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The Ideal Cosmic Warrior: Factors & Types in a Cosmic War

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to introduce the reader to the idea of Cosmic War giving background on the formation of the concept, how it is currently perceived, and the difference from other seemingly similar ideas such as terrorism and holy war. Following this the most influential factors in the modern appearance of Cosmic War such as the rise of religion in the face of modernity and secularism are explored and resultantly the growth in fundamentalist and New Religious movements. From this understanding of Cosmic War the possibility of forming an ideal type of Cosmic Warrior is proposed. Three cases, The Branch Davidians, Aum Shinrikyo, and the Hutaree Militia are used to accentuate the given theories and reasons and ultimately to expose repeating traits that can be used to formulate a flexible ideal type of Cosmic Warrior.

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“While nothing is easier than to denounce the evildoer, nothing is more difficult than to understand him.” *Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky*

1. Introduction

As the world becomes a more interconnected globalized entity, technological advances have effected obvious visible change while other ideological and spiritual shifts have occurred outside the physical world. A loss of faith in science and modernity has affected shifts away from the secular. One such shift has been the global resurgence of religion, responding to man’s renewed search for sources of identity and answers to questions of purpose and existence. In its wake old conflicts have been renewed while others with familiar underpinnings have surfaced. This perceived rebirth is not a religious revival in the classic sense, the driving forces behind this clash against the secularization of identity are Apocalyptic New Religious Movements and religiously motivated political groups who see themselves as actors in an earth transcending conflict of good versus evil which is playing itself out in the physical realm. These conflicts are indicative of a grander timeless struggle that transcends earthly battles linking them with a spiritual cause known as “Cosmic War”. From this war emerge “Cosmic Warriors”, groups and individuals trapped in a seemingly endless but divine struggle, which goes beyond ordinary human reality. Inherent in these Cosmic Warriors is a sense of justification bestowed upon them by a higher power and involving a blend of fundamental scriptural inspiration, apocalyptic adherence and seemingly endless external instigating factors. Whether one has faith or spirituality or is a firm believer in modernity and secularism, religious conflict has returned and become a catalyzing element in the interactions of man on a global scale.

The purpose of this Thesis will be to explore the concept of Cosmic War, understanding the factors responsible for it (traditional and contemporary) illustrating them in the case studies by looking for patterns and taking these factors into consideration ask; **Who is the Ideal Cosmic Warrior?** An initial reaction to this question is that there is clearly a correlation among different groups engaged in Cosmic

Warfare and the reasons for which they believe they are doing so, but whether one overarching comprehensive ideal type can be drawn from this is yet unknown. As complex as the concept of Cosmic War is, so too is the ideal type which stems from it. What is certain is that there is no one single reason for the surge of Cosmic Warfare, rather it is the blending of political and the spiritual which exacerbates tensions and leads conflicts to be ever more violent and desperate than they could be on their own.

2. Theoretical

The last 20 years of human existence has seen a remarkable rise in the number of labeled terrorist groups who have been religiously motivated. “Terrorism” has garnered much attention in relation to questions of religious conflict. It is commonly explained as a method for attracting attention to the plight of ones movement or for achieving goals which are seemingly impossible through the normal channels of accepted political negotiation. The United States Department of Defense defines terrorism as, “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological” (International Terrorism and Security Research). Terrorism and religious violence however are often misunderstood and simplified into terms and situations which make sense for casual observers of the conflict, allowing them to put the situation into an understandable context on the earthly plane. Physical reality however, is only one part of the puzzle. Terrorism and related violence, which seemingly comes as a result of earthbound man made conflicts, are in some cases merely symptoms of a much larger issue. They are aspects of what those involved believe to be greater struggle, one which transcends the earthly battlefield and is cosmic in nature. It has been termed by some theorists and authors as a “Cosmic War”. A Cosmic War not only involves and ultimately transcends the earthly realm, but because of its dual nature as both a physical and spiritual conflict the idea that the conflict could be lost becomes unthinkable as the repercussions continue in to the afterlife involving questions of identity and the very existence of its participants (Jurgensmeyer, 2001:6).

In researching the concept of Cosmic War, it is clear that September 11, 2000 (9/11) has been a dividing point in the direction that related inquiry has taken. Since that event much of the research that is related to this field has focused more upon the aspect of terrorism and the subsequent violence. Driving this is a focus on radical Islamic groups which are involved in terrorist action. Terrorism is ultimately an aspect of Cosmic War, which is complex and multifaceted. Terrorism is the product of an already ongoing Cosmic War that allows its participants to actualize what they believe to be an otherworldly conflict in the physical reality here on earth. While this is obviously a key factor to the discussion of Cosmic War it is only a small component to Cosmic Warfare. As far as theoretical schools are concerned there is very little which could be noted as “officially” recognized however there are some authors attempting to frame the concept in a structured manner. While Mark Jurgensmeyer did not create the term “Cosmic War” he certainly popularized it in his work *Terror in the Mind of God* (2003). Of all the work published on this topic Jurgensmeyer’s seems to still be the definitive source. To date Jurgensmeyer is one of only a handful of authors that lays out concise explanations of Cosmic War and theories for identifying if a group is involved in such a conflict. Following *Terror in the Mind of God*, Reza Aslan’s book *How to Win a Cosmic War* (2008) is perhaps the most respected and certainly most recent work focusing specifically on this topic. While many of the ideas in this book reiterate what Jurgensmeyer has already shown in his writing, Aslan takes it a step further and seeks to understand how it could be possible to win a Cosmic War, his final conclusion being that the only way is not to involve oneself in such a conflict.

Research prior to 9/11 seems to involve varying groups of different backgrounds and religious faiths. Authors such as John R. Hall in his work entitled *Apocalypse Observed: Religious Movements and violence in North America, Europe and Japan* (2000) provide a solid understanding of selected religious movements and what many have termed as “cults” in the 1990’s and their relationship towards the ideology of Cosmic Warfare. The Aum Shinrikyo and The Branch Davidians are two such groups that both came to prominence and met their demise in the early 1990’s. They are two preliminary examples of post cold war globalized era religious groups which hint towards emerging points of conflict between such groups and the nation state ultimately driving

the notion of Cosmic War. Hall and other authors of that time period such as Norman Cohn and Karen Armstrong tend to focus on the notion of Apocalyptic Warfare as the driving force behind these conflicts. Not only do they see it a major factor leading to violence but its importance stems back further with the fractionation of groups from society and established issues of identity. The Apocalypse is extremely important to the wider concept of Cosmic War but like terrorism it is again only component not its entirety.

While both Jurgensmeyer and Aslan address the issue of the Apocalypse in their writings and cite its importance it isn't focused upon as greatly as the pre-9/11 writers do in their writings. There are several possible reasons for this. The most important of them being that generally groups who believe in the apocalypse are split in two, pre millennialist and post millennialists (Hall, 2000:6). Due to the fact that the millennium had not passed at the time of writing, the authors obviously needed to include these concepts more so in their writing and saw it as a more potent force and catalyst in among the explored groups. The other point that seems to be somewhat contradictory is that both Jurgensmeyer and Aslan explain Cosmic War as something which is timeless and never-ending even going so far as to theorize that such a war is unwinnable and should be avoided. However, the concept of Apocalypse throws this theory into question especially as it is still a driving force among certain groups today. Many interpretations see it as end times, where a final battle will be fought sometimes referred to as Armageddon in which the forces of good and evil face each other and ultimately those on the side of god triumph. This concept of apocalypse provides not only a time frame (albeit one which is not necessarily precise in terms of modern measures of time) but it also presents an end to Cosmic War and transformation into a better world or other plane of existence. Whether or not the authors believe this will occur or the results applicable is inconsequential due to the fact that those involved in Cosmic War do, it is very real for them and is a important motivating force in how and when their actions take place. More contemporary research on the Apocalypse and the above-mentioned groups in the 1990's largely seems to be non-existent. In order to gain further insight into these groups a third more recent conflict needs to be analyzed.

An important factor in the understanding of Cosmic War are changing views on Modernity and Secularism and the return of religiously based identity as a force in society and politics. Contradictory to theories on Modernity and Secularism, religion has made dramatic gains in a world once dominated by theories that marginalized it. As Scott Thomas explains in *The Global Resurgence of Religion and The Transformation of International Relations* (2005) we are seeing a modernity crisis where people have become unsatisfied with standard rational explanations for complex questions provided by science and technology and instead look to the religious and spiritual for answers. This is in conjunction with the changing and role of the nation state whether it be due to the end of the cold war and the loss of a political enemy to reinforce ideals or as Ohmae purports transnational economic factors. “The unsecularization of the world is” as George Weigel puts it “one the dominant social facts of life in the late twentieth century” (Huntington, 1993:41). As individuals are separated from longstanding local identities and revert back to cultural and religious identities we begin to see as Huntington forecasted a “Clash of Civilizations”. But it is not necessarily upon civilizational, cultural, linguistic or even social lines that a Cosmic War is fought. Viewing it from a macro perspective in examples such as the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, it fulfills the West vs. Islam theory that Huntington has exalted. But on the micro level it becomes much more complex. Like its predecessor The Crusades, these current conflicts in the Middle East have resource and territorial based motives and are not in themselves solely Cosmic in nature, but an aspect of it manifesting in a physical manner. Cosmic War can cross cultural and social boundaries, it is ultimately not a conflict over territory or resource and neither is it about Islam vs. Christianity or any other religion for that matter, it is truly a conflict of identity and being on the side of good for future salvation. Cosmic War takes on an intrapersonal spiritual context which if one who is viewing it from the outside or who lacks a religious/spiritual frame of reference may have a difficulty understanding.

As Herbert Kelman (2007) in *Social Psychological Dimensions of International Conflict* so accurately summarizes “The causes of conflict generally combine objective and subjective factors, which are related to each other in a circular fashion. Conflicts focusing for example on issues like territory and resources almost invariably reflect and further magnify underlying concerns about security and identity”(195). It is these

physical material goals which contribute greatly to the escalation and perpetuation of conflict. As groups have fulfilled the security and identity gaps left by the nation state and secularism this has strengthened their identity and sense of security while at the same time undermining the role of the nation state in doing so. Conflict arises as groups begin to differentiate themselves from mainstream society and begin to fulfill their member's needs in deference to state and social structures. Leaders use fear as a tool of manipulation and control. As the fear of annihilation of a group becomes connected with the fear of annihilation of the individual these fears must be addressed in order for conflict resolution to be successful. This is a typical approach in conflict resolution, predominantly that of an ethnic nature. However in Cosmic Warfare fear and conflict become part of the identity of those who are involved. Assuaging fears on the physical practical level does not always correlate directly with the spiritual nor is it something that the participants necessarily want. Because Cosmic Warfare and the Apocalypse have become part of their identity it is only through the actualization of these beliefs can they themselves be completely understood and fulfilled spiritually. This is why as in the case of both the Aum Shinrikyo and the Hutaree militia they chose to instigate violence in order to prematurely force the coming of the Apocalypse and a great final conflict. The Branch Davidians on the other hand did not seek to bring this final struggle but instead as they saw it, it was brought to their doorstep. Because of the nature of the battle and their perceived destiny no solution was possible other than victory or death. Political and material resolutions may be acceptable for resolving conflicts among ethnic groups and state actors but they are however wholly ineffective when used to resolve conflicts which involve threats to identity that are spiritually based.

