



COERCION OR CONVERSION?

A CASE STUDY IN RELIGION AND THE
LAW: CUT V. MULL V. PROPHET 1986

By Erin Prophet

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Erin Prophet and Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Prophet Family Literary Trust

Gregory Mull and sister: The Hammond Family

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Coercion or Conversion?

A Case Study in Religion and the Law: CUT v Mull v Prophet

By Erin Prophet

Introduction

Brainwashing is seldom far from the news. During the twenty-first century to date, we find everyone from terrorists to Scientologists to consumers described as having been “brainwashed,” or sometimes in a more sophisticated sounding vein, as having been influenced by “coercive persuasion,” a force beyond their control, whether strong or weak. I myself have given a lot of thought to the dynamics of influence, having grown up in a group that was labelled a cult and left gradually of my own accord.

It is clear that influence increases when a person or group has financial or physical control over an individual. It is strongest obviously when people are locked up and prevented from leaving, as in prisoner-of-war camps. What is less clear is how far influence goes when it is simply mental or emotional. The current popular terminology leaves no room for nuance, and the professional academic discourse seems at times out of touch with popular fears.

When conversion is to a “cult,” a commonly used term for small and unpopular religions, the love affair of conversion can be

even more unstable.* With a living charismatic leader, things can turn bad quickly. Flaws may appear in leaders who once seemed appealing. Leaders may withdraw to hide their flaws. If a person has given up a lot to join the group—a job, financial security—it can be emotionally difficult to leave, whether or not there are physical barriers.

Gregory Mull, the central figure in the case at hand, was a member of Church Universal and Triumphant from 1974 to 1980. The church grew out of The Summit Lighthouse, a religious organization founded by my father, Mark Prophet, in 1958. After his death in 1973, his widow, my mother, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, shifted the group's identity largely into a new organization called Church Universal and Triumphant. A complicated history led the church to sue Gregory in 1981, following which he sued both the church and its living leader.

The suit and countersuit between Gregory Mull, Church Universal and Triumphant and Elizabeth Clare Prophet took place in an interesting period in American judicial history with respect to theories of group influence. During the trial, Mr. Mull's attorney argued that he had been a victim of "coercive persuasion" during his time in the church and had therefore been unable to make decisions independently.

In the wake of the 1969 Manson murders and the 1978 Jonestown murder-suicides, which were widely seen as having been caused by brainwashing, courts had become more open to theories of influence, and expert witnesses testified in support of Gregory's

* The term *cult* is often applied in a derogatory way to a variety of groups that which may have little in common with one other, aside from being unpopular. The terms *nontraditional religion*, *new religious movement* or *minority religion* are more neutral.

claim in the 1986 trial. Opposing experts questioned the scientific legitimacy of such theories.

Brainwashing had entered popular parlance in the 1950s through the work of journalist Edward Hunter and popular films like *The Manchurian Candidate*, which depicted an influence so powerful that it could cause an individual to turn into an assassin when triggered by a code word, years after indoctrination.¹ Brainwashing was said to have been perfected by the Chinese government and to have been used on American prisoners of war (POWs) in Korea. It was believed capable of turning individuals into puppet or zombie-like figures.

The research of psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton on Western and Chinese prisoners of the Chinese government, first published in 1961, was said to support such views. However, Lifton's research demonstrated the importance of physical coercion to the model. Once freed, almost all of those who had made anti-American confessions while incarcerated returned to their previous identity.² Lifton acknowledged the emotionally charged and imprecise nature of the term "brainwashing," but asserted that a specific process was used by the Chinese government, sometimes translated as "ideological remolding," but also as "thought reform." Lifton conducted his research with an eye to application in American society, and suggested that it was extremism which was the hallmark of "totalist" ideologies, which he identified with anything from Jesuit training to McCarthyism.

In the decades since Lifton's work was published, it has been argued that attempts to apply the POW experience to non-physically coercive situations were overstated. Edgar Schein, who studied what he called "coercive persuasion" among American prisoners in the Korean war, did not believe such persuasion was possible without physical imprisonment. A good summary of the arguments can be found in "Conversion and 'Brainwashing' in New Religious Movements," by Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins.³

Anthony and Robbins conclude that the views of Schein and Lifton “have been distorted to the effect that they are wrongly said to affirm a highly effective coercive psychological process which is equivalent to physical imprisonment and in which individual predispositions, premotives and personality patterns play no vital role.”⁴

The coercive persuasion model as applied by anti-cult psychologists such as Margaret Singer (who testified on Gregory Mull’s behalf), holds that influence techniques can be used to control individuals without physical restraint. Singer maintained that hypnosis, trance and dissociation are key ingredients of a thought reform program (and testified that thought reform and coercive persuasion are synonyms).⁵ However, Robbins and Anthony point out that psychiatrists today agree that hypnosis cannot be used to establish long-lasting control over an individual’s entire lifestyle.⁶

Over the past thirty years, a variety of alternative theories have been proposed to explain religious indoctrination, which are beyond the scope of this book. However, the body of scholarship supports the view that groups and individuals vary widely, and caution should be used in the application of grand theories to religious behavior.

In my 2009 book *Prophet’s Daughter: My Life With Elizabeth Clare Prophet Inside Church Universal and Triumphant*, I explore an event which many outsiders would see as evidence of brainwashing. The event is the “shelter episode,” when thousands of members of my mother’s Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT) came to Montana to build and briefly occupy fallout shelters.* The story is

* Note: the church does not generally use the acronym “CUT” to refer to itself, but it has become unavoidable in discussion of legal matters and media coverage. The acronym was used as an epithet during the height of tension, partly

complex, and not simply one of a powerful leader manipulating weak followers.

Although the events were driven by my mother's prophecies of nuclear war, many people went beyond her instructions, adding their own beliefs and preconceptions about prophecy and coming "earth changes" as they made decisions that seemed crazy in retrospect—quitting jobs, buying gold, storing food and weapons. Other members of the church chose not to prepare, and simply continued living in their homes around the world, practicing the church teachings as they had for years. A one-size-fits-all brainwashing explanation does not explain their behavior.

The trial in *Church Universal and Triumphant vs. Gregory Mull* (and countersuit, hereafter *CUT v. Mull*), which took place more than thirty years ago (prior to the shelter episode), is a laboratory for exploring some of these ideas and concerns. It relied on some of the same arguments about brainwashing (re clothed as "coercive persuasion" or "mind control"), that underpin current debates. Four years after it concluded, United States courts began to reject testimony based on a coercive persuasion or "brainwashing" defense.

However, many people do believe that it is possible to "brainwash" people to act against their own best interests and carry out the will of a powerful leader. I don't think either pole of this polarized belief system—total autonomy and personal responsibility on the one hand, and robotic zombies on the other—actually explains what happens.

Clearly, nontraditional or minority religions differ from one another, as do the people who join them. Groups have unique

for its similarity to *cult*. Therefore, I use "church" where possible unless CUT is needed for clarity.

cultures and belief systems, modes of dress and speech which people adopt when they join. Some personality types are more attracted to certain groups than to others. Once they are in the group, both charismatic authority and group dynamics come into play. But do people who join a group have accountability for their actions? At what point does influence end? Why do some leave while others stay?

Debates continue, including efforts to identify personality types of people who are susceptible to joining nontraditional or minority religions, and the kinds of environments most likely to lead to abuse or violence. These issues will be briefly revisited after the evaluation of *CUT v. Mull*.

The trial lasted six weeks and ranged widely over questions such as appropriate use of confessional materials, the rights of churches to employ volunteer labor, to influence family and marital disputes, and of course the process of conversion. During the trial, expert witnesses presented their opinions of my mother, the church founder and leader, and her group. A central question was whether Gregory Mull was under “coercive persuasion” during the seven years of his involvement, from 1974 to 1980.

I had completed a long evaluation of the trial as a part of *Prophet's Daughter*, but most of it had to be cut. I have updated it and present it here as supplementary material to the book in the hope that it may inform future discussion. For the most part, I have kept my personal experiences and feelings out of the narrative, preferring to let the facts speak for themselves, though I describe how my opinions changed over time.

I have also uploaded to my website at www.eprophet.info the complete transcript of the trial, as well as a selection of the exhibits, primarily Mr. Mull's letters to my mother. Was he brainwashed when he wrote them? Under coercive persuasion or undue influence? Or was he simply courting the favor of a powerful

woman and religious leader? I present evidence which I hope will allow readers to make a decision that is more informed than permitted by past discussion of the trial.

The trial contained much information of a personal nature about both my mother and Mr. Mull, among others. I have attempted to deal with this material sensitively, but have not been able to avoid its inclusion since many of the arguments pivoted around these topics. I realize that this material may be painful both to my mother's followers and family, as well as Gregory's friends and family. I have included only enough of such material to review the case, and omitted much additional sensitive material, which does, however, remain part of the public record. (Note: both Mr. Mull and my mother are deceased.)

Having formally resigned from my mother's church in 1993, I commenced a slow withdrawal from the religion of my birth and separation from the community that had raised me. Although I attempted to maintain peaceful relations, inevitable strains and alienation occurred. I have a new understanding of and empathy for the experiences of Gregory Mull, my former stepfather Randall King, and everyone who testified against the church at the trial—as well as everyone who has ever been dismissed from my mother's church (or any church) on short notice, or who has abandoned the religion of their birth. Having to reconstruct a life from the ground up is not easy.

On the other hand, I also have great respect for people who join new religions, often choosing to live non-traditional lifestyles, to give up materialistic goals and their parents' values, to volunteer their time in order to perform activities that they think will improve their own lives or the world, even to spend a life in prayer and religious devotion, separated from society, perhaps circumscribed by cultural and physical boundaries. Those rights are also at issue here.

My experience has taught me that it is important for groups to become more aware of the dynamics that affect them, to install where possible safeguards against the abuse of charismatic authority, for followers to demand accountability of their leaders, and for leaders to explore options for transforming their charisma into more benevolent and diffuse forms.* I do not know what, if anything, should be done by societies to curb these influences from outside the groups. Existing laws protect church members against the most flagrant forms of abuse such as fraud, physical violence and sexual abuse. The civil courts have been used by people who feel that existing protections were not enough. Often, the attempt to achieve “justice” ends up hurting innocents, such as children caught in custody battles, and perpetuates harmful stereotypes. “Cult” members are people too, however impaired their decision-making may seem to outsiders.

There is room for debate. But that debate should be informed by real evidence of what the groups are and how they function, rather than simplistic stereotypes. After all, it was Lifton himself who wrote that the way to distinguish “totalist practice” from “more balanced forms of spirituality” was to judge “any particular religious environment...according to its own characteristics.”⁷

Lifton was unable to identify a bright line between “totalist” and “balanced” spirituality, other than to judge the purpose of the group, something which is famously difficult to accomplish in the case of religious organizations. The story that follows will indicate the difficulties that follow when outsiders attempt to decide the legitimacy of religious belief and practice.

* See Prophet, Erin. “Charisma and Authority in New Religious Movements,” pages 36–49 in *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*. Vol. 2. Oxford University Press (2016).

Timeline: Church Universal and Triumphant vs. Gregory Mull (and vice-versa)

- 1974: Gregory Mull, a San Francisco architect, learns about Church Universal and Triumphant through a member of a meditation group he holds in his home.
- January 1975: Gregory attends the church's three-month Summit University course in Santa Barbara. He joins the church but returns home after the course, and continues living in his home in San Francisco.
- 1970s: Gregory writes numerous letters to the church's leader, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, offering to design buildings for the church. He also takes her shopping for antiques between 1975 and 1977.
- 1977: Church purchases 218-acre headquarters in the Santa Monica mountains, north of Los Angeles, names it "Camelot," and begins fund-raising for a ten-year architectural "master plan."
- 1977: Gregory attends a second three-month session of Summit University, this time at "Camelot." In December of 1977, he marries Kathleen Hammond, his long-time girlfriend, who had worked as Prophet's secretary.
- Late 1978: Monroe Shearer, a church board member, invites Mull to join the church's staff to work on designing buildings for the 218-acre Camelot property. The terms of that arrangement are the subject of the later litigation.
- January 1979: Gregory moves into a dormitory room in the Chapel of the Holy Grail at Camelot, where he lives during the week, commuting to San Francisco on weekends. The church pays him several thousand dollars per month.
- June 1979: Gregory writes his wife Kathleen (also a member of the church's staff) a letter telling her he is divorcing her. He

later claims that Prophet forced this decision. He buys a condominium near Camelot where his daughter, Linda, will live, using money borrowed from his former wife.

- September 1979: The church asks Gregory to sign promissory notes for the payments already received, acknowledging them as loans. He does so, and again in October, the loans then totaling thirty-seven thousand dollars, after which he reduces his time worked at Camelot and begins work for other clients.
- May 1980: Gregory and the church disagree over whether monies paid him by the church were loans (subject of later litigation) and is asked to leave Camelot.
- June 1980: During an attempted settlement meeting with Prophet, Monroe Shearer and Edward Francis, the church's business manager, Gregory writes a check for approximately fifty-five hundred dollars to the church's school. Prophet promises not to sue him.
- November 1980: Gregory writes a letter asking the church to pay back the fifty-five hundred dollars. He calls Prophet a false prophet, the next thing to the Great Whore, and threatens to sue her. He contacts newspapers with reports of zoning and land-use problems at Camelot.
- December 1980: The church's attorney threatens to sue Gregory if he continues speaking out against the church. Gregory then sends a letter to at least ten newspapers making claims about land use violations at Camelot.
- March 1981: The church files a complaint against Gregory for non-payment.
- April 19, 1981: Gregory comes to Camelot, seeking to attend a public square dance along with a group of reporters and family members of church members. The church's business manager, Edward Francis, goes down to the gate to tell them to leave. Gregory later claims he was assaulted by Edward at the gate.

- May 11, 1981: Gregory (with lawyer Lawrence Levy) files counter suit against the church and Elizabeth Clare Prophet personally. Claims intentional infliction of emotional distress, involuntary servitude, fraud, quantum meruit and assault, and requests 253 million dollars in damages.
- Summer 1981: Gregory travels to Kentucky, New Jersey, Virginia, and Montana, interviewing former members and Prophet's parents as well as the family of her deceased husband, Mark Prophet.
- November 1981: Gregory holds a public meeting regarding the church in Livingston, Montana, at the invitation of the Park County Ministerial Association. The church had purchased a ranch in Montana it called "The Inner Retreat" in September 1981.
- 1982: Reporter Bob Pool writes articles with allegations of child abuse and brainwashing at Camelot and the *Las Virgenes Enterprise* also publishes many letters with community members' response.
- 1982-1984: Gregory spends thirty hours a week speaking out against the church (according to his trial testimony) and working with the anti-cult movement.
- Around. September of 1983: Randall King, Prophet's third husband, files a lawsuit against Prophet and the church, alleging involuntary servitude, intentional infliction of emotional distress, etc., and asking for sixteen million dollars. He is also represented by Lawrence Levy.
- October 1983: Randall signs a declaration regarding Gregory. He characterizes the money advanced to Gregory as "a salary" that the board had agreed to pay Gregory.
- June 4, 1984: Gregory has a stroke-like incident.

- 1985: A year after the first event, Gregory has a second event, and is suspected have a neurological disorder such as multiple sclerosis.
- March-April 1986: Trial in *CUT v. Mull*. Along with claims of fraud and intentional infliction of emotional distress, Lawrence Levy advances the theory of coercive persuasion to explain Gregory's experience. Margaret Singer and other experts testify in support of the coercive persuasion theory.
- April 1986: Jury finds against the church and Prophet, and awards 1.56 million dollars in damages in favor of Gregory.
- July 1986: Gregory dies of complications from his neurological disorder.
- 1986: The church appeals the verdict. The church and Randall King settle his lawsuit for an undisclosed sum.
- April 1989: California Court of Appeal finds the trial court made errors but they were not reversible errors. Denies the church's appeal.
- January 1990: U.S. Supreme Court refuses to review the *Mull* verdict.
- April 1990: U.S. District Court rules in *U.S. v. Fishman* that testimony about coercive persuasion and brainwashing are not "sufficiently established to be admitted as evidence in federal courts of law."

Chapter 1: The Background for a Six-Week Trial

When the Gregory Mull trial began, I had just turned twenty, was firmly on the “side” of my mother and her church, and could not imagine that a court would take seriously his claim to have been under “coercive persuasion” during his time in the church. I thought the trial would be over quickly.

But as the testimony dragged on day after day and week after week, I began to wish I had never seen the windowless room paneled in blond wood on the fifth floor of the Los Angeles County Superior Court. A room where my mother’s claim to spiritual authority got her no respect, and a room in which the theory of coercive persuasion was given free rein. I could not leave my mother there to face the “enemies” without me, and yet I wanted it all to be over. It was an intense time for our family—as well, I am sure, for Gregory and his team of supporters.

Both sides saw a spiritual dimension to the conflict. For our side, it was my mother’s preordained Cavalry—God was giving her enemies a chance to attack her so that their souls could be judged and condemned. And we spent almost every spare hour we were not in court doing prayer work, which we called “decrees,” or “clearance,” for our victory and for the “judgment” of the enemies. Mother and I would even go to pray on the rooftop of the Superior Court building during lunch.

At the time, I had taken a break from college and was working for my mother, in training to become a “messenger” for the ascended masters, a role that she learned from my father, who had died in 1973. A messenger was considered the sole official representative of divine inspiration for our church (to speak for a range of “ascended” masters from Jesus to Buddha and St. Francis), though individuals were encouraged also to pray for their own inspiration from divine beings about personal matters.

I believed firmly in my mother's role as messenger and in her explanation that she was being attacked for her "light," and her spiritual office, and not for anything she had done to Gregory Mull. "Great light attracts great darkness," she used to say. In the succeeding decade, I would come to question this black-and-white view of the universe. I would develop other explanations for why so many of my mother's former staff (not to mention my former stepfather, Randall King) had lined up to testify against her.

And the "enemies"? They believed that this was finally their chance to expose the "Wulf" in sheep's clothing, as they liked to call my mother, a reference to her maiden name (she was born Elizabeth Clare Wulf in New Jersey to a German father and a Swiss mother) but also to her tendency to appear kind and gentle in public, only to behave harshly and erratically around close followers. Her behavior could only be excused under the rubric of "guru-chela" relationship, a paradigm we had imported from India and from earlier esoteric groups. Most of the people who were close to her tolerated this behavior, seeing it as a karmic test, a mirror of their own faults, and a chance to transcend their karma and move more quickly into the role of becoming ascended masters themselves, believing that Jesus Christ and the saints had demonstrated a path that all could follow.

