly identified themselves as 'hillbillies'. Indeed, they often made reference to themselves as being 'hillbillies' and would locate their values and ideas within that cultural tradition. This was in contrast to their sense of being American or Missourian. They rarely expressed identification with the rest of Missouri. The community's distrust of government, organised religion, and 'outside' interference all identify them with being 'hillbilly' (see Kalikoff 1993: 86). Similarly their slow, broken and typically forthright way of speaking, as well as their desire to return to 'old fashioned values and ways' (as Sarah Zion described it) are also 'hillbilly' in nature (see Kalikoff 1993: 86-87). Community members would often justify their ideas through recourse to this 'hillbilly' identity. For example, their lack of education was seen as a result of their 'hillbilly-ness'. 'Hillbillies' value resourcefulness and pragmatism over 'learning'. Members would often present what 'outsiders' might label as 'failings', such as lack of education, their poverty and so forth, as positive features of their way of living. It is typical among 'hillbilly' groups to convert what could be viewed as negative attributes into positive ones (Harless 1970: 26).

This identity did not however connect the community, in their view, with their 'hillbilly' neighbours despite an apparent cultural kinship. Their neighbours were

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still '*outside*' but perhaps a more closer, understandable or acceptable '*outside*' than other groups. The rejection of their neighbours in this way is partly due to their view of the 'outside' as 'fallen', which is predicated on their view of themselves as 'chosen'. However, this rejection can also be seen as reinforcing their sense of 'hillbilly-ness'. Kalikoff (1993: 94) notes that 'hilbilly' groups do not see themselves as part of a wider 'hillbilly' cultural group, rather they prefer to remain as isolated, scattered, and individualistic pockets of 'hillbilly-ness'. This ties in to 'hillbilly' distrust of 'outsiders' of any kind. The sense of isolation and cultural independence of such groups is so great that all those not part of a particular group are viewed as potential sources of trouble. 'Hillbillies' may identify others as like themselves but there will always be a sense of separation.

This part adoption of the 'hillbilly' identity is curious when it is considered that the community originated in Arizona and was led for most of its history by a man from St Louis. The community's desire to isolate themselves from the '*outside*' would also suggest a desire on their part to remove all '*outside*' identities. Perhaps the 'hillbilly' values with which they so identify afforded a relaxation of the boundaries between community and '*outside*' in order to make interaction with the '*outside*' easier. Also the 'hillbilly' identity offers many sentiments in common with the community's own worldview and perhaps this identity was adopted at an early stage of the community's development as a way of creating a more homogenous identity for the group. If we recall from the community's history the early founders were a group who represented many different cultural and social backgrounds and so there would have been a need to adopt mechanisms which facilitated the creation of a group identity. Typically, none of the members could explain this adoption of 'hillbilly-ness'. Yet it remains a curiosity particularly as many of the members deliberately shed other cultural 'baggage' on moving to the community. For example, Peter Reuben had spent all of his life, prior to joining the community, in

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Florida, while Naomi Simeon had been brought up in Chicago, yet both now appeared as 'hillbillies' through and through; their previous lives completely 'removed'.

God's Way Community

Before I had visited God's Way community I had no idea what it looked like. Rachel Zion had sent me no photographs of the community, although she had described the physical location and its great beauty. We drove to the community in Isaac's pick-up truck from Rington[34], where I had been collected at the bus terminal. As the journey progressed, the state highway gradually was whittled down until we ended up on narrow, stone strewn, pot-holed roads that went endlessly up, around and down forested Ozarks. I was struck by the remoteness of the area. The nearest town[35] had been two hours previous and we had yet to reach our destination. The few houses we passed were hidden behind the thick trees that covered the area. We were soon the only vehicle on the road. The signs of other people became even less, while the number of trees and hills increased. This gave me a feeling of complete disorientation, made worse by a feeling of nausea produced by the constant twisting and turning of the truck. It felt as if we were travelling deeper and deeper into the heart of 'something'. We finally hit an even smaller, more broken track which caused Isaac to announce that we would soon be home, as we drove up it. As we turned what Isaac promised was the last corner, the thick woodland suddenly subsided and a well built ranch, with impeccably maintained lawns came into sight. I assumed this was the community and felt a moment of relief until I realised that we were not turning up the drive to this place but were continuing onwards.

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[34] This is the nearest city. It has a population of about 50,000 and is a four hour drive from the community.

[35] Winterholm is the nearest town. It has a population of approximately 1500 and has a number of amenities, including, the local elementary school, a fire station, a post office, and one general store.

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We turned one more corner and were faced with what, to me, initially looked like a tiny shanty town. As we bounced up the pot-holed 'road', my travelling companions (Isaac, Rebekah, and Rachel) all exclaimed '*home at last*'. I realised this odd looking place was the community and my new 'home'. The buildings (I initially did not realise they were houses) were an odd array of unevenly built structures. They were a curious mix of wood, scrap metal, and polythene sheeting. The buildings varied in size and most looked like they were about to collapse. A number of derelict buildings were also dotted around, as were old pieces of machinery. I later found out that these were the remnants of the Schism fire.

As we drove up to Isaac's house, the somewhat shocked look on my face must have been obvious to the others, as Rebekah suddenly said '*well it's home to us*'. This statement brought me back to 'reality', as I felt awkward at my appearance of rudeness. Isaac, perhaps realising that I had not meant to cause offence and wishing to relieve the tension that may have formed, explained the odd appearance of their home. The community was intentionally ramshackle and patched together. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, it saved money (and the environment) as they '*recycled*' others' '*cast offs*'. Secondly, it was a good security strategy as my reaction had just demonstrated. They hoped that trespassers would react as I had and turn around and leave, assuming the community to be poor with little of value to steal or damage. Isaac often joked that '*We look so poor, they'd leave us money*'.

The inside of Isaac's house, where I shared a room with his niece Rachel Zion, was as ramshackle as the outside, with the furnishings being an equally strange mix of old wood and furniture. The dimensions of the house seemed to defy normal construction. Yet, the rooms were homely and welcoming. The interiors of all the houses were modelled on pictures from historical magazines of frontier homes. Isaac's living room (like all of the living rooms in all of the houses) was dominated

by the huge black wood burner that supplied heat to all of the rooms of the house via a system of floor and ceiling vents (which also meant that nearly everything happening anywhere in the house could be heard), and hot water to the kitchen. The burner was fuelled by wood from their own forest and gave off the sweet scent of maple and other local trees. Sarah Zion believed that the sweet smell of the wood purified the air of the houses. All the rooms had small windows and few lights, giving a dim glow to each room. The glow and the heat from the burner mixed to give each room a feeling of cosiness. The interior of each house was marked by the absence of any doors. Rooms were separated by doorways. Each doorway had a screen, or more usually a curtain, to attain some privacy. People knocked on the door frame before entering someone's bedroom. To close the curtains before bedtime was an invitation to prying eyes. Even the bathroom had only a curtain to shut it off, which was a constant source of hilarity for the children.

All of the members live in houses arranged by family grouping, except for the two widows who each live alone. Each house has a central living room, kitchen and a number of bedrooms. The houses, like all of the community buildings, have electricity and running water, although in winter the water supply can be frozen for weeks. No one has a room of his or her own, each person shares a bedroom. The houses are all very similar inside. The decor of each house is sparse bar the odd family photograph. Isaac's house is slightly larger and also houses the laundry, which everyone uses. Isaac also has a study which has the only telephone on the community. The telephone is only used for business.

Later on that first day, I was taken around the community and the design of the place appeared more clear (see map in *Appendix A*). In the centre stands the communal dining hall and kitchen which is sturdily built from new materials and stands hidden from the outside by the other buildings. The other houses are located in and around

the dining hall, demonstrating the hall's central place in the community's life. The most derelict buildings are located around the houses and these are the structures that are first seen from the front entrance road. At the back entrance stand the animal sheds and also the outfields. Although these are valuable resources and require protection, they are in no danger as they are surrounded at the back by the majority of the community's land. There is no entrance to the community from the south. There are many 'no trespass' signs and all of the land is fenced with small wooden fences.

However it is easy for people to get on and off the community if they wish. This fact should be noted by those who maintain a belief that communal groups coerce their membership. Members can leave at any time. Isaac often stressed that the children and teenagers could leave, if they wished, when they turned eighteen. No one becomes a 'full' member until he or she is initiated. A member can leave at any time and the only consequence is that he or she can not take anything with them when they leave. No members have left since the late 1970s when three of Sarah Zion's daughters left to get married. All three still keep in touch with their mother. Members who leave are seen as *'fallen'*; perhaps 'lapsed' is a better word as their 'state' is not seen as being as bad as that of other *'outsiders'*. The older members maintained hopes that such people will return. Sarah often expressed wishes to that end. None of the teenagers, despite their moans, ever discussed leaving the community. The only real physical deterrent to movement between the community and the *'outside'* is the topography of the area, with the nearby woods, valley, and hill tracks making access difficult. Their nearest neighbour is a cattle farmer twenty minutes drive away in the valley that the community overlooks.

To the outside world they appear 'real' "dirt poor" farmers, whereas inside a different picture emerges. It is difficult to know what the community looked like

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before the Schism fire as no plans nor photographs survived. It would appear from what the older members said that the buildings were better built with 'proper' materials and methods, as opposed to the somewhat 'patchwork' approach of the current buildings. Despite the almost continuous need for maintenance no one ever complained about the leaks or the draughts that were a daily feature of living in the community. Even though the chicken crew members often discussed the new buildings being erected by the farmers they worked for, and how smart they were, no one ever suggested that the community change their design or plans. The only building which merited new materials and 'real' organised building design was the dining hall. Isaac had constant plans for expanding this building and its store rooms, a demonstration of the importance of this building to the group.

From the physical construction of the community two important factors emerge. On the one hand there is a genuine need for security and on the other there is a need for expression of the values of the group. The design of the community affords satisfaction of both these requirements. The appearance of the buildings deters potential thieves, yet at the same time it allows the group to demonstrate their 'hillbilly' ingenuity by recycling used materials. The layout of the community with the ruined buildings and woodland on the perimeter and the houses forming a circle, with the dining hall in the centre, also provides security. This design can be seen to 'say' much about the community's values.

At the centre of the plan is the most communal building of all: the dining hall. Close to it is the chapel. The two most important buildings, expressing belief in God and the group, are at the heart of the community's design. The homes of the members, which are places where private and public space merges, encircle these constructions at a slight distance, while these are in turn surrounded by their land

and the ruins of the past. It should be recalled that the land is seen as 'given' by God and thus can be assumed to afford some degree of divine protection.

If we recall from the community's history that Abraham believed circles to be sacred the question of whether the slightly circular design of the community was intentional is pertinent. The current community layout is practically the same as the original, although the houses are smaller. Whether Abraham, or the other original founding members, deliberately chose this design is impossible to know.

The interior of the homes reiterate the values expressed in the outside construction. Again there is recycling of used materials. The interiors of all of the houses are similar, with the focus on the living room (the most 'social' room), dominated by its wood burner. The lack of doors expresses the importance of the group over the individual and further demonstrates the extent of embodiment of belief among the members. If one is part of the overall group and vice versa then there should be no need for a strict division of 'private' and 'public'. The curtain demonstrates that there is only a temporary need for this division to be established. This need is prompted by the group's modesty 'code' rather than for any other reason. The sparse decoration of the homes also reinforces the fact that these dwellings are constructed for people who do not spend much time in their homes, rather they prefer to work and be active. The dining hall and the chapel are the only two buildings where any effort has been made to decorate the walls and add some comfort. Thus the design finely balances security considerations with communal beliefs (although the extent to which this is intentional is uncertain).

Social Space

As an IC, egalitarianism, the expression and importance of the group, is the paramount consideration in terms of organising the membership. This essential egalitarianism is expressed in the actual physical design of the community. Nearly all communal activities involved groups of members, if not the entire community. Even those events which appear 'private' such as childbirth also become communal, with most members attending the birth. Yet the idea of the paramount importance of the group is not enough to fully understand the centrality of community within the lives of the membership. Their communal dining, schooling, worship, and work can not solely be understood through reference to socialising mechanisms (see Kanter 1972 and Hechter 1990). Although many of the practices of the community can be interpreted in this way, such as their restriction on entry and exit, the close monitoring of 'outside' influences among the membership and so forth, it is also possible to raise many examples which suggest an alternative explanation may be preferable. For example, Why do members say prayers on exit and entry to the community? Why do they have specific dietary ideas? And what 'good' in terms of group socialisation would lie in Sarah's Zion's belief in the purifying properties of the community's wood? The key to this lies in the very sacredness of the land.

God's Land

'Lose yourself in nature and find peace' was a quote from the *Books of Abraham* carved into the chapel table. It describes the peace and tranquillity of the community's setting. Their location is especially 'meaningful' as it was chosen by God as a *'promised land'*. The history of the community recalls that Abraham visited this site originally with the intention of making it a stop-over before journeying further in search of the *'promised'* area. The site at that time was

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occupied by the Asher ranch. On that first visit Abraham survived an attack by a poisonous snake, an incident which was taken as a divine sign, and the community was established.

Features of the physical environment are taken by the present members (and as Isaac recalled by the founding members as well) to reinforce the fact that this land is *'chosen'*. Features such as the rich farmland, natural well, and the teeming wildlife, were all taken as signs of divine grace, reinforcing the view that this was indeed the *'chosen'* area of God. This fact imbues the entire physical location with a sense of 'sacredness'. A 'sacredness', and by implication a 'purity', which needs to be maintained. Although not all ICs claim to be divinely chosen, most at least maintain a strict adherence to one ideal: the 'purity' of the idea of the group. It could be argued that the boundedness of most ICs is existent in order to ensure this 'purity' rather than to coerce its membership.

Durkheim (1915) theorised that all social space was divided into the sacred and profane. Boundaries between the two are constructed and movement across such boundaries is marked by ritual. This we can see by the physical and social boundaries erected by the community against the *'outside'*, which they see as distinctly profane. The 'leaving' and 'returning' prayers said at the boundary gates, before and after every trip, are rituals that mark movement from sacred space to the 'dangers' of the profane *'outside'*. Douglas (1966) expanded on this idea with her survey of pollution taboos. Douglas (1966) saw the creation of such taboos as a way of establishing boundaries between groups. Such boundaries were established around the idea of purity and pollution related to issues of sacredness.

God's Way community have a very marked view of the *'outside'* as polluting and have many controls on access into the community from the 'outside'. It is common

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among fundamentalist groups to have a strong sense of themselves as different and separate. Such groups are built upon the notion that all around them are 'fallen' and by implication 'polluting' (Ammerman 1987). The members of the community have a particularly pronounced view of their own sacredness due to their 'chosen' status and divine predestination.

Foucault (1973b) noted that boundaries both include and exclude, and that the more malign boundaries are not usually physical but social (and mental). Thus, it is relatively easy to cross God's Way's physical boundaries: their fences are low and wooden. It is much harder to cross their other boundaries. I will be expanding on their view of the 'outside' and their process of 'othering' under the heading of mental space, but first I want to discuss their views on social purity.

The 'Purity' of the Land

The membership maintain that the land upon which the community stands is 'pure'. This 'purity' is illustrated by their fresh water supply, the high fertility of the soil, the size and healthy appearance of their vegetables, and the health of their livestock. Such 'purity' is emphasised by the fact that artificial fertilisers or chemicals are not used on the soil. Only organic farming methods are used, ensuring that the 'natural' balance is maintained as God intended. Sarah Zion maintains that even the wood from the community's forest has a 'purifying' effect when burnt. Even the wild animals which inhabit the community's land appear to be effected. David Joseph maintained that although the community was often over-run by poisonous snakes, especially copperheads, none of the members were ever bitten or attacked. Similarly Jonathon Benjamin, the member most involved in monitoring the local wild-life, explained the reluctance of the coyote, bears, and wild-cats, who lived

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nearby, to venture onto the community's land as due to their *'sense'* of the *'sacredness'* of the area.

Social Purity

As Douglas (1966) noted, groups who create boundaries between themselves and others, due to beliefs concerning purity and pollution, also tend to incorporate the body into this schemata. If the community's entire space is considered sacred, indeed if the very act of living communally is an act of devotion, then the very body of the individual member is part of this embodied *'sacredness'* and thus needs to be maintained at the appropriate level of 'purity'. However as Douglas (1966) points out the body is continually faced with the infringement of nature upon its boundaries, threatening purity levels. The maintenance of bodily purity entails a variety of pollution taboos and purity rituals, as seen for example, among Hindus (Dumont 1966) and Gypsies (Okely 1986). It can be seen to a lesser extent in the dietary restrictions of Judaism and Islam which seek to maintain an internal sacredness by eating specific foods and avoiding prohibited ones. God's Way also has its own set of such 'rules'.

The primary way to maintain the 'purity' level for the individual member is to live *'correctly'*. That is to follow the ways of the community fully. As Isaac would often note, if one member slipped up then his or her behaviour effected everyone, as all are connected. He sought *'whole'* people, stating that it was God's wish: *'He doesn't want part folk, but whole ones'*. Members should approach work with a *'willing heart'*, and fill their leisure with *'purpose'*. The modesty 'code', which involved prohibitions against swearing, drinking, smoking, pop music, licentious behaviour and so forth, should be strictly followed. Younger members should defer to the older ones, while the elders should respect the opinions of the young. People

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should share 'willingly' and endure hardship.   Ostentation and luxury should be shunned and simplicity embraced.   In this way the individual member could establish mental 'purity'.

Bodily 'purity' is maintained in a number of ways.   Although the healthful properties of the community's food and water will be discussed at length in the next chapter, a few brief points can be highlighted.   The members drank only their own well water, which they believed had cleansing properties.   They frequently spoke about the *'purity'* of their water and how Abraham had had it tested, revealing it to be almost one hundred percent pure.   Members added drops of a chemical (bought from the mail order herbal foods company for whom Isaac works) to glasses of *'outside'* water believing that it would remove the effects of chlorine and lead, which members claimed *'outsiders'* put in water to poison each other.   Other drinks, such as coffee or soda pop were seen as *'poisonous'*.   God's Way's members tried to avoid eating *'outside'* food.   They prefered to eat food grown on community land as this land is *'pure'*.   When forced to eat in *'outside'* restaurants they ate very plain meals that resembled their own, such as beans.   Throughout the meal they would complain about how bad the food was and usually left most of it.   Their monthly shop saw them buy only those products that were deemed necessities.   They prefered to follow a limited, plain diet of their own produce rather than buy *'outside'* food.   Their diet of vegetables was seen as *'light'* and healthy.   Their own specific dietary restrictions are on pork (following *Leviticus*) and on milk (following the *Books of Abraham*).   They did not like to eat too much meat and saw 'junk food' (including sodas and chocolate) as *'poisonous'*.   The sickness of the children due to the occasional chocolate binge on day trips, was attributed to the *'poisonous'* nature of the food rather than a case of over-eating by the child.

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They see their diet as '*cleansing*' for the body. The maintenance of a '*pure*' body is an easier task than the keeping of a '*pure*' mind. There are a great many '*outside*' influences on their children, especially at school. The '*purity*' of the body is also maintained by ensuring typical standards of hygiene, although everyone washed in cold water (except babies and very young children), dismissing the more hygienic properties of heated water. Cold water was seen as being '*purer*' than hot, which was seen as '*softening*' to the body, thus making it more prone to infection. The continual and often serious colds and coughs exhibited by nearly everyone throughout winter were not seen to disprove this theory. The community stress the unity of body and mind. Each must be '*pure*' to ensure a '*whole*' person. Members must also ensure that everyone else maintains the appropriate standards of purity.