3. Methodology

As much of the research concerning Cosmic War is theoretically driven it best to explore these theories within case studies. A case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg 1991:12). It will be however not be a true and complete study, in that the qualitative data collection and interviews will not be conducted due to the fact that the groups being studied are no

longer in existence or inaccessible. Rather it will be a retrospective analysis of historical evidence. As this research project seeks to answer a “what” question this leads to an explanatory case study with the unit of analysis in each case being a “group” (Levy, 1988:118). The groups in question will be analyzed by applying theories of Cosmic War and The Rise of Religion to further understand the potential causes and stimulating factors behind Cosmic Warfare as a phenomenon in the post cold war globalized era. Along with this, a third more contemporary group will also be studied through a theoretical focus to compare and contrast as a more recent example. In using a limited number of groups with which to compare and contrast one inevitably falls into a pattern of generalization in which a small sample of cases has been drawn from a wider pool of cases (Yin, 1984:2). This however is unavoidable and as will be explained, the cases selected provide an array of varying examples and explanations to avoid being considered too “general”. The selection of cases tends towards what Stake (1995) terms a “naturalistic” generalization, which he sees as merging understanding between the readers experiential background and the case study itself whereby a broad cross section of readers would be able to relate to the case or cases in question leading to a more successful understanding (Stake, 1995:15). While two of the cases chosen are more historical and retrospective in nature they are widely known, studied and written about, the third offers a contemporary and still yet to be thoroughly explored example.

The first case is that of the Branch Davidians, which were a sect with a Christian Apocalyptic Ideology based in Waco, Texas active during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s led by David Koresh. A relatively small group of only 80 members the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) had become suspicious of their actions and attempted to exercise a search warrant on the Davidian compound on February 28th 1993 believing that the Davidians were in possession of illegal firearms and explosives. The ATF was met with resistance; the ensuing standoff gained national and worldwide attention as the ATF and other governmental organizations laid siege to the Davidians compound demanding their surrender. Not fully understanding the nature of the Davidians and their belief system, negotiations on the part of the ATF failed and after 51 days resulted in the deaths of almost all of the members including Koresh. This case is significant for several reasons. One of the main reasons being that it is an example of a

primarily religious group which had not premeditated acts of violence or sought to make its struggle political or outwardly manifesting and acted in purely defensive manner yet were caught in an unavoidable struggle that resulted in their deaths. This group is interesting because although it appears in literature prevalent after its demise and continuing until the end of the 90's, more contemporary work such as that of Jurgensmeyer and Aslan fails to address this struggle, focusing rather on groups which acted out in violence.

The second case while sharing some fundamentals with the Branch Davidians offers a more classic example of a group actively engaged in what it believed to be Cosmic War. The Aum Shinrikyo were a New Religious Movement that incorporated aspects of Buddhism, Christianity and Hinduism into a mixture of cosmic ideology. Formed in Japan in the 1980's, the group gained notoriety in 1995 for terrorist attacks that its members committed on behalf of their organization and spiritual leader, Shoko Asahara. While the teachings of the group were primarily based on Buddhism, Asahara incorporated elements of Hinduism as well as the Christian concept of the apocalypse into his philosophy and teaching to his followers. On March 20, 1995 members of the Aum Shinrikyo released Sarin gas into the Tokyo subway system. Packages containing the gas were placed on several different subway cars and punctured slowly leaking the poisonous gas killing 12 and sickening thousands. The Aum offer a second distinct case, which presents another element of Cosmic War, that of a group, which while being religious in its origin also had political motivations. In this case it was the overthrowing of the Japanese government in order to free the Japanese people and humanity from what it believed to be a network of global control and ultimately the Apocalypse.

The final case is that of the Hutaree Militia. This case study as Yin puts it is "to allow a degree of focus on contemporary events" (1984:2), it is one that offers a more recent example of Cosmic Warfare, having occurred in March of 2010. While the first two cases both occurred in the early to mid 1990's and are good examples of some of the first groups engaged in Cosmic Warfare in the post cold war era, they are both pre-9/11 and pre millennial examples. In a world where much has changed since that event, adding such a case will lend a greater degree of validity and diversity to this study. It is also one

which differs from the other two in that it is a politically motivated group seeking political change to overthrow the American government while at the same time intermingling Christian and Apocalyptic thinking and belief structures. The “Hutaree” were an offshoot of the Michigan militia who as their indictment states conspired to, “Levy war against the United States and to oppose by force the authority of the government of the United States” (Miller, 2010:1). Their plan was to launch an attack on police officers and several other public building in hopes of inciting an uprising which would eventually expand nationally into a revolt against the United States government. Nine members of the group were arrested before their plans could be carried out. Inherent in their belief structure was once again that the government was “evil” and that they were on the side of god and planned to bring about the Apocalypse and ultimately the return of heaven on earth (Miller, 2010:1).

These cases have been chosen due to several factors including location, time of occurrence, motivation, and outcome. The purpose of choosing them is not to engage in “confirmation bias” which gives more attention and weight to cases that support the assumptions as discussed in the introduction (Skepdic). Rather it is to review, compare and contrast cases which while sharing the fundamental concept of Cosmic War as the driving force also present a look into a variety of factors and possibilities such as the amount of political inclination of the group leading it to act out in an aggressive manner and likewise the lack of political inclination but still being involved in violent conflict as governments unknowingly fulfill a groups visions of Cosmic Warfare and the Apocalypse. To offer different sources and confirming aspects to the case studies I was fortunate enough to speak with a Christian Minister and a Vedic master from India, while I don’t qualify them as semi-structured interviews and were not conducted as such, they did offer insight into the beliefs and history of the respective faiths. The relations formulated in the conversation serve the purpose of making the interviewees’ implicit knowledge more explicit (Flick, 2006:156). While the groups that are focused on in the comparative section are mainly Buddhist and Christian these conversations offer insight into questions of Cosmic War which are prevalent also in Hinduism and Islam and show an interesting correlation between the different beliefs represented.

Questions may arise as to why an Islamic group was not used as one of the cases for comparison, and rightly so due to all the attention such groups have gotten in the past decade. But it is precisely for that reason, the notoriety and abundance of information on such groups and their involvement in Cosmic War that makes use of such an example unnecessary. The point of this thesis is to uncover reasons for the modern resurgence of Cosmic War and in doing so to determine the possibility of identifying ideal types from these factors. In order to conduct such a completely thorough project so as not to leave out any religion or group would be certainly impossible for a thesis of this length and potentially could require many years of inquiry. This however may not be necessary, as will be shown in this paper there are factors and trends evident in Cosmic War regardless of religion and culture that one sees over and over. The concept of Cosmic War is all encompassing, universal and human, not particularly Islamic, Christian or for that matter religious (Treverton, Greg, Gibran, Yost 2005:32). One strength and weakness of these cases is that in each instance Christianity is involved as a driving religious thought process. It is strong in that it may point to such a religious background and ideology as a stimulating factor and a factor in the formulation of an ideal type but lacking in the diversity of involving other faiths. Again it should be stressed that interest and concern should not depend on the type religion, as ones sees cases of Cosmic War occurring across all faiths. Ultimately the true strength of these cases lies in the degree of political and religious inclination that manifests itself in what the participants believe to be a Cosmic War. Such a conflict cannot occur without the absence of either and in each case there is a varying degrees of political and religious motivation resulting in largely similar results but through different methods.

3.1 Ideal Types

The concept of the ideal type as developed by Max Weber has been an important but often controversial tool in the social sciences. As Weber saw it “no scientific system is ever capable of reproducing all concrete reality, nor can any conceptual apparatus ever do full justice to the infinite diversity of particular phenomena” (Coser,1977:223). According to Weber's definition, “an ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation*

of one or more points of view according to which *concrete individual phenomenon* are arranged into a unified analytical construct in its purely fictional nature, it is a methodological utopia [that] cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality” (Weber, 1904/1949: 90). Weber seems to present a concept which oversimplifies and generalizes a complex social phenomenon. It is within the complexity and the understanding that human cognitive capability is limited in understanding such phenomena that Weber’s insight lies. Due to the inability to understand all aspects of social reality some subjectivity and a simplified method of accentuating certain points must be employed to gain understanding of a phenomenon. Ideal types are not to be considered absolute but merely applicable for the cases in question and potentially pointing to factors in the larger phenomenon as a whole. “The ideal type never seeks to claim its validity in terms of a reproduction of or a correspondence with social reality. Its validity can be ascertained only in terms of adequacy, which is too conveniently ignored by the proponents of positivism” (Finch, 1949:10).

Weber first used the concept of the ideal type to compare distinct social characteristics of different societies. In this situation the ideal type according to Weber was “a conceptual pattern which brings together certain relationships and events of historical life into a complex whole whose purpose is to describe historical societies by comparing their internal and external characteristics” (Morrison, 2006:346). While Weber’s original study of ideal types was mainly connected to larger concepts such as social structures, economics, feudalism etc... the ideal type while being within the concept of Cosmic War ultimately relates to the individual, the Cosmic Warrior. Ideal types offer both a method of evaluating empirical cases for similarities as well as differences. Ideal types are not to be misconstrued as “perfect” and permanent types or not even a statistical average, but rather a “typical” type. Ideal types are “analytical constructs that enable the researcher to develop hypotheses linking the types with the conditions that brought about the event, phenomena, or social structure, or with consequences that follow from its emergence” (Encyclopedia). While the ideal type should not be misconstrued as something which is reproducible and indicative of social reality, Ideal types are useful in that they allow the examiner to connect them with the occurrences of phenomenon that resulted in their formation, potentially formulate

hypotheses and link them with possible future events (Bolender). Much criticism has been directed towards ideal types because of the subjective nature of this concept as the well as the oftentimes-extreme phenomenon with which this concept is used to evaluate. The ideal Cosmic Warrior is to be considered an extreme example. Cosmic Warfare, while the concepts and ideas may be existent in the minds of many, the acting out in firm belief of them is by no means commonplace and is considered by mainstream religion to be a “fringe” occurrence (Jones, 2011:1).

4. Cosmic War

“The line between the political and biblical is disappearing”

(Aslan, 2008:83)

What exactly is a Cosmic War? Cosmic War is a multifaceted concept that transcends the boundaries of everyday human life and “relates to the metaphysical conflicts between good and evil” (Jurgensmeyer, 2001:149). Cosmic War is neither a concept of the Common Era or one which has limited itself to the major religions. A brief look at Ancient history finds cosmic struggles within people such as the Egyptians, Sumerians, Mesopotamians, and Assyrians. However as it is relative to the presented cases and the current global situation Cosmic War is viewed strictly from the context of current major religions and absent ancient historical representations. Religious belief and or spiritual faith are the core of Cosmic War, however these alone do not necessarily lead to a cosmic struggle. An explanation of this is not as simple as describing it as a conflict between two opposed religious groups. In fact as numerous conflicts have shown, in most cases it is not actually religions that are opposing each other but rather a *mélange* of religions, ethnic groups and governments confronting each other. Conflict is generally noted to be a conglomeration of objective and subjective factors cyclically related to each other, such as territory and resources which are indicative of deeper concerns most

notably security and identity (Kelman, 2007:195). These factors are relevant in a Cosmic War however they are symptomatic of further issues which transcend earthly concerns bringing the conflict to a cosmological level. Due to the complex nature of this concept, it may be helpful to take in consideration criteria Mark Jurgensmeyer has outlined in *Terror in the Mind of God* (2001) for determining whether a group is engaged in a confrontation that could be called a Cosmic War. According to Jurgensmeyer there are three main criteria:

I. The struggle is perceived as a defense of basic identity and dignity, If the struggle is thought to be of ultimate significance a defense not only of lives but of entire cultures then the possibility is greater that it will be seen as a cultural war with spiritual implications.

II. Losing the struggle would be unthinkable, if a negative outcome to the struggle is perceived as beyond human conception the struggle may be viewed as taking place on a trans-historical plane.

III. The struggle is blocked and cannot be won in real time or in real terms. Perhaps most important if the struggle is seen as hopeless in human terms, it is likely that it may be reconceived on a sacred plane where the possibilities of victory are in God's hands."

It must be noted, Jurgensmeyer explains that the presence of any of these criteria is *suggestive* of Cosmic War and all three being in conjunction is *very indicative* of such conflict. Interestingly enough a conflict overtime can adapt more or less of these features, potentially as he illustrates in the Arab-Palestinian conflict for national identity starting out initially as a political and/or social conflict and transforming itself through various occurrences into a Cosmic War (Jurgensmeyer, 2001:166).