The spiritual framework of our lives did not find much purchase here in the courtroom. Instead, the focus was on Gregory Mull, who had for the past five years been the church's chief public enemy, speaking out vigorously in the media and in public forums. But now he had lost that vigor, and appeared helpless and lost. He suffered from tremors, his once sharp chin blurred, and he seemed barely able to walk. He shuffled into court, accompanied on the first day by his daughter, Linda, and shepherded by a friend, Dave Clark, and took his place on the left with his two attorneys.

And every day, looking almost sinfully young, healthy and prosperous, my mother, Elizabeth Clare Prophet (aged 46), and her fourth husband Edward Francis (eleven years her junior), with their

lawyer Ken Klein, who was in his thirties and had a wrestler's build, would take their place at a table to the right.

I sat with my teenaged sister Tatiana in front, on the right-hand side of the room, with rows of church members behind us, changing every day, taking turns at witnessing their guru's trial. Gregory's supporters—former church members and miscellaneous members of the anti-cult movement—would sit on the other side.

When the trial began in early February 1986, I thought it would end quickly since the judge, Alfred L. Margolis, had already thrown out two of the causes of action in pre-trial motions—for extortion and involuntary servitude. But as the trial got underway, I realized I was wrong.

I'd known Gregory since at least 1975 when he came to the church's three-month live-in training program known as Summit University. At the time, the church's headquarters was in the beach town of Santa Barbara, California, and the Summit University students lived in condominiums near the church's headquarters, which was in a former synagogue.

I remembered Gregory as he had been in the early 1970s with his carefully sculpted sideburns and downward-turning mouth. I'd seen him often in church services, well-groomed, wearing flamboyant polyester suits with matching shoes, socks and ties, his hair blow-dried back. I thought of him as just one more of my mother's sycophants, trying to get her attention by writing her letters and doing her favors. He took her shopping and to the wholesale decorators' stores where he had access.

Gregory was the first witness at the trial and the radical change he had undergone since leaving the church in 1980 was apparent. Four years after leaving the church, he had contracted a neurological disorder with symptoms that matched those of multiple sclerosis, and caused his shakiness. Worst of all, he had lost

the ability to control his tongue. As he sat in listening to his shaggy, graying lawyer, Lawrence Levy, his tongue would slowly protrude from his mouth, flex to a point, and then just as slowly retract. It was pitiful to watch.

I was sure that Gregory's condition made an impression on the jury, which was composed almost solely of younger minorities and retired middle-class whites. The real question was whether my mother and the church had put him in this state. That was what we were pulled back to this courtroom every day to find out, as surely as a ball tied to a wooden paddle whips back when it's hit. There was much that I did not know in those early days as the trial began, but from what I did know, it seemed that Gregory had created at least some of the situation by spending so much time speaking out against the church over the past five years. What I didn't know was why he had not been able to let go.

I could remember when the problems with Gregory started. It was in May of 1980 in a hotel room in Hawaii when my mother received a phone call from the board telling her that things were not going well. We had stopped over in Hawaii on our way back from dedicating a church satellite center in India. Gregory was on staff at Camelot, the church's 218-acre headquarters in the Santa Monica Mountains north of Los Angeles. I knew that he had worked for the church as an architect for fifteen months and that there was some kind of financial arrangement with him that hadn't worked out.

According to the church, this is what the arrangement was. The evidence will be presented as the trial is reviewed, but to summarize, Gregory originally offered to work for the church as a volunteer. He said he would need a loan to cover his expenses, which he promised to repay when he tithed the money from the sale of his house, which was on the market. Tithing (giving ten percent) of all income was required for church members. He was ultimately planning to move his business to Los Angeles, support himself, and do work for the church on the side, which was also common

practice. Numerous professionals—doctors, artists, teachers—donated their time to the church.

Over the fifteen-month period, the church loaned Gregory thirty-eight thousand dollars, for which he signed promissory notes beginning in September 1979, nine months after the arrangement began. He eventually sold his house, and in 1980 refused to pay back the money. Or asked to renegotiate, offering to pay back only part of it, since the house had sold for less than he expected.

At the time, Gregory's entire financial arrangement was unusual for the church "staff," those who made the headquarters work, produced publications, ran a K-12 school and put on events for the thousands of non-staff church members who attended services and conferences there. The staff were paid around a hundred-fifty dollars per month, in addition to room and board, though many supplemented that amount with off-campus work. Volunteering was Gregory's expressed intent in his letters.

After that May 1980 phone call, my mother and the board (then composed of four men plus my mother) decided to ask Gregory to vacate his Camelot office. He had already been living in a nearby condominium he had purchased in Westlake Village, an upscale suburb, the year before. But he never went back into architecture. Instead, he began to connect with current and former church members, sharing his unhappiness with his treatment. In June 1980, my mother (whom I often called Mother, just like the rest of the church members) had a meeting with him that was intended to resolve the problems. At the end of the meeting, he wrote a check for approximately 5,500 dollars to the church's Montessori school as partial repayment of his loan. To show her good faith, Mother gave him a tape recording of the meeting.

But then he started playing the tape for people. Mother heard that he had edited it to make it sound like she was threatening his life. In the meeting, she had used the story of Ananias and

Sapphira from Acts (4:34-5:11) to illustrate what the Bible said would happen to people who lied about their assets. They were struck down dead by God. In the meeting, Gregory asks, “Are you saying that I will die if I do not fulfil your commitment?”

Mother responds, “Absolutely not.”⁸

But now she heard that he was playing the tape with the “not” edited out. I’m not sure he actually did this, but the lines had hardened on both sides. And something had obviously happened between June and November to change his mind about the check. Later I found out what it was.

In November 1980, Gregory wrote her a letter asking for his fifty-five hundred dollars back and said that unless his debt to the church was canceled at the same time, he would sue her. “You either resolve this, I warn you, or you will have one of the biggest enemies you have yet had out to expose you.”⁹ He mentioned having been contacted by “your many enemies, deprogrammers, asked to go on national television, newspapers all over the country, to expose you. They will not rest until you are fully exposed and I am just about ready to join them.”¹⁰

His tone was personal. He stated that he still believed in the “hierarchy,” i.e., the ascended masters, and invoked divine assistance, but viewed her as a fraud.

I see through you now for what you are: a tormented child by both parents, as per your personal confession to me;...I was thoroughly brainwashed by you....If you could just be totally honest in all your dealings perhaps you would not...have all the enemies you do....You are greedy, selfish, power happy and a money hungry woman. No wonder you are called ‘Madame Clear Profit’ on the outside....You stand next to the Great Whore as the False Prophet.¹¹

In December, the church's lawyer, Marvin Gross, wrote to Gregory:

It is incredible to me that an adult member of a respected profession could write such a vicious and vindictive letter....I have never seen such an abusive and threatening letter directed either to a woman or to a minister, and such a complete lack of willingness for a grown man to take responsibility for his own circumstances.¹²

Gross threatened to sue Gregory for libel, slander and collection of the remaining money. If Gregory would quit speaking out against the church, he would drop the whole matter. Gross wrote, "Refrain from discussing to any third person any of your experiences or transactions with and your knowledge about Church Universal and Triumphant...or maligning the church."¹³ Gregory's lawyer later used this letter as the basis for the extortion claim.

Rather than refraining from discussing the church, Gregory contacted at least ten newspapers and the county building authorities with reports of problems at Camelot. At the time, Camelot was made up of the large, Spanish-style Gillette Mansion and associated outbuildings, which had been built in the 1930s, along with two mid-century seminary buildings constructed by the Claretians, a Catholic order which had previously owned the property. Church Universal and Triumphant (named with the intention of being the church for the New Age) had big plans to develop Camelot, as shown in a "master plan" booklet produced in 1978 by an architectural firm called Smith and Williams and an outside artist, hired before Gregory's involvement.¹⁴ But the county zoning authorities had thus far refused to approve any of the church's building or remodeling plans and the church had been getting by with temporary facilities, including circus tents and semi-permanent outdoor pavilions.

Gregory claimed that the tents put up for conferences were illegal, that walls had been removed from a Summit University

classroom, causing structural weakness, that people were sleeping forty or fifty to a room, and that the classrooms used by the church's Montessori International K-12 school (held in some of the older Gillette buildings) weren't up to earthquake codes. He asked the building department to shut down the church's winter conference.

The county authorities discovered that the church did have proper permits for the tents and refused to shut down the conference. The rest of the allegations were a mixture of truth and error. The Summit University classroom was fine. The wall that had been taken out was a non-bearing wall with a large, flimsy accordion door in it. But one of the elementary school classrooms did have to be moved out of the old Gillette carriage house. Gregory's allegations forced us to make this and other inconvenient shifts in our occupation of the already overused facilities.

Mother viewed Gregory's campaign as an act of war. Although she had promised not to sue him for the money he owed the church, she felt that his actions negated that promise. "He didn't do this because he was worried about the children at Camelot," she said. "If he was, he would have said something about these supposed violations when he was here." Mother told the board to go ahead and sue him for the remaining thirty-three thousand dollars, which they did in March 1981.

On May 11, Gregory filed a countersuit claiming fraud, intentional infliction of emotional distress, extortion, involuntary servitude, quantum meruit, and assault—alleging that Edward and several "ninjas" had threatened him when he tried to enter the gates of Camelot that April—and requesting over two-hundred-fifty million dollars in damages. As I read the complaint, I couldn't imagine that anyone would take it seriously. First of all, Edward was a conscientious, reserved person who would never have assaulted anyone, let alone Gregory, with whom the church was already involved in a lawsuit.

Secondly, besides Mother's guard Frank Toth, a martial arts instructor who was not at the front gate on that day, we didn't have anyone on staff who could remotely be classified as a "ninja." Frank had conducted a few months of martial arts classes up on a tennis court, but that had hardly been enough to turn any of the staff into warriors.

After filing the lawsuit, Gregory and his daughter Linda went on a tour of the country, interviewing and videoing ex-members of the church. The tour cost twenty thousand dollars, which he testified in court was his own money, casting doubt on his later claim to have been destitute after leaving the church in 1980.¹⁵

There was a personal component to Gregory's journey. He hoped to uncover evidence of my mother's first marriage. On the tour, Gregory interviewed my father's first family in Virginia. My father, Mark Prophet, had founded the church (as The Summit Lighthouse) in 1958 in Washington, D.C. I had known that my father had been married and had five children when he met my mother in 1961.

But Gregory somehow was aware that my mother had also been married at the time. Gregory also visited her parents, Hans and Fridy Wulf, in Red Bank, New Jersey, and, telling them that he was Mother's close friend, asked for the name of her first husband. He then used that name to look up the marriage license. When he returned, Gregory revealed this marriage to the press. My mother had never denied the marriage, but she had certainly not talked about it, allowing the church members and her family to believe that Mark had been her first husband. The fact of my mother's earlier marriage did not upset me as much as her secrecy. I wished I hadn't had to find out about it in the newspaper. Gregory's tactics did not endear him to our family.

The other "fact" that Gregory revealed to the press was his claim that the church owned a supply of weapons, including dozens

of AR-15 rifles (the civilian version of the M-16), which had been purchased in the early 1970s. I had heard this allegation before but thought it was just another lie made up by our enemies. I had never seen them. In fact, there were never any weapons in evidence at church functions.

Some of my mother's guards did carry concealed handguns at various times, in response to threats, some from among the thousands of letters she received annually, not only from church members but from people who read her books. Some readers were offended by her message—to the point of making credible violent threats. She was a controversial figure and there is no question that her claims to speak directly to founders of the major religions, and to hold various spiritual offices and titles, offended many people, religious or not.

I later learned that the weapons were connected to the prophetic, survivalist component of the church's teachings, which had been emphasized at various periods in the church's history. During the early 1970s, the most recent previous period of prophetic ferment, a group of staff men had bought some AR-15 rifles and other weapons and they had been kept on some land that had been purchased for the church's use near Missoula, Montana. The weapons, which were never used, were for defense against some possible future collapse of civilization. The weapons had been purchased legally—though illegal purchase of weapons would become an issue later, in 1989, when the church built fallout shelters in Montana. However, even these illegally purchased weapons were meant as a hedge against a predicted collapse of civilization, and were never used. Weapons were certainly not a common sight on church properties even in Montana, although some staff did use rifles to hunt wild animals.

The newspaper articles were not the end of Gregory's campaign. In November 1981, after the church bought the Montana ranch, he went to Montana, invited by Christian groups who

believed that the church was Satanic, and held public meetings, saying that the church was a dangerous cult that wanted to take over the county politically. Gregory's allegations fed Montanans' natural suspicion of their new and strange neighbors.

In the summer of 1982, Gregory was quoted in a Montana newspaper as saying that people were so worked up that a posse was ready to come after Mother and shoot up the church conference. This, along with some anonymous death threats, led Mother to start giving her lectures and dictations (messages from ascended masters) from behind a screen of bullet-proof glass. She eventually discontinued it but she considered Gregory to be her chief enemy and saw her war with him as a physical outcropping of the spiritual battle of good against evil that she waged every day.

Part of me didn't completely adopt this view. I listened carefully as the attorneys began their opening statements, wanting to know if there was any substance at all to Gregory's claims.



Gregory Mull c. 1979

Chapter 2: Competing Narratives

At 3:30 p.m. on February 10, 1986, Lawrence Levy stood up, facing the judge, clasping his hands behind him as he spoke. Levy was not a member of a large firm, nor did he appear very successful. He had been one of the only attorneys willing to take Gregory's case, which was, of course, on contingency.

Levy began with a summary of Gregory's life. At the heart of his argument was the claim that Gregory had been under coercive persuasion during his time in the church (he did not use the term "brainwashed"). He said: "My client...was recruited....They reeled him in like a hooked fish....Gregory...became ensnared by the deliberate manipulations and control of these defendants."¹⁶

Levy promised that the evidence would show that the church wanted only two things—Gregory's professional skills and his money. And that they conditioned him to give both under the threat of spiritual damnation. After agreeing to pay Gregory's expenses, Levy said, the church changed the rules and began "coercing" him to sign promissory notes. When he wouldn't turn over all his worldly possessions, they "kicked him out." Levy claimed that Gregory was destitute when he left the church, and that the fifty-five hundred-dollar check that he wrote at the June 1980 meeting was Gregory's last money. After he wrote it, he was reduced to eating from a Dumpster behind Vons grocery store.¹⁷

Levy also claimed that Mother and the church were responsible for Gregory Mull's health problems. He claimed that Mother had labeled Gregory the "Beast of Blasphemy" and "the Serpent," putting him in great fear since "his Biblical training and religious training taught him to believe that the beast and the serpent were evil to be sought out and destroyed." This fear was the cause of Gregory's "stroke-like incident," which eventually led to his degenerative neurological disease.¹⁸

So he's even trying to blame his health problems on us, I thought. When Levy finished, a gray wash covered the courtroom. The jurors seemed to be looking *through* my mother, even though she was facing them, trying to look subdued, wearing just two of the large rings she normally wore on every finger. I was shocked at the broad range of Levy's argument. After all that Gregory had done in his campaign against the church—traveling around the country, holding public meetings in Montana—he was saying that it was the church that had caused him stress.

The idea that Gregory had ever been in genuine fear for his physical safety was ridiculous, I thought. He knew that Mother would never hurt anybody physically or ask anybody to do so. Church members were constantly told that God was in charge of justice, and that they should handle differences by petitioning spiritual beings, primarily through the prayers known as decrees, about which there would be ample testimony. Decrees were alleged to be an instrument of hypnosis, leading to mind control and coercive persuasion. They were also supposed to have caused Gregory emotional distress, and the question of whether a jury should be asked to judge a church for its prayers is a pivotal part of the question of whether religion was improperly put on trial in the courtroom.

But all of this was left to come when the church's lawyer, Ken Klein, stepped up to the lectern. Klein, a foot shorter than Levy, was a member of a large, prominent law firm, and wore a well-tailored three-piece suit. His defense was simple. First, he said the evidence would show that beginning in 1974, Gregory volunteered many times to do architectural work for the church. He was finally invited to do so in January of 1979. Over the next ten months, he borrowed about thirty-eight thousand dollars from the church to pay for his expenses. "You will learn that he acknowledged on many occasions that the money he was being given was a loan."¹⁹

The evidence would show, Klein continued, “That Mr. Mull was his own man and was not brainwashed...” Levy interrupted and asked that the term *brainwash* not be used. He didn’t plan to use it, and claimed that there was a vast difference between “brainwashing” and the terms he intended to use, “undue influence” and “coercive persuasion.”²⁰

Klein concluded by saying: “The evidence...will prove that Mr. Mull’s claim of being coercively persuaded, manipulated, controlled was simply a way for him to avoid his responsibility to pay back the thirty-eight thousand dollars that the church had lent him and was also a way for him to justify in his own mind his failure to achieve the type of success that he had hoped to achieve through his membership with the church.”²¹

The atmosphere seemed to lift after his statement but I still felt unsettled. I knew that people often volunteered to work for the church and that there were different levels of staff. They ranged from unpaid volunteers (the lowest status, which Gregory was) to permanent and probationary staff, who had a higher spiritual status and received small stipends plus room and board. Even board members did not get more than five hundred dollars per month. I didn’t think Mother would have taken Gregory’s check if she had known it was his last money. Even so, I wanted to know more about what the deal actually was when Gregory came to Camelot.

After the opening statements, court adjourned for the day. As we walked out, I said to one of my friends, “What this is really about is whether people should be allowed to live the way we do at Camelot, or not. Can you have a monastic community where people work for next to nothing?”

The next day, Gregory took the stand, beginning testimony which his physical disabilities made agonizingly slow, lasting three days. In between all the stumbling and stopping, what became clear to me was that even based on Gregory’s letters and testimony alone,

Ken Klein's version of the facts stood up much better than did Lawrence Levy's. What kept the trial going for six weeks was the attempt to prove the coercive persuasion argument, to show that the church's Summit University program could cause somebody to be coercively persuaded (really a synonym for brainwashing, as discussed below), and the attempt to portray my mother as a dishonest and manipulative person.

Although Levy alleged that the promissory notes had been signed under coercive persuasion, he never questioned Gregory's signature, or suggested he had not himself written the numerous letters that were entered into evidence, and written them while living in his own home and working for himself. Those letters substantially agreed with Klein's version of the facts.

The first area of focus was the church's alleged use of high-pressure recruitment tactics. But even under questioning from Levy, they did not sound aggressive. Gregory told the jury that he found the church's teachings through a woman who attended a meditation group that he held in his home. She introduced him to some members of CUT, who taught him how to give the church prayers known as decrees. Gregory said he was interested in learning.

Levy then asked Gregory to talk about his religious background. He said he had been a Christian Scientist in his twenties and thirties and later joined a group that studied a book called *Treatise on White Magic*, by Djwal Kul. This book, although Levy didn't mention it, was channeled by Alice Bailey, a student of Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society—whose ideas had also led to our “ascended masters,” whom we also called “the saints of East and West.” Their teachings were a combination of Christian, Hindu and Buddhist ideas.

