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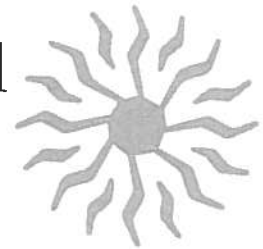
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The Church Universal and Triumphant



Elizabeth Clare Prophet's Apocalyptic Movement

Bradley C. Whitsel



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For my family

Camelot as an Esoteric Community

It remains to look more closely at the private universe CUT constructed during its stay near Malibu to better understand the community's concerns about the future. By the time the church's headquarters was relocated, a high degree of tension marked the relationship between the group and the society around it. What was largely unknown outside the church, however, was that the core membership had developed a style of thought that increasingly directed it to turn inward, away from a surrounding culture considered "dangerous" and "impure," as a means of survival. The ideas that shaped this response to the outside are found in CUT's literature of the period and in the statements of Elizabeth Clare Prophet. Through these sources it becomes clear that the same qualities of thought found in the occult subculture generally were prominent in CUT's belief structure during the stay at Camelot and remained apparent for years afterward.

By the late 1970s, CUT showed signs of tapping into the same obscure netherworld of alternative ideas as some of the better-known secular fringe groups of the period. The difference, however, was that Prophet tied together the diffuse expressions of secularized countercultural belief others held into a religious cosmology. The most obvious example of this was CUT's fixation on the alleged activities of two elite bodies involved in international finance and government policy: the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and the Trilateral Commission.

The CFR was formed after World War I as an international institution designed to coordinate Anglo-American policy in the postwar world and epitomized high-level Allied statecraft. Emerging from the pre-World War I semisecret Roundtable Groups in the main British dependencies and the United States, the organization functioned as a body of influential financiers, academics, and attorneys that promoted an Anglo-American cooperative network.⁸⁹ The Trilateral Commission, a group of several hundred political, economic, and academic luminaries organized in 1973 by David Rockefeller, was an outgrowth of the CFR, yet it differed from its parent body by including representatives from a number of Western countries.

While these organizations clearly existed, wielded considerable power, and sometimes (particularly in the roundtable groups predating the CFR) functioned beyond the scrutiny of general society, they achieved a mythological status for conspiracists seeking validation for various world-control theories. The

late 1970s proved to be an especially fertile time for the growth of such anti-internationalist notions in America. Declining economic conditions played a major role in paving the way for the emergence of these sentiments. Skyrocketing inflation (reaching 20 percent by 1980) frustrated the American public, a feeling compounded by an oil crisis and a humiliating, protracted hostage affair in Iran involving U.S. personnel.⁹⁰

Capitalizing upon these frustrations, extreme rightists gained some support for the exaggerated claims they made about the erosion of American sovereignty and the efforts of menacing world power brokers to impose a one-world government. One such fringe ideologue was Lyndon LaRouche, whose strange, syncretic conspiracy theories had gained a small but ardent audience by the mid-1970s. Originally a Marxist, LaRouche took his following from the extreme left to the far right in 1976 when he declared that his Labor Party would become a superpatriotic organization.⁹¹ At the core of his philosophy was the belief in an unfolding "new Dark Ages" plot, a conspiracy thought to involve British aristocrats and their American counterparts. The insidious plan, according to LaRouche, sought to depopulate the world by wars, birth control, and famines so that fewer people would be left to compete for global resources. Those who were not eliminated in the upcoming Dark Ages would be kept in a state of servitude by international elites through a covert campaign bent on destroying society's capability for reason with drugs, television, and rock music.⁹² Unrestrained in his attacks on the CFR and the Trilateral Commission for their attempts at instituting a reign of "economic controlled disintegration," LaRouche repeatedly campaigned for the presidency during the 1970s and 1980s on a platform of raising the status of the general population and challenging the control of the power elite.⁹³

CUT had no formal ties to LaRouche, but it does appear that Elizabeth Clare Prophet may have believed aspects of his theory about the new Dark Ages conspiracy. Indeed, at this period some of LaRouche's published work began to be cited in CUT literature. Prophet used virtually identical language in her denunciations of the CFR and the Trilateral Commission as LaRouche used in arguments against the power elite. During a series of speeches she made to CUT audiences in 1980, the issue of "the Rockefeller-led Trilateralists" was repeatedly stressed.⁹⁴ Citing the detailed plans these organizations had for gaining world domination, which included weakening America's sovereignty and reducing its population, Prophet attributed to "the international bankers and the Rockefellers in New York" the blame for the decay of human civilization.⁹⁵