As Reza Aslan (2008) illustrates it, a Cosmic War is a religious war in which god is perceived to be directly involved either on the side of one part or the other, "unlike a holy war an earthly battle between rival religious groups, a cosmic war is like a ritual drama in which participants act out on earth a battle they believe is actually taking place in the heavens" (Aslan, 2008:6). It is this dual nature that distinguishes a Cosmic War

from other conflicts; it is the intensity of having conflict on both the spiritual and physical planes that makes it for more pressing than either one could be. In the Crusades the enemy was obvious, be it Muslim or Christian it was he who invaded your lands that was your enemy. In more modern examples such as Waco, the enemy was the U.S. government, just as it was with the Aum Shinrikyo who saw the U.S. as involved with the Japanese Global Governments as part of a much wider conspiracy. The form that an enemy takes in a Cosmic War is possibly ever changing and multifaceted but it is the belief in the foe's ability, the sense that you are on the side of "Good" and the urgency that comes with it that elevates the threat to a cosmic level. Moreover, Cosmic War provides the "template of meaning" for these individuals and groups. Not only does it explain why things are as they are, but it also provides the foundation for doing something, for taking action. In other words, cosmic war bridges the spiritual world and real world. It provides a way to link individual cognition and the real world to divine notions of Good versus Evil. Cosmic War links real and often personal issues and problems to a broader community and shared worldview of great struggle in the spiritual and temporal world. Then it links this worldview back to real actions that individuals can perform, which also has symbolic meaning in the spiritual world (Treverton, 2004:14).

A key aspect of Cosmic War is that unlike purely political struggles there is not a clearly defined beginning and end point, there are no earthly goals to be met (other than complete and utter victory over evil) which could ultimately end the struggle and compromise is not an option. There are endless examples of political struggles ancient and otherwise which were completely devoid of cosmic aspects and were successfully resolved. One such example was that of the Zapatistas. During their uprising in 1994 and declaration of War against the Mexican state the Zapatistas struggled for increased personal rights, landownership privileges and economic opportunity. Although the participants saw the Mexican government as an evil powerful foe and that they were on the side of right and good, it lacked the timeless cosmic element that somehow god was supporting them and that to lose the struggle would be unthinkable and have repercussions in the afterlife and away from the earthly plane. Ultimately the Zapatistas did not continue their struggle violently, but rather chose to move the conflict in a non-violent direction and seek compromise which would help them achieve their agreed

upon demands through representation in the Mexican government (Cockburn, 2007:222). While it is possible that there are demands made among foes in a Cosmic War, such as Osama Bin Laden demanding that the United States remove itself from the Middle East, the meeting of these demands does not lead to the end of violence in such a conflict, it is simply a mundane and temporary victory and ultimately an aspect of the larger cosmic struggle. In a Cosmic War demands and compromise are not possible and this therefore rules out historical methods of conflict resolution, as the sides must be accepting of a compromise or understand that they have no other choice. An example of this is the Arab-Palestinian conflict. While historically there has been little conflict between the Jews and Arabs over the holy-land, the creation of the state of Israel ignited a political and social conflict over landownership and living rights. This conflict has escalated into a Cosmic War and we see the continuous failure of negotiations to be able bring both sides to an agreement that can bring an end to the reoccurring violence.

What a Cosmic War is not is terrorism or a Holy War, but they are both aspects and indicative of it. Terrorism is part of a Cosmic War, usually resulting from the inability of an actor to resolve problems in non-violent ways or as an attention getting ploy. Terrorism is the act which allows Cosmic War to play out on the physical plane, a necessary continuation of that which is taking place in the Cosmos and has been approved by God. Cosmic War is by no means a new concept that has come about as a result of globalization or the end of the Cold War, it has simply re-emerged under modern circumstances. Comparisons of current struggles with a Holy War and the crusades have invariably arisen since the attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent military involvement of the west in the Middle East. The invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan much like their predecessors The Crusades, have involved a mix of social, political, economic and religious motivation. Historically any campaign of principle could be called a crusade and thus those who believe themselves to be involved in a Cosmic War may consider their actions in the struggle part of a crusade or holy war, however this is simply only one aspect of a Cosmic War. As The Crusades have shown they along with wars whether they be Holy or not, have a beginning and an endpoint connected with a goal which is physically tangible. While not being entirely able to be solved rationally and to the agreement of all parties involved, they did however end and reoccur and end again. As

objectives were met lands taken and retaken the purpose of the crusades was reached and thus ended, at least for the moment, that aspect of the conflict. “Cosmic Wars are not fought over land or politics but over identity. At stake is ones very sense of self in an indeterminate world. In such a war losing means loss of faith, and that is unthinkable.” (Aslan, 2008:7). Not only are these wars about faith and identity they are ultimately about the triumph of good over evil. While victory in the Crusades was for the victors a triumph of “Good” and in the name of god, it was one battle in a larger grand scheme and indicative of continued struggle. Due to this terrorism and crusades of all types are merely acts played out on the earth that for its actors is part of this larger struggle, which transcends the realm of physical existence (Armstrong, 2001:6).

What may seem confusing and contradicting is that even though all of the major religions portray themselves as inherently non-violent and espouse philosophies of peace, harmony and the relative ideal of “thou shall not kill”, practitioners of the faith may find themselves involved in violent struggle (Holy Bible, Ten commandments). Christianity, Islam, Judaism and to a degree Buddhism and Hinduism explain that violence can be considered acceptable when used in defense of oneself or one’s faith. This of course has had varying interpretations many of which expound aggressive action as a form of defense in a situation in which they are currently or have been for some time under attack (Armstrong, 2001:7). Statements from the bible such as “all who live by the sword shall die by the sword” have become popular among Christian extremists groups and show the duality and contradiction that is present in religious teachings that could lend validity to acts of violence (RS). For the most part however it is the concept that one is involved in a continuing struggle that you become enmeshed in seemingly without choice that gives license for violent actions. Statements from Jews such as “All Jews are at war with Arabs” and Hamas activists that “We are at war, at war with Israel” perpetuate the concept that they are merely part of something which is ongoing and continuous. As Bin Laden famously said in a pre-9/11 fatwa, “The World is at War”. (Jurgensmeyer, 2001: 148).

As Sun Tzu once said, “If you do not know who the enemy is, you cannot win the war” . As in all conflicts, there must be threat in order to have a Cosmic War. Whether

the enemy is a government, an ethnic group or another religion, if an enemy does not truly exist then the participants must be convinced that it does even if it is an exaggeration of the truth. In a Cosmic Warrior's dualistic worldview, the outside world is "black" and the Cosmic Warrior is "white". Manichean logic in which "good" and "evil", "right" and "wrong", and "us" versus "them" separate the world into conflicting entities weigh heavily in a Cosmic War providing "dichotomous opposition on an absolute scale". This overall provides further certainty and validity to their cause (Gregg, 2009:7). It is part of what Mark Jurgensmeyer calls a process of "Satanization". During this process the level of fear and paranoia regarding a supremely evil enemy are taken to great heights by portraying the enemy as a sinister threat with the capability to completely destroy one's community, culture, homeland, way of life and ultimately one's very identity and existence. In a Cosmic War an enemy is much more than a common foe, as Jurgensmeyer explains it, "When the opponent's victory would be unthinkable and when there seems no way to defeat the enemy in human terms—all of these conditions increase the likelihood that one will envision one's opponent as a superhuman foe, a cosmic enemy" (Jurgensmeyer, 2001:188). What is also integral in the portrayal of an "Evil" enemy is that the threat is ongoing and the pressure constant. Cosmic Warriors live a life of continuing struggle with no respite, their predecessors before them were engaged against an enemy, quite possibly in some cases the enemy may or may not have been the same, but the threat was equally strong and unrelenting. Whether or not the perceived enemy actually does present a threat or even exists in the context which it presented to those on the side of "Good" is inconsequential.

Because Cosmic War divides sides along the lines of "Good" and "Evil", "Us" and "Them", the struggle becomes about being on the side of good and defeating an all-encompassing "Evil" which while it does take on a face and a form can be one which is multifaceted and ever changing. In the case of the Aum Shinrikyo the enemies were not only the Japanese Government, but the American Government, The Jews, Freemasons, and the impending global government. While ideally the complete defeat of a satanic supremely evil enemy would bring about the conclusion of a Cosmic War, when the intermixing with political conflict is included it seems that it does continue to follow a timeless and unwinnable pattern with new enemies taking the place of the fallen ones. It

is in this context which Aslan points out that a Cosmic War is inherently unwinnable, meeting political, social and economic goals is inconsequential to the participants, it is victory over Evil that is the ultimate goal, however one which is unachievable according to Aslan's line of thinking as evil continues to recreate itself through various means and in various forms (Aslan, 2008:4).

As defeating as the threat of an overwhelming enemy with unthinkable force behind it may be and in many cases such as political and social conflicts it can be, participants in confrontations of a cosmic nature are given a sense of empowerment when facing foes of this magnitude. Unlike political struggles where lines are drawn, numbers counted and options weighed, cosmic struggles ultimately do not take such things into account. In a Cosmic War all fighters according to themselves are on the side good and have god behind them. It is here that their sense of empowerment, entitlement, and purpose is reaffirmed and it is truly the strength of their faith, which guides them. Thus even if on the earthly plane they fall in battle they will be reserved a place in heaven or will continue the struggle in the Cosmos. This is also too what makes the likelihood of violence ever more possible and the option of negotiation or surrender all the more unlikely. In the case of the Branch Davidians the United States government took on such a role as a omnipotent satanic foe with its immeasurable strength and resources behind it and could not be defeated simply on the earthly plane, but it was the Branch Davidian's faith in god and knowing that they were on the side of good and part of a much larger struggle for which they would be rewarded in the afterlife which made compromise impossible and ultimately lead to their deaths inside the Waco compound.

5. Apocalypse

Viewing a Cosmic War as a never-ending battle in which no compromise can ever be met, surrender is not an option and the struggle must be continued affirms Aslan's theory that a Cosmic War is unwinnable and the only way to end a Cosmic War is not to engage in one. Yet while this appears to be true from an outside perspective, that is not necessarily the view of those who are part of the struggle. A different viewpoint is taken,

that while the conflict is of epic proportions and not easily won there is ultimately an endpoint that is called The Apocalypse. The Apocalypse has many synonyms, Doomsday, Judgment Day, End Times, Revelation and Armageddon. Literally the word Apocalypse means, “disclose”. This suggests primarily revelation in the prophetic sense, but more profoundly God’s disclosure of the powerful forces that envelope our earthly lives. Apocalypse is a concept that provides not only a timeline for the participants, but also hope that there could be an end and that the struggle is winnable. In this sense it is an extreme aspect of Cosmic War, one that takes it to a heightened level of urgency and importance seemingly in paradox but actually in cohesion with a Cosmic Warriors view that the struggle is timeless and extends beyond an individual’s lifetime. It is seen as end times, where a final battle will be fought in which the forces of good and evil face each other and ultimately those on the side of good triumph. While Apocalypse conjures images of war death and violence it also heralds positive utopian change for the betterment of mankind. Thus, for the involved participant it is something to be sought after rather than avoided (Hall, 2000: 3).

Apocalypse is a concept that originally existed in Judaism and continued into the Christian and Islamic faiths. While there are some differences within the structure and interpretations of it among the three religions, it is essentially the same. Apocalypse is seen as salvation and as Norm Cohn explains, there are certain key elements which followers see the Apocalypse as being:

1. “Collective, in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful as a collectivity;
2. Terrestrial; in the sense that it is to be realized on this earth and not in some other-worldly heaven;
3. Imminent in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly;
4. Total, in the sense that it is utterly to transform life on earth so that the new dispensation will be no mere improvement on the present but perfection itself;
5. Miraculous, in the sense that it is to be accomplished by, or with the help of supernatural agencies. (Cohn, 1970:13).”

Apocalyptic thinking is also present in Buddhist beliefs but as something to be avoided and among Hindus as the end of an age and transformation into a new phase.