Maintaining Purity Across Boundaries

However much an individual, or a group, ensure their personal level of purity, the crossing of boundaries between their 'space' and that of the 'outside' always poses a threat. The 'outside' by the fact that it is not 'inside' threatens the sacredness of the 'pure' group and is therefore potentially 'polluting'. This fact is exacerbated for God's Way community as they are forced to cross their boundaries on a daily basis. There are three main reasons for this. Primary among these three is the need to earn money. Due to a number of factors previously discussed the community must seek employment outwith their ranch. (Their dependency on the local chicken farmers was discussed in *Chapter Three*). The inability to achieve full self-sufficiency also means that they must buy a large part of their food from the '*outside*'. The monthly shopping trip to Rington is only ever done by Isaac and Rebekah. This was not because the others were prohibited from going but rather because none of the others wished to make the journey.

Rebekah must go as she is responsible for the domestic budget and Isaac goes with her because she can not drive. Often they would ask if anyone else would like to go with them. Rebekah, in particular, likes other members to help her with the shopping as she maintains that although her husband has many *'talents'*, shopping is not amongst them. On one occasion I persuaded Rachel to go with me on the shopping trip, as I felt in need of a break, however short, from the ranch. It was an enjoyable day with the grocery shopping only taking a short time, we wandered around the town and had a nice meal in a local diner. I was the only one who seemed to enjoy the day. Much to my surprise and then slight irritation my travelling companions, and Rachel in particular, found fault with everything and talked only of the joy of returning *'home'*. Following this experience I turned down Rebekah's request, the following month, to accompany her on the next shopping trip.

The compulsory attendance at the local state school until the age of twelve was the third source of 'contact' with the *'outside'*. The community members felt helpless at their lack of control over what their children were learning. Although they can pull their children from certain 'unsuitable' lessons, such as sex education and physical education (for the girls), the children on the whole must attend the same classes as their peers. The occasional lapses into bad manners, untidiness, laziness, or rudeness among the children were seen as the result of 'lessons' learnt at school. Although the worst behaviour among the community's children was exhibited by the adolescent boys who attended the community school, therefore suggesting that education may not be the prime factor involved, the adults insisted that the state school was the root of *'much evil'*. School friendships between community children and their class-mates were discouraged. The value, or importance, of *'outside'* friends was dismissed. Kenturah Zion turned twelve during my fieldwork and started attending the community school. She had a difficult time being the only girl

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attending the communal school, and so missed her school friends a great deal. Her requests to visit these friends or have them visit the community were ignored, although she was allowed to write a few letters. Such harsh treatment was not seen as such by the others, and Kenturah's subsequent 'bad' behaviour was seen as part of her general personality rather than brought about by the obvious trauma of changing schools.

In an attempt to counter-act the 'polluting' influences of the *'outside'*, the community members say prayers on exit and entry to the community. These prayers are calls to God to protect them during their trip, however short and for whatever purpose. All trips to the *'outside'* are purposeful and contain the least number of members necessary for the task at hand. Even of those leisure trips held for the benefit of the children will feature only a small number of adults. Such controls ensure some control over group 'purity'.

However there is also the danger of the *'outside'* crossing their boundaries, rather than the other way around. Ensuring control over the malign influences of the *'outside'* within the community itself is perhaps far harder than maintaining 'purity' on 'controlled' excursions across their boundaries. Television, newspapers, radio, and music all pose threats to the community's ideals. Subsequently these are carefully monitored. They read a small number of publications which Isaac ordered by mail. These included a monthly newspaper, published by a fundamentalist Christian organisation, which provides national news coverage with a strong Christian and Republican bias, and a number of special interest magazines. They also subscribed to two mail order catalogues. All publications were kept in the dining hall where members can read them.

Television was always watched as a group in one of the living rooms - the exact location is decided that night at supper, although it usually tended to be at Isaac's house which is slightly larger, and therefore encourages more members to attend. They had a few favourite programmes, usually either clean-cut family shows, or western films and series. Members never watched current affairs or news programmes. Occasionally the children were caught watching some 'banned' show. The adults who caught the children would instantly assume that the child had nothing better to do and needed to be occupied with some extra chores. Because of this the children kept a careful watch at the door when they were watching 'illicit' television, game shows being a curious favourite. Most of the time the community preferred to watch the videos that Isaac had either rented locally or bought via his subscription company. Films tended to be family oriented or westerns. Such films and programmes reinforce their own views and ideals. The members never watched in silence but continually talked through shows, commenting on everything from the clothes to the action. This meant people were always missing important parts of the plots and most videos were watched many times before everyone had finally understood the storyline. Most listened to Christian-run Country and Western radio stations whose music echoed many of the community's views on the family. Pop music was banned and the occasional tapes borrowed by the children from school-friends were confiscated.

While electronic intrusions can be switched off the community find it harder to deal with actual 'visits' from *outsiders*. Apart from the mailman no other person is allowed to walk onto the community without obtaining permission beforehand. If business associates or relatives in town wish to visit, it will be organised several days beforehand. The community are wary of strangers and tightly enforce their 'no trespass' signs with shotguns. A continual war is waged between the community and the local teenagers who use the outfields to smoke dope and drink.

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The community has controls and rituals that it maintains to ensure that the 'pollution' of the *'outside'* is controlled. Yet they face a continual struggle to hold the influence of the *'outside'* in check as it encroaches more and more upon them, with neighbouring land sold off to build holiday homes for *'cityfolk'*, or turned into hidden locations for drug growing (Marijuana is illicitly produced throughout southern Missouri whose geography affords isolation and privacy). The continuing growth of the local towns and the ever increasing lengths of new highway also threaten the community's original isolation.

Mental Space

It is hard to distinguish between mental and social space. I have taken 'social' to refer directly to the organising of the social order, whereas 'mental' refers more to the conceptualisation of space, rather than its actual ordering. The 'mental' space in question here is the conceptualisation of the 'outside' by the community. This is in contrast to the physical and social ordering of their environment already discussed. The community's members conceptualise the world beyond their community as composed of a variety of 'others'.

The process of 'othering' has been identified by some (For example Arens 1979 and Cohen 1985) as a way in which one group defines its cultural identity by opposing what they believe themselves to be against that of another, typically neighbouring group. Thus Scots are Scottish because they are not English (Cohen 1985), or 'we are X because we are not cannibals' (Arens 1979). Cohen (1985) does imply a political dimension to this process but appears to deny that identity is possible without recourse to comparison with another culture. Although the initial process of

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'othering' is built upon some ideas of cultural identity this is not necessarily the crux of the process.

Foucault (1973a and 1973b) sees 'othering' as a process concerned with power and control. Scots claiming to not be English, due to their 'Scottishness', do not actually 'say' much about their identity but do communicate a great deal about their perceived political situation. Said (1978) in his examination of the western construction of the 'Orient' discussed how the West placed into the category 'Oriental' everything that it did not identify with or desire, perhaps, in itself. The Orient was deemed exotic, magical, sensual, amoral, and so forth. As Said (1978) points out this construction served a political purpose, aiding the advance of colonialism. Yet the West's building of an imagined 'Orient', or indeed the reverse process of Occidentalism, is not primarily concerned with the identity of those doing the 'othering'. Rather the process reflects a political situation and the exercise of power and control. The western desire to colonise the East was not made possible by cultural stereotyping but by a considerable imbalance of power and might. The cultural stereotypes are more likely to have followed on from the domination of the other culture, as a source of justification on both sides of the process. Thus, the East's inability to repel the West is seen as reinforcing this imagined cultural inequality.

Foucault (1973b) noted that there is also a psychological element to such processes. Often the construction of the 'other' contains that which is forbidden, the unknown, dangerous, or feared. The physicians and scientists so intent on classifying insanity and disease throughout the Nineteenth Century did so with such zeal because, Foucault (1973b) suggests, there existed a very real anxiety concerning the spread of disease and insanity. If we reflect upon the West's construction of the 'Orient' we can see within it a psychological drama between Western (and in particular British)

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Victorian puritanism and the 'imagined' East where all those desires and practices outlawed by the prevailing western morality were deemed to exist. Ultimately it is a concern with maintaining cultural norms. Those groups who were vehemently not cannibals, but who claimed to be surrounded by cannibalistic neighbours (Arens 1979), are not only commenting upon a relationship between themselves and other groups, but a latent anxiety concerning something as abhorrent as cannibalism which few cultures would condone as suitable or beneficial social behaviour.

God's way community's identity is not predicated upon any other group, rather it is based around their belief in their divine predestination and communal way of life. Yet they participate in the construction of an elaborate 'other'. Their 'other', simply referred to as the *'outside'*, is literally all those who do not live inside the community. Such people are *'fallen'* because they have not been *'saved'*. The community has an overall lack of interest or concern in what is happening around them, whether locally or nationally. I would suggest, following Foucault (1973a and 1973b), that their frequent discussions of the *'outside'* are motivated by a desire to express the power of the community, yet underlying this they are also expressing anxiety concerning their relationship to the *'outside'*.

To firstly consider the issue of power. Although it may be hard to consider thirty four isolated 'hillbillies' as exercisers of great power, in their view they do. It is after all only the community who consider themselves to be *'chosen'* and therefore to be the only ones who will survive the Day of Judgement. They also believe themselves to benefit from divine guidance at all times. The *'outside'* for all its apparent power does not have this. Although the community's members acknowledge the present power, and to some extent control, of some *'outsiders'* upon their way of life, people were fond of saying *'not long now'* before Judgement Day and the rise to power of the *'community's way'*. Their faith empowers them.

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The community members rarely talked about *'outsiders'* in a fearful way, but were most typically mocking of the *'outside'* and its ways, using a tone that seemed smugly superior. Talking about the *'outside'* in this kind of way allowed members to express the ultimate power and authority that they believe their beliefs hold.

However, there is also an expression of anxiety underlying their discussions of the *'outside'*. Members are not anxious that the *'outside'* will permanently contaminate their lifestyle or rob them of their identity - indeed the only group in their history who have tried to damage the community were the Schism dissenters. Rather the chicken farmers or trespassers who they daily face threaten to disrupt the smooth running of their lives. Such people are a nuisance who impede the members' daily business. They are obstacles to be overcome. Members do not talk nervously about the chicken farmers, or the drunken teenagers who party in the outfields, instead they use a world weary tone as if these people were nuisances to be removed. God's Way's members seek efficient, productive, and orderly lives, indeed it is a fundamental part of their 'code'. Any disruption to their well-ordered lives affects the members. As the Day of Judgement approaches, the members consider time to be very precious and certainly do not wish to waste any. Much *'preparation'* is still to be done. The *'outside'* threatens to disrupt the order they seek and waste valuable time.

However, as Cohen (1985) notes, most 'others' are not composed of one opposing group, but many. Indeed the 'othering' process may throw up an number of 'others' each reflecting a different political relationship. The community talk about the 'outside' as a uniform 'thing', yet it is clear that there are different levels of *'outsider'*, each with their own peculiarities. Each 'other', made distinct by the community, can be separated along the lines of distance - physical or social, from the

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community itself. The less the community know about a particular group the more fanciful and elaborate their 'othering' becomes.

'Townsfolk'

The vast majority of the community's dealings with the *'outside'* are with their immediate neighbours: the nearby farms, the local chicken farmers and the townsfolk of Winterholm. Apart from a few individuals in town (for example the craft shop owners who give good prices for their crafts), most of these people are categorised as being bad mannered, lazy, greedy, and inconsiderate of others. Such characterisation reflects the community's troubled relationship with the few *'townsfolk'* that they know. They maintain a 'cool' relationship with the two farmers who own farms most immediate to their own land, meeting only occasionally over boundary disputes. The other farms, like their own, are plagued by teenagers using the outfields for parties. God's Way believe that the other farmers do nothing about this activity and probably grow drugs themselves. There are constant squabbles over boundary lines with the most immediate farm, and legal action is often threatened. Their relationship with the chicken farmers who quite clearly exploit the community workforce is similarly fraught with mutual distrust and dislike. It is perhaps unsurprising then that in these individuals there appears to be confirmation of the traits that the community 'believe' *'outsiders'* have. Every interaction with their neighbours or employers allows their stereotypes to be reinforced.

The community know or speak with few *'townsfolk'* yet associate them all with the behaviour exhibited by the farmers. Their explanation for the 'difference' among the craft shop owners is not explained, such people are seen as *'good livin' folk'*. The high prices fetched for the community's quilts has perhaps something to do with

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this image. However these relationships soon change if any members witness 'unexpected' behaviour from these shop owners, such as a low price or a less than polite demeanour. When this happens the shopkeepers are categorised with the rest. Their lack of social interaction with the people of the town and the fact that all of their local news is gained from the town's rather sensationalist newspaper serves to perpetuate their image of the townspeople.

The '*townsfolk*' are not seen as necessarily immoral, like '*big cityfolk*', but rather more as badly behaved and greedy. Some in fact have a potential for improvement, as Isaac often remarked concerning certain individuals he had met. Obviously the '*townsfolk*' are an 'other' who are, in some ways, less of a 'problem' than other 'others'. They are closer and more easily observable than the '*cityfolk*'. The community must have some contact with the people of the town. Also the community and the '*townsfolk*' do share a sense of local identity which can not be overlooked.

'*City Folk*'

The only other direct contact with the '*outside*' is with '*cityfolk*'. These are the people from Rington who come to the local area. Most come to hunt at weekends, but a large number of teenagers come to the area to use the countryside to hold parties and take drugs. The elegant ranch that I mistook to be the community is in fact owned by a city couple who use it for hunting expeditions. The weekend hunters are disliked by the community. The community abhor blood sports and see the hunters as '*disrupting*' the '*natural harmony*' of nature. The hunters are rich and their ostentation also causes upset among the members. The hunters and the teenage revellers share many characteristics. Both groups trespass, make great

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noise, appear arrogant, and seem unconcerned with disturbing the locals. Each group looks primarily concerned with its own satisfaction.

The community's view of the city is greatly effected by their dealings with these particular people. The assumptions made concerning '*cityfolk*' are also borne out by their monthly trips to Rington. As a small city it has few of the problems that trouble St Louis. Its streets are clean, the crime-rate low, and most people appear courteous. Yet to the community's members the people are rude, obnoxious, and of low morals. The clothes of the passers-by were commented upon and used to morally judge the wearer. Ironically few of the city's people seemed to wear anything that contrastive to what the community members themselves wore. The city was identified as dangerous, with lots of crime. The community had no evidence for this as it is well known that Rington is one of Missouri's safer cities. Small crimes reported in the newspaper, such as the occasional mugging or drunk driver, were taken as symptomatic of the troubles of the city.

Again we can see a construction of the 'outside other' which is more extreme than that of the '*townsfolk*', yet is still based on a sort of reality and corresponds to some of the community's dealings with these people. The '*cityfolk*' still appear to have some redeeming features. In both examples the construction of the 'other' is based on some knowledge of the subject. Distance and dependence upon both groups of people ensure that their respective 'image' is less extreme than that reserved for other groups. While the '*townsfolk*' were considered merely bad tempered and rude the '*cityfolk*' have a more questionable moral character and are seen as very selfish. Yet both groups are still identifiable as 'ordinary' Americans with whom the community, when it occasionally chooses, can relate.

The most extreme 'other' is the *'big cityfolk'*. These are the inhabitants of St Louis, New York or any of America's other large cities. Few of the members had visited a 'big' city and those that had overwhelmingly negated the experience. Naomi Simeon, who was brought up in Chicago would often describe her hometown as if it were an anarchic and dark place. The community's members had not travelled widely and few had even crossed the state border. Consequently their knowledge of their own country was based upon contrastive images produced mainly in the Christian fundamentalist media that they absorbed. This is a media that delights in focusing on the great urban problems often painting a portrait of the USA as if it were a battlefield on the streets of its major cities. Stories about crime, shootings, wide-scale drug use, paedophiliac rings, prostitution, homosexuality, and the divorce rate were among the type of 'facts' printed about the lifestyles of the city inhabitants.

Isaac often worried about the ever increasing size of the big urban centres and saw them as the source of all that was wrong with the nation. The typical city dweller was seen as Black, amoral, deviant, dependent upon the state, and probably a drug addict. Community members were incredulous when I was unable to verify the chaos of *'big city'* life from my short stays in New York and St Louis. They seemed genuinely surprised that I had survived at all. They found it hard to believe that I had not been threatened by gun-toting addicts everywhere I had walked.

The community blamed the big cities for draining the country's resources and considered the nation to be at the mercy of various *'big cityfolk'*, who by implication could not be trusted. America's malaise was caused by this amoral 'other'. The community consider themselves patriots and many of their members, past and present have served in the military. However they see America as a nation in peril,

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whose only hope are the right wing Christian Coalition and a return to the values of an 'imagined' small town turn of the century America. Although no community members vote, they do express nominal support for the political values of the powerful fundamentalist lobby. As Noll (1992) notes fundamentalist groups have always sought to return to the values of an idealised nation made up of small towns.

The '*big cityfolk*' are the most extreme of all the three types of 'other'. They are also the farthest removed from the members, physically and socially. These people are seen to encapsulate all that the community loathes, and perhaps also fears. The '*big cityfolk*' are the most polluted of the three types and the members take particular glee from the fact that it is these people who will suffer the most on the Day of Judgement.

The 'othering' process is complex and involves many different categories of people, invoking a variety of motivations and emotions. The 'other' are also talked about symbolically through the community's use of animal symbolism. Section II will more fully explore this.

Section II

Section I highlighted the community's view of their neighbours and the rest of the '*outside*' world, that is the world not within the community's boundaries. Yet as was discussed in *Chapter Three* the community is economically dependent upon the '*outside*'. This situation is stressful for members who would prefer to keep their dealings with the '*outside*' at a minimum. Of all their external dealings the most 'problematic' is the work of the chicken crew.

Although the crew work is hard and unpleasant these factors are not in themselves the source of the crew's (or the rest of the community's) angst. I would suggest that the chicken crew work before the Schism was not viewed by the community as any different from their other work activities. It has only become a source of anxiety and loathing because its physical and structural position, in relation to the community, has altered. Previously the crew work was done in the community and all their labour benefited the community alone. Now the crew must work on *'outside'* farms, doing work for the benefit of *'outsiders'*. Yet the community is dependent upon the income generated by the crew as it represents their main source of income. This places the crew's members in a difficult position. On one level they wish to benefit the community and follow their own strict work ethic, which is an integral part of their code of conduct. At another level none of the crew wish to allow *'outsiders'* to prosper, nor do they have any desire to spend large amounts of time away from the community.

Members' unhappiness at the crew work is visibly demonstrated in two ways. As mentioned in *Chapter Three*, the members showed a marked reluctance to volunteer for crew work when extra workers were needed, in contrast to members' usual willingness to help each other. It could also be seen in the *'l'il'* prayers said quietly by individual members as they carried out their work. Again this is in opposition to community teaching which is against private prayer (see *Chapter Two*). Such prayers were an attempt by crew workers to focus on their faith as a way of getting through the work. As Rachel described the prayers, it helps *'me to get through my day, as God sees fit.'* She often told me to try it when I looked tired during the work. David Joseph would often reflect on *'all that talkin' to God about chickens'* which they all did and worried that God might think that they were a *'right bunch of*

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whining no goods'.   Such divergence from communal norms of behaviour and teaching demonstrates the ambivalent relationship that exists between the crew members (and the community as a whole) and the chicken work.   Their beliefs tell them to work hard and help provide for the community, but it is hard to work with a *'willing'* heart when one is primarily benefiting the *'outsider'*.   The crew on the whole maintained the typically stoic work ethic of the community, refusing to complain or moan about their work in public, and rarely even in private.   However the members implicitly comment on this relationship with the crew work (and by implication the *'outside'*) through their use of animal symbolism, and in particular the opposition of chicken and horse.

