

the outcome of the interaction between each group and the larger society. He notes, for example, that the tragedy at Mt. Carmel was the result of the raid by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms on what Wessinger has described as a fragile group. In this last chapter Gallagher also explores two other issues raised by anti-cultists: whether the group leaders are all-powerful and if individuals are brainwashed into entering and staying in the group. Exploring recent research on NRMs, Gallagher concludes that followers play a part in maintaining the leaders, who they neither blindly follow nor to whom they have acquiesced all their power. Individuals are not brainwashed and, in fact, most participants in NRMs eventually leave the groups. Those who stay do so because they find meaning and community within the religion. In addition to issues raised by anti-cultists, Gallagher discusses gender roles and the socialization of children in NRMs.

This book provides a thumb nail sketch of the history, beliefs, practices and interactions with the rest of the society for each of the religions discussed. The description of contemporary Paganism, my own area of research, is accurate and presents the major trends in the literature. One of the limitations of the book, which is a result of its encyclopedic scope, is that none of the religions is discussed in depth. It is the scope of the work and its clear engaging prose that make it particularly good for a course in New Religious Movements, Sociology of Religion or American Studies. Its use as a text is enhanced by the inclusion of a glossary and a list of additional readings for each of the religions and topics discussed.

Helen A. Berger
West Chester University



When Prophecy Never Fails: Myth and Reality in a Flying-Saucer Group, by DIANA G. TUMMINIA. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, 240 pp.; \$45.00 USD (cloth).

The focus of this well-crafted and very clearly written ethnography is Unarius, a small but surprisingly stable UFO new religion, founded and led by Ernest and Ruth Norman in 1954, and located since the mid-1970s in El Cajon, California (near San Diego). Tumminia has been studying the group, which styles itself as a new “science” and not a religion, since 1986. This book is the distillation of all those years of labor in the field. Like many other UFO religions, Unarius offers an eclectic synthesis of ideas from Theosophy, Spiritualism, science fiction, and other popular metaphysical systems in terms of telepathically received messages from extra-terrestrial beings. In the rich repository of channeled literature that members create and study are messages from great and lesser figures of human history, human prehistory (e.g., Atlantis and Lemuria), and a vast array of beings from other worlds and dimensions. In line with its Theosophical lineage, the Unarian worldview situates humanity in a complicated cosmic drama where our actions are guided by beneficent enlightened beings called Space Brothers. The Brothers (male and female) are intent on having us live up to our true potential. To that end, people must realize how the twists and turns of their lives are the karmic consequence of a series of past lives that recede into the distant history of the galaxy. The group’s techniques for the retrieval of lost memories will liberate individuals and eventually transform humanity. This transformation will be hastened by the arrival of space ships from an Interplanetary Confederation who will share their advanced technology and wisdom with us.

Several dates for this event have come and gone, most notably 2001, yet the group has survived. In line with previous analyses of failed prophecies, Tumminia argues that the lifeworld experiences of the committed

members readily compensate them for the disappointment and cognitive dissonance associated with these failures. She shows how they quite readily have the ideological means to turn seeming failure into a reaffirmation of their beliefs.

The merits of this study are obvious. To my knowledge this is only the second book length academic ethnography of a UFO group (the other being Susan Palmer's recent study of the Raelians), and it is important to understand how these groups are adapting perennial elements of the cultic milieu to a cultural context dominated as much or more by science than Christianity. The book provides us with rich and original information on a series of classic concerns: the nature of their beliefs and practices; who joins the group (and how and why); insights into daily life in the group; details of its formation and how new ideas emerge; and the ways the group copes with change, including the deaths of three charismatic leaders. In the process, Tumminia avoids becoming "bogged down," and the narrative remains succinct and stimulating. The Unarians emerge as a colorful group, inclined to curious flights of imagination, pageantry, and artistic expression. Like most contemporary ethnographies, the text is reflexive, letting us in on the author's struggles to identify with the Unarian "reality" without either losing her critical judgement or interfering with the field of study. These reflections add an appealing personal touch, instructive for students without, in this case, detracting from the primary task of telling us Unarians' story.

Two other aspects of the analysis are noteworthy: Tumminia introduces the notion of "charismatic labor" to describe the collective process of reality construction that marks the key activity of the group; and she highlights the real therapeutic benefits many experience as result of subscribing to seemingly preposterous ideas. Both processes probably account for the relative longevity of the group.

The study's limitations are perhaps less apparent at first. Three related concerns

come to mind. First, the analysis is helpfully framed in terms of a social constructionist account, appropriately calling on ideas from phenomenology and ethnomethodology—in particular, Melvin Pollner's work on mundane reason. But there is insufficient interpenetration of the theory and the research. Sometimes the theoretical ideas read a bit like a gloss. Second, and similarly, while Tumminia displays a sound knowledge of the growing literature on failed prophecies, some pertinent theoretical insights from this literature are neglected or under-utilized. Third, I noted fascinating parallels between Unarius and the features and history of other new religious movements (e.g., Scientology, The Family). The analysis could have been elevated from a fine ethnography to a more significant contribution to the sociology of new religious movements by placing the Unarians within a more comparative context.

That said, I whole-heartedly recommend this book to scholars of new religious movements and others. It goes a long way towards demonstrating how marginal religious groups can fashion lifeworlds that provide a consistent system of "interpretive validation" (161) that allows them to successfully resist the ridicule, skepticism and criticism of others.

Lorne L. Dawson
University of Waterloo



Saving the Forsaken: Religious Culture and the Rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe, by PEARL M. OLINER. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004, 272 pp.; \$34.00 USD (cloth).

Within the growing literature of Holocaust studies, few works can surpass *Saving the Forsaken* in its striking relevance not only for researchers and teachers but