Strong belief in the apocalypse is generally considered to be followed only by outside elements of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and not taken seriously in mainstream theology (Ranande, 2010:1). And while it may be considered so, it cannot be denied that reference to it is documented in the Torah, Bible and Qur'an. While apocalypse among many is generally considered to be a delusional interpretation of ancient texts, to those who believe in it and engage in Cosmic Warfare it is a very important and integral part of their belief structure. It is part of the continuing state of fear and paranoia inherent in Cosmic War, constantly looking for signs and indicators and knowing that there is an impending final conflict approaching which is the culmination of everything they have fought for up until this point. In the examples of the Branch Davidians, The Aum Shinrikyo, and the Hutaree it was their belief that these apocalyptic prophecies were being brought to fruition and becoming reality that was the catalyst for their violent actions. It is the impression that the believers possessed that everything was coming to an endpoint and that it was not just merely another clash, that made the situation so much more pressing. How it differs from the other aspects though is that in many of the interpretations its culmination in a final battle directly involves the physical participation of god in the struggle against evil and that this is the final conflict, the culmination of the struggle up until that point. Jesus for the Christians and the Mahdi among Muslims will return to earth ushering in a new age of enlightenment and prosperity. It provides an end point in a struggle that is potentially timeless, a resolution and reward to those followers who see the struggle to the very end, often times promised as rewards in the afterlife or the bringing about of a heavenly existence here on earth, one free of war, disease, hunger and other forms of human suffering (Greensborning).

In general most followers of apocalyptic faith share a common belief that the Apocalypse will be foretold by the coming of certain events. War, plague, natural disasters, disease, famine, economic misfortune, attacks by armies of evil and ultimately the coming of the anti-Christ are all indicators that mankind has entered into the Apocalypse. The Apocalypse itself has no set number of days or years for which it will occur. It is a period of time in which mankind will endure great hardships due to all of the mentioned calamities which will manifest in the return of God to the earth and a final battle in which good triumphs over evil. As there seems to always be some form of

calamity afflicting humanity, arguments could be made that the apocalypse is already upon us. Evil comes in many forms, including domineering governments which seem to fulfill notions of end times. Whatever the case may be generally the more indicators of Apocalypse that are fulfilled the greater the likelihood that a group following such an ideology will increase the urgency of their cosmic struggle (Hall, 2000: 6-7).

This line of thinking that sees the Apocalypse as already occurring is one of several forms regarding *time* in apocalyptic belief, known as millennialists and the post-millennialists. John Hall also describes such groups as “pre-apocalyptic warring sects” and “post-apocalyptic warring sects”. While all the various types of apocalyptic belief are very subjective and open to personal interpretation, one thing that is certain as a researcher concisely explains as a Cosmic Warrior, “The apocalypse is not something that happens to you, its something you participate in” (Grupp, 2011:1). Both groups share similar beliefs in how the apocalypse will play itself out and follow thousand year timelines, but one sees it happening before the year two thousand and the other afterwards. Millennial groups such as Hal Bop and the Solar temple saw the year two thousand as the end of the world regardless of the political and social situations present at that time, they did not see themselves as involved in a Cosmic War but rather stuck on a planet which was headed for certain destruction and rather than face this untimely demise chose to end their lives on their own terms. This is in contrast to the Branch Davidians who saw the apocalypse as being brought upon them during the siege of their compound and the Aum Shinrikyo and Hutaree that believed that the time had come for the apocalypse to occur and determined that they had a role to play in bringing about its inception (Cohn, 1970:13).

As visions of utopia and the triumph of good over evil are the driving forces behind Apocalyptic thinking, this lies contrary to the continuity of the current social order. Inherent in the apocalypse is rebellion and cultural change, strife and suffering in order to bring about a new world and a better life for those who join in the struggle. Through the eyes of a Cosmic Warrior the world is seen as being in disarray, malfunctioning and in need of change. The forces of evil are behind this and thus those that perpetuate such continuing ideologies are the enemies of God and resistant to his

preordained change. Consistently in our modern globalized era this “evil” manifests itself in the form of the nation state and the modern society which has formed around it. Due to the belief structure of Apocalyptically minded groups isolation may occur from the majority of society causing these groups to form their own social political and cultural structures along with hierarchies to accompany and facilitate their functioning (Hall, 2000:11-12). In this sense the group has formed an alternative to a seemingly dysfunctional state and society. Thus conflict can arise between the existing social and political order and the apocalyptic believers, where the political is seen as either fulfilling or inhibiting the continuation of the struggle and thus denying the will of god and the movement towards utopia and a new age free of the current suffering. As this increases so to does the likelihood for violence between the group in question and the state. The group becomes threatened by the inhibiting nature of the state while the state may view the group as questioning its legitimacy as an authority. It is when groups engaged in Cosmic War see this fulfilling of the Apocalypse in conjunction with their desire for political mobility that the intensity of the situation increases (Kelman, 2007:6).

6. The Resurgence of the Religious Paradigm

In researching the question of why Cosmic War has once again become an issue of conflict no other factor is perhaps as important as the return of religion and the increase in violence in its name. In the last 30+ years, there has been a noticeable upsurge in violence connected to religious non-state actors without state support that seemingly lack constraints on limits to their violence. In 1980 the US state department cited only several religious organizations on its international terrorist group list, while by the end of the 20th century more than half of the groups on that list were religious (Schmickle, 2008:2). While in no sense is it a new phenomenon, religion and the violence that it is often associated with is now in a globalized world strongly interwoven with other sources of violence; political, economic, ethnic etc...and has become a driving force in much of the conflict we see today.

Secularism, modernity, science and technology have in the last 500 years of human existence positioned themselves as counterbalances to religion. Religion which at one time being the driving force behind social, political and economic functions had slowly over time lost its position of power and influence as the world turned towards secularism in favor of promised development. New forms of social thinking among eighteenth century philosophers seeking to perpetuate a modernity project “consisted of their efforts to develop objective science, universal morality, law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic” their purpose being as Habermas saw it, “the rational organization of everyday social life” (Robinson). The building of nations states and the nationalism inherent in doing so supplanted religious identity as political ideologies became driving forces and identity formers. Secular myth painted religion as contrary to development and modernity and more importantly so, conducive towards the generation of violence and conflict. The state was needed to protect society from conflict and harm because “when religion is politicized or de-privatized as a type of political theology or political religion, it inherently causes war, intolerance, devastation, political upheaval, and maybe even the collapse of the international order” (Thomas, 2005: 22). Modernity affected a secularization of identity, bringing about a change in perspective resulting in a shift in mechanisms and symbols, power and ultimately severing religion’s connection to social life and politics. In order for the state to supplant the authority of religion, religion had to move from a social to a privatized concept. Ultimately the obedience and adherence of the people had to be transferred from religion to the states (Frunza, 2002: 2).

Against predictions of thinkers such as Habermas, Marx, Freud and Nietzsche religion has reasserted itself into modern society reinforcing acknowledgement of its norms and values. While Enlightenment philosophies stating that modernity and secularism are the only logical forms of social, economic and political progress are still acknowledged, religious viewpoints are once again gaining popularity and consideration. By some calculations at least 77 percent of the worlds population now considers itself religious, meaning that they follow and practice a religious faith, while as much as 86 percent consider themselves spiritual (Thomas, 2005: 9-11). Religion has in fact proven itself to be resilient and capable of renewing itself when its validity was most in question.

Its return has been as some have used the phrase, “a crisis in modernity”. As Bainbridge claims today “all around the world religious movements are energizing social change and shaping the transformation of entire societies” (Zeidan, 2003:7). There is very little consensus among scholars as to the exact reason for the return of religion in contemporary times, one potential argument that has been cited is that social scientists themselves adhering to secularization theory either misinterpreted or misrepresented the true extent of religious belief during the Cold War era. It has also been noted as a reaction to the changing nature of the nation state, as the Cold War has ended a clear enemy is no longer apparent and sources of identity and authority found in nationalism have waned. As Jurgensmeyer summarizes “Religion has become the ideology of protest in a variety of settings, it is related to forces of globalization and the weakening of the nation state. Those developments have created voids around the world in terms of identity and moral authority, and religion provides both” (Schmickle, 2008:1).

As Cold War alliances and power structures have disintegrated, resultantly so too has come a rise in the number of local and regional conflicts. In 2001 globally over half of the 34 serious conflicts could be cited as having religious elements to them. It is not simply limited to one religion, while more prevalent in some than others the resurgence of religion and violence has been evident across all faiths. Such occurrences, the greatest of which was 9/11 seen by some as direct attack by religion against the secular state, showed the weakness of the state and its inability to protect its citizens. Religion has been used a catalyst in these confrontations as a way to fill the ranks by painting it as a spiritual and Cosmic conflict adding a sense of urgency and legitimizing violence among those who for purely economic or political reasons would not otherwise be involved “in the service of worldly political battles” (Thomas,2005:9-11). In this sense religion should not be looked as a trigger for these confrontations, it is an element that when combined with political turmoil can lead to violent outcomes. Possible as well is the reverse when the political realm enters into the religious it can act as a catalyst magnifying the intensity and outcome of the conflict. Whether it is due to the changing nature of the nation state and a search for new identity or a loss of faith in a modern thinking that employs reason, science and control in failed attempts to answer essential questions while ignoring faith

and spirituality, religion has undeniably come back as a force contesting modern and secular thinking (Siebert 2005:39).

6.1 Fundamentalism

In discussing the resurgence of religion because of its enormity it may be more effective to look at certain aspects of religion that are directly relative to the concept of Cosmic War and the cases which will be discussed in the next section. When viewing areas of religion that have grown or are seeing resurgence none is more prevalent across all faiths than Fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is simply defined as “a set of militant, mobilized, anti-secularization movements arising in the twentieth century” (Almond, 2002:116). While growth in fundamentalism can be connected with a wide range of religious faiths, the majority of it and the notoriety that comes with it, is predominant within the monotheistic faiths. For it is truly fundamentalism which has gained prominence as a counter to modernity, and in turn it is modernity and the secularism that contrasts it which can be noted as one reason for the rise of fundamentalism. The term fundamentalism is often associated (at least in the media) with negative stereotypes such as violence and fanaticism. While this may have some validity, it has become widely accepted among scholars as the most useful term available when seeking to accurately describe the numerous groups and belief systems that have sought a return to their respective religious fundamentals. Fundamentalism in whichever faith one views, seeks adherence to a strict set of beliefs normally taken directly from sacred texts of the respective religious faith. In interpreting these scriptures such as the bible, fundamentalists seek a literal interpretation of texts and often allow for the interpretations to consider modern and contemporary situations rather than solely traditionalist views. From this develops the adherence to a cosmology, interpretations of time, space, nature and human knowledge often times contrary to accepted social thought and secular mandate. Fundamentalists are not “restorationists” or “primitivists” seeking to return society to a more simple and idealic time, they are reactionary and progressive against the perceived erosion of religion by modernity and its effect on society (Almond, 2002:92-95). Secular governments are seen as a constant enemy of fundamentalist ideologies as

they may seek to separate religious belief from the political realm as well as the social and to make it solely a personal individual choice. Fundamentalism and secularism offer two opposing viewpoints on the structure of society and government and because of this find constant opposition (Wacker,2011:1). Fundamentalism can also be viewed in a larger context as the beginning of a global paradigm shift. The paradigm in this case is shifting from the realm of science and technology into that of religion and spirituality. As is common with paradigm shifts the period can be marked with confusion and conflict. Fundamentalism's rise may be linked to what Dekmejian (1985) sees as "the crisis of the spirit—of identity and culture; and the crisis of legitimacy—the erosion of the moral basis of authority"(8).