Djwal Kul was also acknowledged as a master in our church. Levy did not dwell on Gregory's spiritual life before he joined the church because he wanted to imply that Gregory had been nothing

more than a garden-variety Christian before he came in contact with CUT, which he would portray as entirely un-Christian. This fits in with the standard anti-cult narrative that cults prey on unsuspecting Christians. Next, Gregory told about the meditation group he had in his home during 1973 and 1974, describing it as a Christian group that studied Bible teachings. Levy took care to let Gregory stipulate that it did not study metaphysics, white magic or black magic, technically incorrect since Alice Bailey, author of the Djwal Kul books, claimed to teach “white magic,” and practices such as invocation and positive affirmation, which came from the American metaphysical tradition.

Gregory said that the member of his group who introduced him to the church was named Barbara, and that she was an attorney who worked for the government. He said that most of the people in his group did not like Elizabeth Clare Prophet’s teachings—they were too strict. But he liked them because they were strict.²² Barbara introduced him to a man named Rory Ingalls who had been the church’s group leader in San Francisco. Gregory said that Barbara and Rory took the initiative in coming to see him, but he wasn’t opposed to their coming. They taught him to decree. “They would seek me out. But I was interested.”²³ These also didn’t sound like heavy recruitment tactics to me.

Levy next began questioning Gregory about life at Summit University in Santa Barbara, which he attended in January 1975. Summit University was an intense program—decrees, lectures, lots of reading and paper writing. But was it brainwashing or coercive persuasion? It was during Levy’s questions about this time that I began to see the foundation of his argument.

Levy alleged that both the setting and the lifestyle as well as the decrees were part of a system that put people under mind control. He discussed the diet at Summit University, getting Gregory to testify that there was no protein served, other than beans and peanut butter, and that the fasting, together with a busy

schedule and little sleep, made him feel weak. Later, Gregory testified that though his schedule was busy, he “sometimes” got seven hours of sleep, and his recollection of the schedule did not add up.²⁴ I remembered plenty of eggs and dairy in our vegetarian diet of that period.

But much of the testimony focused on the church’s chanted prayers, the decrees. Gregory told Levy in a soft, childish tone, “I tended to like them [decrees]” and that “other times,” decrees “would make you so you were very passive and therefore you would accept everything.”²⁵ At another point, he called decrees “hypnotic because repetitious, constantly repetitious.”²⁶ He held onto the *s* in “repetitious,” a seemingly involuntary side-effect of his illness.*

Levy was trying to establish that Summit University students would agree with whatever Mother said after they had decreed. But Gregory’s feeble state hampered him. Levy asked, “Did you feel that after you heard whatever it was she had to say to you, that you would reject or accept whatever it was she was saying?”

Gregory: “It was usually accept or reject, correct.”²⁷ Levy had to rephrase the question and still did not get the answer he was looking for, which was that after decreeing, Gregory would do or accept anything Elizabeth Clare Prophet said. (As was later made clear by his letters, Gregory’s relationship with the church could not be characterized as one of passive acceptance, even during his earliest association.)

Next, Levy and Gregory talked about the years between 1975 and 1977, when Gregory lived in San Francisco and would sometimes take Mother shopping for antiques at the Merchandise

* A typical decree might involve repeating words like, “I am light, glowing light.” The shortest rhyming decree was: “I am a being of violet fire. I am the purity God desires.”

Mart with his pass, so that she could get a discount. He had also given her an expensive antique armoire that she had asked him for. Levy emphasized that Gregory continued to decree during this period, though he was living in his own home, theoretically maintaining Mother's control over him.

On the first evening after testimony, our family stayed in a hotel near the courthouse so that Ken and Edward could continue preparing. Among their piles of folders, there was a fat folder of Mull's correspondence with my mother, largely one-sided. In the beginning, he had been full of effusive praise for her.

I looked at the first letter. In large handwriting that measured more than an inch from the top of his risers to the bottom of his descenders, Gregory thanked Mother for the October conference, 1974: "So many many things with searching here and there have come together for me." He told her that he had problems on the plane from San Francisco but "The 'I AM' presence brought us in safely. I invoked out loud." The I AM Presence was supposed to be everyone's higher self, or personal presence of God, and there were many decrees directed to the Presence. I smiled as I thought of him, sitting on the plane, asking the I AM Presence out loud to fix the plane. What did the people sitting around him think? My mother had embarrassed me often enough by doing that every time we had plane trouble.

"Even in this first 1974 letter," I said to nobody in particular—Mother was on the phone and Edward and Ken were talking—"he's offering his services. He says it right here, 'I am an architect and have a wish to help you with your architectural needs in the future.'" As I flipped forward, it was obvious that Gregory had continued his effusive public and private support of the church almost until the end of his time there. In January 1980, Gregory wrote a letter to the editor of the *Thousand Oaks News Chronicle* in response to a series of negative articles, saying, "This is not a cult. There is no personality worship here."²⁸

But Gregory's letters did make it clear that he accepted Mother as an authority on ascended master teachings. In June 1975 he wrote complaining about another church member who had criticized him for using Mother's exorcism techniques on new members (these techniques involve sweeping a sword through the air near the person while giving decrees and prayers). He blamed the "opposition" and "criticism" of these members for recent muscle aches and a "backlash" of energy. He asked for her counsel.²⁹

On cross-examination, Klein got Gregory to admit that he hadn't always been fully compliant with the organization, although he did consider that he had been its "slave." On September 22, 1975, Gregory wrote a letter to Randall King, Mother's husband at the time, who also ran the church's photography studio in addition to other leadership roles. Gregory had complained about some photos that he had ordered from the church which had been damaged and which he had returned. Randall, telling him a refund check was on the way, had left him a voicemail claiming they must have been damaged in the mail, telling him he was immature not to wait for an explanation, and that if he continued, he would be taken off the church mailing list.

In his letter, Gregory claimed the quality of the photos was not good and that they were heat sensitive. He complained about a display of temper Randall had exhibited at Summit University. He wrote, "You may be able to get by with this with the staff being Mother's husband, but my higher self will not tolerate such behavior. I am not that masochistic that I would let you make me a slave under your domination and control....The Ascended Master teachings are so pure and high and I am hooked, but, not on your personal running of the organization."³⁰

He threatened to withdraw his support from the church but not from the masters:

I will not be made to feel unworthy by you, or controlled by you by fear that you will drop me from your lists....I can practice A.M. [ascended master] teachings without your organization....As of the day you so indiscreetly placed your hostility on my Dictaphone tape, I have withdrawn from all local activities and have so stated why.³¹

In the letter, Gregory sounded much more like the touchy, dramatic person I had known than the passive invalid in the courtroom. The tenor of all the letters was that although devoted to Mother and asking her for spiritual advice (and to do things like confirm his past lives as read to him by a psychic), he maintained his autonomy.

Gregory testified that after writing the September 22 letter, he still considered himself a church member, though “partially” separated.³² Following that letter, on September 30, 1975, Elizabeth Prophet wrote to Gregory, telling him that “you are welcome to partake of the masters’ teachings at the level of your own commitment.”³³ In other words, he could attend services without being a church member (this was a common lesser level of commitment). She did not pressure him to remain a church member, but he never formally resigned, either.

The Question of Volunteer or Paid Labor

Much of the trial was spent discussing what the arrangement had been when Gregory eventually did leave his home and move to Camelot in January of 1979 (at least on weekdays), beginning his work for the church, for which he was eventually paid more than thirty-seven thousand dollars. Unfortunately, there are gaps in the written evidence concerning these arrangements.

Although Gregory discusses them extensively in his letters, no letters exist from the church specifically outlining their agreement. However, Edward Francis and Monroe Shearer, church board members who interacted with him, also testified. Their testimony can be weighed against his letters and the testimony of Randall King, who by the time Gregory was on staff was no longer a board member, though he did attend some meetings.

Many of Gregory's letters were entered into evidence but were not read into the trial transcript and were not available to accompany the transcript as it was published on the Internet in the 1990s (on the now inactive factsource.com). Hence those who have read the transcript may have missed some of the background provided by the letters. Neither Gregory nor Levy ever claimed that he did not write the letters—simply that he had been under coercive persuasion when he wrote them.

The letters are, therefore, of interest to those wishing to test theories of coercive persuasion. They do give ample evidence of both personal autonomy and attempts at negotiation. The central point of the letters was that Gregory wanted to volunteer for the church in exchange for the church loaning him money to meet his expenses, and he promised on numerous occasions to pay back that money once he had sold his home, on which he planned to tithe (give ten percent) of the proceeds, which he would have been required to do as a church member.

Here is what the letters say about the question of his compensation: In February of 1979, ten months before he signed any notes, Gregory made it clear the money was a loan. “When Monroe called me and asked me to come and do architecture at Camelot on my terms, I was pleased and grateful and wanted to make it as easy as possible for all of us. I said I could only come at once if my monthly bills were met, which runs about \$2,000 per month.”³⁴

In spite of his use of the words “on my terms,” which he repeated often at the trial, his letter went on to describe the payments he was receiving as loans. He said he planned to sell his house in June and promised, “I will give you 10 percent of all profit I make from the sale of my property, but will also pay over and above that sum if necessary to see you are paid back in full for all monies paid to me to date of receiving sale money, unless the home could not be sold for some reason.”³⁵ In the same letter, he stated that after the home had sold, he would continue to work for the church for a requested salary of seven-hundred dollars per month. He also sketched out a plan for helping to support the church’s architecture department in the future by taking on “outside work,” i.e., non-church clients.

A March 1979 letter seems to support the characterization of the money as a loan: “Beloved Mother and the Board of Directors: Thank you for your loan assistance making it possible for me to be here.”³⁶ However, in court, he testified that though he had referred to it as a loan, “it never was a loan. It was payment of expenses no matter what it was called.”³⁷ He later stated that he had signed the promissory notes “out of fear”³⁸ and that he “never intended to pay them back.”³⁹ He felt that the terms had been changed. Klein asked him why he did not leave in March 1979 once he realized the terms had changed. He responded that he wanted to design the Camelot community, which he and Levy persisted in calling the “new Jerusalem,”⁴⁰ though that was never its name.

In late April 1980, after selling his house, Gregory wrote a letter to the church, which ran six single-spaced pages, and seemed to be an attempt to work out some kind of deal since he had gotten less for his house than he thought he would. He made a crucial proposal: “I am prepared to give you \$10,000 as my total payment to you but all commitments in the past will have to be waived.”⁴¹

As we continue to review the trial testimony, it will become apparent that Gregory’s characterization of the money as a loan is supported by most of the other testimony, with the exception of Randall King. His letters paint an inconsistent picture of his finances, his expenses jumping suddenly from two thousand to four thousand dollars per month. But overall, the theme is negotiation, not servility—but by 1980, a tone of desperation was creeping in.

Gregory had hoped to be the lead architect on the Camelot community. However, by 1980, the building plans were being blocked by county zoning authorities and the threat of eminent domain loomed over Camelot, a threat he acknowledged in his April 1980 letter to “Beloved Mother.” “We did not know of ‘eminent domain’ and I did not know it would take so long to sell my home so I burned my bridges behind me.”⁴² Although Levy tried to imply that the church knew in 1979 that development could not take place, before inviting Gregory to come to Camelot, and to suggest that this supported the cause of action for fraud, evidence suggests that this was in fact not the case.

Between 1979 and 1980, two threats arose, one from the California Coastal Commission, which involved zoning, and could have precluded some or all development, and the other, which was from the federal government, which was said to be considering the property for the headquarters of a new national park, which it planned to obtain through forcing the church to sell by the government power of eminent domain.⁴³

In the lawsuit, Gregory made his case that he felt he had not been adequately compensated for the work he performed during his fifteen months at Camelot, in support of his claim for “quantum meruit.” His suit asked for 1.5 million dollars in architecture fees. Since Gregory had expected, when he came to Camelot, to be the architect of the entire “New Jerusalem,” in Levy’s words, and the prospective cost of the project was thirty-three million dollars, Gregory testified that “if I completed the project, at the outside I would charge at least a million-and-a-half to two million fee for architectural design and renderings.”⁴⁴

I thought yes, but it wasn’t built. How could he be asking to be paid as if it *had* been? At most, Gregory could have asked for the work he did do during those fifteen months to be paid at his professional rate, offsetting the loan. But that option was never brought up.

Klein later presented evidence that Gregory’s work while at Camelot had consisted of designing a chapel known as the “Will of God focus,” which was built on the church’s Ashram property in downtown Los Angeles, together with very preliminary drawings for a school building, and an auditorium. A few remodeling projects were completed, but in general his drawings did not meet with approval from either Mother or the board, something which he admitted “frustrated” him.⁴⁵

Klein also presented Gregory’s tax returns for the four years preceding his 1979 move, which showed his business had not been very successful, grossing no more than twenty-five thousand dollars per year, and even netting a loss during one year. (Gregory had initially recalled during testimony that the gross was sixty thousand dollars.)⁴⁶

Gregory’s April 1980 letter, written after he had sold his house and closed down his San Francisco office, contained a variety of proposals, among them that he continue to work part-time in

exchange for his expenses being met, and presenting fees far lower than the million dollars he would later request:

After two years I will be in a better position to serve the Ascended Masters but I will have some time now I can give to Camelot when my jobs are not incoming from the outside work. If you can pay me \$945.62 a month expenses I will serve you full time with Architecture....Most architects would charge you 7% commission. With thirty million dollars of buildings it would cost you over two million dollars for architectural fees. My expenses would be less than \$12,000 per year and in three years 30 million dollars of architectural work could be designed which would only cost less than \$36,000 for an architect.⁴⁷

In other words, he was offering to design the entire Camelot community for thirty-six thousand dollars. But by May 1981, when he filed his lawsuit, Gregory's calculus had changed. He then felt that he should be paid as if the entire Camelot project had been built. A crucial turning point in the relationship between Gregory and the church is the meeting held with Mother, Monroe Shearer and Edward Francis in June 1980, which will be reviewed later in this document.

Chapter 3: The Secrets of the Confessional

As Gregory's testimony moved through his various causes of action, inevitably, sensitive and personal topics arose. The cause of action for "breach of confidential relationship," which turned on his claim that my mother had divulged the contents of a "clearance" letter he had written at Summit University, which was also called a "confession letter" during the trial, though the two terms were not equivalent in church terminology. Confession was part of the Summit University experience and was supposed to be a liberation from the past, though as seen by church opponents, it was part of the system of manipulation and control. In any case, the handling of the letter became an important topic, testified on by numerous witnesses.

Levy had added this cause of action to the lawsuit after an incident that happened at one of Gregory's public meetings in Montana in late 1981. At the meeting, Gregory claimed that the staff were mistreated and didn't get salaries. One staff member in attendance, a woman named Peggy Keathley who had known Gregory at Summit University, stood up. An imposing woman with three grown children who had managed a lodge in Alaska, she corrected Gregory, saying that she did get a salary. According to Gregory's testimony, she didn't stop there. "Peggy...said I was just an impotent homosexual, and hated the guru."⁴⁸

Levy told the jury that this was a breach of Gregory's confidential relationship with Mother since this information could only have come from a letter he had written to Mother back in 1975. In the letter, according to Gregory, he had described some early homosexual experiences and had "followed a homosexual path," as Levy put it, in his "teenage [years] and twenties mainly." After becoming associated with the church, he had *never* discussed his "sexual past" with "anyone at the church" except in the confession letter he wrote to Mother while he was at Summit University.⁴⁹

Writing “clearance” letters was a ritual conducted at Summit University at the end of every quarter. The letters were supposed to contain a list of all the bad-karma-making acts a person had committed in the past, and it was supposed to be read only by Mother, who would give “clearance” decrees, asking for all negative energy associated with it to be “transmuted,” or dissolved. After that, the letters were to be burned. Gregory’s conclusion was that the only way that Peggy could have learned this information was if Mother read the letter and told somebody about it, or if the letters had not been burned as promised.

The church attitude towards homosexuality was fairly standard for esoteric groups of its time, conditioned not only by the Bible but by fundamentalist Hindu proscriptions against its practice. In Mother’s parlance, homosexuality was a “misuse” of the sacred fire, the energy of the life force, and not permitted for church members. However, people could hold a lesser level of membership as “Keepers of the Flame” and attend conferences without any one quizzing them on their sexuality. Mother herself was always polite and cordial to the gays she interacted with professionally. But people who formally joined the church or the staff were supposed to give up their practice. Nobody could miss the teaching that homosexuality was one of the sins that had previously led to the destruction of ancient civilizations, and was likely to doom our own!

There were a number of “recovered” gays and lesbians on staff, and since many of the staff were single and celibate, they blended right in. Some previously gay staff ended up entering a heterosexual marriage; others eventually returned to their former lifestyles after leaving staff and the church.*

* In the mid-1990s, I changed my views on homosexuality, which I do not believe can or should be “cured.” However, I think it is important to maintain

On cross-examination, Klein addressed Gregory's claim that only Mother had known of his past. He first asked Gregory if he could name anyone who saw the letter after it was supposed to have been burned. He couldn't. Then he asked him if he could remember a time when anyone from the church threatened him with revealing its contents or asked him to do something to prevent them from being revealed. He couldn't.

To effectively counter the claim, Klein believed he must show that Gregory himself told other people the secrets that he was alleging he put only in his letter. Klein asked him if he had ever discussed his homosexuality with any of several witnesses. They would later testify that he told them he had been homosexual before entering the church but that the church had "cured" him. His former wife, Kathleen, testified that she had been aware of his homosexual past and had shared that information with a female church member.⁵⁰ His own words, therefore, represented another means by which Peggy Keathley could have known of his earlier homosexual experiences when she stood up in the Livingston meeting. A former teaching assistant from Summit University also testified that she had seen the confession letters burned after the clearance session during Gregory's quarter.⁵¹

Although I never spoke to Peggy about the incident, I am quite sure that her outburst was her own idea, that my mother did not tell or encourage the staff to launch personal or public attacks against Gregory, and that feelings against Gregory were running quite high among staff at the time, as he was seen as a block to the church's plans to develop a community and improved living conditions for everyone.

some historical perspective on the church's teachings, which were shared by many religions at the time.

As far as whether my mother had mishandled Gregory's Summit University confession letter, my thoughts ran something like this. I had no doubt that Gregory's letter was in fact burned after Summit University. But a case could be made that my mother had not always appropriately handled private letters from followers. There was a strong culture within the church of writing letters—of confession, for advice, “clearance,” supplication and petition—either to Mother or to the ascended masters. The ones written to masters were meant to be burned, which was considered to be a way of “sending” the requests to other realms, and also of helping to transform or “transmute” the events written in them. This process was an important part of the religious beliefs of the church and had come from earlier ascended master groups.