Interestingly, the parallels with LaRouche's conspiracies went even further. Much like LaRouche, the church accepted the notion that mind-control "programming" was being used "at the highest levels" to influence the behavior of American citizens and their political leaders.⁹⁶ Prophet argued that the global power elite "promoted a culture of death" predicated on social permissiveness and mass consumerism that mirrored LaRouche's perception of the unwinding plot to destroy the nation.⁹⁷ Focusing on this elite plot to enslave the general population, LaRouche maintained that the "little people" were forced to retreat into mind-numbing activities while the powerful strengthened their grab for world control.⁹⁸

To some degree, the general thrust of CUT's populism was not too far distant from that of a growing body of Americans in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While the fringe ideas of LaRouche represented an extreme manifestation of antielite beliefs, their underlying message (albeit in a far weaker form) resonated with broad, and more mainstream, sectors of neoconservatives, anti-communists, and conservative Christians.⁹⁹ Seen in this context, CUT's hyperbolic populism was a supercharged variant of widespread antiestablishment sentiments. Where CUT parted ways with other groups expressing concern with the concentrated power of the CFR, the Trilateral Commission, and other supranational organizations was over its view of the power elite. To be sure, a constellation of groups on the far right had made these insider groups a fixture of their antigovernment philosophies by the early 1980s.¹⁰⁰ The Church Universal and Triumphant, however, incorporated the standardized CFR and Trilateral conspiracy theories into a much deeper, and more exotic, system of belief than those movements whose concerns were largely political.

Building on the esoteric conspiracism of Mark Prophet, Elizabeth traced the existence of the CFR and the Trilateral Commission, along with other manifestations of earthly evil, to extraterrestrial sources. According to Prophet, who stated her theory at a major church event in Philadelphia in September 1980, the world was currently plagued with legions of "counterfeit beings" who had evolved from the Nephilim, or Fallen Ones.¹⁰¹ In her speech, Prophet told the audience of their deceitful plans to create a world dictatorship, which she claimed began with the Nephilim's efforts at developing a "slave race" of simulated humans some three hundred thousand years ago. Produced through a process of genetic manipulation, and later bred with humans, these counterfeit beings performed tasks of labor for their masters for a period lasting eons of

earthly history and were humanlike in every form except that they lacked a soul. In Prophet's telling of this secret history, not all of the earth's inhabitants had fallen prey to the Nephilim's plans to enslave the human race. Noah and his descendants, Lightbearers (or children of God), survived the Nephilim's sudden decision to kill off their counterfeit creation (the Great Flood, the unintentional result of their manipulations).¹⁰²

Frightened that interbreeding up to the time of Noah had diluted the power of their manufactured beings, the Nephilim orchestrated a campaign of germ warfare and weather manipulation to destroy earth's soulless humanity. As Prophet explained, the Nephilim triggered a sudden change of climate in an all-out effort to exterminate this slave race. The resulting flood destroyed their engineered creation, but Noah survived to father forthcoming generations of Lightbearers. While the flood ended the Nephilim's attempts at achieving an outright world dictatorship with "robotic" humans, the cataclysm did not curtail their plans for advancing evil on the planet. Following the inundation, the Nephilim (who briefly fled the earth in spaceships) returned with a different strategy for winning global hegemony. Convinced that their plans could be better realized through intrigue, the aliens engaged in secret agreements with those humans who were willing to compromise their belief in God for material reward. Thus, according to Prophet's reading of history, the current state of the world was explained through "the dual evolutions" of these two separate races, the Nephilim and the Children of God. As she warned her audience, the Nephilim and their genetic progeny still remain in a position of global power. In a world dominated by their evil, Prophet recommended to CUT members that they remove themselves from Nephilim control by "coming apart and being a separate people."¹⁰³

The topic of Prophet's September 1980 address in Philadelphia was not chosen arbitrarily. By 1980, CUT's concern with evil in high places was obsessive. At the group headquarters at Camelot, the members' fears about the activities of the CFR and the Trilateral Commission were obvious. Just after the 1980 presidential election, the church alerted its nationwide teaching centers and smaller study groups to conduct a twenty-four-hour "vigil of the violet flame" in order that Saint Germain's approved candidates be appointed to President Reagan's new cabinet. So seriously did the church take the threat of these anti-insider organizations that CUT disseminated a list of fifty-nine potential cabinet officers that included information on whether the candidate had ties to

73. Edmond Mazet, "Freemasonry and Esotericism," in *Modern Esoteric Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, ed. Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 250–51. Freemasonry, as opposed to Rosicrucianism, began as a craft guild in fourteenth-century Europe. In its earliest form, Freemasonry had no esoteric/occult orientation since its purpose was to organize and initiate craftsmen into a special community of laborers. The movement adopted an esoteric character when its early emphasis upon the building trade was displaced by the interests of an increasingly upper-class membership in practices of a secretive and occult nature.

74. The central belief in Rosicrucianism was that man was evolving toward the godhead and that reincarnation permitted this course to divinity to take place. See Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 350. The Freemasons were not organized around explicit religious principles, although the group (in line with its humanitarian convictions) stressed the spiritual development of its members.