The strength of Fundamentalism lies mainly in its timing, surging as social, political, and economic shifts leave identity gaps and opportunity for motivated groups to effect change. Questions of self strike at the core of human existence as humans have a basic human need for identity, recognition, and security. Although, "...their experience of fulfillment or violation of these needs may be different from one person to the next, depending on the cultural, religious, political, social, economic, and other 'identity groups' to which they belong..." (Sandole, 2002:100). The convergence of crises has allowed for the growth of fundamentalism which has offered traditional scriptural views and values while at the same time being uniquely adapted and flexible to the modern world. The argument can be made that fundamentalism is not a new development but rather a reorganization of the old and a reaction to modern threats which sought to displace religion from society as we move into an age of postmodernism. As Caplan argues fundamentalism is "not so much a rehashing of the old as it is clearly the result of contemporary events" (Taken from Zeidan, 2003:67-69).

Fundamentalism should not be treated as the result purely of social and political phenomenon. While most explanations regarding the resurgence of religion and fundamentalism tend to place emphasis on these points they often leave out the metaphysical and spiritual aspects, which to their believers are not only ideology but central to their understandings of self and existence. Adherence to religious belief throughout the 20th century has been as much a factor for social struggle, change and

martyrdom as it has been anytime in the past. Religion's attempt to provide answers to seemingly unanswerable questions and the ebb and flow of a religion's prominence is largely dependent on its ability to provide answers to questions regarding theodicy relevant to the current point in history and ultimately provide a source of identity. The prominence of a religion may decline or ultimately disappear based on its ability to provide such answers or if explanations come from other sources as they have predominately done so in the last 200 years. "The recent rise in Fundamentalism in all of the world's major religions testifies not only to renewed faith, but to intensified doubt and even fear that established theodicies have lost all plausibility" (Siebert, 2005:39). To some, fundamentalism may be seen as a reaction to the crisis of anomie and alienation in modern societies caused by rapid changes that modernization has brought, including secularization, industrialization, urbanization, and development. These changes have created feelings of powerlessness, humiliation, a sense of cosmic despair, and an existential loss of identity combined with deep disillusionment with the political and religious norms, resulting in a quest for the roots of one's faith. Therefore, mainstream religion in some cases can be considered as much an enemy as the secular state, with its failure to provide contemporary answers and movement away from fundamentalist ideals thus guiding society in the "wrong" direction. (Zeidan, 2003: 88).

The radicalism and extremism that comes associated with fundamentalism is derived from its contemporary and active nature, as a reaction to modern secularism it seeks to change the shape of society bringing fundamentalist teaching back as a focal point. In order to do so an active progressive nature is needed. In contrast with traditional religious views fundamentalists tend towards a literal interpretation of scripture which often involves messianism and millenarianism in times of crisis and conflict such as the first gulf war when Abrahamic groups viewed the situation as fruition of apocalyptic prophecy (Almond, 2002:104). The interpretation of these beliefs involves the follower as an active participant in the scriptures and prophecies growing more important and urgent as end times draws nearer. This belief structure is key to the Cosmic Warrior and shows itself time and time again. Due to the literal interpretation of scripture that is found across all sectors of fundamentalism, an element of exclusivity has developed. Fundamentalists pride themselves as bearers of divine truth and actively participate in

denouncing other belief structures even within their respective faiths. Because of this exclusivity the world is dichotomized into very black and white terms. It begins to take on the previously discussed “in” and “out” group contexts. “Us” and “them” “good” vs. “evil”. Due to the extreme nature of this belief system and viewpoint that “others” are enemies, fundamentalists may engage in radical and militant action. This action mostly is seen by the follower as a defensive reaction to perceived threats to their belief system, way of life and identity. Because of this perceived threat from the outside many radical fundamentalist groups such as the Branch Davidians chose to formulate alternative societies which offer a like minded communal situation protected from the outside world and the evil which is inherent in it. It is within these alternative communities that one sees the growth of the Cosmic War concept as the connection with mainstream society is severed and new societal and ideological structures begin to effect individual identity perception. (Zeidan, 2003: 78-81).

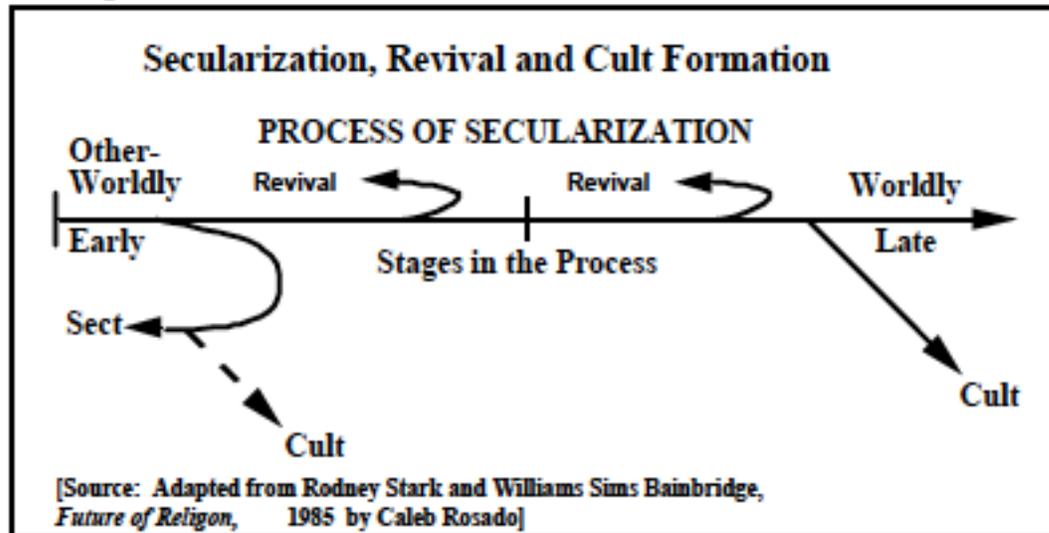
Disconnection with society resulting in grouping generates the potential that an enclave mentality will form amongst its followers. Initially an enclave can be conceptual in nature perpetuating the dualistic concepts of us and them, good and evil, furthering a separation from normal society. As enclaves develop they have the propensity to result in members living in close physical proximity whether it be within society or distanced in a private setting. Resultantly the implementation of fundamentalist norms and enclave formation dominates an individual’s space and time making them, much like other resources, part of the group rather than the individual. This is part of the process of distancing from society and in turn creating a more seemingly idealistic society among the followers, one which espouses their ideals and fundamentals (Almond, 2002: 52-53). Key to the survival of the enclave is the perpetuation of its cosmology and within the Abrahamic traditions the belief that they are living at the end of an era. Past, present and future are all equally important as they are considered continuations of each other and at times inseparable.

These paradigm shifts, crises, and threats from the secular towards fundamentalism resulting in distancing from society and enclave formation belief coincide well with Weber’s concept of the Charismatic Authority. Owing the rise of

fundamentalism to the convergence of all of these along with failures in economic, political and social systems (as we are seeing more blatantly now) culminating in the creation of charismatic leaders (often deemed as prophets) who offer leadership and hope in a time of crisis and bring a fresh and modern interpretation of fundamentalist concepts and scriptures. This rise of Charismatic Authorities makes itself very evident in the cases of the Branch Davidians with their leader David Koresh and the Aum Shinrikyo's Shoko Asahara. The Charismatic authority (in these cases a prophet) is seen by Weber as a necessary figure with the ability to unify followers by polarizing society and challenging secularism. Charismatic figures should not always be particularly associated with wrong doing, one sees the rise of such figures across many spectrums including the religious, political, social, media and much more. It happens that in a time of strife or when identity is in question that Charismatic figures tend to come to prominence with more ease. The Charismatic prophet has the capability to stimulate and transform groups, individuals and form new religious movements. He becomes a guru-like figure revered not only for his charisma but his seemingly otherworldly qualities that legitimize his authority. This figure is integral in the role he plays in a paradigm shift in which the religious gains importance in issues of identity thrown into crisis by social, economic, political and spiritual disenchantment (Kronman, 1983: 68-70).

6.2 New Religious Movements

One trend that has emerged alongside fundamentalism as another alternative to popular religious and societal thinking while incorporating modern perspectives and contemporary viewpoints is that of New Religious Movements (NRMs). NRMs, are often controversially referred to as cults and thusly have (as the word fundamentalism has) negative connotations associated to them. Patterns of NRM increase coincide with fundamentalism in that as society has moved from the sacred to the secular, as evidenced below:



the resulting spiritual gap has been filled with these new groups as individuals seek to “experiment” as old established religious institutions became too “secular” and “worldly”. NRMs as do fundamentalist groups, offer in light of this secularization true and literal interpretations that larger institutions once held that in turn culminate in increasing tension with society (Rosado, 1993:3).

The distribution of NRMs as with fundamentalism is not limited to one region or demographic, they can be found worldwide in third world, developed and developing countries and again among all the monotheistic faiths. The trend of NRMs has been progressing steadily since the end of the Second World War, in North America alone there are now over an estimated 800 NRM groups. Development of NRMs increased rapidly as mass religion (as a result of dominate secularism) saw growing loses of adherents most notably in the 60’s, with increased interest and legal issues in the 80’s and violent conflict occurring in the 90’s (in both the cases of the Branch Davidians and the Aum Shinrikyo). Previous to these examples there had been cases of NRM violence however they were internal and self-inflicted such as the mass suicide that occurred in Jonestown in 1978. It should be made clear that NRMs are not necessarily always fundamentalist movements. Although there can be crossover between the two (such as scripture and messianic belief), there are differences. Fundamentalist groups can be more narrowly likened to “sects” who broke away from larger religious organizations because they wished to maintain a belief in scripture and true religious values which they see the

main organization as lacking. NRMs or Cults “represent a radical break from religious tradition” and are “the beginning phase of an entirely new religion” (Rosado, 1993:4). NRMs are not necessarily terrorist groups either. NRMs are not (like terrorist groups) inherently violent or political in their inception; it is the introduction of certain social and political factors that involve an NRM in violent action or reaction (Dawson, 2010:5). NRMs generally involve a blending of concepts and possibly religions with interpretations provided by an individual figurehead oftentimes seen as a prophet of god. As Almond believes, members within NRMs pledge allegiance to an individual charismatic figurehead willing to give up their lives for him whereas fundamentalist groups do so for their religious belief and concrete goal, “fundamentalist movements are willing to sacrifice their own members, but they do so in pursuit of a concrete political goal” (Almond, 2002:91). As will be illustrated in the case studies there is a fine line between the two, especially when the concept of Cosmic War is introduced, an NRM with a fundamentalist belief structure can make the situation ever more volatile.

As Treverton (2005) describes them, NRMs have two defining characteristics; “A high degree of tension between the group and its surrounding society” coupled with “a high degree of control exercised by leaders over their members”. They have also been described as "assigned to the fringe of the dominant religious culture", and "existing in a relatively contested space within society as a whole". Religious Historian Phillip Jenkins adds to this view that these groups are authoritarian and totalistic with a Weberian charismatic type leader in control. Along with this Treverton sees there also being two conditions which if present could result in violence “if the group or movement feels threatened from the outside by society or the government and if it has young inexperienced leaders that resort to violence when threatened from either inside or outside the movement” (Treverton, 2005:16, 54).

John Lofland and Rodney Stark have outlined factors for understanding an individuals involvement in NRM’s:

1. “A person experiences acute and persistent tensions within his or her religious life.

2. The individual defines himself or herself as a religious seeker.
3. He/she then encounters the movement at a crucial turning point in life.
4. The individual forms an affective bond with one or more existing members.
5. Extra-cult attachments become attenuated; the recruit sees less of those outside the movement while getting more involved with those inside the movement.
6. A person feels acute and persistent internal tensions between diminished ties with old friends and family and experiences of intensive interaction within the group.
7. He or she then ultimately becomes the group's deployable agent" (Treverton, 2005:35).