However, Mother also received a large variety of correspondence under varying circumstances, which included confession letters addressed to her, requesting a penance and response. Clearance letters written to her at the end of Summit University were meant to be burned and I had often seen this taking place in outdoor barrels the church maintained for the purpose. People seemed to appreciate this ritual—it was a symbol of the spiritual transformation they thought they were undergoing. But after Summit University, confession was a different matter. They often wrote her other letters with personal details, sometimes marked “confession.” She spent hours per week assigning penances. Many of our members were former Catholics, and they really seemed to get something out of confession.

But Levy used Mother's loose handling of these other non-clearance letters to cloud the waters. It was true that Mother wasn't always as careful as she should have been about confession letters. She received thousands of letters, and employed a staff of four or five secretaries to open and occasionally summarize them.

Some required official church discipline or counselling. She often shared serious cases with close staff, usually with the intent

that they would “share her burdens” by praying about problems revealed in letters. After all, everyone in the church believed that “negative energy” could be harmful if not handled effectively. Much of what church members did with their time was think about dissolving negative thought patterns.

But there was some looseness around the handling of Mother’s private correspondence, especially around close staff. Randall King later testified that Mother used to turn some confession letters over to board members, who would sit around and laugh at “the juicy parts,” as Levy put it. I didn’t doubt that happened on occasion, and Randall was probably one of those who laughed, moreso than Mother. Some of these letters were likely also ordinary correspondence, of which Mother’s was filled with outlandish questions about past lives and spiritual practices.

While Mother did not tend to ridicule her sincere followers, and she had never, to my knowledge, threatened anybody with revealing the contents of their confession letters, her habit of sharing them with friends and family members in order to, as she saw it, deal with “karmic situations,” could be seen as manipulative and unethical.* She also did seem to need to talk about the letters at times, which was done with close staff (quasi-clergy) in the guise of preparing to “transmute” what was in them.

In spite of the loose handling of some letters, I still didn’t think Gregory’s claim held much water. It made more sense to me

* It is difficult to excuse Mother’s practice of occasionally also sharing information from a confession letter with a friend or relative of the confessor with the purpose of interfering in intimate relationships, particularly among her family and close staff. The intent was to promote spiritual growth, but it also often coincided with increasing her own power in the person’s life. This serious ethical violation can perhaps explained in light of her lack of pastoral training and the sheer volume of thousands of letters she handled in a wide-ranging thirty-year ministry, of which a small fraction were mishandled.

that the leak would have come through Gregory himself. From his correspondence, he did not appear to be a particularly private person. In a 1975 letter that was not marked “confidential” and that he had to know Mother’s secretaries would see, he asked all kinds of personal questions. Should he have gotten a vasectomy? Were his past-life recollections valid? Was he really one of the thieves who was crucified with Christ? Was he Michelangelo in a past life?⁵²

Besides, many people who knew Gregory thought he looked “gay” just because he seemed to fit the current stereotype by his dress and mannerisms. It didn’t have to come from a confession letter. Taken in total, his own letters and testimony as well as the testimony of his ex-wife Kathleen suggest that he was conflicted about his sexuality and looked to the church to help him achieve stability or redemption. Believing the church’s teachings on homosexuality and the dangers of extramarital sex no doubt increased his conflict, especially if he was homosexual or bisexual by nature. Kathleen testified that he had not been faithful to her during their long-term sexual relationship and brief marriage, even during his church affiliation.⁵³

In his closing argument, Klein presented his theories about the facts behind Gregory’s claim for “breach of confidential relationship.” He commented: “not one single witness has testified that they ever saw Mr. Mull’s clearance letter.”⁵⁴ He offered an alternate theory of how some church members might have gotten the idea that Gregory had been gay, saying:

The argument was made by Mr. Levy that you know Mr. Mull wouldn’t have done this because he wouldn’t go around telling people he was a homosexual....But if you look at the testimony by the witnesses...they had one similarity. That Mr. Mull didn’t say he *was* a homosexual. He said he *had been* a homosexual and was cured by the teachings. So it is no longer a statement where someone is confessing a terrible sin. It is a statement where Mr. Mull,

the true believer who wants to tell everybody how great this religion is, is telling everybody, “This religion is so terrific that it cured me of being a homosexual.”⁵⁵

This argument made sense to me in that it was a part of church culture during the 1970s for people to brag about how “bad” they had been before joining, usually in the context of sex, drugs and rock ’n’ roll. Gregory’s sexuality was just one of the personal and sensitive topics to be raised by both sides during the trial, not all of which are dealt with in this book, but which remain, I imagine, a painful memory for all those who participated.

Chapter 4: Divorce, Assault, and Coercion

Gregory's next claim, "intentional infliction of emotional distress," was primarily based on the allegation that Mother forced him to divorce his wife Kathleen (who was now remarried and with the last name of Mueller). Gregory and Kathleen had been dating on and off for eight years before Gregory first enrolled in Summit University. She was a single mother with two daughters enrolled in the church's school. It was common for Mother to encourage people in long-term relationships to marry when they joined the church or attended Summit University.

Gregory and Kathleen were married at the end of 1977 but didn't live together immediately. Kathleen was on staff at Camelot but Gregory still had his business in San Francisco. In fact, one reason why he wanted to move to Camelot was to be near her. But their marriage was not easy. Kathleen complained that Gregory would keep her up at night, criticizing her, and that she was also under pressure from long work hours as Mother's secretary. Mother often awoke Kathleen at night to work,⁵⁶ and Kathleen also began complaining about Mother to Gregory.

Mother's attitude towards "criticism" was that it "opened the door" for negative energy, and should be reported. This led to a strained culture among the approximately five-hundred people who made up the church headquarters staff at the time. Family members and friends often reported on each other. Loyalty to the guru was supposed to trump loyalty to a spouse. Gregory reported Kathleen to Mother, who decided she had to leave immediately. That had been the tradition on staff as begun by the church's founder, Mark Prophet. The idea was, if you're going to go, go quickly, so that your negative thoughts won't attract bad energy to the community. (Ideas about good and bad "energy" affected most aspects of life.)

Rather than go with Kathleen, Gregory decided to stay at Camelot. In a letter, he expressed relief: “I spent twelve miserable years knowing Kathleen. I want it to end....I really tried my best but to continue would be a waste of valuable time. I thank El Morya often for the dispensation that I do not have to continue the marriage....I know Kathleen hates me...May I start divorce proceedings?”⁵⁷ He also expressed concern that he divorce Kathleen quickly before she ran up bills that he would have to cover.

He testified that Mother told him at that time that he had El Morya’s permission to divorce Kathleen and that even though he later told her that it was his own decision, it wasn’t. “Dear Kathleen, I want it clearly understood once and for all that I, of my own free will, have decided to dissolve our marriage.”⁵⁸ I had to admit that asking a guru for permission to divorce sounded like a gross intrusion of a religious figure into private life. On the other hand, the position of the Christian church itself has changed greatly over time—and the Roman Catholic church has had its own long history of not sanctioning divorce. Although asking one’s spiritual teacher permission to divorce sounds strange in the twentieth century, it is certainly not unheard of.

In any case, the testimony differed from the letters on whether Gregory had been ordered to divorce Kathleen or had made the decision independently. By November of 1980, after leaving Camelot, he had changed his mind, writing to Mother as “Mrs. Prophet”:

I thought I was choosing between a wife and God, but my true decision was between two women, you and her, and I chose the wrong woman. I consequently lost a wife whom I still love....I take full responsibility for Kathleen leaving me....I have apologized sincerely....It was your manipulations that was the first cause.⁵⁹

The real question to be determined during the trial was whether Gregory's post-church view of his life was more accurate than the one he had held while he was inside.

* * *

As the trial continued, I and the other members of the church's side settled into a routine. We would spend every evening in prayer, which continued also in the car on the way to and from the courthouse. We were convinced that God was on our side and that truth would prevail.

Mother did often seem frustrated at not being able to give her version of events. One morning, I was combing my hair in the courthouse restroom when the only white, non-retired member of the jury walked in. Her name was Carole Snow and I had noticed her the first day when she said she was a therapist who worked as a teacher at a nearby college. She was tall, thin and alert, although her high-necked, print dress seemed dowdy. Mother came out of the stall and said "Hi" to her, smiling her engaging smile, which a reporter had once called "slightly buck-toothed."

"Hi," Carole smiled back.

"Isn't it great about Cory Aquino?" said Mother, picking her hair in the mirror. Aquino was in the middle of her dramatic sweep to power in the Philippines.

"Yes, it is," Carole said.

Later, Mother told Ken about the interchange and he warned her not to say anything to the jurors at all, not even normal pleasantries. Mother hadn't realized that. As we walked back into court, she had a set look on her face. She was used to being able to charm people with her voice and enthusiasm. Now all she could do was to look at the twelve people who controlled her fate across a wooden barrier, having no idea what was going on in their heads.

So we continued our “clearance” work at lunch and during breaks, decreeing and praying about the trial under our breath, in corners and at the end of hallways. We focused our minds on all the participants, trying to “clear” bad energy that might cause them to act against us. This process gave Mother some satisfaction: she was doing something on the “inner.” Clearance was something she often practiced in private, but also did in church, from the main altar, with church members participating. Sometimes she would pray with her eyes closed. At other times, she would wave a sword through the air, attacking invisible evil forces. It was a cathartic form of exorcism that she had copied from earlier esoteric groups, and which had taken on a more important role in church ritual in recent years.

* * *

The next cause of action to be discussed was assault. Was Gregory assaulted at the gates of the church’s Camelot headquarters as he claimed when he showed up for the square dance on April 19, 1981? The square dance had been advertised as being open to the public, and he had arrived with his daughter, a newspaper reporter and the parents of a church member, William Malek, who had already undergone an attempted deprogramming and was at that time choosing not to see his parents.*

Camelot was entered by way of a set of always-opened wrought-iron gates at one end of a long driveway, lined with eucalyptus trees. Halfway down the drive was a single unarmed staff

* Deprogramming is a coercive process by which friends and relatives of a member of a group attempt to reverse its purported indoctrination techniques. Deprogrammings are almost always coerced, with the individual confined and prevented from leaving or using the telephone. This controversial practice is illegal in the United States but continues to be condoned or tacitly permitted in other nations. Nevertheless, it short-circuits the normal process by which individuals leave groups and is today generally considered to be a harmful practice in the psychiatric community.

attendant, who sat in a small kiosk from which he could call or radio. When Gregory and his party arrived, walking down the driveway, the attendant phoned for instructions and was told to have the group wait until Edward Francis arrived. After a discussion, which became heated at times, the group left.

Gregory testified that he was met by a row of between ten and twenty “judo experts” who either lined one side of the road or blocked his way, putting him in “extreme fear of being attacked.”⁶⁰ Under Klein’s questioning, Gregory admitted that nothing stopped him from leaving other than that he wanted to go in. He did say that Edward threatened him physically by raising his voice and calling him deranged. But Gregory had already given a different statement. Klein read from his deposition, taken in 1985: “Did Ed Francis physically threaten you or act in a physically threatening manner towards you?”

Gregory: “No.”⁶¹

Later, Levy had Gregory clarify that his mind was not clear when he gave the deposition due to his recent stroke-like incident (1984) and that it was more clear during the trial.

I thought about the question of assault. The thing that convinced me that Edward never assaulted Gregory—that is, put him in fear of imminent bodily harm—was that Bob Pool, a reporter who was by no means friendly to the church, was present, and took pictures of Edward and Gregory talking. One of them was published in the *Las Virgenes Enterprise*, a newspaper which at the time was also not favorable to the church. There were a few staff men who stood nearby to back Edward up, including a former radio host who was then serving as the church’s public relations director, but they didn’t appear to be doing anything threatening other than standing there.

If Edward had raised his hand to threaten Gregory, or if twelve ninjas had lined up at the gate and put him in fear of his life, then certainly, Bob Pool would have taken pictures of them and they would have been used as evidence. But they were not.*

The assault charge rather seemed to be part of Levy's strategy to throw everything at 'em, true or not, relevant or not, and see what sticks, especially if it supports popular cult stereotypes.† Church "security," especially at Camelot, was pretty ad-hoc and low key, with the gate attendant primarily acting to direct deliveries, and unable to stop anyone who really wanted to get in. My mother did usually have bodyguards, sometimes armed. More on weapons and security later.

As the testimony continued, Levy turned to some of the other evidence that he was using to support the claim of intentional infliction of emotional distress. Part of the evidence was that Gregory claimed to have been harassed after he left the church. I knew that this would play into the cult stereotype because some groups did harass ex-members, but we had never done so. Usually when people left, that was it, other than sometimes telling church

* Under California civil law, assault is both a criminal and civil offense. No criminal charges were ever brought in the matter. Under civil law, "assault" consists of five elements, which must all be proven: 1) Defendant intended to cause harmful or offensive conduct. 2) Plaintiff reasonably believed he/she was about to be touched in a harmful or offensive manner (or defendant threatened same), 3) Plaintiff did not consent to defendant's conduct. 4) Plaintiff was harmed. 5) Defendant's conduct was a substantial factor in causing plaintiff harm. These are taken from the California Civil Jury Instructions of 2017. Other than Gregory's testimony of his fear, the transcript does not appear to contain other evidence demonstrating these elements, particularly Edward's intent.

† For more on the "cult" stereotype, see pp. 229-30 of "Deconstructing the Scientology 'Monster' of Popular Imagination," by Erin Prophet, pp. 227-248 in *Handbook of Scientology*, edited by James Lewis and Kjersti Hellesoy, Leiden: Brill (2017).

members not to talk to them, which could be traumatic in and of itself, as will be discussed later.

In any case, Gregory told the court that after he left the church, “My car was bombed, lights were turned off outside the building. I received harassing phone calls 24 hours a day.”⁶² He also said that somebody had injected oil into the seat of his car.⁶³ I looked around, wondering if we looked to the jury like the kind of people who would do things like that.

On cross-examination, Klein asked Gregory if it was true that a mechanic told him that he might have run over a bottle when he thought his car was bombed. He answered “yes.” The jurors, including Carole, were dutifully taking notes. Klein asked Gregory if he had any personal knowledge other than suspicion that would lead him to believe the church was responsible for the car incident. He didn’t, but he suspected it because “I didn’t have any other enemies except the cult.”⁶⁴

Another bit of information that had come to Gregory and which he claimed had caused him to live in fear was that he had heard that he had been labelled the Beast of Blasphemy and the Serpent. He told the court, “I was afraid for my life, that somebody would come and kill me.”⁶⁵

I knew where this Beast of Blasphemy idea came from. In 1983, Mother had taken a dictation from Jesus that predicted the binding of the Beast of Blasphemy (from the Book of Revelation) and said that so-called “fallen ones,” i.e. incarnated fallen angels, would be cast into a Biblically inspired “lake of sacred fire” after they died. In other words, their souls would not be able to reincarnate.

The prediction was a part of my mother’s complex theology of evil, which had indeed begun to focus more on living individuals rather than invisible forces in recent years. This shift coincided with

the emergence of numerous former staff members who had begun making public statements against her. She taught that fallen angels could be incarnated in human bodies and commit evil acts, but that God would provide their “judgment” after death. The dictation about the Beast of Blasphemy did not specifically name Gregory. Nor did she actually call him the Beast of Blasphemy. But privately, as she often did for close staff, she provided context to the dictation and said that Gregory was the *mouthpiece* of this beast. In other words, currently acting as its instrument on earth.

But Levy’s assertion that Gregory knew from the church’s teachings that this beast was to be sought out and destroyed was flat wrong. As I demonstrated to myself when the dictations were computerized and I searched them, the 1983 dictation was the first ever to mention the Beast of Blasphemy, and didn’t direct that it was to be destroyed. Mother never said that Gregory was “the Serpent,” either, but she did tell people that he was one of a group of fallen angels known as “serpents” who were in human bodies. More on serpents later. But none of this in any way contravened the long-time church culture of non-violence towards enemies, which was carried out through its entire history. But perhaps Gregory’s claim sounded plausible, given the prevalence of stereotypical attitudes towards “cults.” And I was sure that it must have been stressful to him to learn that he was the topic of decrees being given by people he had formerly considered friends.

The emotional distress claim was also connected with Gregory’s medical condition. Later in the trial, Gregory’s cardiologist, Hosein Afshar, testified that stress could have been a factor in the 1984 stroke-like incident that preceded the onset of his multiple sclerosis. However, Dr. Afshar also said that according to his notes, when he asked Gregory, after the 1984 incident, to list the causes of his stress, Gregory *initially did not mention the church*. The church only came up later as a cause of stress.⁶⁶ Opinions may vary as to whether it was the church experience itself or Gregory’s now five-year battle against the church which had caused the most stress.

I do accept, on the other hand, that the stress was real, and heard that Gregory went so far as to install a chain link fence over a welded steel frame on the balcony of his condominium to prevent “cult” members from entering, and adopted contact lenses in an effort at disguise.

But after Klein finished cross-examining Gregory, I couldn’t imagine that a jury could find against the church or award him any part of the two-hundred-fifty million dollars he was asking for. Based on Gregory’s own testimony, almost all of his causes of action stood on flimsy grounds. The financial damage he had sustained as a result of his involvement seemed primarily connected to his decision to relocate to Los Angeles.

His donations to the church had not been large, totaling just over thirteen hundred dollars,⁶⁷ although he had chosen to spend money going to Summit University and conferences, but the fees were hardly exorbitant. He had spent perhaps ten thousand dollars over seven years. This included money had had voluntarily spent sponsoring friends to attend Summit University. All of these he mentions in his letters. But there was the question of coercive persuasion. How much would that factor into the jury’s decision?

Levy had a bang-up finish prepared for Gregory’s testimony. Since decrees were supposed to be the means by which Mother gained control over Gregory, Levy insisted to the judge that he had to bring them into the courtroom. The tape he played was one of the fastest available to the public, with decrees to a being called Astrea. Levy started the tape in the middle of the decree and a high-pitched hum filled the room, no doubt sounding eerie, sinister and even hypnotic. I squirmed. Even though I liked to give Astreas, they seemed out of place here. After about five minutes, Levy turned it off.

“The rest of the tape is more of the same?” asked Judge Margolis.

“Yes,” he said.

Edward and Ken Klein were incensed at the judge for allowing the tape to be played. He was effectively allowing our religion to be put on trial, Klein said, adding that it might give us good cause for having a negative verdict overturned on appeal. If the church put on evidence about the decrees themselves, or played any of the softer or slower ones, it might risk losing this option.