75. Mazet, "Freemasonry and Esotericism," 270. Scholarly accounts of Freemasonry attribute much of the movement's esoteric content to the Knights Templar, a mysterious secret society of the Middle Ages that is believed to have been the inspiration for Freemasonry.

76. Bennett, *The Party of Fear*, 23–24.

77. Arkon Daraul, *A History of Secret Societies* (New York: Citadel Press, 1994), 220–32.

78. Goodricke-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Naziism*, 29.

79. Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 40–41.

80. Edward Tiryakian, "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture," *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 3 (1972): 505.

81. Hieronimus, *America's Secret Destiny*, 22–35. This account of the early history of the United States reflects the author's belief that the Founders were influenced by the esoteric tradition and particularly by the philosophies of the Freemasons, Rosicrucians, and Illuminati.

82. Goodricke-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Naziism*, 20–25. See also Dusty Sklar, *The Nazis and the Occult* (New York: Dorset Press, 1977), 27–36.

83. Tiryakian, "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture," 306.

84. Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 248–49. Barkun's analysis of the conspiratorial mind-set of the radical Christian Identity groups finds an easy application to conspiracists of all types.

85. Ellwood, *Religious and Spiritual Groups in America*, 95–97. Ellwood argues that the movement played an important role in gaining India's independence from Great Britain.

86. Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, 226–27. Webb alleges that the Blavatsky-led early Theosophists were involved with promoting racist and conspiracy theories. According to Webb, during the 1880s the Theosophical Publishing House in London reprinted various anti-Semitic tracts.

87. Bryan, *Psychic Dictatorship in America*, 220–26. According to Bryan, the group routinely prayed for the destruction of its enemies.

88. Werly, "The Millenarian Right," 197. Also see Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 22.

89. Carroll Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope: A History of the World in Our Time* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1966), 952–53. Quigley, whose revelations about the CFR are often cited by con-

spiracists on the right as proof of the existence of a world-controlling conspiracy, argues that the CFR and its predecessor organizations wielded power that "can hardly be exaggerated." Quigley, however, was most certainly not an opponent of the CFR.

90. Bennett, *The Party of Fear*, 344.

91. Dennis King, *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 60. See also Daniel Pipes, *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 11–12.

92. King, *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism*, 103. Also see Ronald Johnson, *The Architects of Fear* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 187–88.

93. "The Real Story Behind the Trilateral Commission: The 1980s Plot to Destroy the Nation," pamphlet produced by Citizens for LaRouche, March 1980.

94. Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *I Believe in the United States of America*, and Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *Planet Earth: The Future Is to the Gods* (Los Angeles: Summit University Press, 1981). The latter is a speech given to a church audience in Philadelphia in September 1980. For evidence of LaRouche's published work appearing in CUT literature, see Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *Prophecy for the 1980s*, 141.

95. Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *Planet Earth*.

96. "A Prayer Vigil for the World," prayer probably from the organization's 1984 decree book. In this prayer, "psychotronics" (or mind control) is specifically mentioned as a strategy used by the Nephilim to influence the thinking of American political officeholders and citizens.

97. Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *I Believe in the United States of America*.

98. Johnson, *The Architects of Fear*, 195.

99. Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 261–62.

100. Frank Mintz, *The Liberty Lobby and the American Right: Race, Conspiracy, and Culture* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 60–63, discusses some of these far-right groups.

101. Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *Planet Earth*.

102. *Ibid.*

103. Elizabeth Prophet's theory does not differ from Mark Prophet's original statement concerning the reasons for the existence of world evil as explained in his 1966 book *The Soulless Ones*. However, she has elaborated on some of her late husband's arguments. For her views on the extra-terrestrial origins of evil, see Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *Forbidden Mysteries of Enoch: Fallen Angels and the Origins of Evil* (Livingston, Mont.: Summit Univ. Press, 1992) 1–15.

104. "More Violet Flame," internal staff document dated November 21, 1981.

105. Ballard, *Unveiled Mysteries*, x.

106. C. E. Ashworth, "Flying Saucers, Spoon-Bending, and Atlantis," *Sociological Review* 28, no. 3 (1980): 357.

107. Zechariah Sitchin, *The Twelfth Planet* (New York: Avon Books, 1976), 372–78.

108. See Sitchin, *The Twelfth Planet*. In 1980, Prophet frequently mentioned Sitchin's research in her lectures. Sitchin's work continues to be popular among UFO enthusiasts who reject more conventional explanations of human development on earth. For two decades he has been routinely featured as a speaker at alternative science and UFO society meetings.

109. "Freedom 1982," 84.16–84.18. Decree book prayer entitled "Judgment of the Conspiracy of Watchers."