Individuals who are likely to involve themselves in NRMs tend to be at a "crossroads in life" where their identity is in question or have lost their direction and are looking for some sort of reassurance. NRMs do not necessarily target people for recruitment who are lonely or outcast, but rather it seems to have more appeal for people who lack social attachments and ultimately have less to lose by choosing not to conform socially. It provides a controlled surrounding, in a sense another familial context, that allows for continued self exploration and the search for the "true self"; while at the same time providing a situation with a larger sense of purpose and cosmic significance (Dawson, 2010:6-8).

These factors that are outlined as potential reasons for involvement in a NRM also foreshadow an individual who may have a proclivity towards becoming a Cosmic Warrior. While Jurgensmeyer's Cosmic War theory generally pertains to the larger whole theory of Cosmic War, it is the individual personal analysis that shows the making of a Cosmic Warrior. NRM indoctrination methods focus on isolation of members from society and a forming of a bond and alliance with the group as a source of security and identity. It must be noted that the vast majority of NRMs are peaceful and violence is rare. Only in extreme circumstances with the correct combination of factors does Cosmic War becoming a self-fulfilling notion with violence as an end result whether it be defensive or offensive in nature. Examples of NRMs such as the Apostolic Church, a Christian based group have shown no tendency towards violence while maintaining a fundamentalist view but lacking apocalyptic belief or conflict with authority. Certain

Mormon groups being fundamentalist, believing in the Apocalypse and end times but also lacking political confrontation have not engaged in violent acts. Finally when we take NRMs such as the Aum Shinrikyo and the Branch Davidians that exhibit all of the above mentioned criteria that did in fact have violent endings, it leads one to assume that it is the combination of all three that perpetuates and stimulates the idea of Cosmic War turning into reality what was initially only an concept reserved for the Cosmos and lacking a physical earthly presence.

The somewhat unexpected reactionary return of religion to the forefront of modern society after 50 years of a secular cold war era that dominated modern political and social thought has been a catalyzing factor in Cosmic War. Gaps in identity and spiritual discontent left room for religion to fill such roles, and from this sprang the even more reactionary fundamentalism and NRMs. While modernity and secularism initially pushed religion out of the popular eye it then entered into a phase of transformation moving first to more scriptural based conservative faiths and from there evolving into the seeking and development of new faiths such as cults and New Religious Movements, “secularization means the transformation of religion not its destruction”(Rosado, 1993:3). Borrowing from traditional religious scripture while at the same time providing modern interpretation has stimulated the growth of these movements appealing to individuals who are unsatisfied with both modern religious and secular viewpoints and seek a different way of life. Within this it is the blending of religious, social and political conflicts which become stimulating factors and culminate in a variety of conflicts from ethnic, religious political and Cosmic. In viewing the rise of these movements and groups, which have been involved in such conflict, it is difficult to point to only one single factor responsible for violence but rather it is much more clearly the case of a range of issues reacting with each other in a cyclical fashion.

7. Case Studies

7.1 The Branch Davidians

The events that transpired over 51 days at Waco, Texas in 1993 represented a turning point in the study of NRMs and the concept of Cosmic War. Until that point the understanding of such groups and belief systems had been relegated to the fringes of academia and the violence associated with it considered internal and self-inflicted. Although the Branch Davidians had no known intentions of acting out in violence, the resulting confrontation became violent and highlighted the potential for conflict with such groups when government forces intervene. The Branch Davidians were a NRM originally linked to the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) which is essentially a Christian sect following similar practices to those of the Christian church with some significant differences in interpretation of the end times and the apocalypse, but ultimately believing that Christ will return to earth and bring them salvation. The group was formed in 1942 by Victor Houteff and moved away from the SDA to become an independent organization or as some now identify it, a cult. Houteff was instrumental in forming the Mt. Carmel Center in Waco, Texas, which became the headquarters for the Branch Davidians following his death. As time passed leadership of the group changed hands several times often involving scandal revolving around drugs, polygamy and murder (Wright, 2005:25). In the early 1990's the group was taken over by David Koresh, the youngest and most charismatic leader the Davidians had ever known as well as one of the most prophetic in his beliefs about impending doom and the coming of the apocalypse. Koresh after an unstable childhood and failed attempts at becoming a rock star found solace with the Branch Davidians in 1981. Koresh quickly gained power in the group through his charm and abilities in recruiting members. After the current leader George Roden was arrested for murder in 1989, Koresh assumed leadership and began to prophesize and purport his divine connection. Central to Koresh's teaching was that a final battle would take place in which the Branch Davidians were the key actors chosen by god against the forces of evil. It was after this battle that, "the Branch Davidian members alone would ascend to heaven to be with god" (Religious Tolerance).

The progression of the Davidians throughout the 80's and under Koresh in the early 90's was typical of NRM growth in a globalizing world. The Davidians at Mount

Caramel consisted of a flux of over 80 individuals of all races and backgrounds many of them coming from different countries to join the group. Most were seeking to fill a spiritual or religious gap within that they had been unable to find an answer for among mainstream faiths. Many of the Davidians saw themselves as outsiders in society with little social and familial attachment. Initial introduction to the Davidian movement had been through other members who had also sought similar spiritual resolution. What Mount Caramel offered to these seekers was a return to more fundamentalist scriptural ideology in light of the changes modernity had brought about and a chance to be involved with others who feel and think in the same way. More importantly though what it provided was the members a sense of purpose that they were involved in something more important, something cosmic in nature, being chosen to fulfill god's word on earth and be responsible for bringing about a utopian age or in trying to do so securing themselves a place in heaven. These factors coupled with the charismatic and convincing nature of Koresh provided a strong bond and sense of empowerment among the members.

While the Branch Davidians may be considered extreme in their viewpoints and apart from mainstream religion in their practices they were only one of many such fundamentalist and NRMs in the United States at the time. What set them apart from other groups was their strong apocalyptic belief that a final battle was imminent, "the forces of evil" would attempt to destroy them and it was the will of god for them to defend themselves. They firmly believed that their faith in god would save them and when they died it was by god's will and they would have a place in heaven in the afterlife. This led them to seek out weapons to defend themselves. On February 28th 1993 the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) attempted to exercise a search warrant on the Davidian compound in Waco Texas (where 80 members lived led by David Koresh of varying ethnicities and nationalities), believing that the Davidians were in possession of illegal firearms and explosives. They were met with resistance; it is still unclear about who fired the first shots but in the ensuing firefight 6 Davidians and 4 ATF agents were killed. A siege by the ATF then began, demanding the surrender of all the members. The standoff quickly gained national attention, Negotiations failed for the most part as Koresh refused to surrender because of his belief that it was against the will of god and that he and his people were an integral part of a larger cosmic struggle (PBS).

After 51 days of failed negotiations and intimidation tactics, which included psychological attacks and temporarily turning off electricity to the compound, it became clear that the Davidians would not surrender. Attorney General Janet Reno approved a new method of approach, using non-lethal CS gas to force the Davidians to come out and surrender. Once the attack was underway several fires broke out around the compound. There has been debate as to how the fires started, whether it was the gas canisters and impact of the tanks on the buildings which started the fires, or if it was the Davidians themselves who had been overhead talking about lighting fires if the ATF tried to force itself into the building rather than being captured. In the end 76 of the 80 members died (including Koresh) mostly due to the fire and smoke inhalation. Waco has been widely considered a tragedy and the U.S. government has taken much criticism for its handling of the situation, the case was reopened with congressional hearings in 2003 to re-evaluate wrong doing, the results are still inconclusive. The Branch Davidians still remain active under new leadership in states across the America but no longer have a presence in Waco, Texas. (Cult education).

The Davidian cosmic ideology expresses itself in their belief in the seven seals. Koresh made constant reference to the book of revelation which discusses Armageddon and more importantly so, to the Seven Seals. Part of Koresh's believed duty was not only to interpret scripture but also in doing so "open" the seven seals. As per Koresh's interpretation, throughout Davidian history since inception certain factors and events had occurred systematically opening the seals. Koresh's prophecy at the time shortly before the standoff was that the forces of evil would attack the Davidians effectively opening the 5th seal. Once it was known that the ATF had come to serve their arrest warrant Koresh is quoted in reference to the "Kingdom of God" as saying "the time has come" (Hall, 2000:65). During negotiations Koresh is quoted as asking the negotiators to reference Psalm 18 in particular a passage which states "The Chariots shall be with flaming torches" Koresh then says "that's what you got out there" [referring to the tanks](Tabor, 1997:101). The Davidians believed that once all seven seals were opened, the apocalypse as foretold in the book of revelation would occur and that they must then travel to Israel for the final battle. As in all apocalyptic belief, after the triumph of god over evil the kingdom of god would return to earth and a utopian existence would ensue for all. The

standoff at Waco fulfilled all of Cohn's criteria to determine that an individual is involved in an apocalyptic struggle, it was a collective effort among the Davidians that was being realized in real time upon the earth that came about suddenly and would lead to a new age guided with the help of divine intervention.

Although by some (including most of his followers) Koresh was considered a prophet, he did not formulate new prophetic belief, but rather borrowed from long standing established thought effectively interpreting it relative to the situation at hand and the actions of the government. This is one aspect which makes apocalyptic thinking so vital in driving cosmic war as it provides a loose basis with a multitude of various interpretations, which can be seen in a variety of different ways. Enter into the equation a charismatic leader with a strong following amongst his believers and who may or may not have personal interest in the situation and it becomes ever more important. The Davidians saw themselves as part of something important and special, as if this privilege and responsibility had been bestowed upon them by god with Koresh as the prophetic intermediary guiding them with god's words and instruction (Tabor, 1997:32). In reviewing the Branch Davidians case, the disconnect in understanding between Koresh and government negotiators becomes very apparent. The ATF initially sought a peaceful approach appealing to Koresh's perceived sense of empathy for his followers well being. In viewing Koresh's responses they are lengthy and logical to those familiar with biblical interpretation, to those who aren't (such as ATF negotiators) they were described as "preaching" and "bible babble" and seen as long uninterrupted tirades which achieved nothing of substance (Tabor, 1997:5-6).

Much has been brought to light about the wrong doing of the government in their tactical and logistical carrying out of the raid on Mount Carmel. However, a great deal more can be taken from the situation as a whole in the study of cosmic war and its driving factors. In a larger context the Waco siege was more indicative of the clash between the secular and religious. A conflict between a state which seeks to maintain its authority and dominance over the legitimate means of violence while preventing the formation of a "state within a state" and a religious group who discontented with the established religious social and political order sought to form its own enclave pursuing

fundamentalist and scriptural ideology while waiting for signs that a final battle was fast approaching. As one federal law historian aptly put it “the raid fit within a historic, well-established and well-defended government interest in prohibiting and breaking up all organized groups that sought to arm or fortify themselves” (Hall, 2000:67). Koresh’s abilities and leadership position among his followers reveals yet another level of conflict, between two Weberian examples of legitimate authority the traditional and charismatic. It is clear that through Koresh’s leadership and faith among his followers along with his perceived unique ability to interpret scripture that he fits well into the Weberian framework of a charismatic authority. As Weber sees it there must be a level of recognition among those who fall under the charismatic leader’s authority and well as the from the opposing authority in order to validate the charismatic leaders position (Tabor, 1997:42). Both of these were clearly fulfilled. There is however a somewhat misleading tendency in anti-cult analysis to overplay the role of the leader, reducing the followers to mindless acolytes blindly obeying the commands of their leaders. While the ideology can be intense and the draw of a charismatic leader very convincing, members of new religions ultimately still maintain the ability to think for themselves or determine their own actions. The conversion and resocialisation process is very much an individual decision and experience, and members cannot be seen solely as passive victims of exploitive leaders (Dawson, 2010: 3).