Decrees and their Role in the Trial

Every day after court, we left the physical battle and joined the spiritual battle in the Chapel of the Holy Grail at Camelot, about an hour away, depending on traffic. The several hundred members of the staff were required to decree whenever court was in session, with only those who were needed to prepare food or mailings exempted.

Summit University students, even students in the church’s Montessori International private high school (fourteen-year-old Tatiana was in eleventh grade) decreed for long periods. Mother didn’t want us to let down our guard for an instant. Even though she kept up her incurable optimist face, we knew that verdicts in the tens of millions of dollars had been issued recently against other new religions, also called minority religions, and popularly known as “cults,” such as the Hare Krishnas. That was what Gregory and his team were hoping for. Their goal was to destroy the church.

During the decree sessions, pictures of Gregory, Randall King and their lawyers were flashed on a large screen at the front of the chapel. We didn’t have pictures of the jurors but the staff also decreed about them and all evil forces attempting to influence them. Mother often used images to focus decrees, and had previously showed pictures of world events during decree sessions. But this was the first time she had used it in a large group setting to focus on enemies of the church.

Given the amount of testimony about decrees at the trial, and the debate about whether they were given “for,” “against,” or “about” a person, and whether the target was the individual or the evil forces associated with him or her, this is an appropriate place for some background on decrees. Decrees were part of a complex set of practices taught by the church under the term “The Science of the Spoken Word.” They included not only prayers for judgment and protection, but also love, wisdom, healing, peace and guidance. There were hundreds of decrees in the church’s official prayer book, along with hundreds of hymns, songs and mantras incorporated from Christian traditions (usually with language modifications) and Eastern religion. “Inserts” were written to be incorporated into the repetitive, rhyming decrees, and often included lists of undesirable conditions to be neutralized, such as war or terrorism. Decrees were given every day—usually for hours at a time, and often included requests for God to handle “enemies” and difficult people.

The decree sessions about the trial, as well as many of the decrees done by the church, incorporated military metaphors. We began most decree sessions by invoking blue protection energy for ourselves, asking Archangel Michael to stop all bad energy directed at us, Mother or the community. With our spiritual shields up, we went on the offensive and asked the angels to “bind” and drop “blue lightning bombs” on the people we thought were sending the energy. Further decrees might call for the “judgment” of those we decreed about.

Bad as these images sound, it is worth remembering that people were encouraged to use this same kind of imagery when decreeing against their own bad habits, fears, and past karma. For example, one of the oldest decrees calls for “transcendent blue lightning” to “flash through *my* soul” (emphasis added). Bad energy or karma was imagined as a thick substance like wood or tar, which had to be burned away.

Before we started a decree, we would often use an invocation that until recently, Mother used only in her private clearance work. It was written by someone in the 1930s I AM activity, and it went: “Smash! Blast! Annihilate! Shatter! Dissolve! and Consume!” Afterwards, one would specify an energy source. I would add, “all energy coming through King and Mull.” As I decreed, I visualized their faces dissolving into an explosion of white or blue light. In spite of the violence of the images, I did not think my decrees could actually hurt these people. The intent was that they be neutralized so they couldn’t hurt us spiritually, and that they would stop attacking us.

Later, former members would talk about this decree and say it was used to annihilate anyone you wanted to get rid of. Of course, none of them actually were annihilated, but Gregory did become ill. It was more than twenty years before I publicly disavowed this type of prayer and the tradition it could ultimately be traced back to. The practice of decrees originated in a religious movement known as New Thought and mind cure movements, primarily in the United States. But parallels can be found in scripture. For example, among the imprecatory Psalms is number 35, which reads in part:

Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me! Take hold of shield and buckler, and rise up to help me! Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers....Let them be put to shame and dishonour who seek after my life. Let them be turned back and confounded who devise evil against me.⁶⁸

Mother often read the Bible to her congregation and applied its descriptions of enemies to her own. Knowing her habits, it didn’t take long before Randall (and Gregory and others) got the idea that people at Camelot were decreeing “on” or “against” them, even invoking “judgment” on them. “Judgment” involved a special decree known as a “judgment call,” which basically requested that a person’s karma be accelerated so that they would be unable to

continue whatever bad thing—mental or physical—it was they were doing against the one making the call. It didn't matter that it was all supposed to be done with love. An almost inevitable side effect of this type of prayer work was the end of communication between the two parties.

How did I feel about doing “judgment” decrees on people I had known well, including my former stepfather? I would have done a judgment decree on myself, since judgment was only supposed to send back a person's own creation, like a cosmic “return to sender.” At the time, I thought that Randall deserved to get all of his karma back at once. I was angry (righteously indignant, as we euphemistically called our own anger) that he would attack my mother publicly.

Mother believed that all of the people on the other side of the courtroom aisle were fallen angels who had turned against God many lifetimes ago. This was to be their final incarnation. At the end of this life, they would go through a kind of soul extinguishment called the second death.

She wouldn't do anything to hasten their deaths but she thought that if we sent enough of their karma back to them, it would neutralize their attacks and distract them. Most of us believed that Gregory's multiple sclerosis was caused by his own karma. It's a good thing he didn't know, I thought with a suppressed smile, about the time she sent a carload of staff over to sit outside of his condominium and give “decrees.”

Decrees could sound sinister to outsiders, especially at the rapid pace used by veteran church members, which was usually reserved for private services and decree sessions. The decrees given outside his condominium were to neutralize his energy and none of the people giving them would have done (or did do) anything to harm him, but the practice sounds creepy.

Detractors had expressed concerns about my mother's practice of compiling lists of names of "enemies," or people sending "negative energy," which were "inserted" into decrees. They worried that, however committed the church was to nonviolence, what would happen if a rogue member took it into his or her head to physically attack Gregory or other enemies, just as Peggy Keathley had done verbally and publicly? It is certainly a valid question, and one which I consider further later in this narrative.

I no longer believe it to be a good thing for anyone to decree about specific "enemies," but I also know that church members decreed against their own negative thoughts and feelings, and would have used the same prayers directed at the enemies on themselves and their loved ones. In addition, all decrees and prayers incorporated the caveat that the request be adjusted "in accordance with God's holy will," to protect individuals from asking for "unlawful," i.e., karmically wrong, outcomes.

* * *

Mother still found time during the trial to carry on her ministry. On the Friday night at the end of the first week, it was Valentine's Day, and there was a waltz on the tennis court at Camelot. It was raining buckets, and the makeshift canopy over the dance floor did not keep out the water. I sloshed around the court to the strains of Strauss waltzes, then scooted over to the chapel in time to wring the water out of my hair and take my place in the front row. Mother, who had already started giving her lecture on twin flames, seemed happy and free after the enforced silence of a week in court.

Talking about relationships, she said that counselors and psychologists could be helpful but that the real solution to problems was to go outside of the world altogether. The only true, satisfying happiness was "beyond human pleasure and pain...divine bliss." She

was doing what she did best. She always said that she was never happier than on the altar.

In conclusion, she read a poem that my father had taken as a written dictation from a master known as Saint Germain back in the 1960s. Written dictations from masters can be described as channeled documents (a term they did not use), which my parents received at their desks, in private, as opposed to the public, verbal dictations that were more like inspired sermons, although often given with eyes closed.

As my mother read, I closed my eyes and meditated. “I AM projecting my Love out into the world to erase all errors and to break down all barriers.”⁶⁹ I could see my love going out to Gregory, Randall, their witnesses, the jury, sweeping them up and tumbling them over until they couldn’t even remember why they hated us. I wished the jury could see the loving or “pink” side of decrees—and there were a lot of those, too. And I did not at that time understand the pain that all of these “enemies” had experienced in separating from the church, which had also provided them with such moments of shared joy.

Chapter 5: Negotiation or Coercion: Characterizing a “Tough Business Meeting”

Infinite love seemed very far away when we were back in court next week. It was Mother’s turn to testify and she took the stand wearing a bright blue suit and magenta silk blouse with a soft bow at her neck, looking chipper and hopeful. Finally, she would be able to speak for herself. But Lawrence Levy wasn’t going to give her a chance. He began with a series of questions that demonstrated that she had no credentials as a minister other than having been ordained by my father, Mark Prophet.

Levy began by addressing her as “Miss”—as he did for most married women throughout the trial: “Miss Francis, what names are you known by in your church?” Sometimes he also called her “Miss Prophet.”

She responded: “I am called Mother, also Guru Ma, which means the teacher of the way of the mother—

“Excuse me, ma’am. I am going to object, your honor, and ask that the latter portion of that be stricken. Just want your names.” The court granted the motion.

“I am called Mother, Guru Ma, messenger, or messenger for the ascended masters...Vicar of Christ...Mother of the Flame.”

“Who conferred those titles upon you?” Klein objected as to relevance but was overruled.

“In terms of Mother, my students began calling me Mother. As messenger, this was conferred upon me by Saint Germain. As Vicar of Christ, by Beloved Jesus. As Guru Ma, by Padma Sambhava.”

“Before Jesus conferred the title of Vicar of Christ on you, was there any communication between the two of you?”

She replied that she received a message from Jesus. Her husband Mark Prophet conferred the title of *messenger* from Saint Germain.

“Did your husband, Mark Prophet, have any authority to convey titles? When I say ‘authority,’ I mean authority by any state or governmental body or any religious body?”

“No authority apart from the holy spirit.”⁷⁰

Frequently, Mother tried to clarify Levy’s questions by over-answering, and at least six times, Levy asked to have part of her answer stricken from the record as being “nonresponsive.” Levy asked, “Did there come a time when you told Gregory Mull that he would not make his union with God unless he balanced his karma?”

Mother answered, “Well, balancing one’s karma is a prerequisite to union with God.”

Levy objected. “Nonresponsive.”

Judge Margolis: “The objection is sustained. The answer of the witness is stricken. The jury is directed to disregard it.”⁷¹ Each time this happened, Mother seemed to shrink in the stand.

The climax of Levy’s examination was a dramatic piece of evidence which was problematic for both sides: the tape recording of a settlement meeting that had taken place between Gregory, Mother, and the church board members Edward Francis and Monroe Shearer. It was during this meeting, which took place on June 6, 1980, that Gregory wrote the check for fifty-five-hundred-dollars, which he claimed left him destitute. I had never heard this tape and I was looking forward to it.

Levy introduced it with an exchange that revealed something about Mother's character, how she argued and how she acted when confronted. I was not surprised that she had been perceived as manipulative by ex-members. She would do almost anything to avoid admitting something unflattering, even to the point of appearing ridiculous. Levy asked her to categorize the meeting as pleasant, unpleasant or friendly. She said it had all elements.

Perhaps unfairly, the judge insisted that she choose one and Levy continued to press her. "When you and Mr. King got divorced, was your last meeting friendly or unfriendly?"

Mother: "I thought it was very friendly."

Levy: "So bearing that in mind, how would you describe this meeting with Mr. Mull? Friendly or unfriendly?"

Mother: "I think it was a friendly meeting."⁷²

The weekend before, Mother had taken a dictation during a service that said the lawsuit represented the attempt to silence ministers, who should be free to speak what was on their hearts. She viewed the meeting as a minister chastening a wayward member of her flock, and "friendliness" was not at issue, but the meeting proceedings also clearly showed that she also hoped for some kind of resolution.

Levy began presenting the meeting by commenting on the seating arrangements, which had placed Gregory across from Mother and between Edward and Monroe. This was said to have placed him at a disadvantage, adding to his feeling of being trapped. In reality, it was a large desk and room, and there would have been plenty of space between the chairs. Levy drew a seating chart carefully on the whiteboard for the jury, then started the tape.

I could imagine Mother beginning the meeting in the office known as Saint Germain's office on the ground floor of the Spanish-style Gillette mansion. She sat on one side of heavy wooden desk, really an eight-foot antique table, facing Gregory. This high-ceilinged, bookshelf-lined room was used as a set in the 1982 film *Frances*, about the movie star Frances Farmer, where, ironically, it served as the office of the director of her mental institution.

Although the meeting began in a friendly way, with an invocation from Mother for the I AM Presence to resolve problems between her and Gregory, she quickly launched into the chastening, telling him she was "chagrined" at his actions and that he had a "shallow" consciousness.⁷³ Next, she took him to task for decreeing against her, using phrases I had often heard her and the masters use: "Don't give me those mamby-pamby excuses, those mealy-mouth excuses. That's an absolute abomination."⁷⁴

The meeting, though tough at times, did clearly demonstrate, though, that at the time of the meeting, Gregory believed that the money was a loan and was trying to change the arrangements for paying it back.

During the meeting, Mother asked him, "Why did you say you would pay them back if you thought those monies were due you for professional services? Why didn't you say 'This is not a loan. This is what I require for services rendered. I think I'm worth this'....You led us on, Gregory....Why did you sign a promissory note for these funds if you thought you were due this payment?"⁷⁵

He answered, "Because I thought my home would sell quicker than it did, and I didn't mind being out like \$20,000."⁷⁶ Later, he said, "I never lied to you. I never deceived you and I never did it intentionally, nor was it a plot."⁷⁷

“Well, so what?” rejoined Mother. “So now you sold your house for less and I’m supposed to bear the burden of that? What folly.”⁷⁸

The discussion next turned to the motive of the meeting, with Mother stating that she was not interested in his money, and Gregory accusing her of being only interested in money, going back to the time when he first came to Santa Barbara and asked her what he should do to advance on the spiritual “path,” and she told him the story of the rich man to whom Jesus said, “go and sell what thou hast, give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.”⁷⁹

This story has probably made paupers out of thousands of Christians but I cringed when I heard it in court, especially coming from a woman who wore a necklace of ten diamonds around her neck and two more in her ears. My father used to quote the saying from a Robert Burns poem, with a Scots accent: “Oh, wad some Power the gifted gie us/To see oursel’s as others see us.”⁸⁰ She could have used more of that power herself.

But she did not during this meeting attempt to convince him to turn over all his worldly goods, acknowledging that she respected his decision: “you have preferred not to do that. I have not judged you.”⁸¹ Over and over in the taped meeting, she told him she wasn’t concerned about the money, she was worried about his soul, not because of the money but because he had deceived the church about his intentions.

I could understand what she was saying but I didn’t know how the jury would take it. She believed she wasn’t after his money—or anyone else’s, for her own benefit. Everything she had went to the church and since she gave all of her time and effort towards furthering God’s work, she herself could not be seen as greedy. Her jewelry was used to “focus” spiritual energy and make her prayers more powerful. Most of it belonged to the church. And to her mind, even her designer outfits were necessary to give her

credibility and attract new members. I wasn't sure it was a good idea for her to have read Gregory the biblical story of Ananias and Sapphira even though she told him that she hadn't read it to threaten him but to illustrate "the law," by which she meant the law of karma.⁸²

Though Levy and later the expert witness Margaret Singer would state that during this meeting Mother had threatened his immortal soul and his ascension, she specifically addressed that issue as well. In response to her statement that Gregory should have "the fear of the lord in his heart for doing what you are doing. I am not your judge and I refuse to judge you," Gregory responded, "I don't have that much fear except I want to make my ascension."

She answered vaguely: "fear is awe," but went on to warn him that he risked not passing an "initiation" and suggesting that his history of deceit as well as his "momentums" of sexual misconduct were at issue by saying, "you've reached your nemesis on the 10-4 axis," a reference to a church teaching which compartmentalized undesirable activities into twelve categories based on the lines of the clock. The "10-4 axis" included the sins of lying and disobedience as well as misuse of the "sacred fire" through sexual "perversion."⁸³ This was an oblique threat to his salvation, although in her cosmos, it did not have to be permanent. She went on to tell him that if he refused to honor the debt he would effectively conclude their relationship—in other words, he could still seek salvation on his own, but without her as guru.

He told her that he no longer trusted her organization, though he trusted her, and that had already resigned from the church formally in a tape he had given her. And finally, the topic of ascension came up again towards the end of the meeting, when he asked, "You mean I will not make my ascension if I do not pay it?" She responded: "I am not making any threats, Gregory....I am giving you a teaching only."⁸⁴

The “ascension” is the final union with God which the church taught was the destiny of every soul, to follow in the footsteps of Christ at the end of a period of reincarnation. Striving for the “ascension” was an important topic in church teachings, but it was not something Mother could grant or take away. Though people would be told that certain activities could imperil the ascension, they were always told that God was the final judge. The church did not put on any evidence attempting to explain the ascension, karma or any of the other theological terms introduced during the trial because it maintained that the introduction of these terms was a violation of its First Amendment rights. Nevertheless, Gregory’s side repeatedly stated that his immortal soul and “ascension” had been threatened during this meeting.

But much of the talk was about mundane details of the settlement. Gregory had put forward a proposal and various options were discussed. He made it clear that he was concerned about being sued for the notes he had signed. He claimed not to have made any “profit” from the sale of the house, since much of the money was due in bills and capital gains taxes the following year.

In his April 20, 1980, letter he had stated that he had received forty-six thousand dollars as a down payment on his home, and expected to receive another thirty-nine-hundred “on or before June 15, 1980.” However, he had no “profit” because of his bills.⁸⁵ Edward responded by questioning his recent purchase of a new car for seven thousand dollars.⁸⁶ Before the meeting finished, Edward suggested to Gregory that he not pay the church back now, but agree to pay in two years, when he would receive the proceeds of the third mortgage on his house, sixty-five thousand dollars. Mother said, “You could make minimal payments.”⁸⁷ It did not sound like extortion to me.

But Gregory was not interested. At the end of the meeting, he withdrew his offer to pay ten thousand dollars (saying he no longer had that money) and instead he wrote his check for fifty-five

hundred dollars, which Levy said left him to eat out of a Dumpster. As he wrote the check, Gregory did mention that it was all he had in the bank, but did not seem distressed about it, stating that he wanted it to go for scholarships for needy children to attend the church's school. Mother did not ignore his comment. Their exchange went like this:

Gregory: "When I write out these checks I don't have any more money."

Mother: "Well, that concerns me greatly."

Gregory: "But...it always comes in. I am very good at breaking even, so it will be alright."⁸⁸

He had, after all, indicated that he was to receive nearly four thousand more dollars from the sale of his house by June 15. Mother, clearly relying on his representations, and believing some kind of resolution had been reached, concluded the meeting by saying, "God bless you and go in peace."⁸⁹

If nothing else, Gregory's correspondence reveals that his own description of his financial picture fluctuated widely over the course of his communications with the church. First he needed two-thousand a month, then four thousand. He had financed friends to attend Summit University. He had boasted in detail about each such sponsorship. In the clear light of 1986 with his tax returns in hand, it was obvious that he had presented his personal wealth and success as greater than they actually were.

The meeting was mild compared to other "discipline" sessions I had seen my mother conduct. She spoke in normal, if forceful, tones. What I couldn't believe, I thought in court on the morning of February 19 as the meeting wound up, was that Mother *gave* Gregory a tape recording of the meeting. She thought she

hadn't said anything objectionable. She was that insulated from how her actions might appear to the world outside of Camelot.