'A chicken is not a horse!'

The phrase a *'chicken ain't a hoss'* was uttered on a daily basis, during crew work and in the community in general.   The phrasewas not exclusive to the crew members, as it was used by all.   At first I did not pay any attention to this curious phrase as it merely served to reinforce my view (at the start of my fieldwork) that these people were 'dumb hillbillies' given to eccentric turns of phrase.   It should have perhaps been more obvious to me at a much earlier point that a people who used words so sparingly were probably trying to 'say' something other than the obvious zoological fact that a chicken is most definitely not a horse, by any stretch of the imagination.   Yet this phrase continued to crop up in all sorts of conversations.   It became apparent that this phrase was commonly used by all and not just the crew workers as I had originally thought.   Perhaps it was only with my own continued participation in the crew work that it became more obvious as to what meanings the phrase might carry.

The phrase, '*a chicken ain't a hoss*', was also said in the same particular way, further demonstrating its usage as a carrier of some type of meaning. The speaker always said the phrase with great solemnity, accompanied with a dramatic slow shake of the head as if to express some disappointment with the fact that a chicken was not, in the view of the speaker, a horse. His or her audience would also adopt a grave demeanour and nod their heads slowly in agreement, occasionally saying '*ain't that right*'. The overall effect could often appear quite comical, particularly as its recurrence became noticed by myself. A member might say this while throttling a chicken or changing a diaper, but always in the same way. It should be noted that the members are not prone to theatricality and usually tend to deflate anyone who attempts such pretension.

Animals and Symbols

If we consider the community's relationship with animals in general it is possible to see the importance of the chicken and the horse over all other species. The members see all animals as beautiful, as they are all part of God's creation. However some animals, for example snakes, need be controlled as they pose a danger due to their own peculiar '*nature*'. Jonathon Benjamin, the member responsible for monitoring the incursions of wildlife, and snakes in particular, into the community's grounds, did not blame snakes for the consequences of their actions, but rather would point out that a snake is just doing what a snake does. It is the responsibility of others to avoid getting in a snake's way. Animals, like people, had their set '*ways*' and according to Jonathon these should be respected. The community despise blood sports in contrast to the majority in this area who virulently oppose gun control. They consider hunting for 'sport' as a disruption of

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the natural order. The weekend hunters were seen as *'disrespectful'* to animals and by implication God. The members are all interested in wildlife and are very knowledgeable about the species that live around them. This interest is stimulated by watching natural history documentaries and reading similarly themed books.

The community is surrounded by a forest and a valley which teem with wildlife. The community also keep their own cattle and rabbits. Many of the surrounding animal species are particularly commented upon due to their encroachment upon community life. Many of these animals are also used symbolically within other cultures, particularly American-Indian culture. Given the community's passion for all things Native American it is surprising that they do not adopt any of its symbols. Each night coyote (a common symbol of approaching death) howl in the valley that the community overlooks, disturbing sleep and frightening the children. Other Native American symbolic animals, such as bears and eagles are also spotted near the community's boundaries. The reason why the community do not use Native American symbolism is perhaps because such symbols do not 'say' anything to the community's members about their world and its relationship with the *'outside'*. It may also be because although the community have an interest in Native American culture it is just another of their many hobbies. Although members do have an admiration for many aspects of Indian culture I do not believe that they would place it in an equal relationship to their own. Native Americans remain *'outsiders'* and therefore the community do not have any identification with Indian animal symbols.

Snakes are a constant nuisance, in particular copperheads, as they infest the community's land and need to be periodically killed for safety. As Mundkur (1983) notes snakes are an almost universally used symbol cross-culturally, probably due to their ambiguous physiology. There is also the armadillo, which due to its

unfortunate habit of sleeping in the middle of busy roads, is a regular roadside casualty. When the crew truck passed by an armadillo corpse there was always the cry of '*stoopid*' creature from some of the community's members, as we drove past in the crew lorry. Yet an individual who did something silly was not referred to as being 'stoopid as an armadillo'. Nor were others 'noisy as a coyote', or as 'annoying as a snake'. The only animals used to denote personal characteristics were chickens and horses. Thus, '*you make a chicken look clever*' is a regular insult among the children at school. A stupid person was '*stoopid like a dumb chicken*'. As no other animals are singled out in this way it can be deduced that there is something important about this pair of animals in relation to the community that is absent in the other species mentioned.

Lévi-Strauss (1964), in his study of totemism, made the point that animals are '*good to think*' and that humans indulge in the symbolic use of animals to structure and think about their world. Both Willis (1974: 128) and Douglas (1990: 33) make the point that this symbolic use of animals is based on the recognition, by humans, that animals are at once part of us and yet not part of us. As Willis (1974: 129) states: '*as symbols, animals have the convenient faculty of representing both existential and normative aspects of human experience, as well as their inter-relation*'. When God's Way's members talk of chickens and horses they are thinking through their world. This is a world where people are torn between a desire to do what is best for the community, yet in the act of doing this they are in danger of putting this communal ideal in jeopardy.

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It is salient to consider the nature of the crew work. Most poultry farms consist of about six or seven huge chicken sheds, each holding up to four thousand birds. These sheds are rectangular in shape, with very low ceilings. There are no air vents or windows, but a series of shutters line the walls. The shutters are old and rusted, making them difficult to open. The first thing that hits one as the shed door is opened is the stifling smell of ammonia which stings the throat and eyes. The ammonia is given off by the chicken excrement which thickens the dirt floor. Following the stench one becomes aware of the dust which is stirred up by so many flapping birds, who are instantly 'spooked' by the appearance of the crew. The wall shutters are only opened in very hot weather and so the smell and dust is trapped within the shed. The sheds are hot and stuffy in summer and freezing cold in winter. The crew members are distinguishable from others by their chesty coughs and streaming eyes and noses, all caused by their over-exposure to the ammonia and dust. After only one appearance on the crew I too had puffy eyes and a streaming nose. After a week of crew work I had developed the hacking cough which took several months to go away once I had left the community. Although the crew all wear scarves around their mouths and noses, with hats drawn tight over brows, the smell and dust still permeates through. It only takes a few minutes before each member is covered in dust, feathers, and muck from so many flapping birds. The dirt floor is uneven and is dotted with pot-holes. In the dusty atmosphere it is easy to twist an ankle or lose balance. Flapping birds scratch faces, ears, and necks. Somehow claws manage to pierce through the padded gloves that all of the members wear. No matter how 'padded' up everyone is - with thick jeans, heavy boots, padded gloves, thick plaid shirt (with the collar turned up), hat, and neck tie, everyone leaves with a fresh set of cuts and scratches. Additional hazards are faced

during debeaking when tired hands mistakenly inject poultry vaccine into fingers instead of birds, causing digits to swell for days. The smoke emitted from the debeaking machines makes the operators feel nauseous, with its smell of burning Keratin. Bird catching strains wrists and arms, while loading hurts backs. Crew members were rarely without some malady, although like all the community's members these were borne with little complaint or fuss.

The work is carried out efficiently with everyone slotting into their selected place in the crew. Positions are decided by choice and ability. Most get to do what they prefer doing. No one talks during work, although a few can be seen saying quiet prayers under their breaths. The nature of the work allows one to switch off to the task at hand and focus on other things. While I spent most of my crew work time trying to list things that I could be better spending my time doing than catching chickens in Missouri, my crew-mates admitted to a variety of distractions which were more 'dutiful'. David Joseph mentally listed all the odd jobs that needed doing around the community, while Rachel Zion said that she recited songs from the *Books of Abraham*.

Chickens are treated with little respect and are killed with no display of compassion. This is uncharacteristic of the community who usually treat animals with great reverence, stressing the need for individual members to slaughter rabbits, cattle, and even snakes, quickly and cleanly without causing undue suffering. During the chaos of crew work many birds will injure themselves by flying into walls or bunching into groups which suffocate many. Yet care is not taken with the slaughter of injured birds. If a chicken has not been killed outright it will be dropped to the floor and left to jerk and spasm until it finally expires. The crew member responsible for 'killing' the chicken will point it out to the others, and all

will laugh and jeer at it. Unco-operative birds will be punched and often a bird will be killed because it was '*naughty*'. The children find great amusement in the birds. They throw them against the shed walls and try to make them fly. They laugh when the bird fails. The children also will jump up and down on dead birds in order to hear them squawk. (Dead birds still do this due to the expulsion of air trapped in their lungs). The children are not reprimanded for behaving in this way and often the adults will join in the laughter and fun. The chicken is a figure of fun, generally treated with great contempt.

The poultry farmers and their ranch hands are never present, nor even visible to the crew. The crew works alone, without assistance. There are no washing facilities and everyone travels home dirty and hot. If it is going to be a long day they bring their own water and food. During the nights of loading the crew must watch as the truck driver drinks coffee in the ranch office with the farm hands, while the crew work on through the night. Apart from the 'leaving prayer' said at the boundary of the community no one speaks during the journeys to the chicken farms. Similarly there is silence on the return journey, as everyone tries to catch some sleep. Everyone seems greatly relieved to return safely to the community at the end of a crew shift. The crew members, such is their approach to labour, do not dislike hard work, even if it entails dirty or hazardous conditions. Yet there is something fundamentally disliked in the crew work.

'If Wishes were Horses'

This treatment of chickens can be sharply contrasted with the way in which members behave with their horses. The community has ten horses and ponies. These

animals are kept for no other reason than pleasure, unlike the cattle and rabbits which are kept for subsistence. All of the members ride and all are involved in caring for the horses. Even the children will willingly volunteer to muck out a stall or bag up the day's feed, in contrast to their usual reluctance to volunteer for anything. Members spend hours grooming the animals. Some animals must endure hours of grooming as members take turns with the brushes. People delight in plaiting tails and manes in elaborate ways. Tack is lovingly polished and mended. The tack catalogues that are sent to the community via a mail order firm are pored over by all, with each new catalogue greatly anticipated. The arrival of a new catalogue would provoke hours of discussion concerning which items would be bought if money was plentiful. The community members' typical shunning of extravagance was ignored in the face of pages of fancy saddles and bridles. The community's horses would be mentally pictured in each different item from the catalogue. Members are tender with the horses, and talk to them gently in whispers while grooming or riding, in a tone which is reminiscent of the 'sweet nothings' of lovers. When a horse falls ill its condition causes great concern, far more than that demonstrated when a person is sick. The sick animal's progress will be closely monitored, with everyone insisting on continual 'updates'. The members loathe the idea of eating horse meat and frequently accuse others of doing so. MacDonald's, the fast food chain popular with 'outsiders', was accused by many members of using horse meat. Unlike the chicken the horse is respected, well treated and greatly loved.

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I want to suggest that the members are indulging in the play of tropes and that each animal is symbolic of the community's precarious relationship with the '*outside*'. A trope, according to Fernandez[36], is '*a movement or turning in our understanding*'. Metaphors, metonyms, and irony are all examples of tropes. Fernandez (1991: 8) points out that anthropologists have been too pre-occupied with metaphor to the detriment of other tropes which may also be in use. He also stresses that we must be aware of each specific context within a given culture of such trope use, and consider the likelihood that in different contexts different tropes may be at play. Turner (1991: 121-158) demonstrates this in his re-examination of the Nuer's famous '*twins are birds*' statement. He found that in different contexts this statement invokes different tropes, and that therefore its meaning alters slightly with each context. I would suggest that in God's Way community they are not indulging in the explicit use of tropes, perhaps in keeping with their sparse use of language. They would never say: 'chickens are them, horses are us', unlike , for example, the Bororo's clear identification of themselves as '*red parrots*' (Turner 1991). However, I want to suggest that there is an implicit use of metaphor and metonym which identifies the horse with the community and the chicken with the '*outside*'. It is necessary to examine the peculiar attributes of each animal.

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[36] Department of social anthropology seminar on 28th October 1991.

The chicken is obviously a bird. L´evi-Strauss (1966) classified birds (in his study of French conventions concerning animal names) as being metaphorical humans. They are separate from our society, but they do form 'societies' which appear homologous to our own. This is particularly true in this example: the chickens actually live at some distance from the community. I want to suggest that they represent the '*outside*' society. Let us consider the chicken further. Chickens are not accomplished birds: they flap instead of fly, they do not sing, they are not aesthetically pleasing (like a Swan is), nor are they skilled (in the way that an Eagle is with its hunting prowess). The members stress these facts constantly: '*dumb bird can't fly*', which would be followed by someone launching the unfortunate chicken into the air, only to see it crash into the barn floor. '*Boy, you some ugly critter*' was another familiar comment made usually to individual birds during the vaccination and debeaking process. The crew also pointed out constantly how the birds were only interested in their own survival and would seemingly sacrifice other members of their 'flock'. Chickens will peck each other to death or scramble on top of other birds during 'bunching'. The chicken was also seen as '*dirty*'. Peter Reuben, the crew's leader, described them as '*livin' in shit and eatin' it*'. The barns were rarely cleaned out so there were considerable amounts of bird droppings which produced the ammonia that caused such discomfort to the crew members. The chicken in some sense causes actual physical harm to the crew. The chicken as symbol of the crew work also can be seen to cause spiritual harm as well.

The relationship between the crew and the chickens was similar to that described by Tambiah (1969) concerning the relationship between Thai villagers and their dogs.

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The dog is seen as an unclean, loathsome creature, which even though it lives in the home, has a somewhat precarious existence. The Thai villagers used references to dogs as the greatest insult that could possibly be made. Tambiah relates this to Thai views on kinship and purity, the dog symbolising impurity. The chicken too symbolises impurity, real and imagined. It embodies their perceptions of the '*outside*' world. This proposition is furthered supported by Leach's (1966) examination of the relationship between the use of animals as terms of abuse and kinship relationships. He proposed that different animal names denote different levels of abuse due to the relationship between man and animal. This relationship mirrors, Leach contends (1966), the categories of individuals we can or can not marry. For example, 'hen' and 'duck' are affectionate terms rather than terms of abuse. The hen and the duck are both farmyard animals, who live close to man but are not members of the family. Farmyard animals are thus equal, according to Leach (1966), in category to friends and potential mates. Family pets live with humans and therefore belong in the category prohibited by the incest taboo. We prefer to call our pets by special names and the use of specific references to the animalness of our pets, such as dog or bitch, therefore become terms of abuse. The community's use of the chicken as a form of abuse can be related, via Leach's schema, to the chicken's position as an bird which lives outwith the community and it therefore occuppies a category similar to strangers or potential enemies rather than kin or potential kin.

Chickens, like '*outsiders*' are of no value, they 'kill' their own to survive, they are dirty and they cause ill to the community. A chicken can not be trained, nor does it co-operate with other chickens in the way that other birds do, again this echoes the community's perception of '*outsiders*'. The chicken, representative of a loathed

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task which members must participate in for the good of the community, becomes the perfect symbol for the equally loathed '*outside*'.

The Horse

The horse on the other hand has a dual nature: it is both individual, yet social. Horses can lead or be led. A horse can work with an individual rider, or it can work as part of a team. They are 'clean' animals and can be trained to be productive. L´evi-Strauss (1966) suggested that race-horses are metaphorical humans, because like birds they have their own society which resembles human society. I would suggest that in God's Way the horse is both metaphorical and metonymical in relation to the community. They are metonymical in that they are part of the community, yet they are metaphorical because they do not play a meaningful (in the sense of practical) role in communal life and in some sense are therefore separated from the community.

The horse is a commonly held symbol of freedom. Both Lawrence (1982) and Okely (1986) present this symbolic view of the horse in relation to, respectively, cowboys and traveller-gypsies. God's Way community as a group do not see the horse as a symbol of freedom, indeed their horses never take them away from their grounds. Yet the horse has also been used to invoke ideals of community. In Ancient Greece the horse was seen to demonstrate the values of that community. Although a strong and proud 'individual' it accepts citizenship in a public system. Such equine communality is also demonstrated by Lawrence (1982) in her study of rodeo riders and their horses. The horses were seen as an integral part of the rodeo

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'community'. This was taken to such a degree that horses were led into the rodeo saloons and joined their rider for a drink! However both of these examples also demonstrate the duality of the horse as metaphor and metonym. In Greece the horse was being held up to not only stand for citizenship (in opposition to the anarchy of nature), but at the same time it was also representing the social ideal desired by that particular culture. Lawrence (1982) points out that the rodeo horse in some sense embodied those values, of courage and wildness, which the riders were striving to achieve.

For the community the horse symbolises themselves. It is clean, communal (groups of horses will work together), beautiful, beneficial to health, and so on. A horse can lead or be led, just as a community requires active members who are also able to place their trust within the group. Yet in it could be suggested that in some sense the horse is slightly beyond the level that the members have reached - it in some ways embodies values yet to be fully achieved.

Chickens and Horses

'A chicken ain't a hoss' is an implicit use of metaphorical and metonymical speech by the members. A chicken is not a 'hoss' because the 'outside' is not the community: 'They are not us'. They have opposing values and patterns of behaviour. The sombre tone adopted, including the regretful shake of the head, when saying this phrase perhaps demonstrates that not only is a chicken not a horse, but that a chicken can never become 'like' a horse. By implication the 'outside' can never become like the community after all a chicken can not learn, unlike a horse.

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The community's members would probably refuse to acknowledge any meaning behind this phrase, seeing it as just a statement of fact. But if this were the case one wonders why it is used so prevalently. Although they like to state the obvious, no phrase is said more frequently than '*a chicken ain't a hoss*'. The frequency of usage implies meaning.

Somebody Else's Moon[37]

God's Way community's orientation in the world is defined by their faith. Their belief in their own predestination and divine selection sets them in a 'pure' versus 'impure' opposition with the rest of the world (the '*Outside*'). Such an opposition does not manifest itself solely in their physical environment, but due to the embodiment of 'belief' among members it can be seen in the social and mental ordering of space as well. Thus faith becomes a divider of space at all levels, including ways of viewing the world. In the next and final chapter the focus on the community's worldview continues with reference to their use of language and everyday ritual.

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[37] Title of a Country and Western song popular in the community.

Chapter Five

Sauerkraut and Beans

'Repetition, the re-experiencing of something identical, is clearly in itself a source of pleasure'
- Freud.

'You got a good taste going on this 'kraut! God himself gave this 'kraut'. Isaac Zion.

The preceding chapters, although each focused on different aspects of God's Way community's 'culture', all had as their underlying foundation the community's belief system. As has been argued this set of beliefs is embodied within every aspect of communal life, at once creating and yet also justifying meaning. To put it another way the focus has been upon the community's essential sense of 'being' in the world.

'Being' is the term borrowed from Heidegger's (1962) distinction between *dasein* ('being in the world') and *sein* ('being'). Our *dasein* is our sense of engagement with the world, in contrast to our individual sense of our own 'being', i.e. the physical body, our emotions, our thoughts, and so forth. The two interact, although the sense of *dasein* inevitably becomes more prominent. The notion of 'being' is preferable to other, older terms such as 'ethos'. 'Being' contains within it a sense of action on the part of an individual or a group, in contrast to the passivity of a concept such as 'ethos'. For one to 'be' in the world one must, according to Heidegger (1962), 'be' active in that world. Merleau-Ponty (1962) holds a similar view of the essential 'being' of life. He contends that one exists in the world through active engagement with this *'lived-through-world'*.