The traditional vs. charismatic is a symptom of the larger previously mentioned religious and secular conflict. It is truly the larger cosmic ideology that was the driving factor behind the Davidians. While Koresh certainly played a role in interpreting manipulating and possibly exaggerating this, without it, there was no conflict, just as without government intervention a strong case can be made that the Davidians would still be in their Mount Carmel compound today waiting for signs of the apocalypse. There is no evidence to support the belief that the Branch Davidians sought violence; no plans were ever discovered regarding proposed violent acts. While it is obvious through their enclave formation that the Branch Davidians harbored an extreme level of discontent with the established social and political order there was never any inclination by Koresh or his followers regarding changing or overthrowing the social or political order. The Davidians can be seen solely as a *religious group without political motivations*. Their

standpoint was completely defensive in nature while the ATF and other involved government organizations unknowingly fulfilled their apocalyptic fear and paranoia through their aggressive actions. The concept of Cosmic War leading the Davidians to believe that they were part of an other worldly conflict playing itself out on earth coupled with the urgency of the impending apocalypse was what drove them to stockpile weapons. It is in turn this collection of weaponry that gave the government impetus for its attempted arrest of Koresh and his followers and failing that the subsequent siege. The governments misunderstanding or disregard of the dynamics of a group believing itself engaged in cosmic war was indicative of cult understanding of the time. They as others including anti-cult groups and experts mistakenly believed that the dynamics and reactions of such groups were largely based on internal factors and through negotiations with the leader or appealing to his followers the situation could be diffused and an agreement come to. Ignored was the fact that such groups with a belief in Cosmic Warfare operate not only on a series of internal variables but more so when it comes to their beliefs external stimuli are actually the most pressing and driving factors. The refusal to submit to an external authority is largely based on the belief of such groups that the authority is not an authority but actually an opponent with the only true authority being god. In the case of Davidians rather than submitting to the will of their opponent death was chosen as it was the will of god (Hall, 2000:73).

7.2. The Aum Shinrikyo

The Aum Shinrikyo of Japan provide an example of a group engaged in a struggle cosmic in nature very similar to the Davidians, but at the same time with sharp contrasts. The Aum were a NRM and “cult” (as some have termed them) formed in Japan by Shoko Asahara and like many other NRMs came to prominence in the 1980’s. The Aum gained worldwide notoriety in 1995 for attacks that its members perpetrated on behalf of their organization and spiritual leader by releasing Sarin gas into the Tokyo subway system. The Aum was much more global in nature than the Davidians, being mainly based in Japan but at its height claimed over 40,000 members located in various nations around the world including Japan, Russia, The United States and Europe (Reader, 1996:12). The

scale of their operations was much more extensive as well, while official numbers have never been released speculation has estimated the total wealth of the Aum Shinrikyo at roughly \$1 billion dollars which includes its cash assets, large real estate holdings and a multitude of businesses. The Aum has been incorrectly labeled by some as a Buddhist group, while the teachings of the group were primarily based on some Buddhist concepts such as *Poa*, select elements of Hinduism were incorporated along with the Christian concept of the apocalypse into its philosophy and teaching to its followers. As with the Branch Davidians the Aum Shinrikyo also shared a history of illegal activities that ranged from suspect financial dealings, kidnap, and murder which over time increased in severity and magnitude. While some of its followers were arrested and prosecuted for crimes committed, Asahara was never successfully connected with any of the allegations leading up to the sarin Gas attack (Religious Tolerance). Much like Koresh and the Davidians Asahara and the Aum believed that being the chosen ones they alone would be “saved” and ascend to heaven to be with god if they were killed in the final battle. Asahara led his followers to believe that after the war between good and evil was over those who survived would “create a new and transcendent human world” (Jurgensmeyer, 2001:110).

Shoko Asahara the founder and leader of the Aum Shinrikyo, epitomized the idea of a charismatic figure, but he took it to more intricate levels than others had ever done. The Aum was created by the mind and perception of Asahara structured around the belief system that he developed over his life via his experiences to serve his ultimate personal and spiritual goals. In contrast to Koresh who picked up the reins of an already formed Adventist group and through his own interpretations lead them towards the same ultimate goal of apocalypse and rebirth but on a much different path. As a child Asahara developed congenital glaucoma, completely blind in one eye and with very poor vision in the other. He came from a relatively poor background, this coupled with his disability started his separation and distaste for society, searching for other avenues of acceptance and understanding. A former classmate is quoted as saying that Asahara would “try to create a kind of closed society in which he could be the head” (Lifton, 2000:14). Asahara’s forays into maintaining a “normal life” and business failed and in 1981 when he was 26 he chose a spiritual path and joined the Agonshu, a NRM which was emerging at a time when such groups were gaining popularity in Japan. From this he researched

Buddhist ideas and concepts as well as human potential, neurology and psychology. In 1985 Asahara claims to have had a vision in which a deity or messenger of god appeared before him and claimed Asahara was chosen to lead the armies of god. Two years after this vision he formed the Aum Shinrikyo which literally means “religion of the supreme truth” (Hall, 2000:85).

The Aum’s initial foundation could be considered a new age interpretation of Buddhist and Hindu doctrine interspersed with fundamentalist Christian apocalyptic ideology. Asahara (like Koresh) benefited from the nature of NRMs in that while they are often connected with the belief systems of parent major religions, they are not strictly beholden to the accepted ideology. A charismatic authority can exercise a level of freedom that is not possible amongst major religions in interpretation while choosing which thought structures are to be utilized by its members. Asahara did this with masterful skill. While most Buddhist doctrine advocates non-violence and peace Asahara was able to manipulate one concept in particular known as *Poa* to justify his violence. *Poa* is usually interpreted as a “transfer of consciousness” in which when an individual dies his energy form passes on to a higher plane of existence closer to the goal of nirvana. Asahara’s interpretation of *Poa* was that if people were on the wrong path and accumulating bad Karma it was actually the duty of someone who is enlightened (such as himself) to kill them so that they could stop the accumulation of bad Karma and move closer to reaching their goal of Nirvana. As the leader of the Aum and ordained by god such an order must be obeyed by Asahara’s followers and seen as an act of love rather than murder. As one former follower summarized the Aum’s interpretation of *Poa* as it relates to the world, “If bad Karma accumulates too greatly, then at one point it explodes so Aum’s teaching tell us not to let any more accumulate” (Lifton, 2000:66,85). Along with the concept of *Poa* Asahara drew upon ancient descriptions of the Hindu God Shiva, who in order to save the world would “dance the world out of existence” scattering the ashes from his body so that the world could be renewed. (Ibid: 45). While Asahara did a remarkable job of blending Buddhist and Hindu beliefs to create an atmosphere in which Aum members felt justified in their actions and empowered as being servants of a divine force to carry out a beneficial rebirth for mankind, a blend of ideologies is fairly common among NRMs. These same feelings of uniqueness and justification were also present

amongst the Davidians but did not manifest in outward violence. The Aum had a variety of other mitigating factors which lead to the outpouring of violence.

While NRMs typically attract a large demographic with a variety of backgrounds, the Aum had an unusually high number of educated young adults, scientists and university dropouts. A reoccurring theme among all of the members was disenchantment with society and a yearning for something more, a spiritual fulfillment that they had been unable to obtain in their former life and religious pursuits. Also present among the followers was a common cultural history. While eastern religions played more of a role in everyday life than Christianity did, the concept of the apocalypse was not unknown to the majority of the Japanese populace. The younger members as teenagers had become familiar with a culture of science fiction and manga that utilized the image of a great world ending battle and the apocalypse. The middle aged members (who made up a majority of the organization) had grown up in a post WWII Japan that had been devastated by atomic bombs, sparking end times like images and making them acutely aware that the previously unthinkable levels of global mass destruction were very real and possible. With this basis of end times understanding Asahara integrated the Christian belief in the apocalypse in which he portrayed the Aum as an elite group chosen by god that would be the only survivors of the final battle and the world's "religious future" was their responsibility (Lifton, 2000:46).

Asahara's next ingredient into his religious milieu of Cosmic War and coming apocalyptic violence focused on contemporary events and politics both globally and within Japan. An underlying mistrust of the government among Aum members provided fertile ground for his ideology. Asahara successfully formulated a blend of ideas and concepts, this time prophetic and conspiratorial in origin. He selected from the predictions of Nostradamus as well as a blend of conspiracy theories that portrayed the Japanese government as part of a global conspiracy involving the United States, Jews, and Freemasons "to completely annihilate the cities, produce a state of anarchy and then establish a worldwide unified political power". Asahara believed that it was his divine duty to inform the Japanese people of this global conspiracy and to help them by showing

them the true nature of the Japanese government and its incapability/unwillingness to protect its citizens from coming apocalypse and disaster (Jurgensmeyer, 2001:154).

While Asahara steadily indoctrinated his members with concepts, the intensity and urgency of his teaching seemed to have coincided with failed legitimate attempts to gain political power. In 1990 Asahara and twenty-five Aum members ran for political office in the elections of that year. The Aum made a valid attempt at organizing their campaign, creating rallies and meeting with potential voters, however they gained no seats. Political involvement among NRMs in Japan was not out of the ordinary; there were several examples such as the Soka Gakkai who had been relatively successful in gaining political positions and influence despite being considered outside of mainstream thinking. It seems that the Aum while having a solid religious background and philosophy lacked a comprehensible and structured political thought that would resonate with the Japanese people. It is here that many scholars agree there was a marked turning point in the Aum strategy and perspective on the need for violence, they believed that society had given up a chance for salvation and true understanding and that this “might well have pushed Aum’s leadership into feeling that society was damned and should be abandoned”. (This viewpoint was also confirmed by former members who agreed there was a shift at this point). (Reader, 1996:45). While evidence shows this to be the case it must be kept in mind that Asahara has already created his foundation of religious, apocalyptic, prophetic and conspiratorial belief. His political loss was certainly a catalyst for violence and for intensifying his teachings but had some political gain been made there is no reason to believe that this would have satiated Asahara’s desire to overthrow the government before the coming apocalypse. While not strongly millenarian in their origins, after the failed election attempt the Aum took an increasingly millennialist approach as the year two thousand neared. This target date provided a timeline and sense of urgency among the members that action had to be taken before it was too late.

Asahara’s teachings involved predictions that he made himself many of which had not come true, including earthquakes, and catastrophes which would occur in Japan and worldwide. One of the predictions that he made told of gas attacks on the public, which would signal the beginning of the apocalypse. On March 20, 1995 members of the Aum Shinrikyo released Sarin gas into the Japanese subway system during the morning

peak rush hour. Packages containing the gas were placed on several different subway cars and punctured, slowly leaking the poisonous gas. The gas, which was created by chemists who were active members of the group, killed 12 people and sickened more than 5000 others (CFR). The political purpose of the attacks was to destabilize the Japanese government, because of the close proximity of the attacks to the Japanese parliament the hope was that they could eliminate as many officials as possible weakening the government and therefore strengthening the political and social power of their movement. Also possibly more important though, Asahara believed that the attacks would show the weakness of the Japanese government in protecting its citizenry and prove his power in prophecy not only to his followers but also to the mainstream populace. This was key to his plan because he believed the citizenry would realize that a day of reckoning was coming and would look to him as a leader and prophet for having predicted the attacks and at the same time showing that the Japanese government was incapable of helping. Following the attacks more than 200 cult members were arrested, 12 of which have been sentenced to death including Asahara himself. Although after the capture of Asahara the organization began to dismantle largely due to the Japanese government forcing them to close down their operations in many locations including their headquarters, the Aum Shinrikyo are still active in Japan and Russia with roughly 1500 members total (Trinh, 2000:77).