The jury foreman (Carole Snow, the woman my mother had spoken with briefly in the restroom) later told me that she saw the session as a "tough business meeting," but the rest of the jury, as we would come to discover, did not see it that way. Apparently, they bought Levy's position that some form of manipulation was at work. Over and over during the trial, Levy referred back to the meeting as extortion, designed to wring out Gregory's last five thousand dollars.

The six-week trial is complicated, but it is hard to see how anyone who seriously reads the transcript and the letters in evidence can believe that there was a deliberate plot to deceive Gregory and extort money from him. There was some unclarity about the arrangements when he arrived at Camelot as far as the amount of his monthly bills and how much could be counted as travel expenses as opposed to bills.

But the letters indicated that he made a deal and then tried to change it. In April 1980, he offered ten thousand dollars instead of thirty-eight thousand dollars. Then in June he reduced it to fifty-five hundred dollars. Mother accepted his offer. It is difficult for me to imagine any kind of influence or coercion scenario in which the church staged the events and wrote Gregory's letters for him. The influence went both ways, and also came from inside himself, his desire to design the entire Camelot community, and to appear as a benefactor of the church.

The real question, I thought, is why he fixated on the five thousand dollar check and began publicly attacking the church? Why couldn't he do as he said he would and resume his architecture practice? He was relatively young.

Why did he devote himself to this crusade? He and the other former staff who testified against Mother—Laura Lea Cannon, Randy King, etc., seemed to believe that my mother was a dangerous woman who should be stopped by any means necessary. If that meant mischaracterizing life in the church in order to make it fit what a cult was supposed to be like, then it must have seemed worth it to them.

Levy ended his examination of Mother by referring to a colloquialism that she had used in her deposition, which he turned into a rhetorical theme. He had asked her who really made the decisions at the church and she had answered, “When it comes time to get on with the show, somebody has to have the last word. I have the last word.”⁹⁰

He quoted her and then asked her a question that was more important to him than any answer he might receive: “Is that what you consider this whole thing is, the destruction of Mr. Mull’s life—getting on with the show?”

She answered demurely, “Of course not, Mr. Levy.”⁹¹

Evaluating Randall King’s Characterization of CUT and Support for Gregory Mull

I had seen Randall King, my former stepfather, the first day I came to court. It was a meeting I dreaded more than the others. As I walked down the hall, I walked right past his familiar figure, skimming him with unfocused eyes, not wanting to give him the satisfaction of acknowledgment. As I talked outside the courtroom with my friends, I glanced over at him as he stood with the rest of the “enemies.” I wondered why he was helping them.

He hadn’t changed much in six years. A little less hair, but still handsome. I had always thought he looked like John Travolta. It was hot in the courtroom and as I watched Randall (usually Randy

to us kids) take off the jacket of his tight brown suit and roll up his sleeves, I tried to remember the first time I saw him. I couldn't. He was part of the group I thought of as my "La Tourelle" family, those who had been on staff at the brick mansion in Colorado Springs where the church had been headquartered in the 1960s and early 1970s, which was named for the round brick tower at its center. Inside that mansion lived nearly a hundred people, "the staff," taking refuge from a fast-changing society, publishing books, putting on conferences, and doing lots of decrees.

I could remember Randy wearing his white chef's hat and cooking eggs for my father in the big kitchen. He had joined staff at La Tourelle in 1970, a hippie who had studied hotel and restaurant management at the University of Denver. He had read the "I AM" books upon which my parents' interpretation of "ascended master" teachings were based⁹² and tried to join the Denver group of the I AM Religious Activity, but was turned away for his former marijuana use. All ascended master teachings were opposed to drug and alcohol use, but their entry requirements varied. After being rejected by the I AM, Randall came across some of my parents' literature about the masters, which led him to La Tourelle.

When Randall took the stand after my mother, I was prepared to hear him tell his "lies," which I thought I already knew since they had been published in the press. But I was hoping the judge wouldn't let him say everything he wanted. As Lawrence Levy began questioning him about the church, he fired off his answers rapidly as if he had been waiting for years to give them. First, Randall gave his support to the brainwashing (or coercive persuasion) scenario, saying that my father told him how he kept control of the staff (church members who worked at headquarters). "Keep them busy day and night so that they don't get an opportunity to be alone or with outside people," and "control their sleep habits and their eating habits."⁹³ It was hard for me to imagine my father saying that, at least in context of deliberate manipulation.

At La Tourelle, it had been busy, but I had never thought it was a deliberate act of control on the part of my parents. Rather, it seemed that we were all caught up in the “mission” of spreading the teachings which everyone thought were so important. Even if keeping people busy was a “strategy,” wasn’t it one they would have agreed with, having asked to be guided by the ascended masters?

Randall knew my father for three years. Along with the other staff men, he slept in the attic of the ten-thousand-square-foot building. They worked for nothing more than food and good feelings, it’s true, but they seemed happy at the time. They welcomed hundreds of people to the quarterly conferences, cooked (mostly) tasty vegetarian food, ran a restaurant, and always talked about how much they loved to “serve.” Many of them had come right out of the hippie culture.

I could imagine my father perhaps saying things about keeping staff busy in the context of the way people should behave if they wanted, for example, to make spiritual progress, or overcome their “entities,” the spirits believed to be responsible for negative habits. But I didn’t think it applied to the way Gregory was treated, especially since he lived in his own home for all but twenty months of the six years he was part of the church. As far as I was concerned, Randall was tailoring the facts to Levy’s picture. For him to reduce the complex equation of staff life to these parameters seemed unfair to me.

Randall also supported Levy’s portrayal of decrees as hypnotic and an agent of coercive persuasion. He testified that part of the purpose of decrees was “as a control factor.” He gave a glib example: “Let’s say if there was a disciplinary problem and somebody was a little rebellious. If you go make them do a couple of hours of Astreas, when they came back, he would be a perfect little robot. They would be ready to do whatever you wanted.”⁹⁴ Randall also characterized the church’s three-month Summit University program, which Gregory had twice attended, as a

mechanism of control. According to him, the environment was structured in terms of sleep, diet and contact with friends and family members in order to “get control of them.”⁹⁵

He also supported Gregory’s contention that the monies paid to him were payment for services rendered, stating that they expected he would cost up to three thousand dollars per month, which would be a savings for the church over what a normal architectural firm would charge.⁹⁶ Assuming Randall’s statement was true, and that the church had hoped to save money (by either hiring Gregory or securing his volunteer labor) it did not negate Gregory’s written offers to do the work for a lot less than the millions of dollars he was now requesting.

It had been late in the day when Randall took the stand; Levy chose to end with his most explosive testimony. Referring to Mother, he asked, “Did you and she have an affair while she was still married to Mark Prophet?”⁹⁷

Before he could finish the question, Klein was on his feet objecting, “Irrelevant.” The court initially sustained the objection, asking the lawyers to approach the bench.

Levy told Judge Margolis that this line of questioning was designed to show Mother’s character, “That even when she is in a contractual relationship, she doesn’t abide by the terms of it.” Klein argued it was irrelevant and even if it was true it was more prejudicial than probative. The judge hesitated.

Then Gregory’s other attorney, Lyle Middleton, who was also a minister, stepped in. He had taken a back seat to Levy for much of the testimony but now he had an enticing argument: “Your honor, we are not dealing with an ordinary witness here. We are dealing with the head of a church that holds herself out to be, in her own words, pure.”

The judge answered, “I agree with you....We are dealing with somebody who holds herself out to be a messenger of God, the Vicar of Christ and the various other appellations that she has taken for herself. The objection is overruled.”

The lawyers sat down and Levy continued, “Mr. King, did you and Miss Francis have an affair while she was married to Mark Prophet?”

Randall answered with one satisfied word, “Yes.”

Court adjourned. Judge Margolis acted as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. He commented to the jury, “Hopefully, we will have better air conditioning tomorrow.”⁹⁸ I stared into the cloudy surface of his big glasses, angry as hell. What did my parents’ marriage have to do with Gregory Mull?

In the hallway, I said to Mother, Edward and Ken Klein— “Are we going to get a chance to tell the truth? Are you just going to let him sit up there and lie? Why can’t my mother tell the truth?”

Ken responded, “We’re going to have to think carefully about this. We don’t want to give up our rights.” If he put on any evidence about the alleged affair, he would not have been able to argue that admitting it to evidence was an error.

My mother and father’s love was a bedrock of my childhood memories. Their love and work were interwoven. I was sure that my parents had been true to one another, given their intimate spiritual work and apparent deep connection. It is not clear what, if any, impact testimony about this affair had on the jury’s decision-making process. But it could have served to make Gregory’s case for underhanded dealing seem more plausible.

The next day, I braced myself for more “lies.” I was glad that my brother, Sean, was in court that day, having taken time off

from work. With Judge Margolis having overruled Klein's objection about the affair, Randall now seemed to be free to say whatever he wanted whether it was relevant to the case or not.

Levy's strategy seemed to be not just to interrogate but to get in his version of the facts wherever possible, in his own words, and to undermine the credibility of the church at every turn. The actual causes of action were rarely mentioned. Levy himself was becoming Gregory's star witness. With a distended question, he now tried to draw attention to Mother's oft-changing marital status. He asked Randall, "Did the board usually follow the dictations of Elizabeth Clare Prophet Francis? If I confuse you with her names, I sometimes get them out of sequence. Before we were talking about Miss Prophet. And when you were married to her, we are talking about Miss King. She is now Miss Francis. And so making the transition, I stumble. But you know who I am referring to all the time."⁹⁹

Levy's next avenue of attack was to question the legitimacy of the church itself. The church had been founded by my mother in 1975. Before that, the group had been called The Summit Lighthouse, the organization my father, Mark Prophet, founded in 1958 before he met my mother. Mark had not wanted to start a church back then, just a loose organization for spiritual study, kind of like the Rosicrucians. But as time went on and the group developed rituals and people started wanting to be able to marry and receive sacraments, both my parents had felt that a church might be needed. But Randall claimed that the whole reason Mother started Church Universal and Triumphant was because The Summit Lighthouse was under investigation by the IRS over some silver investments. "We didn't tell the general congregation that we had two churches going. We just started diverting funds."¹⁰⁰ It made the church sound like a cheap, back-room operation. Whatever the immediate catalyst for its founding (and the silver futures crisis was indeed a factor in the timing of the legal establishment of the church), the idea had been in my mother's mind even before Mark's

death. Since then, the church had become meaningful to thousands of people.

The silver futures crisis was actually something Randall himself had been intimately involved with. But was it relevant to Gregory's case? Klein objected strenuously to the topic but Judge Margolis let Randall talk, seeming to be interested himself. I had heard about the silver futures in newspapers and in an interview Randall had given to *People* magazine after his 1980 divorce from our mother.

I thought it was low for Randall to bring up this problem when the silver investments had been his idea. Also, after their 1974 investigation, the IRS did *not* revoke the tax exempt status of either the Lighthouse or the newly formed CUT. Even if Mother thought they might at one time, which happened to be about the same time the church was founded, she hadn't made any money off the silver deal and she had never gotten involved in investing since. I think she felt she had learned her lesson. But it was true that at one point, she was convinced that the investments were going to be God's way of freeing her from ever having to fundraise again to support herself and her work.

Randall and Mother invested Lighthouse money in silver futures during 1973 and 1974 when we lived in Santa Barbara after my father died. Just before his death, he had been concerned about a coming economic collapse and had suggested the group buy gold and silver, and stock up on food. So the staff started a for-profit corporation called Lanello Reserves to sell gold and silver coins and dehydrated food. The idea was that the staff could make money to support themselves while also providing food and gold for our own survival plans, which included buying a small ranch in Montana where we and the staff (about 150 people in those days) would live if things fell apart.

At about the same time, Mother and Randall started trying to think of ways they could make extra money for themselves. Mother had never gotten much of a salary from the church. She always had a nice place to live, the best food, household staff, and frequent personal gifts from followers. But having her own source of income would free her from the fiction that she and the staff were the same, when they weren't.

Once, she and Randall were on an airplane and she was reading a magazine article about seven millionaires who had made their fortune by the time they were thirty-five. She told Randall that she thought he was smart enough to do that and if he could, our family could support itself. Randall's idea was that, since he was already handling gold and silver buying on behalf of Lanello Reserves, he would just borrow some money from the church, invest it, and pay it back with interest.

For a few months, I remembered Mother and Randy acting like we were going to be rich. They started an investment club for the staff and us kids with the idea that we would all have money, taking some more of the church's money and investing it in our names. They even brought us to see some big houses that they wanted to buy.

But then that all stopped. The silver market crashed. The brokerage issued a margin call and Randall couldn't meet it. The Lighthouse ended up paying it, and there was not only an investigation by the IRS but also a lawsuit with the brokerage. From what Randall said in the newspapers, he seemed to think that the board had lied. I didn't know if they had but their primary goal at that time was to help the Lighthouse-CUT survive a debacle that he had created. The whole thing was wrong, and had wasted a lot of the money donated by members. I later learned that Mother had told Randall the masters approved of it, but then later had backed out and let him take the blame. This was one of the things that ultimately turned him against her.

After the silver market crash, there were endless board meetings and then more meetings with lawyers. Mother took Randall's jobs away and he was no longer president of the Summit Lighthouse or of Lanello Reserves. From then until he left staff in 1979, he managed the church's photography studio, among other jobs.

I was not sure how Randall's testimony would be perceived by the jury—the suggestion of a history of wrongdoing with respect to funds. But next, Randall headed for an area that was possibly more damaging to Mother than any of his other allegations: her lifestyle. He said, “What we were actually getting in benefits and money was in the range of two- to three-hundred thousand dollars a year for our family.”¹⁰¹ By the end of the trial, he took the stand again and upped the amount to between three- and four-hundred thousand dollars. The lifestyle included a leased beach house paid for by wealthy church members.

I was bothered by the lifestyle allegations because there was some truth to them. I wished the church could hurry up and build better housing for the staff. The church had tended to occupy non-traditional space for much of its history, and Mother and our family had always gotten the best rooms. But during a two-year period when the church leased a college campus in Pasadena, California, which had ample dormitory rooms, we Prophet children (though not our mother) had occupied the same housing as staff. However, even now there were plenty of well-off church members not on staff who lived quite well, in their own homes even nicer than our mother's.

As for the rest, it was the free staff labor, and I guess it would have depended on how you calculated who was working for my mother and who was working for the church. Their roles were often mixed. It was true that Mother did not have to do any household chores, and that she had several apartments or houses dedicated for her use. And that she had drivers (she couldn't drive

because of her epilepsy). She also had nannies and cooks and seamstresses. But the staff wasn't there simply to take care of us. They were also working on publications for the church and conducting services. Further, Mother did not own the properties she lived in nor did she take time off to enjoy her lifestyle, but worked constantly, writing even at the beach and on vacation. But I wondered how all this looked to the jury. Most of them probably lived on less than twenty-thousand dollars a year.

Randall's final blow was to lend support to the brainwashing claim by bringing up the fact that some staff members had been asked to sign documents without reading them back in the 1970s. The contents were covered up and only the signature line was visible. Levy asked Randall, "In your opinion, did those people have such a faith in Elizabeth and the church that they would do whatever was suggested for them to do without question?"

"Absolutely."¹⁰²

Later, I found out that the documents were simply authorizations to invest money on these people's behalf, that it was part of the silver futures scheme, and that Mother had approved it because she did not want them to spoil the "alchemy," or spiritual process at work. (On a practical level, they might have asked where they had gotten the money that they were investing.) If the silver market hadn't collapsed, they would have made money; in fact, they never did.* The money invested was the church's money, and it didn't belong to the people whose names were listed as investors. Significantly, this was the only time during the history of the church

* The documents were a part of the Prophet-King investment club, which was set up in 1974 for the purpose of investing in commodities. Each member invested two thousand dollars. Randall King was the designated agent. The participants were: Randall, Elizabeth, the four Prophet children, and about sixteen staff members.

that anybody was asked to sign a document they hadn't read. And there was never any evidence presented during the trial that Gregory himself had ever signed a document he did not read, including the promissory notes. But it was a damning piece of church history and shows the level of commitment the close staff had towards Mother.

* * *

In the top-floor courthouse cafeteria, Sean told me that during a break, he went into the restroom at the same time as Randall. Unlike me, he decided to speak to him. "Randall, why are you doing this?" he said.

"Sean, there is so much that you just don't understand," Randall replied.

"I understand enough," said Sean, and walked out.

The next day, there was a story in the *Los Angeles Times*, "Ex-Husband Tells of Affair With Guru Ma Before Their Wedding."¹⁰³ Mother said she wasn't going to read any of the newspaper articles but I knew they bothered her.

The Turning of Randall King

In spite of all the blows from Randall's testimony, I often thought during the trial of the good side of Randall. He had put a lot into being a father to the four of us kids. Though he and my mother had a stormy marriage, many of the best family times we had were with him. It was several years before I would piece together the complete story of how and why Randall had turned so thoroughly against my mother. It hadn't been that way when he first left staff in 1980, claiming to still believe in the teachings, and wanting to attend church as a regular member (which she denied to him). By 1983, Mother had become quite upset over Randall's relationship with some former church members, John and Susan

Pietrangelo. John had been Randall's friend since their days of cooking back in Colorado.

Randall had left the church's staff voluntarily in March 1980 during a crisis—disagreements with Mother and board members, and the later revelation that he was having an affair with his secretary. But he continued for some time to maintain a friendship with current members of the church. But by 1983, Mother had learned that the Pietrangelos had quit the church and were spreading rumors about her that they had gotten from Randall. She had also heard they were talking to Gregory Mull. Though things had seemed amicable in the first year after Randall left, now Mother decided that he was an “enemy.” She had her staff decree against his “energy.”

I learned years later when I finally had the courage to contact him myself that it had been a gut-wrenching experience for Randall to be dismissed not only from staff but also from the church itself in 1980, especially after everything came out about the affair with his secretary. I had liked the secretary, a woman who had taken care of me and my siblings at times. And I could relate to Randall's complaints of stress, overwork, never being able to keep a regular schedule—all true for those who spent time around Mother. He felt that if he could just get a job and attend services like a regular church member, his temper and his life would improve. But Mother had not been willing to allow him even to attend services after he left staff. Suddenly cut off from all his friends of the past ten years, and having left his family back in Colorado Springs to move to California, he had felt adrift.

He had continued spending time with the Pietrangelos and other old friends. But it was Mother herself who had turned the Pietrangelos against her. She had forbidden them to sell a multi-level marketed product known as Spirulina to church members, since the church itself was a distributor. This effectively cut off their family's income, and they began to gossip about her (one can see that the “Madame Clear Profit” appellation would be appealing to

those in this situation). Mother had always been protective of the right to market and sell products to members of her church, but it was harsh of her to insist that John couldn't sell to them at all. They *were* his circle of friends. It was only in this context that Randall had begun to tell them the story of his affair with Mother.