'Being' in the world requires an active participation and engagement between the individual (and/or the group) with their 'surroundings'. Such engagement is

maintained at many levels and, as demonstrated by the previous chapters, can be examined through looking at many different aspects of a given culture. In this chapter the community's use of language and everyday practice, the most mundane yet ephemeral part of their lives, will be explored. The way that members do their daily chores or the fact that they appear to prefer silence to speech may seem inconsequential, yet as Tyler (1987: 67) points out *'Words and deeds in that commonplace world of our daily lives constitute a context of mutual implication that is the background of our awareness'*. Studying the way members' wash dishes is as useful a tool towards 'understanding' the community's sense of 'being' in the world as is locating their history, or their spatial constructions. The community's use (and non-use) of language will be discussed in Section I. In Section II everyday practice and 'ritual' will be examined.

Section I

'Language could be an object of meaning as well as its means of expression'. Tyler (1978: 3).

Both Heidegger (1962) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) saw language as the key factor in our active engagement in the world. Indeed for Heidegger language was the *'house of being'*. Wittgenstein (1953) went so far as to suggest that language was the *'limit'* of our world, controlling our actions and understanding. Gadamer, another philosopher interested in language, action, and meaning, notes that (1976: xxix):

' . . . *language and understanding are inseparable structural aspects of human being-in-the-world, not simply optimal functions that man engages in or does not engage in at will. What is given in language, is not primarily a relation to this or that object, or even to a field of objects, but rather a relation to the whole of being.*'

The study of 'being' and language are not concerns of the philosopher alone, but have come to preoccupy the anthropologist as he or she tries to interpret meanings within cultures. Weiner (1991: 16) sees the study of language use and discourse

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analysis as the fundamental starting point for any cultural study if we have any hope of interpretation. However, this argument is not grounded in some Whorfian notion of language shaping and controlling culture, but rather a more sophisticated suggestion that both language and the individual/group are active participants in their world, each moulding and altering the other. As Tyler (1978: 5) states the study of a culture's use of language affords *a distinctive way of understanding the world*. Therefore if language is our most direct way of engaging with the world then the analysis of speech and discourse is necessary for understanding 'being'.

It is not, however, enough to document language use alone; rather we need to incorporate action also. Austin (1975) divides speech into three 'acts': *phonetic*, *phatic*, and *rhetic*. The *phonetic act* is the actual uttering of speech sounds. The use of specific words and sentences is the *phatic act*, whereas the *rhetic act* is the 'performance' of the speech act, including in particular what linguistics terms paralinguistic communication (Fastold 1990). Gesture, voice intonation, and posture, are all paralinguistic devices. Tyler (1978) in his examination of speech and writing demonstrates the cultural loss inherent in writing as it is divorced from such paralinguistic (he uses the terms *'illocutionary'* and *'perlocutionary'*) acts which add important emphasis and meaning to that which is being spoken. Language divorced from context loses meaning (1978: 14-17). This view is echoed by Goody (1987), Tannen (1992), and Finnegan (1992). Thus, the model required is one which shows the speech act with its accompanying action in order to give some sense of 'being'. However, Tyler (1978: 3) also warns that language is not just a transmitter of information but may be meaningful in itself.

An Oral Community?

Before looking at God's Way community's use of language it is important to note the importance of speech (as opposed to writing) within the group. I argued in *Chapter One* that the community have an oral tradition. As Finnegan (1992) and Tonkin (1992) both stress the distinction between oral and literate traditions is clouded, with overlaps existing between the two. Many cultures operate both traditions, although typically one will be privileged over the other. For example, the community's members can all read and write, albeit at a remedial level, yet they do not privilege books, writing, or academic education (which we tend to associate with the written). One 'part' definition would be to locate within the category of 'oral', those cultures whom privilege speech as a transmitter of important cultural knowledge or 'truths'.

Using this definition it is possible to label God's Way community an 'oral culture'. Although the members do read it is not on a regular basis. Most of the members try to avoid having to write anything more substantial than their own signatures, which those involved in external labour often must do to finalise contracts or complete receipts. Isaac, as the group's administrator and business negotiator, is probably the member who writes the most. None of the members enjoyed creative writing as a past-time. Writing was associated with external work and school, in other words the world of the *'outside'*.

God's Way's preference for orality has three elements. Firstly, the community associate the written with the *'outside'*. Secondly, the members are staying 'true' to their 'hillbilly' identity with its distrust of education (associated with writing and reading). Lastly and by far the most important is the fact that the community's faith, its 'true knowledge', has always been orally transmitted. Although the *Books*

of Abraham, the central source on their faith, is written it is not a record of events but a transcription of God's words, like the *Qu'ran*. (Eickelman 1978). This belief gives its words veracity. As was noted in *Chapter Two*, their religious worship centres around this text, but members are not required to study or read it. During worship extracts are read aloud. Their initiation ritual requires the initiand to learn only selected passages which are in turn recited during the final ceremony of initiation. The act of reciting passages from the *Books of Abraham* is very important during worship. Additionally it can be recalled from the community's history that all of Abraham's divine signs and experiences were orally based[38]. The community is motivated by their embedded belief system. This belief system is built upon the belief in that the community have a close relationship with God. This closeness is reflected in the mode of transmission use by God in 'his' interactions with the '*chosen*'.

Writing creates distance between subject and object; the act of writing down what has occurred creates a text whose meaning is detached from the original event (Ricouer 1976: 25). Tyler (1987: 64) stresses that a written text breaks the harmony created by the interaction of words and events. Thus by implication a religious text, such as the Bible, which is a collection of histories, rules and commentaries places distance between the God upon which it is focused and the devout who are being addressed. This relationship is essentially passified and 'truth' is open to interpretation. God's Way community see their relationship with God as extremely active and their focus on the oral expresses this. Because their faith imbues meaning to every aspect of communal activity it is therefore not surprising that all 'meaningful' discourse should be oral rather than written.

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[38] This is typical of apocalyptic revelation within the Judaeo-Christian tradition (McGinn 1994: 4-5)

Anthropologists who conduct research among communities who share their 'mother tongue' are not as free from the vagaries of errors inherent in translation and interpretation between different languages as would be imagined. Okely (1984: 5) comments that she had to '*learn another language in the words of my mother tongue*' when she conducted research among Traveller-Gypsies in southern England. I faced a similar problem with the community members' 'own' form of English.

Trudgill (1983) loosely defines a dialect as being a form of a language which contains enough of its own peculiar semantic, syntactic, and phonological structures to render it unintelligible to some other speakers of the same 'mother' tongue. Thus, Jamaican 'Patois' or lowland 'Scots' often can appear as 'different' languages although both are actually dialects of English. Whereas English speakers with different accents can understand each other without great difficulty, some speakers would find some English dialects hard to comprehend.

The community do not have a unique dialect. They speak American English[39] using the Standard Midland accent common throughout the Midwest region (Kurath 1972), albeit with a number of characteristics peculiar to the Ozark area (Wells 1987) which can be seen as further proof of a 'hillbilly' identity. Such facts explain the slow, stilting style of speaking and the use of particular syntactic and phonological forms. However, these facts do not explain the meaning behind the community's own peculiar use of such linguistic devices, nor do they explain their propensity for silence, or their seeming penchant for repetition. These can not be understood through sole recourse to regional or national linguistic characteristics.

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[39] This is a form of English with some words peculiar to North America, but overall is not that different from RP English. Similarly there is also Australian English (Wells: 1987).

It may at first appear odd to begin a discussion on speech by looking at silence, but the community members spend more time not speaking than the reverse. Silence as a form of communication has, until recently, been neglected by linguistics. However other disciplines have shown the importance of silence for the transmission of meaning.

Anthropology, for example, has demonstrated the cross-cultural variance in the use and meaning of silence, and indeed how it may be contrasted within social groups in a given culture. Thus the noisy worship of Pentecostalism, described by Maltz (1985) can be contrasted with the silence of the Quaker tradition. Yet both grew from a common rejection of Puritanism, which the former found too quiet and the latter too noisy. Both have the same shared aim: the worship of God, yet different ways of achieving this. The creative and meaningful use of silence is also found outwith the religious sphere. Nwoye (1985) showed that among the Igbo of Nigeria noisy talk is the cultural norm; therefore silence is used in many social situations to express disapproval and social ostracism.

Tannen (1985) pointed out that the perception of silence differs within and between cultures, a fact that can lead to misunderstanding. She studied the use of silence between a group of Americans, a Jewish community in New York, whose cultural traditions prize talk and debate and a group of Californians, who adopt a more relaxed, quieter approach to speech. The New Yorkers sought to fill any silences with talk, which the Californians perceived as pointless and annoying. Neither group could see the 'problem' lay within their specific speaking styles and both became deeply irritated and agitated.

I fell into a similar cultural trap when I first arrived at God's Way community. I found their silences socially awkward, being used to identifying silence in social occasions with disharmony. The small talk commonly used to 'fill' social ill-ease was missing. I had not expected the community's members to be so silent. Strangely the Hutterites with whom I had stayed on arrival in America had been the people I had expected to be silent. Yet they were talkative noisy people who relished debate and discussion, in contrast to their typical ethnographic portrayal (Hostetler: 1974a). The community's silence was not just a point of social etiquette expressing a communal preference for silence during mealtimes or indeed during work. There was a marked reluctance on the part of members to discuss or debate their beliefs and ideas. Indeed, the choice of silence appeared to form part of this belief system.

The problem with silence is that there is often a temptation to 'fill' it, as I had tried during meal-times. Yet a group's silence is often as profound an expression of their beliefs as speech, containing much cultural meaning. As Saville-Troicke (1985) stresses, silence is very ambiguous and easily misinterpreted by people who do not realise its specific cultural significance. Scheper-Hughes (1992) provides a powerful and moving example of the dangers inherent in attempting to appropriate others' silence. In the poor and violent Brazilian shanty towns in which she worked the infant mortality rate was very high. The death of a child was not accompanied with the show of grief that one might expect. Instead of grief there was silence. As Scheper-Hughes (1992) notes the immediate reaction is to 'fill' this silence with one's own cultural meanings. In this way one could suggest that the bereaved are heartless, hardened by constant death, or value children less than ourselves. Yet to appropriate the silence in such a way is not helpful in understanding it. Rather the silences of the people are more ambiguous and reflects their complex relationship

with the political and social environment which surrounds them (Scheper-Hughes: 1992).

There are many ways in which the community's members' silences could be 'filled' with meaning. Indeed there is the option that the silence is without meaning. My own initial reaction to their silences was to view it as further reinforcement of my image of the community as 'hillbillies' (in the derogatory sense). But it was soon evident that the members could, if they desired, be most loquacious. Later I thought that perhaps the silences merely reflected that no one felt that he or she had anything to say. Like a couple who have been married a long time, perhaps the members simply do not need to speak to each other and enjoy a sort of companionable silence.

Part of the explanation lies within the community's essential fundamentalism. As Ammerman (1987) and Barr (1977) highlight, a key characteristic of fundamentalists is their doctrinal silence, in the sense that they do not debate nor try to interpret their beliefs. Fundamentalists view their beliefs as inerrant and therefore if this is the case there can be no need for debate. Debate is an expression of religious doubt. Although the community's doctrinal silence can be interpreted thus, what of their other 'silences'? Most speech, during work, meal-times, or leisure, was brief and pragmatic referring to the matter at hand or events of the day. Singing, a typical work accompaniment, was absent. On a typical busy weekend all that can be heard is the noise of the children and the noise of tools. This can give the place an eerie sense of calm. Rachel and I often broke this rule by talking as we worked, which would draw the typical comment of '*what do you find to talk about?*' This response from the others on the work party led us to fall silent. Apart from such 'pragmatic' or technical speech, the only other type of speech used consisted of those 'stock phrases' which the members used repetitively, such as '*A chicken ain't a hoss*' and

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'*God sees dust*'. Such phrases are laden with meaning and express specific communal beliefs.

The only members who did talk continually were the children who were always being reprimanded for chatting, singing, or shouting. On most days the only sounds that could be heard from the community were those of the children. Talkativeness was seen as a trait of children. Talking was something done by children and was characterised as being idle, silly, and pointless. It should also be noted that '*outsiders*' were seen as gossipy and prone to '*talk too much*'. Thus talking for the sake of talking was a characteristic of non-members i.e. the uninitiated. Silence therefore appears to be an important part of 'being' a full member of the community. Their silence does appear to fit with the general worldview of the community but not only in relation to the inerrancy of their beliefs. The no-nonsense, pragmatic and hard working ethic that members adopt is also reflected in their silence. Talking can, after all, impede work and is not always 'useful'. When members do choose to 'fill' their silences with non-technical speech it would appear to be significant. Such significance can be illustrated with the following account of my first communal meal. On my first day I came across a difference between their use of language and my own, which I interpreted within my own *milieu* (concerning manners and polite conversation), and did so wrongly.

The First Supper

When I arrived at God's Way community it was at supper-time and so my first introduction to the community was in sitting down with them and sharing their evening meal. In one instant I met everyone and learnt a number of important lessons. As we all sat down to eat at Isaac's table, I refused the offers of food coming from the others. I was tired and slightly nauseous from my journey and the

beans and sauerkraut on offer did not look very appetising. At this point I did not know this was their staple diet and also a very symbolically important food. I drank water instead. My refusal of food provoked much comment from Isaac and Rebekah, which I interpreted as due to my rejection of their hospitality. They both kept repeating how good the beans were and how healthful the sauerkraut would be. Indeed, it was the sole topic of conversation to an extent which I quickly found embarrassing. I began to wish I had taken some food.

As I had never eaten there before, I did not know that this was a 'ritual' engaged in at every supper time. Another thing I did not notice on this occasion was that Isaac's youngest daughter (Leah) left her sauerkraut which went curiously unmentioned. When I had taken some water, the conversation turned from the food to the water. Isaac kept asking me how good it was. *'So what do you think of our water, then?' 'Mighty fine, huh?'* and so on. The water tasted fresher than usual but did not seem to warrant the enthusiasm being displayed around me. Mystified by all of this and beginning to feel tired and impatient at the conversation, I responded politely but without the expected enthusiasm. Again he continued as if he were waiting for a greater response. After a number of protests from Rachel about how tired I must be from my journey and so forth, Isaac ended his 'celebration' of their water by telling me for the first time (of many later occasions) that the water had been tested and was found to be almost one hundred percent pure. At the time I thought this slightly improbable, but did not question it. I would hear about Abraham's testing of the water on many later occasions, but the alleged laboratory report was never displayed. The conversation ended with Rachel and I leaving supper early. I interpreted this whole incident, at the time, to have been due to my social gaffe at not accepting their food and not making the correct polite 'noises' about their water.

However, I would later discover that it was not the style of the community to expect a great show of praise, indeed quite the opposite. Excessive praise seemed to embarrass them. I found this out later that same evening when I highly praised (trying to compensate for my presumed social gaffe at dinner) a quilt in progress. My words seemed to have the opposite effect than I had wished and resulted in the quilt being covered up. Sarah Zion and her daughter Leah accompanied this action with profuse denials of personal skill and talent.

What I would later find out was that comments on the food and water were a nightly event at supper and that the only difference had been that on my first night I had taken on the 'role' usually 'played' by Leah. Leah hated sauerkraut and every meal time there was a battle of wills between the girl and her parents to see how much she could get away without eating. On my first night she was ignored and the focus was placed on my seeming refusal to eat the food. That night I was the one acting like a young child, by refusing the food. But this is not just the case of being perceived as a child: as I learnt later, it was part of a symbolic act in which all the diners have roles and speech acts, which communicate many things about the community and its sense of itself. The food and water has important symbolism for them and this needed to be talked about at every meal. Soon, I would join in and repeat these stock phrases too.

Beans and 'Kraut

As has previously been noted the community have a fairly restricted diet due to their striving for self-sufficiency. This leads them to survive on a staple of stewed beans served with sauerkraut. The beans are a mixture of 'home-grown' and 'store-bought', both types being cooked together. The beans are stewed overnight in water and then cooked with flour to provide a tasteless, gritty mush. The community

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members savour their beans as if they were *haute cuisine*. They view the beans as essential food which provides filling sustenance or in Sarah Zion's words 'meat' for the body.

At every evening meal, once everyone was seated, the nightly ritual of commenting on the food began. This did not happen until Isaac sat down and started to eat. If he were absent then his 'role' would be played by Jonathan. Isaac, after several spoonfuls of beans, would sit back and contentedly say *'These beans! Aah you gimme these beans, and I'm smilin''*. Another favourite phrase was *'the Lord himself he gave these beans*[40],' which would then elicit the following response from some of the adult members; *'yeah, and he'd enjoy 'em too, I think'*. This would bring chuckles from everyone present. Isaac's comments on the beans were always along the same lines and produced the same responses. Once he had started on the beans he would continue to comment on them until he had elicited a response of favourable agreement from everyone at his table and several nearby. Sometimes people would be slow to join in and the process would drag on an on. It seemed important that the other adults all join in with this ritual.

Most of the time this ritual ran smoothly with everyone seemingly aware of their roles, but occasionally the process broke down and moved along in a halting fashion, which made it look less 'natural', with Isaac seeming to go around each person in turn asking them the same questions. This discussion of the food happened every night and ended with Rebekah pointing out that there was always plenty left for *'seconds'*. Although her remark was addressed to everyone, only Isaac had a second helping. Rebekah would say *'there's plenty more in the pot,'* to which Isaac would reply, *'Think I'll have a few more in here, thur so good,'* and he would go and

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[40] Isaac's phrase *'The Lord himself gave these beans'*, would also be used to talk about the 'kraut and the water, with beans replaced by one of the other food stuffs. It was his most commonly used phrase for talking about the food.

fill his plate, even if he had not finished his previous serving. He praised the beans as he made his way to and from the serving table.

Once Isaac had his second helping of beans, he turned his attentions to the sauerkraut. At every meal they had beans and some 'home-made' sauerkraut. They made the 'kraut, as they called it, from their own cabbages and pickled it in 'home-made' vinegar from their own vines. The members believe that the 'kraut cleans out the inside of the body and that it is necessary to consume large amounts on a daily basis in order to be healthy. The 'kraut was very bitter, especially the older batches. It was an acquired taste and was universally loathed by the children. In private many of the adults expressed a similar dislike of the sauerkraut.

Although all of the children tried, in vain, to avoid eating too much 'kraut, the role of chief protester fell upon Leah, Isaac's youngest daughter and the youngest school age child on the community. Following his comments on the beans, Isaac would look meaningfully at Leah's plate. Like all of the children's plates, it was piled high with 'kraut dished out by vigilant elders. She would sit, prodding the 'kraut around her tray in the style universally adopted by all of the other children. Her father would say *'ain't you gonna eat your 'kraut?'*, which would typically cause Leah to comment about its bitter taste. This would provoke both her parents, and often other adults, to comment on the importance of 'kraut for health. In the face of the adults constant comments Leah's original dislike soon changed into a more passionate loathing of the 'kraut. The little girl's demeanour altered from reluctance to eat the food to a full scale temper tantrum directed at her parents for forcing her to eat the dreaded 'kraut. Indeed, it often seemed like the adults were deliberately goading her until she became defiant in her loathing of the 'kraut, as opposed to her original mild dislike. Soon the other adults at the table would be commenting on how good the sauerkraut tasted and how good it was for the body. The behaviour of

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the other children was ignored and Leah was portrayed as the only anti-sauerkraut person. It seemed strange that she was singled out for this as I and many of the other adults rarely ate much 'kraut, preferring to place only small amounts of sauerkraut on our plates at supper, yet we received no lectures regarding our behaviour.