In contrast to the Davidians who were an apocalyptic sect that had no political aspirations, the Aum were a *politically oriented religious organization*. Unlike the Davidians they possessed a desire to effect political change initially through failed elections and ultimately hoping to catalyze apocalyptic rebirth through acts of violence. Asahara sought a way of “kick starting” the apocalypse with an initiate and strike first mentality that essentially became a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is truly the fundamental difference along with *Poa* as justification for their killing that separates the two groups and illustrates two varied faces of Cosmic War. Arguments could be made about the level of belief in the apocalypse that Asahara and his actions after the elections lead one to believe that he was manipulating the concept for his own political purposes and failings, otherwise he could have simply let the apocalypse occur in the year 2000 as he had predicted and taken his place with the Aum of appointees of god in the new utopian

world. In all actuality the Aum can be considered a relatively successful NRM with a strong philosophy, growing membership and abundant financial success. Although much can and has been attributed to the ego of Asahara and his manipulation of religious and political concepts, it is the members who carried out the attacks. The Aum saw themselves as having been given a divine right and duty to overthrow the Japanese government which was both “evil” as well as incapable of protecting and leading the Japanese people when the apocalypse finally came. In this sense the attacks were an attempt to not only force political change but to prepare the Japanese people for the coming end times. A group with actions stimulated by the idea of cosmic warfare is only as effective as its members; the charismatic leader can do very little on his own. While it is true that in both the case of the Davidians and the Aum it was a charismatic leader who was responsible for interpreting and guiding his followers it was still their core belief in an ongoing cosmic war and impending final battle which drives them to actions whether it be defensive or aggressive, the charismatic leader much like prophets before them are vessels for the divine message.

7.3 The Hutaree Militia

The United States has had a long history of militia groups stemming from the fight for independence against British colonial power. Since that time militia groups have been active yet relatively unknown until the 1960’s and 70’s when soldiers returning from Vietnam with military know how and prowess sought to continue to serve and protect their nation by privately forming militias consisting of fellow citizens in response to cold war fears of a Soviet Invasion. The Hutaree originated in Michigan in 2008 under the guidance of David Brian Stone and were among a wave of militia and “patriot” groups that sprung up during that year. Several proposed reasons for the growth have been the elections of a black president; economic downturn and proposed legislations to limit citizens gun rights. American militia and patriot group activity peaked with 858 known groups in 1996 following a growth in interest after both the Ruby Ridge and Davidian’s standoffs in which the participants were seen by supporters as innocent victims of an over powerful out of control government which no longer serves the interests of the people. As

recorded by the Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence report the United States in 2010 had a total of 824 anti-government “Patriot Groups” 330 of these were armed militia groups, an increase from 42 in 2008. (SPLC).

Militia groups traditionally have viewed themselves as unofficial auxiliaries to the United States army there to protect the citizenry in times of need. Since the standoffs of the 1990s there has been a growing anti-government sentiment based around partial fact and conspiracy theory similar to the Aum that the United States government is the enemy seeking to take away freedom from its people and is conspiring with the Jews, Freemasons and other international groups such as the UN. Although this mistrust of the government seems to be pervasive throughout militia movements, the majority of militia groups even though they are armed and trained tend to act defensively. The Hutaree however provide a rare example of a group that had enhanced motivations and had planned to act out in violence to achieve their goals (SPLC).

The Hutaree while described by some in the media as a militia and by others as a “fringe” Christian group are in fact both, a blend of fundamentalist Christian ideology and anti-government militia right wing thinking. The group’s foundations lie with the Michigan Militia, one of the largest militia groups in the United States. Due to differences and finding a more religious motivation David Brian Stone broke away from the Michigan Militia to form his own group, much as a sect would break off from a larger religious organization to pursue its own interpretation of practices. Since the arrest of the group members leaders of the Michigan militia have made it clear that they did not support the Hutaree’s ideology whether it be religious or political. The Hutaree as per their own interpretation means “Christian warrior” and as founder David Brian Stone’s ex-wife is quoted as saying “It started out as a Christian thing”. Stone initially drew in members from church offering a more fundamentalist interpretation of the bible, but “things got worse” when he began speaking about the end times and interweaving apocalyptic thinking with contemporary events, conspiracy theories and mistrust in the government reminiscent of Asahara and the Aum. Before its removal the website of the Hutaree stated that it was “preparing for the end time battles to keep the testimony of Jesus Christ alive” Apocalyptic thought was the driving ideology behind the group, as they saw themselves as warriors of god who would meet the enemy in battle if it was the

will of god (Buchanan, 2010:1).

The Hutaree while having both a fundamentalist Christian belief in the apocalypse and a fear of the United States government which the Davidians possessed, also had a political motivation to overthrow the government by “kick starting” the apocalypse. The Hutaree sought to employ a three point plan which involved killing a Michigan police officer, ambushing and killing more police officers at the funeral and finally engage in a Davidian like standoff. Their goal however was not to perish as the Davidians had done, they believed that this standoff would simultaneously create a national uprising against the United States government which would be the apocalypse as the warriors of god faced the Anti-Christ. All members of the group have been arrested and charged with various crimes, the most severe being “conspiracy to levy war against the United States” (Dennis, 2010:1). This final case differs markedly from the previous two in that it is the most recent occurring in March of 2010 and the only one in which violence was averted. It also presents another angle of possibility, as the Hutaree were at their inception a *politically oriented group with religious motivations*. Even though they maintained their militia like appearance with rank, military structure, tactics and anti-government standpoint what takes them beyond these common factors which are found in most militias is their belief in the Apocalypse and that it was their duty to initiate and Apocalypse in the name of god.

Due to the fact that relatively speaking the case of the Hutaree is a recent occurrence and virtually all of the members of the group have been arrested, are currently waiting trial and not had the opportunity to publicly tell their side of the story, a definitive history on this case has yet to be written. Seeing this, much of the information provided here has been a collection of news articles and third party interviews which while valuable only gives a glimpse in to the workings and ideology of this group. Taking this into consideration there is still a great possibility that new information will be brought to light deepening the understanding of this group and its relationship to the concept of cosmic war. This group is however a worthy addition to the case studies shows that the concept of Cosmic War is still present and a driving force even after the passing of the millennium and that it a concept which is not purely limited to groups that are religious in origin, that it is pervasive in varying group structures.

8. The Ideal Cosmic Warrior

After researching and analyzing the three groups presented it has become clear that each case is in itself uniquely different and to draw assumptions based on only three examples of such a vast and complex topic as Cosmic War is very presumptuous and limiting. There are however at least in relation to the Weberian model of ideal types noticeable reoccurring themes that are apparent in each case which support the theories presented regarding the nature of Cosmic War. These reoccurring traits among participants can be used to facilitate a general but not absolute outline of an Ideal Cosmic Warrior. What is most prevalent and seemingly obvious is that the individual must be (whether it has been throughout their lifetime or a recent occurrence) religious or have a sense of spirituality. Such an individual would exhibit a distancing from normal society, maybe through lack of social and familial attachments or perceived lack of achievement. It may however be just a general sense of not belonging and trying to seek a sense of identity. This individual will most likely initially have found some solace in one or more of the major religions only to move towards a more fundamentalist belief structure with stronger reliance on scripture as these offer flexible and relative explanations for modern circumstances. At this point the individual may seek a further sense of identity and belonging, searching for a group to integrate with, that has taken a fundamentalist view towards life and at the same time formed an enclave distancing itself from a secular society and religions which they believe are following the wrong path. This may come in the form of an NRM with a firm fundamentalist background originally having been connected with one of the Abrahamic faiths but not limited to only those religions.

The Ideal Cosmic Warrior will certainly fall under the guidance of a charismatic leader. A charismatic figure takes on many roles not only that of a leader, but a prophet, a diviner, interpreter and almost god like entity that instills a heightened sense of importance, purpose and strength in the Cosmic Warrior. Even more importantly perhaps is the overlying sense of fear and urgency that the charismatic figure makes known to the warrior. A conspiratorial mind set and level of mistrust towards an outside figure must be present as well, in many cases it is usually the government who oftentimes takes on the

unwilling role of the evil adversary. A process of “satanization” will occur where outside forces are seen as adversarial and seeking to destroy not only the individual and the group but humanity and the world. This adversary will spur the warrior into action.

One factor that is key in the formation of an ideal type of cosmic warrior is a strong belief in the apocalypse and end times. Not only does it instill a sense of fear but it also proposes an end or goal to this vast and seemingly endless battle. The ideal cosmic warrior must possess a high degree of initiative, not content with waiting for the apocalypse to happen, they will want to not only be an active participant in it, but to start it through violence. From the Ideal Cosmic Warrior’s perspective this person would see themselves on the side “good” and that their intention is ultimately to help their group as well as society as a whole, to affect positive change through acts of violence as it has become the only way to reach a new and utopia like world. A high level of political involvement or inclination weighs heavily in this ideal type. Whether it be a desire to overthrow the government after having had failed attempts at affecting legitimate political change or being politically motivated from the outset such as a militia group, politics is a much a stimulating factor in the creation of this ideal type as any of the other traits mentioned. Involvement in a mixed NRM/Militia group would provide the strongest source of development for this type.

While there may be some statistical leanings regarding race, culture, nationality and gender these traits are not particularly important to the identity of the Ideal Cosmic Warrior, it transcends all these boundaries. There can be no one factor that makes the Ideal Cosmic Warrior, rather it is a conglomeration of various elements along with situation and timing that form the type. In looking at the cases and those involved it seems that truly the ideal cosmic warrior is the charismatic authority, who possesses all of these characteristics to extreme degrees and believes the most direct influence from god as an earthly figure chosen to carry out these divine orders.

9. Conclusion

In seeking to understand why Cosmic War has reemerged and become a focal point for violence perhaps no other factor is more important then the return of religion as a

whole. It points to questions of man's identity and existence, questions which were originally fulfilled by religion then replaced by science and modernity and now answers have been sought through religion once again but with more fundamentalist interpretations of modern issues and the formation of new religions seeking to provide their own answers. Religion should not be considered at fault for the rise in violence, as William Cavanaugh has explained violence can be connected to religion but no more so than politics can. Any connection between religion and violence must be scrutinized as greatly as one would examine a proposed link between violence and culture, class or race (Wilkinson, 2009:14). If anything, peeking into the world of a cosmic warrior reveals that acts of violence are truly not about religion, it is not religion that creates violence but rather a blend of intricate factors. While religion's apparent return and strength as a paradigm itself are not factors leading to violence it is its conflict with the secular, (as has been shown in these cases government forces) that sets the stage for violence and the growth of Cosmic War.

Cosmic War is indicative of not only a paradigm shift from the secular to the religious and a change in how the nation-state is viewed but also a crisis in religion itself. While the resurgence of religion has created a movement away from the secular so too has growth in fundamentalist faith lead to a shift away from established religious thought. Discontent by followers of major religions leading to a growth in fundamentalist belief and a shift away from a society seen as corrupt and on the wrong path culminates in grouping and enclaves seeking to separate themselves from society and follow their own lifestyles. Marked by its rise among groups such as the Davidians and the Aum in the 90s, terrorism surrounding 9/11 and more recent examples such as the Hutaree today Cosmic War is still very present and the same stimulating factors are apparent and will continue to be. It is within these fundamentalist teachings such as the Apocalypse that cosmic otherworldly concepts take on real meaning and their actualization begins to be seen. Cosmic war links the spiritual world with everyday reality, occurrences and conflicts take on heightened meanings of great importance which regardless of how the rest of the world views them are of the utmost importance to the believer.

10. Reflections and Future Potentials

In looking back on the elements which are involved in Cosmic War and in the creation of Cosmic Warriors there may have been several other poignant factors, which had the length of the thesis been conducive to could have been added to strengthen it. More inquiry into the nation-state may add a stronger sense of connection with issues of identity stemming from change brought about after the Cold War. While this is alluded to in this thesis it is a subject which in the concept of Cosmic Warfare is of lesser significance than what has been presented. Another important point is that of atomic weapons and the apocalyptic implications which they present. It seems that for the first time in history the power to “end” or truly cleanse the world has been effectively transferred from God to Man. As with the nation state it was alluded to in the paper and seems with further inquiry could uncover deeper visions of apocalyptic endings in the minds of Cosmic Warriors.

As Cosmic War certainly seems that it will not be losing strength in the near future an understanding of it and formulation of ideal types can be useful for further research into the concept and identifying of groups or individuals who could potentially act out in violence in the name of Cosmic War. While Cosmic War cuts across all conceived boundaries the United States might present the most fertile ground with its growing Fundamentalism, New Religious Movements, and militias who blending together and tying in political and economic change may end up producing a more modern, motivated and advanced Cosmic Warrior.

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