So Mother was not blameless in Randall's decision to support Gregory, Levy, and the coercive persuasion narrative. From what I knew about Randy's character, I assumed that he had said to himself—"You want war? Fine, I'll give you war." And thus he was willing to say almost anything Levy needed him to say. In hindsight, I do not doubt that Randall was telling the truth as he remembered it, but his descriptions of the church lifestyle were selectively chosen to support the coercive persuasion or thought reform model, and did not accurately reflect the full picture of either staff life, Gregory's own experience, or the wider church membership.

* * *

After Lawrence Levy had finished questioning Randall, Klein began his cross-examination, trying to attack Randall's credibility. He brought up Randall's own sixteen-million-dollar lawsuit against the church and tried to segue into Randall's earlier threats to write a book about Mother. Levy objected and the court sustained. When Klein tried to ask the question another way, Judge Margolis threatened him with contempt (though he had allowed Randall to testify about an affair and other alleged dishonest dealings). The judge had apparently made up his mind that he did not like the church. And it was only the second week of testimony.

Klein did get Randall to admit that he hadn't even been on the board of the church when the decisions were made about Gregory joining staff (though he had sat in on some informal meetings). And he showed Randall a newspaper article in which he was quoted (after leaving the church) as saying that the church

offered its members a good diet and healthy life, though it came at a price.

The final issue raised by Klein, attempting to cast doubt on the coercive persuasion narrative, was whether Randall considered that he himself was “brainwashed” or “controlled” during his ten-year affiliation with the church.¹⁰⁴ He testified that he had been under coercive persuasion but had also used techniques of manipulation taught by the Prophets on other staff, such as shouting at them or making them do decrees. He agreed with Klein’s question that he was both “victim” and perpetrator” of the control mechanisms.¹⁰⁵

Klein then tried to show that Randall was not as controlled by Mother or by decrees as he claimed to have been and suggested that he take responsibility for his own dishonest actions in the silver case. Klein first asked Randall if, while he was in the church, he would have lied, cheated and deceived others for Mother if she had asked him to. He said he would have.

Then Klein brought up an incident that happened in Big Sur, California, when Mother wanted to leave garbage on the beach and Randall did not, and they argued about it.

Klein: You grabbed her and shook her?

Randall: Yes.

Klein: And you told her you’d like to kill her?

Randall: Yes.

Klein: So am I correct in that you were willing to lie for her, cheat for her, deceive for her, but you drew the line when she wanted you to leave garbage on the beach?

Randall: At that particular moment, yeah, I was upset....That’s true.¹⁰⁶

* * *

The next witness following Randall was used to promote the idea that decrees caused mind control or brainwashing. The witness was Don St. Michael, a boyish, blond young man whom Gregory had sponsored to attend Summit University.

Levy asked St. Michael to demonstrate the church's salute to the ascended master known as Saint Germain. He stood up in the witness stand, clicked his heels together, thrust out his arm in a Nazi-style salute, and shouted, "Hail, Saint Germain!" I had to admit that even without his theatrics and inverted hand (we performed the salute with the palm cupped and turned upwards), the salute had a fascist vibe.

St. Michael had not liked Summit University, and left after only a week. His testimony was an attempt to show that decrees would put someone under Mother's control. What better way to do that than to evoke an image of Nazi Germany?

But St. Michael hadn't just *said* the decree; he'd shouted it, after Levy asked him to give it as loud as he could. He added that when he was asked to give the decree in Summit University, "it was terrorizing to me," since he believed he might have died at Auschwitz in a past life. No doubt the decree did make him uncomfortable, but his choice to leave after a week undermined the claim that decrees put a person in a passive state of mind.

The salute was problematic for the church, and my mother was aware of how it appeared. The church had inherited the "Hail, Saint Germain!" practice from the I AM movement, which was accused of having fascist roots.* But in fact the I AM conceived of

* For a balanced treatment of the question of fascism and the I AM, as well as the movement and its history, see "The I Am Movement," pages 257–307 in Braden, Charles S. *These Also Believe: A Study of Modern American Cults & Minority Religious Movements*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1949.

the salute in *opposition* to the Nazis. The Ballards, founders of the I AM, were super-patriotic and supportive of the United States government during World War II. In my view, the salute was a 1930s holdover. It probably hadn't seemed strange at a time when everybody from the Salvation Army to the Foursquare Gospel Church had larger-than-life leaders and used military metaphors. But Mother had never thought of changing that decree for modern times. It was part of the culture when she joined the church in the early 1960s.

I knew that she realized it made the church look militaristic, though. In 1977, when the television show *In Search Of...* was doing an episode on the figure of Saint Germain in history and religion, they included a segment on her. They were nice enough to send her a sample video to review before it was aired. It included a clip of Mother giving a dictation from Saint Germain and saying, "This is the mantra for the Aquarian Age." Then it cut to the congregation saying, "Hail, Saint Germain!"

Mother asked the producers to re-edit the segment. First, it was inaccurate, since the dictation was talking about a different "mantra." But secondly, she thought the salute would be misunderstood. She asked them to replace the salute with a less forceful prayer. At that time, the media didn't see CUT as a destructive cult and they were happy to comply.¹⁰⁷

After St. Michael's Nazi salute, Mother begged Ken Klein at the break to let her get up and testify again, so she could explain the decree. "No," he said patiently. "If you do that, you're going to give up your rights under the evidence code. We can bring all these things up on appeal." But the atmosphere had been set for more

references to concentration camps, which would be revisited by the expert witnesses from both sides as the trial continued.

Chapter 6: The Church's Side

On March 4, the church began presenting its side of the case. Klein asked each of the church witnesses about their experience, about Summit University, decrees, Camelot, the food and lifestyle. Answers were pretty similar, in that decrees were described as positive, Summit University was like a retreat, the food was both delicious and nutritious, they were not required to work long hours, and they had not been pressured to give all of their belongings to the church. Nor, they said, did they worship Elizabeth Clare Prophet or follow her every word. Some had left the church with no negative repercussions.

If any of this sounded monotonous, it would only have been because most of the people affiliated with the church did, in fact, not take the final step of joining staff or moving to Camelot, as Gregory had. Only those who had asked for “chelasip” by joining staff were expected to be obedient to Mother. And even among those who had, there was a variety of experience, and the schedule and work were more demanding the more closely associated one was with the organization. It also varied over time.

Klein began by trying to pick away at the idea that Summit University was a fail-proof system of thought reform. He called a former church member named Jane Fleming to the stand. She looked kind of New Agey but not in the conservative power-suit way of Mother and her close staff. Her blond hair was cut in a short, boyish cut, and her clothes were relaxed and form-fitting. She had attended Summit University in Santa Barbara in the same quarter as Gregory, but left the church sometime thereafter. She said that Summit University was a “retreat experience,” that she missed the food, which she called a “veritable feast,” and that she wasn’t shunned or threatened after she left. She said she never viewed Mother as a guru but as a “facilitator,” and that she had continued to decree even after leaving the church.¹⁰⁸

Klein's witnesses cast plenty of doubt on the picture of Camelot as concentration camp. But the church witnesses were also subjected to further questioning from Levy as to their religious beliefs. As he cross-examined them, Levy brought out another decree. Unlike the Astrea decree he had already entered, which was a rhyming decree meant to be repeated numerous times, this was an "Insert on Personal and Impersonal Hatred," written in prose and meant to be given once, prior to a repetitive decree.

It listed a variety of topics, ranging from attacks on Mother and the church to targets of concern such as junk food and organized crime, all of which Mother thought were manifestations of "hatred." The decree included a blank space for people to use for inserting the names of people or conditions that they thought were responsible for the hatred. Levy handed it to each witness and asked them if they had ever put Gregory Mull's name in the blank space. Nobody answered "yes."

The decree was eight pages, single-spaced, long and confusing. It did not ask, but "demanded"—of God and the ascended masters—action upon a variety of issues, including the "reversing of the tide of the entire momentum of criticism, condemnation, and judgment, all hate and hate creation directed against me or the light for which I stand, the messengers and their chelas, Camelot," etc. It also demanded "instantaneous judgment" of those sending negative energy, and the consuming of the "cause and core of the consciousness of the betrayers of the light."

With its martial language, the decree no doubt sounded bizarre and even evil to the jury, calling for the "sinister force" and the "astral hordes of death and hell" to be taken "off the earth in this hour." These "astral hordes" were supposed to be disembodied forces of evil, but the language could easily be construed as wishing harm to the "betrayers," of whom Gregory was most certainly perceived as the chief at this time.¹⁰⁹

I began to wonder what the testimony on decrees was really about—was it about whether decrees were used by Mother to hypnotize and manipulate Gregory Mull? Or whether decrees could actually harm somebody? Why else, other than pure ridicule, would Levy be repeatedly bringing up this decree and asking if Gregory’s name was ever put in the blank? I suppose it could support the intentional infliction of emotional distress cause of action.

Levy also systematically asked church witnesses whether they decreed “against” people. Some tried to explain that decrees are not “against” people but their energy. One witness replied that we decreed against the “negatively directed energy.”¹¹⁰ Levy asked whether a person’s energy was a part of that person and if so, how one could decree against a person but not their energy. He asked why Gregory’s name was in the decree sessions if he was not being decreed against. The witness replied that he was in the decree sessions in order to defend against Gregory’s energy “because he has attacked the church” but that the outcome should be the best for Gregory since decrees are always adjusted according to God’s will and justice.¹¹¹

Whether useful or not to support the coercive persuasion model, it was clear that testimony about decrees could be employed to ridicule the church’s beliefs and practices. Concerning the practice of decrees, he once responded sarcastically to a witness, “You said the energy behind somebody. I am going to turn around slowly. Maybe you can tell me whether there is something back behind me.”¹¹² In church beliefs, the forces “behind people” meant evil forces such as demons or entities, which were believed to use people.

In another instance, Levy ridiculed a nurse who testified as to the healthfulness of the diet at Summit University, and of the fasting program, which sometimes included enemas and colonics. “You described your experience at Summit University [as] just a

grand old glorious time. Were the enemas and colonics part of the grand old glorious time?”¹¹³

The jury by now was probably very confused about the church beliefs and I was starting to wonder if Ken Klein’s strategy of playing it straight, avoiding sarcasm and sticking to the facts was being outmaneuvered by Levy’s grandstanding and bluster. Another thought was, if Mother really did control her followers via coercive persuasion or thought reform, how could the behavior of Monroe Shearer and Edward Francis be explained?

The “Terms” According to the CUT Board

Both Monroe and Edward had joined staff at La Tourelle in Colorado as young men. And both had been on the church’s board since the early 1970s. Ironically, Monroe had been dismissed by Mother from the board and from staff in 1981, not long after Gregory’s exit. And Edward, who had not been married to Mother when Gregory was on staff, had married her in October 1981.

Monroe and Edward’s version of the terms on which Gregory came to Camelot followed the information in Gregory’s correspondence pretty closely. When he cross-examined them, Levy did not spend much time talking about facts but instead attacked their characters and tried to ruffle them.

Monroe began his testimony by saying that Gregory was the one who first asked to be able to design buildings for Camelot, not the other way around.¹¹⁴ He said the deal offered to Gregory was that the church would give him room and board at Camelot, and pay his airfare to and from San Francisco to finish up his business there. He said that at the time Gregory came to Camelot, there was no arrangement as to how he would meet his living expenses. Gregory had mentioned a couple of options, including paying them out of money he was currently owed by his clients. After Gregory came to Camelot, Monroe said the board agreed to loan him money

based on the future sale of his house because they thought the arrangement would be resolved “in the immediate—very foreseeable future.”¹¹⁵

Monroe also said that the board did not discuss hiring Gregory to design the entire ten-year-plan for Camelot. Gregory was told that after he finished with the design for a planned Montessori K-12 school, “he would have to be prepared to support himself financially either in the Camelot area or in San Francisco.”¹¹⁶ In other words, Gregory was never asked to come to Camelot to work on the church’s ten-year plan, or to be the “architect of the New Jerusalem,” as Levy repeatedly called the project.¹¹⁷ Monroe also set Levy straight that Camelot was never called the New Jerusalem, which was a spiritual designation applied by the church to the greater Los Angeles area.

Levy’s best option for discrediting Monroe was to try to insert a wedge between Monroe and the church by asking him why he had left staff. On the witness stand, Monroe called it a “career change,”¹¹⁸ not mentioning that Mother had given him, his wife and three young children only one day in which to leave Camelot.

His loyalty was impressive, but he still believed in the church’s teachings, and didn’t want to complain. However, it was true that Mother had seen him as a threat because he could sometimes contradict her. He had, after all, known Mark Prophet, the church’s founder. It was hard not to conclude that she had gotten rid of him to consolidate her power.

In any case, Monroe had been in a difficult position after leaving staff. He had no possibility of support from his family, from whom he had been estranged since he joined staff in Colorado in 1968. They couldn’t forgive him for not taking up his role as a third-generation Christian minister. But Monroe maintained his loyalty to Mother and didn’t bite on any of Levy’s leading questions. This

demonstrated considerable courage because he was also named in the suit and could have had damages assessed against him.

Levy then returned to a leitmotif of his case—Mother’s statement about who makes decisions in the church. He was consistently trying to prove that Mother, not the board, was responsible for everything that happened at Camelot, including Gregory’s treatment. This was both true and not true. Mother did, especially during those years, delegate financial arrangements and everyday operations to the board. Levy read to Monroe the quote from Mother’s deposition about how she had the last word when it was time to “get on with the show.”

Levy asked Monroe, “Was it Elizabeth Clare Prophet who ran the show?”¹¹⁹

Then, later, he asked, “Is that generally how Elizabeth Clare Prophet referred to the spiritual things with the church, as getting on with the show?”

Monroe answered, “No. I feel she was very reverential.”¹²⁰

Later, Klein demonstrated that in her deposition, she clarified that when she said she had the last word, she had been speaking of “spiritual matters and disputes and resolutions....[but] legal, financial business matters are subject to the board’s resolution.”¹²¹ In fact, the church’s work arrangements with Gregory Mull probably had been worked out with the board at first, but when it came down to big-picture items, she did have the final say, and could influence or overrule the board, as seen in the future, when she consolidated power after dismissing Monroe. But it was not unheard of for the board to overrule her.

Levy, in order to reinforce his version of events, returned several times to the June 6, 1980, attempted settlement meeting, where, according to his version of events, Gregory was “bilked” out

of his last fifty-five hundred dollars. He asked Monroe, “were you loving him when you got his last \$5,000—last \$5,500? You were just full of love at that time?”

Monroe: “That is like asking me if I beat my wife or something.”

Levy: “That is a question I won’t ask you, Mr. Shearer, because I am afraid we might be upset with the truth.”¹²² Sometimes I wondered whether Levy’s insulting tactics were helping or hurting him with the jury.

* * *

The next day, March 12, it was Edward’s turn to testify. In his mid-thirties, he wore a navy blue suit and spoke calmly and deliberately. He and Ken had worked for days to organize this series of questions, and Levy found hardly anything to object to. In contrast to Mother, who had sometimes appeared to waffle during her testimony, Edward was simple and to the point.

Edward had also been on the board of the church since the 1970s, and had been the business manager since 1976. He contradicted much of Randall King’s story. I thought he made a more credible witness. He came from a wealthy Texas real estate family. Although he had never finished his bachelor’s degree, having given up his history and religion studies at Colorado College to join staff, he had managed to attend law school at night for three years, and had been handling all of the church’s business and legal affairs since the mid-1970s. One of the reasons Edward started law school was to be sure that nothing else happened like the silver futures investment debacle, in which he had played no role.

Edward said that he first began getting interested in Gregory Mull’s loans when the amounts became quite large. This sounded logical to me. Edward did not supervise every staff member but was

careful about unusual arrangements. He explained that he first began to ask questions in March 1979, and described several meetings leading up to one in September of 1979 when Gregory met with him, Monroe and James McCaffrey, the church's treasurer. Edward said that at this meeting, he told Gregory that the amount of the loans was getting "extremely large." "We had expected about two thousand a month and it was really averaging about four thousand a month or maybe even a little bit more."¹²³

Edward testified that he told Gregory he had to sign a promissory note for the records. And that the church couldn't go on advancing him money. "We told him we would go another month, but that he should start planning on opening his private practice and finding clients and being prepared to support himself."¹²⁴ This suggestion is borne out by Gregory's letters, several of which mention advertising for outside clients.¹²⁵

At that point, the fall of 1979, Gregory actually reduced the amount of time he was working on staff to twenty hours per week or less.¹²⁶ He started spending more time in San Francisco and then at his new condominium. He wrote about other projects he had taken on. So in May of 1980, at the time when he left staff (or was "kicked out"), he had not been working full-time for the church for several months.

Levy's two tactics with Edward were to pretend that he was contradicting himself in his answers (he wasn't). And to needle him about never having finished law school. (He had not finished because he was busy running the church, and did not plan to become a practicing lawyer.) Levy brought up the law school more than three times, each time with more sarcasm. Levy: "With your three and a half years of law school knowledge, when he [Gregory] called Elizabeth a False Prophet and a Great Whore, why didn't you sue him for libel or slander?"

Edward didn't take the bait. "That came down to a question of legal advice between us and our attorneys," he replied serenely.
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Later, Levy got even more personal. He asked, "Do you consider yourself to be the reincarnation of Captain Cook?"

He knew that Edward did believe this, or at least that Mother had declared it. Edward's office at the ranch was filled with maps and books about Captain Cook's voyages, gifts from the staff. Klein objected on First Amendment grounds but was overruled. Edward answered without losing his cool: "Yes, I do."

Levy then said, "Let me ask you this one as Mr. Francis instead of Captain Cook."¹²⁸ He then launched into a long question that was more testimony than interrogation, and Edward kept looking straight at him, impassively. I was embarrassed for Edward. I had always wished that Mother would be less public about the declared past-life lineage of family members. Edward seemed a bit uncomfortable when the staff gave him gifts that related to his supposed past lives. But he couldn't very well say he did not believe he was Captain Cook after Mother had revealed it.

He had been a fixture in my life since 1970, when he joined staff at La Tourelle. Like Randall, Edward seemed to have always been a part of my life, sitting in meetings with Mother, eating in the special dining room reserved for the board and our family at Camelot. When I was in college, trying to decide what to study, he said, "Whatever you do, make sure that it's meaningful, something that will help people. Don't do anything just to make money."