Leah was absent from dinner once due to illness, and when the time drew for some comments on the importance of the 'kraut, I expected silence instead of the usual arguments. Instead I found myself in Leah's 'position' as the recipient of the 'kraut lecture. Isaac used the same comments and language that he usually reserved for his youngest daughter. Everyone else also joined in their usual roles. This incident was embarrassing and led me to start eating far more sauerkraut than I would have liked from then on, which was also never mentioned. Often, in private, the other adults discussed their diet; how they wished it could be more varied and how they disliked 'kraut. However, in public, it seemed as if they all felt that they were eating the best possible food every night.

What are we to make of this nightly ritual, and what does it tell us about their 'being' in the world? The first important element is the topic of discussion. The members choose to talk about their food. Importantly both foodstuffs are produced in the community and therefore share the 'sacred' and 'pure' qualities attributed to the land. The beans are believed to nourish, '*like meat*', while the sauerkraut appears to have cleansing properties. The healthful properties of the beans and sauerkraut have their provenance in the purity of the community's land.

But the meal 'ritual' is not just an affirmation of the perceived healthful properties of certain food stuffs. It should be noted that the recipient of the ritual 'lecture' on the food is the structurally youngest member. Leah is not the youngest child but she is

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the youngest community child who attends school. The younger children who did not attend school were rarely admonished in the way the older children were. The pre-school children were seen as incapable of learning much or behaving properly. When Leah was absent I took her place in the ritual. The thing we both had in common was that we were both the least experienced in the community's ways and beliefs. We both were at the bottom of the learning ladder. Although the 'message' to be communicated was directed at everyone it was obviously deemed appropriate to target the least knowledgeable member.

Ong (1967) points out that formulaic expressions are a source of wisdom and meaning, especially in oral traditions. What then are the community members trying to express? The essential 'being' in the world of the community is their divine predestination, it gives everything else meaning. They are self-sufficient as part of their drive to establish the divine settlement ordained by God. Self-sufficiency entails sacrifice, evident in the sparse diet. Yet this diet also has healthful properties due to its provenance in the sacred soil. When Isaac and the other adults participate in the 'ritual' of the praising of the beans and 'kraut' they are actually expressing many important communal ideas that need to be learnt and remembered. Leah acts as the 'learner' although the ritual is addressed to all. Ideas about self-sacrifice, self-sufficiency, bodily and communal purity, hard work, self-control, struggle, and so forth are all being communicated. The dietary discourse is ultimately one about themselves and their relationship to God. As Tannen (1989: 95) puts it: *'Repetition is a resource by which conversationalists together create a discourse, a relationship, and a world.'*

Another example is their similar discussion of the merits of their water. This often happened at supper times and always during breaks for water during the chicken crew work. The crew passed around a jug of their water; attempts by the children

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to buy sodas or drink water from the chicken farmer's tap were scorned. Each crew member was expected to comment on the water as the jug was passed around. This would occur every time the jug was produced during crew work. Again this situation is not (just) about some sort of culinary delight, although as Freud has pointed out there is a pleasurable element to repetition.

Instead one needs to remember the elements involved. The chicken work is loathsome and takes them from the community. It is dirty, unpleasant and poorly paid. It is symbolic of their lack of self-sufficiency and their precarious relationship with the outside. The water comes from their own well. It is pure and unpolluted. It is one sign of their land being 'chosen' by God. By drinking the water and commenting on how good it tastes and how refreshing it is, the members are commenting on their relationship with God. The water, like the beans and sauerkraut, all embody the community as they are produced from the land. When members eat such food or drink the water they are reaffirming their belief system and expressing many different aspects of it.

Language and Repetition

Along with their own particular form of speech, it has been noted that the members use a number of stock phrases in a repetitive manner. Their use of language has been shown to reflect their belief system, i.e. their 'being' in the world. Such use of repetition is not only restricted to speech but is also found in deed. In the next Section the community members' repetition in deed (and speech) will be explored.

Section II

'It is, however, perfectly obvious that, for most of the time, practice is patterned in varying degrees, according to customary and normative prescriptions.' Sallnow (1989: 248)

Repetition in Speech and Deed.

Repetitive behaviours can be interpreted in many ways. I interpreted the members' repetition of specific phrases as fulfilling my own stereotype of the community. I also found the practice annoying. The members' preference for the exact duplication of evening chores and other deeds was similarly interpreted. Yet my views of their speaking and acting gave more insight into my cultural background than theirs. Two facts concerning repetitive behaviour need be considered.

Firstly, western psychology has traditionally associated repetitive acts of speech and deed as symptomatic of some mental malaise. The pathology of such repetitions are noted in medical casebooks and used as signs to aid diagnosis. For example, the ritualised behaviours of the obsessive compulsive who will commit hundreds of daily acts of repetition, such as counting books on shelves or cleaning his or her house in the exact same way every day, is seen as dysfunctional and symptomatic of his or her pathology. The highly ritualised and secretive behaviour of the anorexic is similarly conventionally interpreted. We interpret such repetition as pathological and it makes us uneasy when confronted by individuals who do this. Yet such behaviours are open to contrary interpretations. However, psychology has often overlooked the fact that such behaviour, however pathological, adds meaning to the 'belief systems' of the sufferer[41] . We also tend to associate lesser amounts of

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[41] Much has been made of the need, by psychology, to identify pathological behaviours as in fact functional and productive, giving meaning to the existence of the sufferer. The case of Anorexia is a particular example. The activitite and beliefs of the Anorexic have been put forward within some sections of Feminist theory as in fact the solution to women's 'problem' with image and that far from being pathological the anorexic is in fact the healthy woman (see Wolf 1990, and Crowley 1992 for discussion). The radical psychiatrist, R.D. Laing (1961) echoed the writings of the early Freud by

repetition with lack of intelligence or social graces. Indeed repetition is most commonly associated with children in their speech and play. Only recently has this repetitive habit of children's speech been shown to serve many interpersonal functions, and that far from stifling and disjoining child society, it serves to bring it together (see Orbach 1988).

This leads to the second point about repetition; that it is very common cross-culturally. We forget, or do not realise, the extent to which our own everyday lives are repetitive and ritualised. The same hours bring the same deeds and words on a daily basis, from the customary morning greetings and 'traditional' meal for breakfast, to the same hours of rest and sleep. We even label our structured breaks from routine as 'holidays'. Such days are identified as special because they break this routinization of our everyday lives. Because this repetition is the routine we do not question its validity or pervasiveness. We only do this when we encounter a different form of cultural or social repetition. Thus, the American view of the seemingly near obsessive British adherence to regular, daily, tea breaks, leads them to interpret the tea break as expressive of some deep cultural compulsion, ignoring their own particular cultural work breaks and activities.

In Western culture we tend to identify repetition with a lack of inspiration and *ennui*. This view has allowed artists to convey meaning through repetition. Pinter, for example, adopts repetitive speech in many of his plays, such as *The Birthday Party* and *Old Times*, in order to add depth to his characters and the drama in which they are embroiled. Many poets, such as T. S. Eliot, Phillip Larkin, and John Betjeman, have adopted a similar use of repetition in their explorations on the everyday and mundane. But as Tannen (1989: 37) points out such repetition is common in all language and can be viewed as a creative and meaningful resource:

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suggesting that the mentally ill are only defined that way by us and that their beliefs and rituals make 'sense' to them.

'Analysis of repetition thus sheds light on our conception of language production . . . it suggests that language is less freely generated, more prepatterned, than most current linguistic theory acknowledges. This is not, however, to say that speakers are automatons, cranking out language by rote. Rather, . . . is a resource for creativity. It is the play between fixity and novelty that makes possible the creation of meaning.'

The premise from which we must begin is that repetition is not in fact something 'rare', to be taken as a sign of dysfunction, but rather that repetition, in word and deed, is the norm. Indeed, it is necessary for cultural functioning. Wittgenstein (1953) suggested that words only achieve meaning when they are used in language. This is a controversial idea which many believe misinterprets what the philosopher actually meant. However, Wittgenstein's idea is backed up by much data from linguistics.

Tannen (1989) suggests that semantics is as much about prior rules and structures, as syntax or phonology are. Ferguson (1976) has shown that Arabic has a set number of phrases that must be uttered in specific contexts; to neglect to do so threatens the social harmony of the particular situation. Tannen (1989: 38-39) cites similar examples of such phrases from Greek. In English we have few linguistic set phrases, but we do tend to adopt the usage of groups of well known phrases in certain social situations. Norrick (1985) provides the example of proverbs and other forms of cliché, in what are deemed appropriate contexts. Johnstone (1987) highlights the ritual and repetition associated with formal speaking, while Mieder (quoted in Tannen 1989) has shown newspaper headlines tend to rely on cliché to instantly convey meanings and associations to their readers. Thus even within English we have set phrases for specific social occasions which to omit would bring comment: for example, saying 'good morning' or a similar greeting to colleagues on arrival at work is deemed appropriate. The person who omits to use such social pleasantries is deemed 'rude' and colleagues may try and interpret their lack of

sociability.   Such rudeness may signal that the individual in question is in a bad mood, ill, worried, and so on.

We fail to see such repetition within our everyday usage.   Fillmore (quoted in Tannen 1989) points out that all meaning is related to our information of other texts and scenarios, thus we fail in linguistic interaction in other cultural environs due to not having that shared knowledge.   This is the fate that befell me on my first evening at God's Way community.   As Tannen (1989: 43) puts it: '. . . *the organization of discourse follows recognisable patterns'*.   It is impossible for us to construct speech otherwise.   Tannen (1989) outlines a number of reasons for the repetition or pre-patterning of speech.   It affords better speech production, better comprehension (by listeners), and it allows for easier interaction better speaker and audience.   As listeners we repeat phrases in order to fully participate, to convey enjoyment, humour, to stall, and to bond.   Tannen (1989) points out that in English we characterise repetitious speech with the everyday and boredom, yet as she puts it (54): '*it is pervasive, functional, and often automatic in ordinary conversation'*.

Making Meanings

Bateson (1972) suggested that language has a '*metacommunicative*' function, meaning that speech conveyed something about the relationship between speaker and audience.   We can view much of the role of repetition in this way.   The problem that befalls one is how to interpret the significance and appropriateness of such repeated words and phrases.   Thus if we avoid locating God's Way community's members' repetitive speech and actions as pathological and acknowledge that all cultures are filled with repetition which is typically meaningful, it is then possible to try and locate meaning within such repetitions.

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In previous chapters I have cited examples of repetitive speech among the community members. *'A chicken ain't a hoss'* and *'significant as dust'*, are two such common phrases. Each conveys much about the community's belief system. Supper-time is an occasion particularly filled with repetitive acts. Perhaps this is because it is the one situation, outwith chapel worship, where all the members meet together regularly. It should be noted that failure to attend supper regularly draws much greater, and quicker, comment than failure to attend chapel services.

'God Sees Dust'

The community has a number of tasks which members must do on a daily basis, such as chop wood or light the burner fires. Such repetitive acts are labelled *'chores'*. *'Chores'* are always executed in exactly the same way and are often accompanied by a stock phrase. Supper-time, with its many *'chores'*, is particularly 'rich' in repetitive behaviour.

There are many things to be done once supper has been finished: dusting, sweeping, clearing dishes and washing up, etc. Such tasks are done by the women and the girls. The girls rarely show any enthusiasm for the *'chores'* and try to 'escape' as they typically wish to play or investigate what the men are doing. Nothing can be done until the last person has finished eating and often the women will hover around that unlucky individual, who typically leaves the dining hall with his supper half finished. The women exhibit a tremendous desire to start their work and as soon as the dining hall is cleared of diners, each takes up her particular role. Each woman does a specific task. It is always the same one and she will be helped by one of the girls. The criteria for allocating the tasks was never explained and I found myself choosing to help with the washing of the dishes as this involved

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several people and did not disrupt the organised work of the other woman who were cleaning cookers or sweeping floors.

The work begins with nearly everyone saying the refrain '*God sees dust*'. This phrase is then repeated during the work, and is particularly directed at the girls who are trying to do as little as possible. This phrase is directed at anyone not seeming to be actively doing anything. In the context of the spotless dining hall and kitchen area, where the slightest spill or mark has been wiped as soon as it was made, such behaviour seems slightly compulsive. Indeed I viewed it in this way myself at first. The children realise that there is little 'real' cleaning to be done and bemoan their mothers' enthusiasm for cleaning surfaces and floors that are already spotless. Such pleas are greeted with the refrain '*God sees dust*'. Despite this dearth of dust or dirt, dishes, cookers, pots, and floors were scrubbed thoroughly. All the chores took over an hour and none of the women hurried their work. Once completed each woman looked over the others' work, with alleged flecks of dust flicked away from the areas that had been done by the girls, even though such areas were as clean as the rest. '*All done*' would be said and we could all finally leave the hall.

The thorough cleaning of spotless surfaces is partly attributable to the members' typical relish for hard work and thoroughness. The daily execution of chores fits in with their delight in order. Yet the accompanying phrase and mania concerning dust reflects a deeper significance to the women's actions. The concept of 'dust' is also used by the members in reference to their relationship with God, with the oft quoted words from Abraham that '*We are as significant as dust*'. This phrase suggests that God considers dust to be insignificant. Yet during chores this same 'dust' suddenly appears to hold great significance and has a new visibility in divine eyes.

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'Dust' is an ambiguous substance. It is not dirt and therefore not 'unclean', yet it is not completely 'clean' either. Dust is non-threatening, unlike dirt, and one may allow a film of dust to build up without concern. Dust is a pernicious substance which always seems to return almost as soon as it is wiped away. The movement of time is shown by the accumulation of dust. Unlike dirt, dust has no substance - it can be easily wiped away without need of scrubbing or scraping.

If we consider the above qualities of dust it can be seen that the women are not referring to dirt when they use the phrase *'God sees dust'*. Similarly they do not expect their dishes or floors to be in need of great cleaning. The phrase *'God sees dust'* is expressing meaning concerning the community, their beliefs and their relationship with God. It has a dual meaning. Firstly, it refers to the need to maintain communal standards. For example the literal accumulation of dust demonstrates a tardiness on the part of the members in respect to their usual hard working efficiency. In this sense the phrase is a call to the members to maintain their typical standards. In this reading 'dust' refers to actual 'dust'.

The phrase can also express a more symbolic meaning. In this case 'dust' refers to the community's members. But how is the community like dust? The community is not impure, unlike the *'outside'*, yet it is not completely perfect either. Rather its members strive to attain purity. If God desired 'he' could wipe the community from the face of the Earth in the manner that one would wipe a dusty shelf. The community is enduring and has returned from the edge of disaster following the Arizona troubles and the Schism. When the members say *'God sees dust'* they are making reference to the fact that God sees them and that they are like dust in his eyes. This is not to suggest necessarily that they are insignificant, but rather that they have a precarious relationship with God. The use of 'dust' as a symbol for the community allows many communal characteristics and beliefs to be expressed. Not

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only does God see the community but 'he' also sees those qualities that the community exhibit and which come from their relationship with God.

In this light the phrase *'we are as significant as dust'* may in fact be more ambiguous than it first appears. Although initial readings may suggest the phrase states that the community's members are as insignificant as dust in the eyes of God, it could actually imply that God finds dust highly significant and observes it. Dust is significant because it symbolically holds those properties which the community strives to maintain. This new reading fits in more with the cleaning 'phrase'. At once the phrase reinforces this relationship with God as well as their work ethic. Its repetition serves to express such beliefs and meanings.

Talking and Doing

Obviously all life has some element of repetition. It is the norm, which we only become aware of when we encounter a different style of repetition. Silence, repetition of deed and speech all provide a source of discourses concerning the community's relationship with God. The essential 'being' or *dasein* in the world for God's Way community is their divine predestination. This belief held by the members is the fundamental principle upon which the entire community is constructed. The community's embodiment of belief is motivated by this principle.

In the previous five chapters different aspects of communal life have been explored with reference to this 'special' relationship with God and belief in the community's divine destiny. Communal history, religious practice, work, gender, space, and speech have all been used as 'tools' with which to examine communal belief and the extent to which it is embodied. The original movement towards 'understanding', started in the *Introduction* , has gone through the lives of the community's members

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from a macro to a micro level. 'Innocence' has become 'Experience' via the ethnographic 'journey'. Is 'understanding' still attainable despite the experiences of 'experience'?

REDEEMED INNOCENCE

Part III

'Youth of delight come hither,
And see the opening morn,
Image of truth new-born.
Doubt is fled, and clouds of reason,
Dark disputes and artful teasing.
Following is an endless maze;
Tangled roots perplex her ways.
How many have fallen there!
They stumble all night over bones of the dead,
And feel they know not what but care,
And wish to lead others, when they should be led.'

- William Blake ('The Voice Of The Ancient Bard' from *Songs of Experience*).

Definitely, Maybe: Some Concluding Remarks

This thesis had two inter-twined aims. The first has been to successfully apply Csordas's (1989) paradigm of embodiment to the study of ICs. The second has been to use this paradigm as part of a methodology (which has also included a post-positivist approach that acknowledged and explored the relevant historical and cultural interconnections involved) which would allow us to create 'understanding'. This in turn would aid a creation, at some level, of 'sympathy' between the 'audience' of this thesis and God's Way community.

Before re-examining the crucial issue of 'understanding' it is necessary to review once more the relevant methodologies upon which 'understanding' is to be constructed. The ethnographic material used throughout the previous five chapters have been 'understood' through recourse to two methodologies.

Methodologies

The first methodology, loosely labelled 'postmodernist' (or 'post-positivist'), has been to demonstrate God's Way community's 'relatedness' to wider historical and cultural patterns. Such an acknowledgement of 'connectedness' is particularly salient in relation to what Shweder (1991) calls the more *irrational cultural forms*. It is always tempting to view the seemingly 'bizarre' or 'extraordinary' in culture to be unique independent objects. Yet such a view serves to maintain 'misunderstanding'. As Obeyeskere (1990) and Shweder (1991) note, all cultural forms have their own unique qualities, but that does not deny their relationship to wider or external cultural patterns. One can not 'understand' the meanings behind the practices and ideas of a given group without also locating the connections

between the group and those that surround them. As was discussed in Part I there is a trend towards focusing on the cultural and historical context of 'new' religious movements (see for example Marty and Appleby 1991, Wuthnow 1976, and Ammerman 1987). This movement has begun not only to challenge secularisation theory's contention that religious beliefs are in decline within modern society, but also its viewing of 'new' religious movements as reactions to modernity (see Part I for discussion).

Lyotard (1984) saw historical and cultural movement and interconnection as a vital part of what he labelled *'postmodernism'*. Fischer (1990: xxiv) reiterates this point in his placing of *'cultural interference'* at the heart of all cultural *'evolution'*. Another consequence of such a methodology, which departs from the modernist preoccupation with sealing off culture into 'neat boxes' by acknowledging relatedness, is that alternative meanings or interpretations are made possible. As one aim of this work is to review the stereotype of groups like God's Way community and seek 'understanding', then such a methodological consequence is important.

A re-connecting of the community (and other similar communities) to history allows us to view the group as part of a more general historical phenomenon: western communalism. More specifically it is possible to see the community's place within the American communal movement. By making reference to such historical connections the community may be 'understood' more clearly. It is no longer necessarily to be 'understood' (or 'misunderstood') as an isolated group of 'weirdoes', but rather as a member of a long-lived historical tradition. Although the community has its own unique features and practices, its general characteristics and aims are commonplace within western communalism as a whole, and American communalism in general. In a similar vein the community's belief system, although

unique in some ways, can be shown through reference to American religious history, western apocalypticism, and Christian fundamentalism, to again be the product of wider cultural and historical patterns. Other features of communal life, such as their view of the '*outside*', also share more widespread cultural characteristics. Such contextualisation of the community allows many of its beliefs and practices to be given alternative meanings and thus produce 'understanding' and perhaps create 'sympathy'.

However, the ethnographic material has been primarily examined through recourse to Csordas's (1989) paradigm of embodiment and it is the effectiveness of this methodology that is fundamental to the successful creation of 'understanding' and 'sympathy'. If communal life can not be shown to be embodied then 'understanding' remains problematic. Communal beliefs may indeed be part of a wider pattern of fundamentalism, apocalypticism, or American Protestantism, but their specific form and quality remains unique. 'Understanding' the uniqueness of the community can only be done, I maintain, through the idea of embodiment.

Soap, Cold Water, and Dirty Dishes

One final ethnographic curiosity may be used to demonstrate the idea of embodiment. The members wash all things, including their own bodies, in cold water. As has been previously noted this is due to a belief that cold water is '*pure*' and also acts as a fortifier of the body (and spirit). In contrast, hot water '*softens*' and is thought to encourage germs. All water used on the community comes from their own well and is deemed to have healthful properties. However, the members have a contrary use of soap. All communal soap is bought in town. It is a thick, strong smelling type of soap, sold in large boxes. It is multi-purpose and can be used for cleaning clothes, bodies, or floors. It has a detrimental effect on the skin,

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causing dryness and irritation. The soap causes a burning sensation when left in contact with skin for prolonged periods.

The soap is used for washing clothes and bodies but nothing else. All clothes are washed by first soaking them in a bucket of soapy water and then scrubbing them with more soap, before rinsing them off. During scrubbing the need to use lots of soap is stressed, and often members repeat the phrase, '*God don't do everything*'. Similarly members stressed the need to use lots of soap when washing themselves. Such a practice had a detrimental effect on the skin of many individual members. The need to wash thoroughly is again stressed. The phrase, '*God don't do everything*', is also used repetitively in relation to the members' personal washing habits.

There is nothing particularly curious in the need to maintain a particular standard of group, or individual, cleanliness. However, what is curious is the fact that the members do not use this soap when washing cooking utensils, dishes, or floors. Dishes are soaked in cold water and then are vigorously scrubbed clean, using large wooden brushes. Floors receive a similarly thorough scrubbing. Often food can not be completely removed from dishes, despite many attempts at scrubbing them clean. Such dishes are placed back in the dish cupboard to be used again. These dishes are not seen as 'dirty'. The cleaning of the kitchen and dining area is laborious and can take the women over an hour to do each night. Why would soap, which is deemed so effective at cleaning clothes and bodies, not be used in other areas especially the kitchen and dining areas where hygiene is so important?

It would be easy to dismiss such an ethnographic example as further evidence to demonstrate the 'bizarreness' of this particular group. One possible step towards 'understanding' would be to locate what are obviously part of the community's

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purity and pollution rules within the wider context of such prohibitions. Douglas (1966) suggested that all such prohibitions are related to the creation of cultural boundaries and the desire to maintain group distinctiveness. Okely (1986), in her discussion of the elaborate cleaning rituals of Traveller-Gypsies, also demonstrated this. Gypsies use different containers to wash different items, such as clothes, dishes, hands, and so forth. Such items are washed separately due to a categorisation of each according to the levels of pollution identified in their usage. Gypsies manage to contain and regulate the flow of this pollution via their use of different and rigidly separate cleaning areas/utensils (Okely 1986).

Thus, If we reflect on the elements involved in this particular example this process can perhaps be shown. The soap used is from the *'outside'*, while the water used is from the community's own well. The 'dirt' found on clothes and bodies is identified as coming from the *'outside'* and so is removed by using an agent (the soap) also from the *'outside'*. All members have two pairs of boots: one pair is worn only during *'outside'* work, while the other pair is worn only in the grounds of the community. Therefore dishes and floors are not dirtied through contact with the *'outside'* and so do not need to be washed with soap. The washing of clothes and bodies in a particular way maintains communal purity levels. Using Douglas's idea it is possible to 'understand' the members' behaviours as 'purity' reinforcement rituals.

Yet such a theory does not provide the full meaning to the cleaning 'rituals'. Although the cleaning of the clothes and bodies can be understood in terms of the need to remove 'pollution' brought into the community from the 'outside', it does not explain everything. Why should dishes or floors be washed with only cold water? Similarly why is it not regarded as bad hygiene to put dishes which still

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contain food from the previous meal back in the cupboard? Such behaviour seems to go against the members' usual fastidiousness.

It will be recalled from the previous chapter that the community eat a particular diet (beans and sauerkraut) due to their ideas concerning the sacredness and purity of their land. Therefore the dishes and pots are not 'dirtied' by the food, in the way that they would be by *'outside'* food, but rather remain 'clean'. The 'leftover' food on plates can not, in their opinion, harm the members. Similarly floors do not need soap because they are not in contact with the *'outside'*. The 'dirt' brought into rooms by the boots worn only in the community can not be considered 'dirt' in the same sense as *'outside'* dirt.

Such an analysis is possible if we recall Csordas's (1989) paradigm of embodiment, which merges Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* (1977) and Merleau-Ponty's idea of the pre-objective (1962). Initially, we view the dishes, food, and community as objects in themselves, and the members as subjects interacting with these objects. Yet, if we maintain this objectification, which as Merleau-Ponty (1962) would contend is at the end of the process of perception for the members, we cannot hope to go beyond proposing ideas concerning purity moving across boundaries (which would be a typical analysis). Rather, we need to begin in the pre-objective stage, the stage which the community members are in, and a stage we as non-members can not grasp.

The members, as I have suggested following Csordas (1989), are situated in a subjective relationship to the community and each other; that is there are no objects initially within it, rather everything shares the same subjective interaction with everything else. Even if we recall the fact that individuals can never fully co-exist in a shared perception of the world, it was argued previously (Part I) that within a

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communal environment it is possible, due to the great sense of shared communication, for individuals to experience a high participation of co-existence (Merleau-Ponty 1962). This level of co-existence allows the community to achieve an almost total sense of intentionality. MacIntyre (1970) warns us that it is almost impossible to determine whether subjects are following rules. Yet if we follow Bilmes's (1993) contention that we not become preoccupied with inner states, and instead focus on what people are saying and doing, it is possible to view the seeming universal participation of members in these cleaning rituals as evidence to suggest a shared worldview.

If we recall that the community's central tenet is that God chose this land and ordained the construction of the community, i.e. that they are predestined, then everything on the land is sacred and holds a special relationship to God. The important property concerning the food and water is that they are produced in the community. When members scrub their dishes in cold water without soap it is an act of communing with each other as a 'community' and with God. It communicates their relatedness. The dish-washing method is a form of *habitus*, which puts their beliefs into practice on a subconscious level. The dirt on the clothes and bodies is not in a subjective relationship to the community's members. The dirt is from the '*outside*' and therefore is an obstacle to the community's perception of their being in the world, rather like Merleau-Ponty's boulder (1962), which must be removed.

As Synott (1993) notes, the body is at the heart of all social interaction and identity; it therefore becomes a vital source of meaning. Embodiment is a useful methodological tool because it allows culture to become active in a way that other methodologies do not. As Bourdieu (1990) points out we '*know*' with our bodies and thus such activity is rooted in the actual physicality of the body. It is also a

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consequence of the dissolution of the object/subject division inherent in other methodologies (Csordas 1989). The passivity ascribed to subjects, inherent in many other ways of locating cultural meanings, is particularly problematic in examining the nature of communities such as God's Way. The production of culture is not a passive process, as Bourdieu (1990: 52) notes, ' . . . *the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded*'.

Yet Turner (1995: 169) has criticised the recent '*fetishism*' of the body brought about by the current focus on embodiment theory. Turner (1995) sees such theory as placing the body at the '*root*' of all cultural and social processes, when in fact the body is rooted within such processes. He is, of course, right. Yet he appears to be missing the point. Embodiment theory is not suggesting that culture is being produced within the body. Rather it is being argued that the body, and physical experience in general, should be located within general theory. The division between mind and body, theory and practice, and subject and object, all fail to acknowledge the fundamental interaction that occurs between each part of the dichotomies listed. Such dichotomies only serve to divide and pacify subjects within the cultural process. Turner (1995) is correct to warn of the dangers inherent in overstating the importance of the body within the production of culture, but it is also necessary to warn against the dangers of neglecting the importance of interior states (which can be accessed through embodiment theory), particularly in relation to cultural beliefs.

Steps Towards Understanding

Intentional Communities, as previously discussed in the *Introduction,* have typically been studied in a very functionalist way with writers focusing on reinforcement and commitment mechanisms (see for example Kanter 1972 and Hechter 1990). As I

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discussed in Part I the analysis of ICs in terms of 'commitment' mechanisms is not incorrect; it simply does not go far enough toward explaining the 'deep', active commitment of members within these communities. One consequence of this type of analysis has been the presentation of members as passive agents within community. This failure to acknowledge the members of ICs as active participants is due to the essentially pacifying effect of 'outside' observation caused by the subject/object divide inherent in many methodologies. This pacification of subjects has allowed for the creation of many of the common stereotypes of communalists as 'brainwashed' or 'unthinking'. Such typical analyses also fail to acknowledge the complex relationship between group members and their belief in the idea of 'community'. Embodiment allows for a dissolution of the subject/object divide.

This is also an effective methodology, as Csordas (1989) notes, for the study of religious experience in general. Religious experience is fundamentally an interior state and one which the observer cannot hope to grasp. Bilmes (1993) suggests that we stop speculating about what is possibly going on inside the subject's head. Instead, he calls for a discursive approach (1993: 3) which focuses on what subjects are saying to each other about different inner states. In this way inner states are viewed as a resource utilised by subjects to make sense of their own and others' behaviour. God's Way community's belief system can be accessed through the notion of embodiment which is used, implicitly and explicitly, by members to express and explain their world. Embodiment allows for the acknowledgement of this interiority of belief but affords a possible route into it. The need to raise questions concerning 'rationality', truth', or 'brainwashing' etc, so often the hindrance within anthropological studies of belief, can also be removed.

The methodologies outlined previously has been utilised with the aim of creating 'understanding', in the sense of Weber's (1947) *erklarender verstehen* ('explanatory understanding'). Weber contrasted this type of 'understanding' with actual or direct comprehension of an event. For example, we 'know' that one plus one is two. However, this piece of arithmetic does not inform the researcher as to the significance of the 'event' to the participatory subjects. *Erklarender verstehen* is concerned with this search for meaning. Heidegger (1962) elaborated on Weber's thesis by suggesting that *verstehen* is the point when the researcher realises the outline for a new way of *'being in the world'*. Thus, appropriate methodologies can allow for the creation of ways into others' sense of 'being'. 'Understanding' is not concerned with issues of truth, or of communion (Geertz 1984b), but rather allows the [willing] observer a glimpse, if only briefly, into another worldview. Geertz (1984b: 135) compares the process as being like '... *grasping a proverb, catching an illusion, seeing a joke, - or ... reading a poem ...*'

I stressed the point in the *Introduction* that 'empathy' is not a realisable aim, i.e. it is not possible for one to become a 'proper' member, to see with their eyes, or even step into their shoes. However, it is possible for us to engage in a sympathetic relationship with them, that is one which allows some insight into their lives and beliefs, however slight, which can then assist us in altering our prejudices about them, indeed to bring them closer to ourselves rather than maintain distance.

Understanding Consequences

Geertz (1984) and Shweder (1991) both make the point that one of the problems with extreme relativism is that it tends to deny difference and seeks to create a world

of similarities. Neither would deny the need for a relativist approach, but both suggest that we need to be realistic and acknowledge that there is difference and some of it is shocking and upsetting. Both call for a cherishing of differences but an adoption of an approach which still maintains that we are closer to these differences than we are distant. This is a brand of relativism which says 'you are different', but I can see within this difference similarities to my own experience. Thus it is 'sympathy' rather than 'empathy' which is too often the supposed aim of arch-relativism (see Shweder 1991). Tyler (1986) also makes the case that ethnography should be concerned with creating 'sympathy', although he is discussing methodology rather than relativism.

God's Way community's beliefs are different from my own experience of Christianity. I find their apocalyptic beliefs quite extraordinary, and perhaps ridiculous. However, I am able to see where these beliefs fit within my own and others' experience, by incorporating history and cross-cultural interconnections. By using the appropriate methodologies it is possible to move towards 'understanding' and create 'sympathy'. Naturally, this does not force one to believe in what they believe, nor does it fully allow one to clearly 'see' everything that is going on. Rather, we can gain some modicum of insight which may allow us to relate the community's ideas back toward our own in some small way, and so challenge some of our misconceptions, or assumptions, concerning them and others like them.

Appropriate methodologies may achieve 'understanding', that is some insight into others' 'being in the world', but they may not always create 'sympathy'. 'Understanding' is a framework which may be filled with contrastive information. Gadamer (1975) notes that all 'understanding' is interpretation with the possibility of ambiguity and a variety of meanings. Sympathy' requires more than insight or

recognition of cultural similarities. Rather it requires an emotional identification, on some level, with the subjects.

'Bible Bashing Loonies'

I now want to discuss more fully the reasons why I have found in relation to this particular topic a need to overstress (in comparison to other anthropological works) the twinned concepts of 'sympathy' and 'understanding' which one would assume are a 'given' in any anthropological work. The above sub-title is a direct quote from an anthropological colleague following a reading of some of my preliminary research data, only weeks after my return from fieldwork. The remark astonished and angered me, especially as it had followed a discussion of shamanistic practice and belief which had passed without any extremes of 'emotion', or uncharacteristic comment. Whether the remark shocked me because of the seeming difference, in terms of the inequality, being stressed between shamanistic belief among 'tribal' peoples and the apocalyptic beliefs of American Christians, or whether I assumed that anthropologists, especially, senior ones, did not make such remarks about beliefs, however 'strange' (given the overwhelmingly relativistic approach of the subject), I am not sure. To be fair to the individual in question he is not alone in his *'astonishment'* (Shweder's (1991) term for the emotional response often produced during cross-cultural exchange).

Before going on fieldwork I had encountered similar views concerning the type of groups that I planned to visit and study. Although never as 'extreme', they did follow along the lines of implication that apocalyptic Christians are possibly anthropological subjects who may be ridiculed. Yet other apocalyptic groups, such as Cargo Cults, which are more 'traditional' anthropological objects of study do not receive such reactions. At the time I put such views or remarks down to my own

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inability to fully describe or explain the groups in question; maybe I was giving the impression that they were cults, and perhaps I was playing up the more 'extreme' elements of the ethnography for dramatic effect to cover up a lack of concrete data to enliven discussions and presentations. Yet I did notice that another colleague who was also researching a small and isolated community in North America (although not religious) would often receive similar 'astonished' reactions from 'audiences'.

However, on my return from fieldwork I found that rather than declining, such comments continued, although few were as direct as the one quoted. There appeared to be an underlying implication from some that apocalyptic or fundamental Christians are not on an even footing with the more 'typical' subjects of anthropological study. The Nuer's statement that *'twins are birds'* or the Bororo's claim to 'be' red parrots are somehow deemed unproblematic, whereas a group of American Christians are not 'allowed' to claim similarly quizzical beliefs, such as *'we are chosen'* or *'we will be the only ones saved after Judgement Day'*. I want to explore this issue because it raises important questions concerning anthropological practice, especially the ever expanding field of anthropology 'at home', within which this study could be classed.. The reasons for such views lie within a number of spheres within and outwith the discipline.

Understanding Astonishment

'Neither weep nor laugh but understand' Spinoza.

I want to digress slightly by discussing *'astonishment'* and how it need not be a bad thing, but instead may be used as a methodological 'tool' for a movement toward 'understanding' and 'sympathy'. Spinoza's quote (above) neatly summarises the suggestion that through emotion we can then progress toward 'understanding'. For

Spinoza emotion must be subsumed by 'understanding' and 'reason', because emotion goes against those particular Enlightenment values of 'reason' that he cherished. I would not go so far as to deny or eradicate emotion in order to establish such a problematic concept as 'reason', but instead follow Shweder's (1991) suggestion that we use our emotional response (he calls it *'astonishment'*) to engage in a process of looking at another culture in order, in his words, to *'think through'* that culture (1991). He and other cultural psychologists (see also Obeyeskere 1990) have adapted psycho-analytic paradigms which utilise emotion as an analytic 'tool' for cultural investigation. Shweder (1991) points out that in contemporary anthropology (which according to him now exists in an arch-relativistic, post-modern world) there is considerable denial of such *'astonishment'*, which is seen as naive and, perhaps, politically 'incorrect'.

For Shweder (1991) and Obeyeskere (1990), such *'astonishment'* is only to be expected when we make cross-cultural comparisons. It is in the very nature of cultural divergence, that we find 'extreme' and often, for us, disturbing practices or beliefs. Different cultural ideas must by their very nature 'astonish' us, if they did not then we could only wonder why (Shweder 1991). Such a stance does not accept the debates against relativism, but rather as Geertz puts it (1984a) allows us to move away from the calm facade of the Enlightenment 'garden' from which this subject emerged. Geertz (1984a) suggests that we should both cherish our, and presumably others', emotional responses, and challenge them. It is possible to use such responses in order to help our movement towards 'understanding'. Gadamer (1976) views prejudices as hermeneutical tools:

'It is not so much our judgements as it is our prejudices that constitute our being - Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. The nature of the hermeneutical experience is not that something is outside and desires admission.

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Rather, we are possessed by something and precisely by means of it we are opened up for the new, the different, the true.'

Shweder (1991), echoing Csordas (1989), points out that what disturbs us does not disturb those who practise it because they are in a different relationship to the practice than ourselves. They are subjects directly engaged in the practice, whereas we are on the 'outside' of the process and from this position we cannot avoid objectifying the process, which entails studying it as an object which is independent in the world. Fabian (1995: 42) calls for the notion of *'non-understanding'* and its use as a tool from which to proceed towards 'understanding'.

Following both Shweder (1991) and Geertz (1984a), I would suggest that there is nothing wrong with 'emotional' responses to cultural information. Rather, such responses raise interesting points concerning the material. Why is it so disturbing to the audience? Okely and Callaway (1992) demonstrate some of the benefits of an anthropology which demands that its researchers engage in a critical examination of themselves within the research process; often it provides great insight into the process. This I have attempted to do with my own material.

Conversely, we should also examine our 'audience' reactions on returning from fieldwork, in the presentation of our data. Even a lack of *'astonishment'* garners much information about the state of the subject. Weil (1987: 198) makes the point that we focus almost completely on the researcher-informant relationship, when in reality there are other relationships affecting our work (consciously or unconsciously). These relationships involve friends, family, and colleagues. All of these individuals affect work at some point, whether in the 'field' or at 'home', during the writing and presenting process. An examination of the reactions of such people to the material can often be as insightful as one of the reactions of informants.

It is possible to use and investigate such responses within both oneself, as researcher, and one's various audiences, to raise important and interesting questions regarding the material and one's processing of it. Obeyeskere (1990: xxi), adapting a model from psycho-analysis, states that there are three important *'inter-subjectivities'* in which we participate as anthropologists and from which we can, via analysis, gain cultural insight. The first two relate to the relationship between researcher and field subjects. However, his third is the relationship between anthropologist and other *'audiences'*. Obeyeskere (1990) defines these other *'audiences'* as those with whom we *'must communicate by virtue of. . [our]. . profession as ethnographer and theorist.'*

Reactions to the God's Way material fall into many categories, yet rarely is there no reaction. It is impossible to fully 'explain' the reactions of every 'audience' member. However I wish to suggest that there are three main aspects to this *'astonishment'*: confusion of 'belief' and 'understanding'; issues relating to anthropology 'at home'; and cultural stereotypes of the USA. All of these aspects stem from the same process of over-identification between subject and 'audience'.

Whose Home?

This over-identification particularly raises interesting points concerning the idea of 'anthropology at home'. The term itself is a misleading one and explicitly demonstrates the identification, which I would argue is false, prevalent in ideas concerning 'anthropology at home'. Messerschmidt (1981: 13) lists eight different phrases all interchangeably used to mean work conducted in non-traditional anthropological domains, typically within western cultures. Anthropology 'at home', as Messerschmidt (1981) and Jackson (1987) both point out, has been conducted throughout anthropological history, although often sectioned off as 'Folk

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studies' or 'Celtic studies'. The rise in popularity of anthropology 'at home' began in the 1970s with the critical examination, within the discipline, of our colonial past, and also because of the increasing restrictions on conducting 'traditional' fieldwork (see Messerschmidt (1981) and Jackson (1987)).

The stereotype of the practice, as Strathern (1987a) discusses, was that it was 'easier' than anthropology elsewhere, because the anthropologist was presumed to already know much about the culture being studied. Since the developments of the 'writing culture' school (see for example Clifford and Marcus 1986) and the move toward a more reflexive anthropology, anthropologists have become more aware of the logistics of field research and the fundamental nature of such research. It has become clear that no matter what the field situation is, there are shared methodological problems which can not be surmounted by a shared cultural identity or language. As Strathern puts it (1987a: 16), *'The grounds of familiarity and distance are shifting ones. Home can recede infinitely'*.

However, although most would agree with this, there remains a lingering sense of over-identification with many of the subjects of anthropology 'at home'. One of the first movements away from this situation is to abandon the phrase altogether. Hastrup uses the phrase *'fieldwork in a parallel culture'* (1987: 104) which is more helpful, but I would suggest that a complete abandonment of all such labels is necessary. They merely serve to create and maintain divisions within the discipline. Such divisions serve to make implications concerning methodology. Strathern (1987a: 16-17) suggests that what we seem to be assuming about the anthropologist 'at home' is a form of *'auto-anthropology'*. She stresses that the only 'true' anthropology of 'home' would be one where the subjects and the anthropologist are equally 'at home' with the nature of the enquiry, i.e, whether the entire process is meaningful to the subjects. Obviously this is a situation which would rarely be

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found, although as Strathern points out subjects in some areas of western culture (she compares her work in Elmdon with her work in Papua New Guinea) would make more 'sense' of the whole enterprise than many peoples in more 'traditional' anthropological areas. The villagers of Elmdon had more 'understanding' of what she was doing, yet most of them would still remain quite baffled by the ethnographic product. Perhaps, the only true 'auto-ethnography' is that conducted amongst anthropologists themselves, for example, the work of Kuper (1975).

I was not at home in Missouri. It may have been less stressful, in a physical way, to live there than it would have been in a place where the climate, language, and level of living were dissimilar to my own. However, there remained profound differences, even with the language we supposedly shared. Conducting anthropology in a culture with which one has a familiarity or a shared identity may provide an easier start to work, but eventually obstacles still appear. As Hastrup (1987) points out over-familiarity can be as seductive as under-familiarity.

Seeing is not always Believing

The familiarity which often has a tendency to seduce 'audiences' into believing fieldwork 'at home' to be easy, also serves to create cultural misconceptions which would not otherwise occur. In the case of belief this is often common. Although one may find it difficult to accept or appreciate the particular beliefs of a 'traditional' anthropological subject group, for example the Nuer, at least their beliefs will probably be received more reverently than 'extraordinary' beliefs held by subjects 'at home'.

All beliefs raise issues within the researcher and his or her audience concerning rationality, truth, belief, and so forth. As Needham (1972) and Ruel (1982) both

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note, this is partly due to the semantic development of the word in English. The word 'believe' originally (in Norse and Old German) implied 'trust', 'confidence', and 'desire'. However, by the Middle Ages the word's meaning implied 'truth' or 'allegiance' to a particular idea (especially Christianity). This semantic shift was due to the mis-translation of the Greek and Hebrew verb roots for 'trust' by Biblical scholars. This new emphasis on 'believing' meaning 'truth', as opposed to 'trust', in 'something' reinforced Church teaching.

However, this semantic implication of 'believe', which is a very ambiguous word, has led to many of the debates concerning rationality and relativism (see Wilson 1970, Hollis and Lukes 1982, and Larner 1982). If one assumes a belief to be a 'truth' then when one is faced by a contrastive set of ideas, one then has to question their veracity, as there can be only one central 'truth'. The point, as MacIntyre (1970) succinctly states, is that one need not 'believe' the beliefs of another in order to 'understand'. 'Understanding' and 'believing' are two very different concepts. Yet if we reflect on the history of studies of belief and religion within anthropology, it is filled with examples of observers confusing the two concepts. The 'rationality' debate (see Wilson 1970, and Larner 1984) is one such example.

When 'audiences' are not only confronted with extraordinary beliefs but ones held by people with whom they culturally identify as being like themselves, then this process of confusing 'believing' with 'understanding' is exacerbated. I would contend that much of the 'audience' reaction to the God's Way community ethnography is 'explained' in this way. The 'audience' who belong predominantly to a common Judeao-Christian tradition, 'expect' a group of Christian fundamentalists to share similar views. When no commonalties exist, questions of veracity are raised. Yet 'believing' (or accepting) is not vital to the process of 'understanding'.

I would suggest that the third important aspect of 'audience' reaction is rooted in cultural stereotypes of the USA as a whole. The tension (political, economic, cultural, etc.) that exists between the USA and Europe (including the UK) has given rise to a myriad of cultural assumptions and misconceptions on both sides of the Atlantic. Although this is not the place to examine each and every one a few are particularly relevant.

Due to its history the USA has often been recognised as a 'young' nation and by implication therefore lacking in 'history' or 'culture' (Parrington 1964). The dominance of 'pop' culture within America further reinforces this image and allows a dismissal of American cultural forms. This image of a 'culture-less' nation raises an important question for British anthropologists: what is there to study? Of course, the USA is filled with a great variety of cultural forms to study, including pop culture. What is required is a shift in anthropological interests, which is already beginning with the increase in research 'at home', the use of new methodologies which can locate 'pop' culture, and the move towards a more cross-disciplinary approach. However, the study of American 'cultural' forms is still relatively 'new' within British anthropology due mainly to the different way the discipline developed, historically, in each country (Kuper 1975).

As well as stereotypes of America in particular, there is also an element of stereotyping of western culture in general. In the context of this thesis the cultural assumption most pertinent is that of the essential secular nature of western culture. We assume that we live in a secular age. This assumption is based on the dominance of secularisation theory within sociology and its entry into public discourse (Martin 1978 and Glock and Young 1976). Yet this assumption, as was

discussed in Part I, is based predominantly on the wrong interpretation of statistical evidence (Martin 1978), the equation of modernity with rationality (Parsons 1949), and a lack of understanding of 'new' religious forms/movements (Tipton 1984, Wuthnow 1976, and Lippy 1994).

Undeniably, Church power has declined, particularly in the political sphere; yet this does not necessary suggest a decline in the potency of religious belief (Glock and Bellah 1976). The 'proof' of this secularity is always quantitative: figures showing a decline in church membership, attendance figures, marriages, baptisms, and so forth. However, such figures do not provide the whole picture. If we take note of the findings of successive religious surveys in the USA and the UK (see for example Gallup 1989), what emerges is that people not only retain a great amount of religious knowledge, but also a strong sense of religious or spiritual belief. The continual rise, over the past two decades, in ecstatic religion, fundamentalism and New Age beliefs further reinforces that people are not less spiritual, rather they are disaffected with formal church 'religion'. The assumption that western culture is secular would appear to be not completely correct.

The USA, in particular due to its association with pop culture, is viewed as being even more secular then the European nations, yet as was noted in *Chapter Two* it has the second highest church attendance figures for a western nation. Other polls demonstrate that the majority of the population believe in a variety of religious phenomena. Religion is not in decline but, as can be seen by examining American church history, has always been an important source of cultural discourse (Lippy 1994). The current rise and power of the right-wing Christian coalition within American politics should be considered incredible if we consider that this is a nation with a constitutionally decreed division between state and church. However, if we recall history it becomes clear that this is far from being a secular nation.

The variety of audience *'astonishment'* lies in within these many considerations.

Unfinished Sympathy

'And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.' Ruth 2: 16.

This thesis had at its central aim the desire to construct a methodology which in turn would create a relationship of 'sympathy', however tenuous, between the reader and the members of God's Way community. The strength of the methodology will be demonstrated if this 'relationship' does not end on reading and instead the reader, or other 'audiences', leave this material with a degree of 'sympathy' toward such groups. Perhaps the reader needs to reconcile his or her conceptions ('Innocence?') of communities, such as God's Way, with their 'experience' of reading this text. It is hoped that they will enter a new stage which incorporates both states and presents a new view of such communities.

My own connection towards the work is not ended. I have moved from the 'innocence' of pre-fieldwork research, through the field 'experience', into the shifting and less settled sphere of 'redeemed innocence', where previous ideas and experiences merge, break down, and reform. This movement, as Blake portrayed it does not end, merely the process restarts. It is inescapable. Similarly my relationship with this work and more pertinently with God's Way community will not end, but instead will be reused in other experiences and later work.
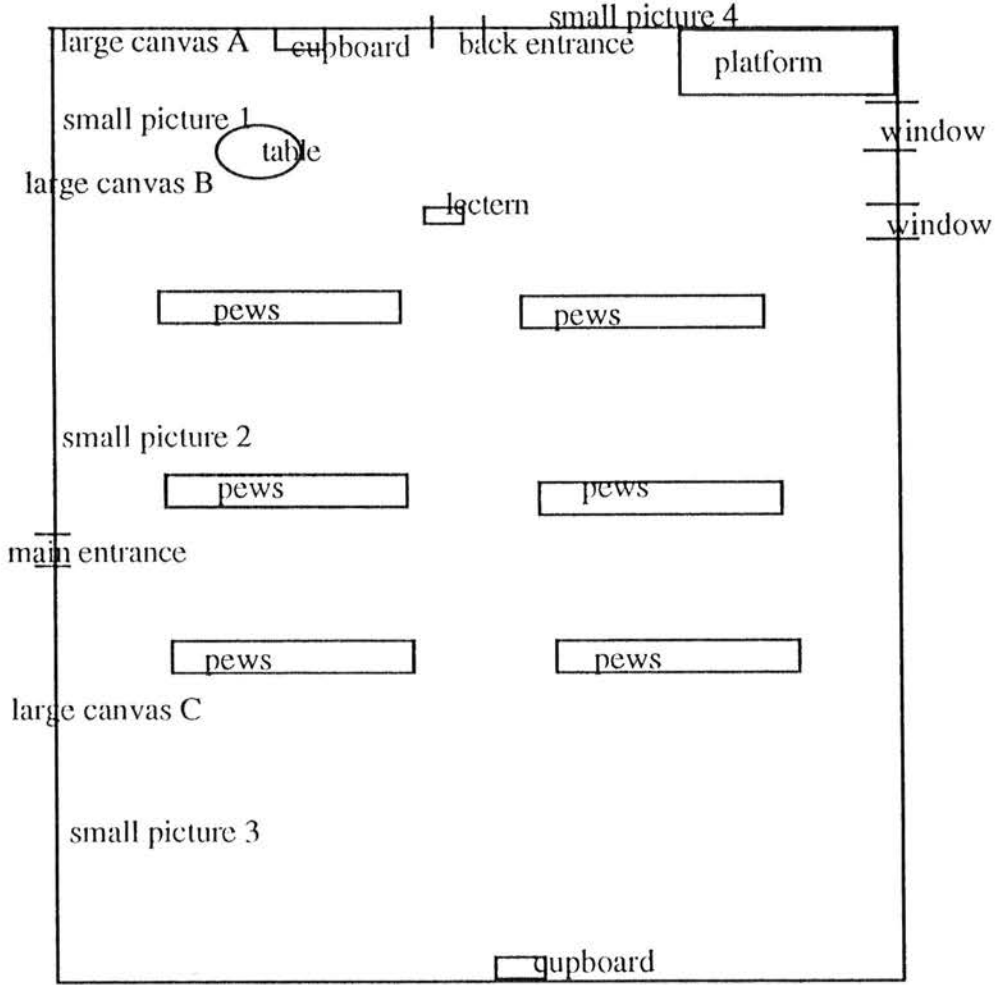
The community, itself, by the nature of its perceived role must also balance its essentially utopian vision (which could be identified as 'Innocence') with the daily

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dificulties of pursuing it ('Experience'). The result of this balancing act is a community which can not live as fully as it would desire - the ethnography showed this fact - but one which continues to strive towards its goal of intentionality. It is possible to view God's Way community as continually struggling between the two Blakean stages of 'Innocence' and 'Experience' so that its daily life resembles something approximating 'Redeemed Innocence'.
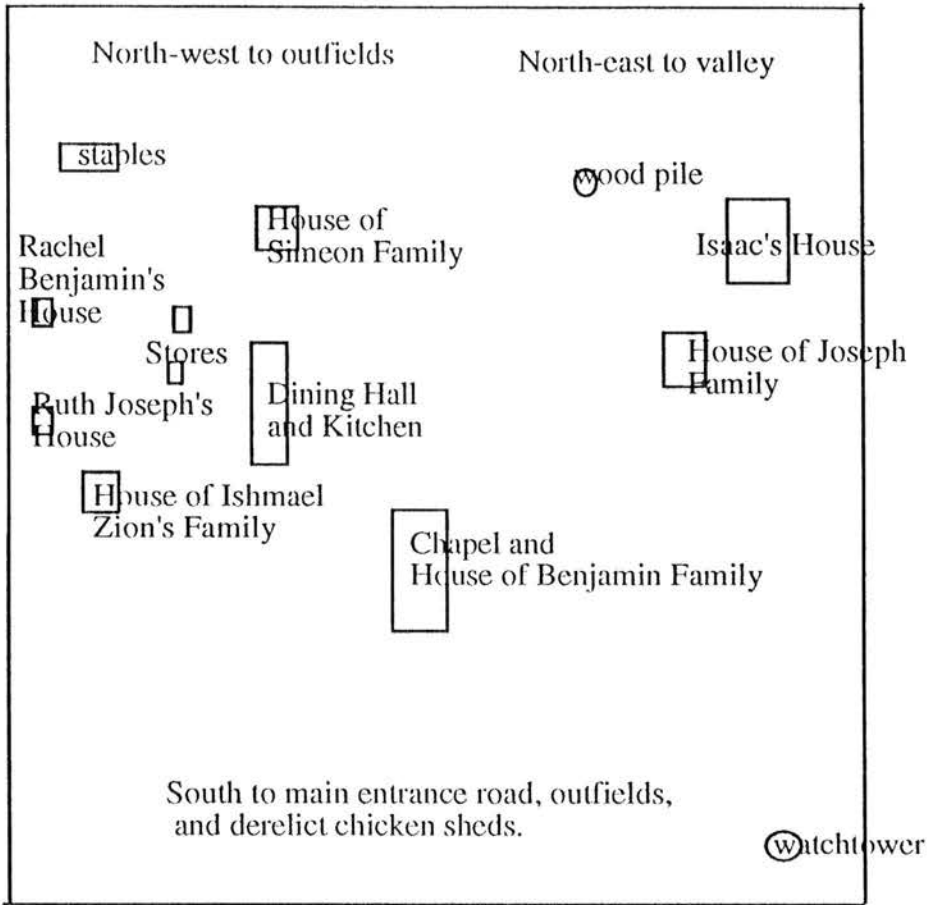
God's Way community is a fundamentalist, apocalyptic, community which is intentional. It presents a view of a community in which belief is embodied to such an extent that it challenges many previously held misconceptions of communal forms. The community provides insight to the degree of intentionality present within an intentional community. It is a vivid example of a group attempting to live a fully intentional life. In a more general sense the community provides an example of fundamentalism which is not linked to the mainstream of American fundamentalism, and indeed challenges many perceptions of fundamentalism. God's Way community ironically, for a non-proselytising group, have much to teach us about how belief and faith are experienced and lived by believers.

Appendix A: Plans of Communal Spaces

Plan of Chapel

large canvas A   cupboard   back entrance   small picture 4   platform

small picture 1   table   window

large canvas B   lectern   window

pews   pews

small picture 2

pews   pews

main entrance

pews   pews

large canvas C

small picture 3

cupboard

Plan of Community

North-west to outfields   North-east to valley

stables

                    House of
                    Simeon Family   wood pile

Rachel   Isaac's House
Benjamin's
House   Stores
                                                                House of Joseph
                                                                Family
Ruth Joseph's   Dining Hall
House   and Kitchen

        House of Ishmael
        Zion's Family
                            Chapel and
                            House of Benjamin Family

        South to main entrance road, outfields,
        and derelict chicken sheds.
                                                    watchtower

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Plan of Kitchen and Dining Area

exit to back porch and store-rooms

wash-up sink

wood-burner

main entrance

serving table

Benjamin Family

Isaac's family

large glass windows

Joseph Family

Ishmael's Family

kitchen area

Jonah Simeon's Family

curtain

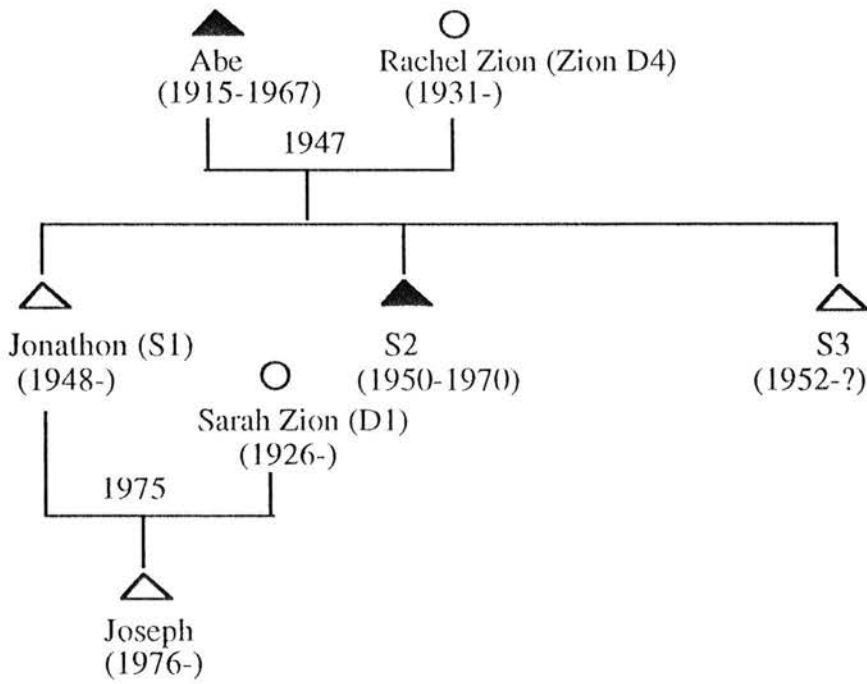Back room for storing coats, boots, and washing hands.

curtain

exit

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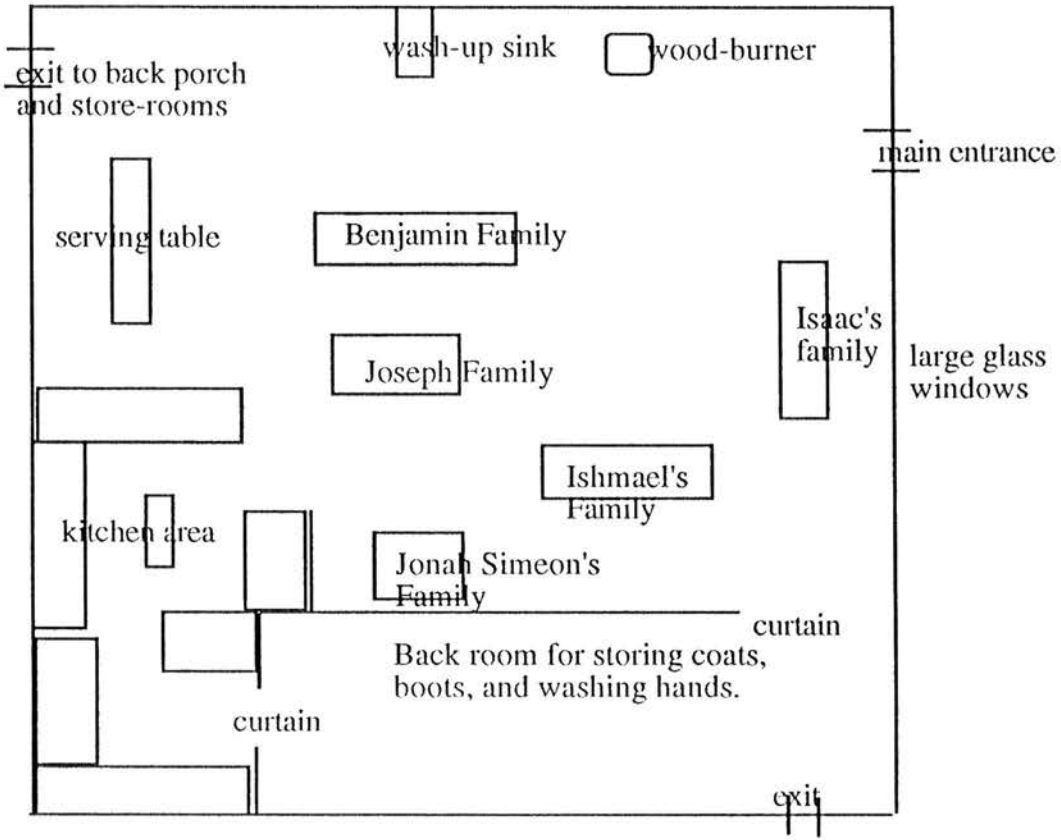
Appendix B: Genealogical Diagrams of God's Way Community

Guide To Genealogical Diagrams:

△ Male

○ Female

■ Deceased   ▨ Individual left community before or after Schism.

▥ Individual left community during the Schism.
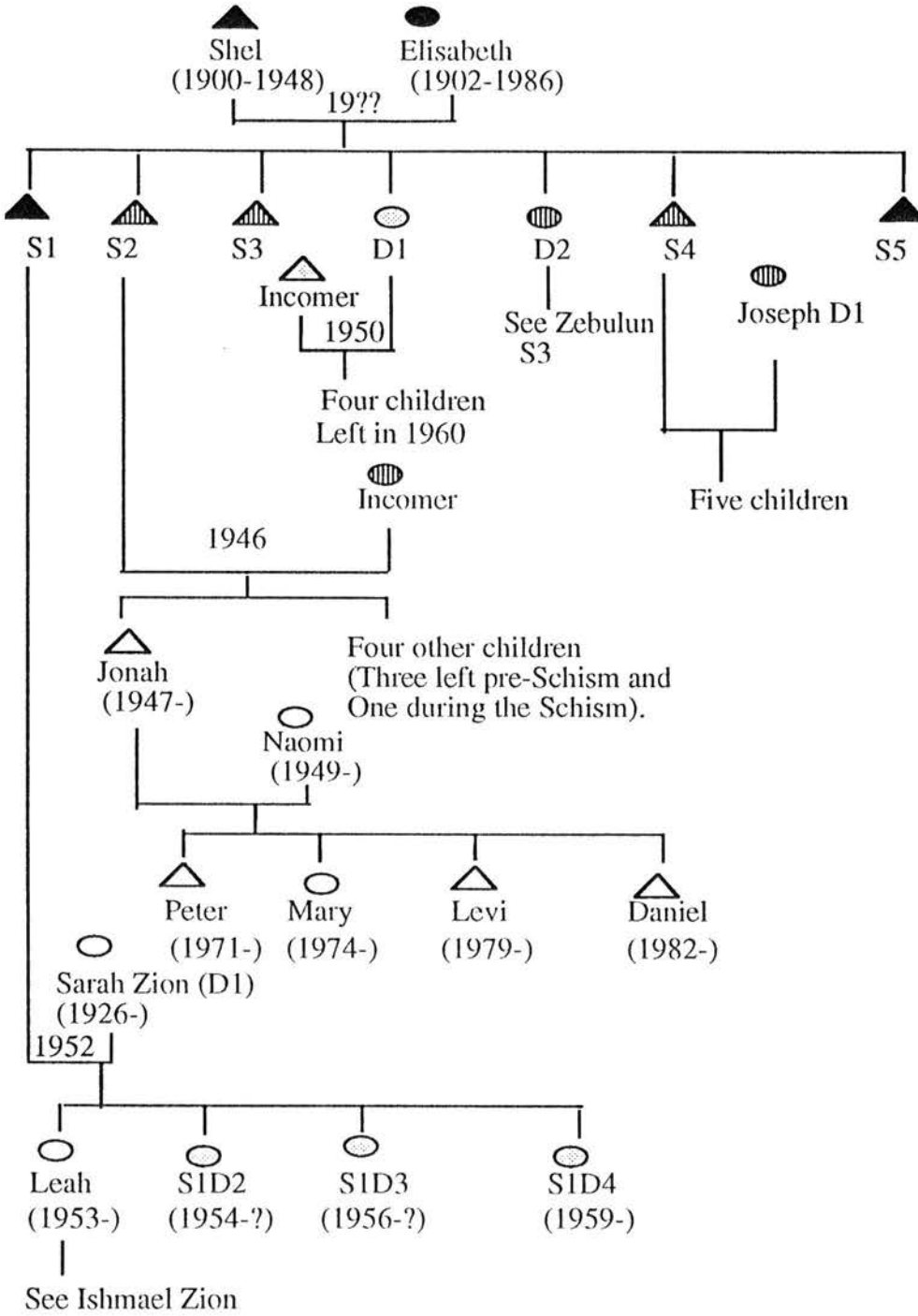
Benjamin Family

Abe Benjamin joined the community in 1938.
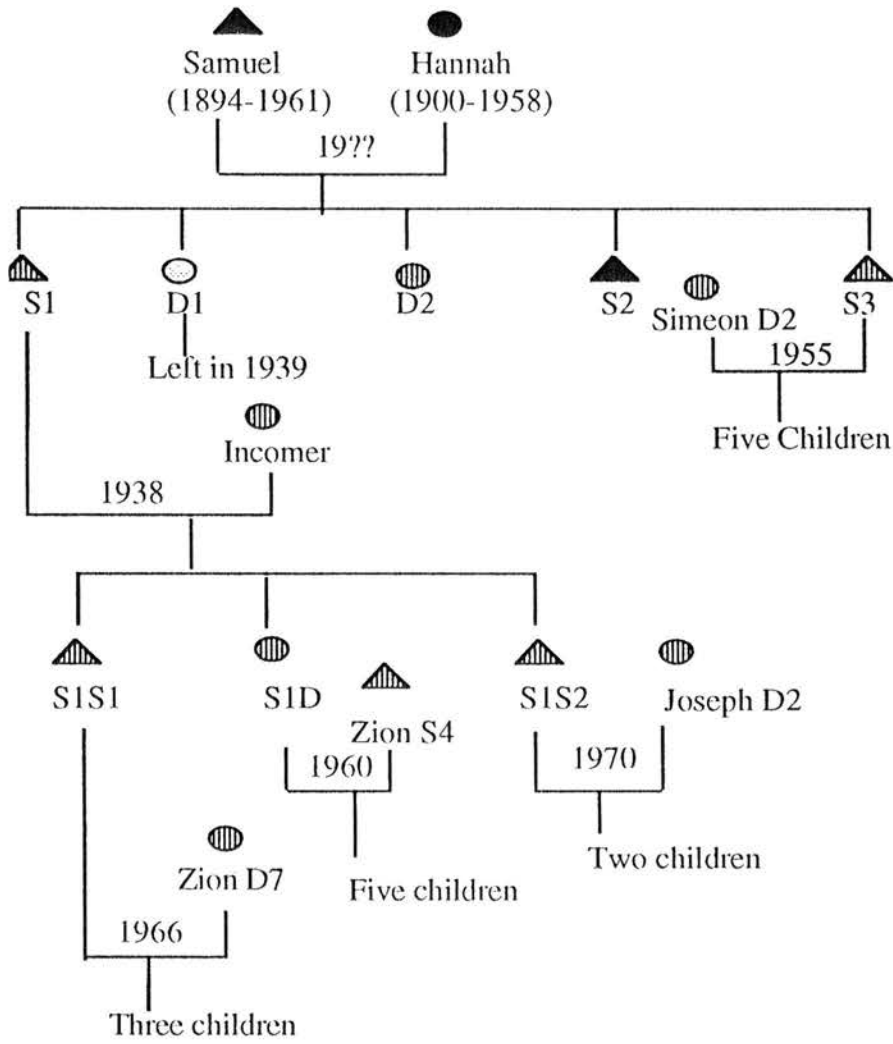
Joseph Family
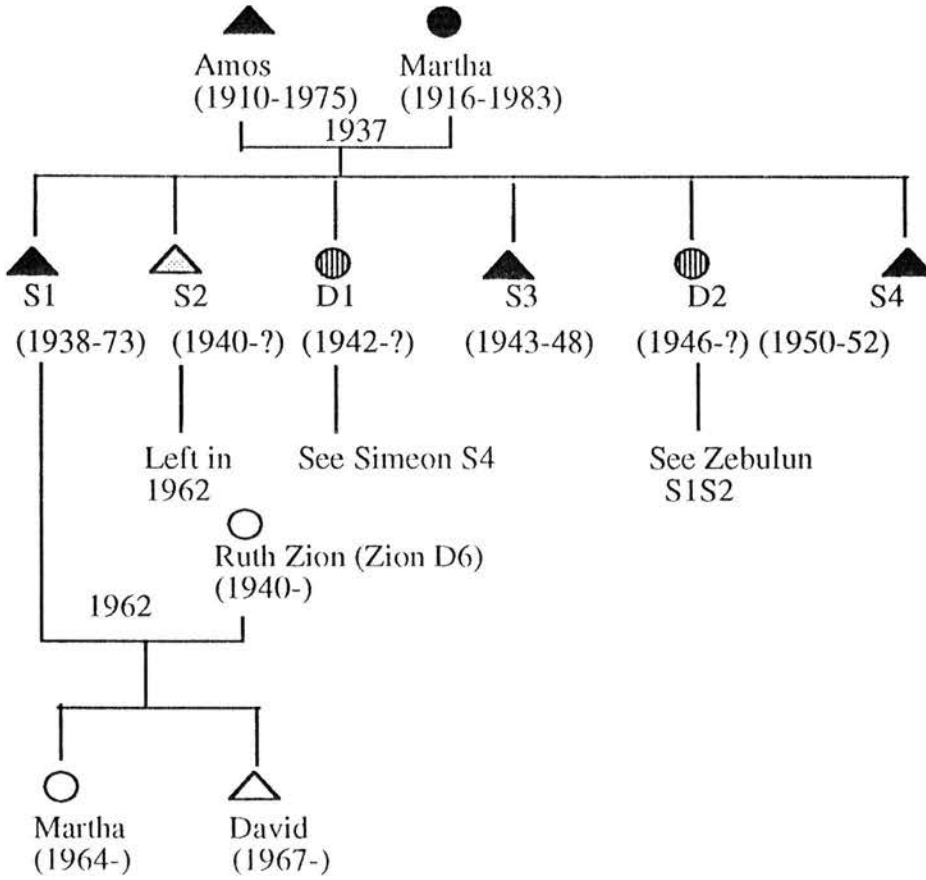
Amos Joseph joined the community in 1935.   He married a local woman.
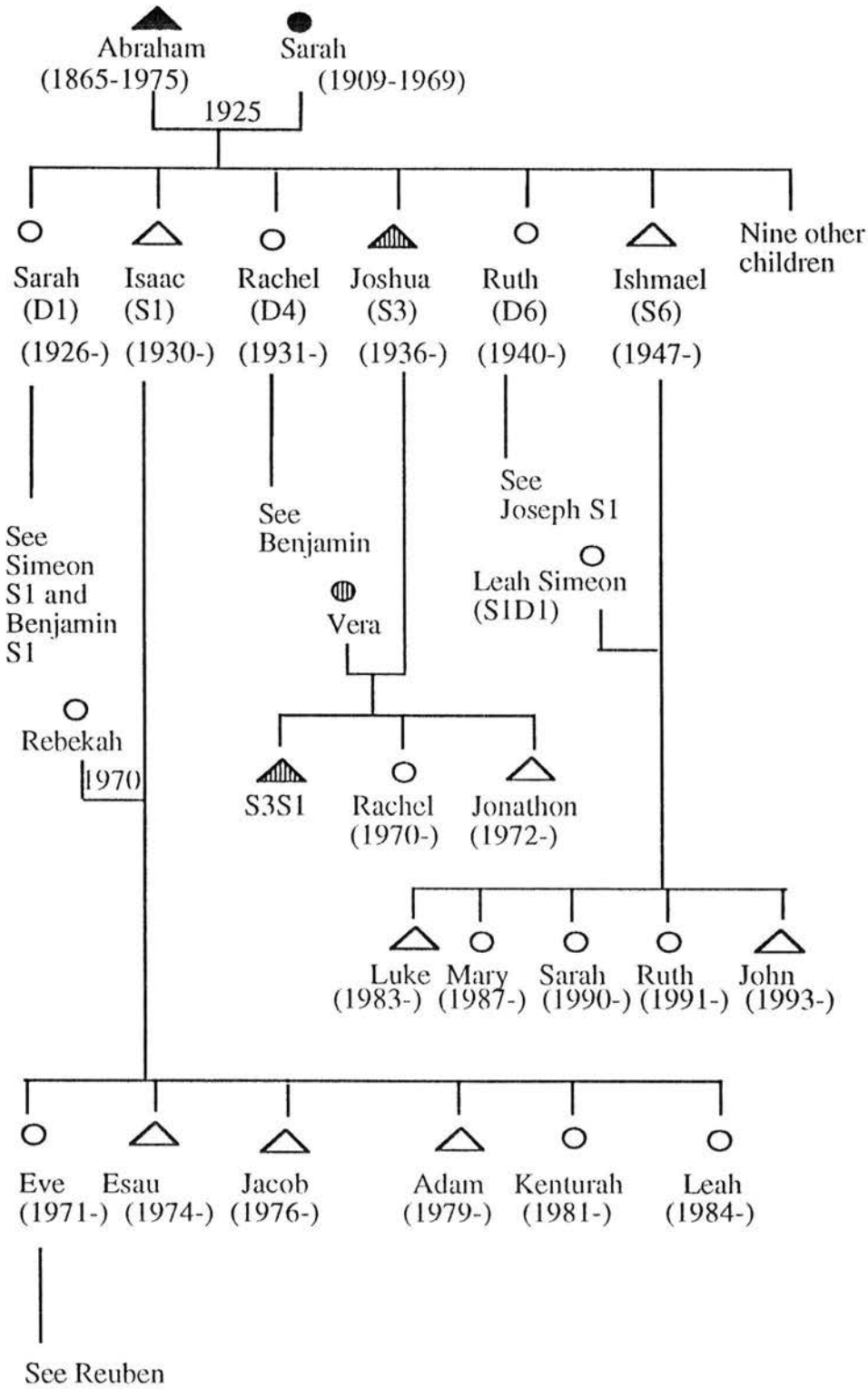
Simeon Family

Shel Simeon and his family were among the original members of the community, who first came together in 1927.

Zebulun Family

Samuel Zebulun and his family were among the original founding members of the community, who first came together in 1927.

Abraham
(1865-1975)

Sarah
(1909-1969)

1925

Sarah
(D1)
(1926-)

Isaac
(S1)
(1930-)

Rachel
(D4)
(1931-)

Joshua
(S3)
(1936-)

Ruth
(D6)
(1940-)

Ishmael
(S6)
(1947-)

Nine other
children

See
Simeon
S1 and
Benjamin
S1

See
Benjamin

See
Joseph S1

Vera

Leah Simeon
(S1D1)

Rebekah

1970

S3S1

Rachel
(1970-)

Jonathon
(1972-)

Luke
(1983-)

Mary
(1987-)

Sarah
(1990-)

Ruth
(1991-)

John
(1993-)

Eve
(1971-)

Esau
(1974-)

Jacob
(1976-)

Adam
(1979-)

Kenturah
(1981-)

Leah
(1984-)

See Reuben

Of the nine other children born to Abraham and Sarah Zion, four died in infancy and two left before the Schism. The three remaining all left during the Schism. Of these three, one was single while the other two were married with children (see Zebulun Family).

Reuben Family
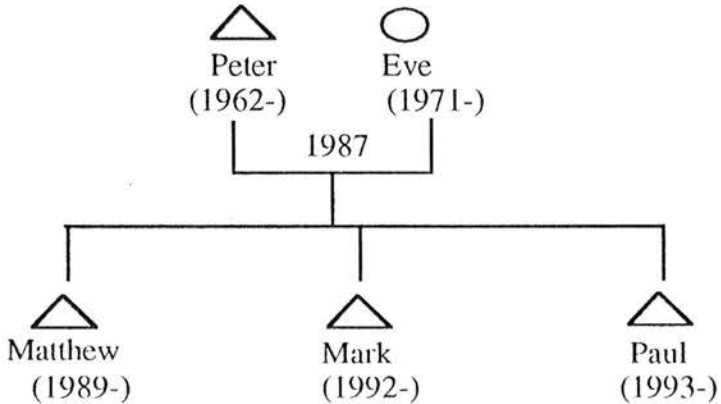
Peter Reuben joined the community in 1986.

There were four other members, Dan Martin (who joined in 1927), Ocran Asher, and his two sisters Page and Ruth Asher (who joined in 1935). None of these four married.

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