I felt that was a statement about his own life. Both of Edward's parents had died when he was in his late teens and he was supported by a trust fund. Before he joined staff at age nineteen, he had been thinking about using his money to go out to California to start a commune. His parents had been interested in esoteric ideas

such as Rosicrucianism, which he saw as available in CUT. Though he acted skeptical at times, I knew he had a deep personal attachment to the church and its teachings—my father’s dreams as well as my mother’s. He could have used his money to live almost anywhere.

Edward held up well under Levy’s questioning, which can only be described as hostile and misleading. When Levy got up to cross-examine him, it was obvious he recognized that the chief obstacle he had to overcome in discrediting Edward was his demeanor. He began by asking him, “I notice you have a very well-modulated voice. Do you ever raise your voice?” Edward answered, “I have done it on occasion.”¹²⁹

Now he turned to another strategy—to suggest that Edward contradicted himself. The remarkable thing was that, on each occasion where Levy said he thought Edward had said something else earlier, he hadn’t. Levy was mischaracterizing the testimony.

The first time Levy used this tactic, he was so convincing that I myself had to wonder if he was right:

Levy: Mr. Francis, now with regard to you as the overseer of major expenditures, you testified earlier today that you never talked to Gregory Mull during that early part, and it was sometime into mid-spring when you talked to Gregory Mull in the year 1979. That means that Mr. Mull came to Camelot in January, you didn’t bother to talk to him in January, February or March or until the latter part of April. Is there any particular reason why you waited four months when you knew that there was an ongoing negotiation and/or dispute with regard to terms of payment to Mr. Mull?

Edward: First of all, that is not what my testimony was. I said that I did not talk with Mr. Mull about the loans until

mid-March, 1979. I certainly had occasion to talk with him, greet him, about many different things up until that time...

Levy: It was in February that he wrote you a three or four-page letter setting out not only his terms and conditions and the fact that he would not make a commitment nor could he make a commitment until certain things were agreed upon by the church. Now, if the letter was sent to you as a member of the board of directors in February, wouldn't you think it would have been incumbent upon yourself to do something before the end of April?

Edward: Who said the end of April? I said mid-March is when we met and discussed this.

Levy: This morning you said April. So from this morning when you said the latter part of spring till now when you are changing it to March—let's go with March then. You like March better?

Klein: I'm going to object, your honor. That mischaracterizes the testimony.

Margolis: Overruled.

Levy: You prefer March?

Edward: March is what I said.¹³⁰

What exactly had Edward said? Back to the earlier testimony:

Klein: When was the first conversation you had with Mr. Mull with respect to the money the church loaned him?

Edward: The first conversation I had with Mr. Mull concerning the money was in the spring of 1979.¹³¹

A few minutes later, Klein asked, "Did there come a time when the board of the executive committee met again and discussed Mr. Mull and the financial arrangements with him?"

Edward: Yes, we did.

Klein: When was that?

Edward: Mid-March, 1979.¹³²

With the luxury of the transcript and hindsight, it is clear that Levy was blowing smoke, but could the jury keep all this straight over five hours of testimony? Klein tried to repair some of the damage before wrapping up the church's case, following which Levy called a few witnesses for rebuttal.

As the documentary evidence mostly supported the church's position, Levy's case depended much more on the unnamed cause of action, "coercive persuasion," which took up far more of the testimony than the other causes of action, such as "quantum meruit" or "fraud." When the expert witnesses began to take the stand, the real debate over coercive persuasion began.

Chapter 7: The Experts Debate Coercion

The expert witnesses called by both sides during the trial, psychologists or scholars of religion who had studied the church or interviewed Gregory, focused on two primary questions. The first was whether decrees themselves and Mother's clearance calls could cause hypnosis. The second was whether the church teachings and the rules in place for staff at Camelot could lead to some kind of prisoner-of-war-style brainwashing or "coercive persuasion," in the absence of actual physical restraint keeping people there.

The first expert witness, called by Gregory's side, was a rabbi named Stephen Robbins, who had been interviewed about the church for a local CBS television series in 1985. Rabbi Robbins had been a licensed therapist in Ohio, but was not licensed in California. His qualifications were simply his pastoral training as well as fifteen years of experience in counseling people who had left new religions. As background research, he had attended a lecture by Prophet and talked with three current members of the church, as well as counseled a half-dozen former members.¹³³

First, he talked about the standard characteristics of groups he called cults: "The individual tends to become abject in the presence of the cult leader. By that I mean...the individual gives up his or her autonomy, they surrender all capacity for free choice and for free action to the orders of the leader of the organization."¹³⁴ I was surprised to hear him making this argument, given the forceful personality that showed through in Gregory's letters and at the June 6 meeting, in which he resigned from the church and changed his settlement offer. And in Robbins's framework, how would one evaluate Gregory's choice to decree *against* the leader, when he had learned those very decree techniques from that same leader?

Rabbi Robbins's testimony reflected his involvement with substance abuse counselling. For him, joining a "New Age" religion is "the ultimate of addictive behavior," equivalent to drug addiction.

He went on: "In my past as a counsellor, I have worked with a lot of drug addicts and alcoholics and I find similar profiles. The individual unable to, for whatever reason, truly find coherence and control of their own lives." According to Robbins, decrees are the drug. He continued, "the kind of routinized behavior, whether it be chanting or meditating or studying or group activities...creates a great dependency."¹³⁵

I felt insulted that he would categorize me and all the well-dressed, mostly together-looking church members in the courtroom as losers who couldn't find coherence in their lives. Many of the people in the church were highly accomplished. And then to sum up the entire practice of decrees, with all the intricate nuances of energy and colors and words, as an addiction, was doubly insulting. Decrees existed outside the church and former members often continued to use them after leaving.

Rabbi Robbins then talked about the specific effect that the church had on Gregory, with whom he had first spoken briefly in 1983 or 1984, several years after his exit from the church, and then not again until just before the trial.¹³⁶ Over Klein's objections that he was not a psychologist capable of evaluating personality, Robbins called Gregory "an innocent," with a "sense of spiritual and emotional naïveté."¹³⁷ Gregory's personality became "disoriented" by the decrees and lifestyle, including "inadequate exercise and a sense of confinement."¹³⁸ I wondered if that included the period when he was living in his own house in San Francisco, all but fifteen months of his seven years in the church. Rabbi Robbins also testified that people who leave cults need to be rehabilitated, and that Gregory's time of rehabilitation was interfered with as a result of the "intense condemnation" leveled upon him for leaving.¹³⁹

He also said that he began to suspect, while counseling Gregory, that Gregory's mannerism of "tongue thrusting....could be a result of his identifying with the judgment that he is the serpent." He had asked Gregory whether he thought so, and although

Gregory became upset at the question, “my sense...is that on some level he does” identify with the serpent characterization. In conclusion, Robbins continued the references to Nazi Germany by comparing Gregory to a concentration-camp victim.¹⁴⁰

He clarified that even though there were no physical barriers to leaving Camelot, and that even though Gregory went back to San Francisco on weekends during his fifteen months at Camelot, he was still imprisoned:

Regardless of the physical limits that were set on him at Camelot there was the whole dependency through the indoctrination process he went through in which he took all of those limits and barriers with him and found himself constrained and confined wherever he went.¹⁴¹

Robbins had summed up the argument for coercive persuasion as imprisonment without bars. Although there was a gate at the entrance to Camelot, it was always left unlocked and wide open until the church began moving out in 1986 after selling the property. A waist-high, three-strand barbed wire fence that surrounded the parts of the property along the roads could easily have been circumvented.

I could not understand how Rabbi Robbins felt that he could make a blanket judgment about Gregory on the slim evidence of his four or five hours of conversation. How did he know that Gregory was accurately representing his experience? He did not refer to any of Gregory’s letters written while he was in the church, or other evidence of his condition during his church membership. His diagnosis was made solely on the basis of Gregory’s own post-church recollections.

Hypnosis

A good deal of the expert testimony concerned the question of whether decrees and other church practices could hypnotize people

so that they would act against their own interests. The first evidence on the topic was presented by Levy's wife, Kathleen, a marriage, child and family therapist. Lyle Middleton, rather than Levy, examined her as she sat before the microphone in the witness stand, looking casual with feathered hair and a deep tan, in contrast to most of the church women, who were pale and wore conservative hair styles.

But how much of an expert was she? Her credentials sounded weak to me. She had only been a licensed therapist for two years—since 1984. And her education was less than rigorous. She had a one-year bachelor's degree in psychology from the unaccredited University Without Walls in Santa Monica and a master's degree from the California Family Study Center. When she first began working with Gregory, she was only a hypnotherapist and had not earned her counseling certification until more recently.

Middleton first asked her to explain hypnosis to the jury. I looked around, shocked. Surely she wasn't enough of an expert to do that. But she did, Middleton drawing a simplistic diagram with a line representing a barrier between the conscious mind and the subconscious mind and a little star representing the "critical" area of the brain. She told the jury that hypnosis allows the critical area to be bypassed so that any suggestion will be taken in "literally and freely."¹⁴²

I wondered how this could apply to all the church members who argued with Mother and sent her letters about this and that point of doctrine or questioning why her teachings differed from former ascended master groups in certain respects. What about people who had left on their own? Even if decrees did hypnotize people, they couldn't be powerful enough to control people day-in-day-out for years at a time, especially when they had no contact with Mother. It seemed to me an attempt to equate the church's complicated rituals and symbology with barbershop hypnosis.

The crucial aspect of Kathleen's testimony was to support the contention that Gregory was hypnotized by his connection with the church. Middleton showed her the Astrea decree tape which had been played for the court. She agreed with him "absolutely" that it could be used as a hypnotic tool, and that it would take fifteen to twenty minutes for the average person to be hypnotized by the tape.¹⁴³

Middleton next, over Klein's furious objections, gave a good imitation of a "clearance," Mother's signature prayer form. He called forth "*bolts* of blue lightning!" and even brought out a ceremonial sword that Mother had given Randall, and waved it around. Then he asked if this kind of ceremony could cause a person to come under the control of the person performing it.

Kathleen replied that the ceremony "would instill fear, that a person doing that would have authority and control over that individual through fear that that would be like what hypnotists call a shock induction."¹⁴⁴ A shock induction, she explained, is something that causes somebody to drop deeper into a state of hypnosis. After being placed into hypnosis by this ceremony, "Gregory Mull could not resist anything from her at all, that anything Elizabeth Clare Prophet would want or would ask for...he would give her."¹⁴⁵

Kathleen also testified that the image of a chakra, a star-like shape on the cover of one of my parents' books, *The Science of the Spoken Word*, could serve as a hypnotic induction symbol, akin to the traditional watch that is waved back and forth in front of a subject to lull him into a trance. Anyone who had ever belonged to the church would have found this absurd. Nobody waved chakras in front of our faces during decrees.

Later in the trial, Ken Klein put on Dr. Irving Katz, a hypnotist. He said it was impossible to draw the conclusion that Mother had damaged Gregory through fear. He also said that when

people are hypnotized, they don't become more gullible and they don't do things against their own self interest. This conclusion remains standard today, in spite of dramatic theatrical demonstrations of compliant hypnotic subjects.*

As the trial continued, I simply could not believe that the jury would take seriously the contention that decrees caused hypnosis to the degree that they would explain all of Gregory's actions, and that Gregory had been manipulated and coerced into participating in the church. There was no question that my mother was a charismatic leader, and that she could convince people to do things they might not have ordinarily done. But people were getting something out of their participation.

And charismatic though Mother was, here in the courtroom, those persuasive powers were dimmed. If anyone was wielding power in court, it was Lawrence Levy, enabled by Judge Margolis. Levy had begun to seem at times like a ringmaster. During Kathleen

* Although theatrical demonstrations of hypnosis have convinced many in the general public that hypnosis can produce embarrassing behavioral changes, there are no reliable studies to suggest that religious indoctrination and prayer techniques can produce long-lasting involuntary changes in individuals, affecting their entire lifestyles. In the 1970s, the CIA concluded that hypnosis was not a reliable method of altering behavior. Hypnosis continues to be used in a clinical setting to assist individuals in altering their behavior in a direction that they desire. While acknowledging these difficulties, Steve Eichel, president of the International Cultic Studies Association, suggests that hypnotic techniques used in religious settings may affect certain hypnotizable individuals by increasing attachment to the religious leader, thus supporting behavioral compliance. It is difficult to imagine how such claims might be ethically studied. See Steve Eichel, "The Theory that Won't Go Away: An Updated Review of the Role Hypnosis Plays in Mind Control." *ICSA Today* 7:1 23–27 (2016). Eichel's formulation is significantly scaled back from the grandiose claims of Singer. See also Dick Anthony "Tactical Ambiguity and Brainwashing Formulations: Science or Pseudo-Science?" 215-317, in *Misunderstanding Cults*, edited by Benjamin Zablocki and Thomas Robbins, Toronto: University of Toronto Press (2001); "Myths About Hypnosis," American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, www.asch.net.

Levy's testimony, Levy and his team indulged in a comic moment that sounded like it came out of a sitcom version of court. Middleton asked Kathleen if she was married to Levy and she said she was. He asked, "How long have you been so married?"

Kathleen answered, "fourteen years."

Middleton replied, tongue-in-cheek, "You have my condolences."

Levy, seated, legs crossed, one arm draped over the back of the chair next to him, looked around casually, laughed and exclaimed, "See what I have to put up with!"¹⁴⁶ Judge Margolis, a diminutive man, blinked behind his large glasses and did nothing.

A Used Pop Bottle

The core arguments supporting coercive persuasion were presented by a more academically qualified expert for Gregory's side, Margaret Thaler Singer, PhD, a clinical psychologist who had studied schizophrenia and taught at UC Berkeley and at the UC San Francisco Medical Center. She had studied Korean prisoners of war, written a book called *Cults in our Midst*, and was a member of the board of the *Cultic Studies Journal*. Her early notable work in schizophrenia had given way to an interest in cults, and she had testified at a number of high-profile trials, including the Patty Hearst criminal trial in 1976, in which she supported Hearst's so-called "brainwashing" defense of her participation in a bank robbery by a political group which had kidnapped her. She also built on the work of Richard Ofshe, a sociologist who had developed a model of control known as "coercive persuasion" based loosely on Edgar Schein's earlier work with Americans imprisoned in Chinese camps during the Korean War.

To prepare for her testimony, Singer had not interviewed any current church members, nor had she read any of Gregory's

letters written while he was in the church. But she had spoken with some ex-members, as well as read interviews with them, including Joseph Szimhart, who was briefly affiliated with the church in the early 1980s. She had read documents by, but apparently never met, John and Susan Pietrangelo—whose last name she mispronounced. And she had spent ten hours interviewing Gregory Mull. After she read a long list of documents she had reviewed, Levy responded obsequiously, “It appears you did your homework.”¹⁴⁷

Levy first asked her to define a cult and to state her opinion as to whether Church Universal and Triumphant was a cult. She listed the seven criteria she used to define a cult: (1) led by a self-appointed leader, (2) who was the object of veneration rather than God, (3) whose purpose was solely to fundraise and recruit members, (4) which possessed a double set of ethics for insiders and outsiders, leaders and followers, (5) elitist, (6) totalitarian, with a pyramid-shaped power structure, (7) totalistic, with rules governing all aspects of life. She stated that, in her opinion, Church Universal and Triumphant was a cult.¹⁴⁸

She attempted to identify aspects of church life which related to each of the seven points. For example, she brought up the differences in lifestyle between “Mrs. Prophet” and the staff. The double standard was also said to apply to the church’s secrecy with regard to outsiders, in that outsiders were not always told that a branch of the church, such as its school or publishing arm, was affiliated with the church. Finally, she stated that the church exhibited “totalistic control of conduct” as evidenced by control over diet, marital decisions, dress, choice of entertainment, etc.¹⁴⁹ (No effort was made to distinguish between CUT’s rules and those of more established religious groups.)

She explained her conclusion that the church was elitist because “spiritual adepts are to rule over inferior people.” I didn’t think the church had ever taught this. Finally, she claimed that the church’s survivalism led to people being “instructed to kill in order

not to lose their chance to clear the planet.”¹⁵⁰ I wondered where that idea came from. It was out in left field and could not be found in any teaching I had heard of, as killing (other than direct self-defense) would be an extreme karma-making act in the church belief system, and the church generally promoted a turn-the-other-cheek attitude towards violence. Klein didn’t even object to her statement. He had probably decided that since the judge was obviously biased against the church, he had better save his objections for really important points.

Singer lectured the jury in a rusty-nail voice, sweater draped over her shoulders like a schoolmarm, summing up by claiming that overall, the practices and beliefs of the church constituted “a thought reform program.”¹⁵¹ She defined a thought reform program as: “a psychotechnology in which there is a systematic manipulation of social and psychological influence techniques of many kinds to get a person to drop their old belief system...and express the new belief system that management within the thought reform organization wants.”¹⁵² As had Rabbi Robbins, she also promoted the view that the kind of thought reform that went on in Communist societies and prisoner-of-war camps could be compared to life in the church, and asserting that people could be controlled by such a system even if there were no bars and fences keeping them in.

Singer went on to give six conditions she stated must be present in order to “carry out a thought reform program”:

The first is you need to get control over the person’s social and/or physical environment. And especially you need to get control of their time. Secondly, to run a thought reform organization, you need to create a sense of powerlessness in the person. This is done by separating them from their past social, psychological, economic support systems...oftentimes getting them to contribute all of their money to the organization...The third feature...is that management level individuals manipulate

rewards, punishments and experiences in ways to influence the people to suppress the display of their old behaviors and to stop expressing their old belief systems about how the world works....[the fourth feature] management wants to manipulate rewards, experiences and punishments in order to elicit new behavior....The fifth condition that has to be present...is the people being thought reformed have to be unaware that it is being done to them....The sixth feature...is it is done within a closed system of logic and within a totalitarian authority structure...the system is unmodifiable...there is no sending suggestions upwards to management.¹⁵³

It is beyond the scope of this work to evaluate each of these conditions for association with Church Universal and Triumphant. Neither Mother nor the church board had any kind of training in psychological influence. Though my father had been a travelling salesman, his methods of persuasion were hardly totalistic or even universally successful. It should be clear to the reader by now that Singer's criteria are sufficiently vague as to be able to be applied to almost any organization, including large corporations, multi-level marketing groups and military training programs. By 1990, psychologist Dick Anthony was able to demonstrate that Singer had made up these criteria on her own, that they did not conform to previous scholarship on indoctrination or the use of influence.*

Although she had reviewed a large amount of material, Singer's preparation was one-sided, which became apparent upon cross-examination. She was under the impression that church members were not allowed to watch movies, when that restriction applied only to Summit University students, although there were some limits on the content of staff movies (mostly nothing rated

* Anthony, Dick. "Religious Movements and 'Brainwashing' Litigation: Evaluating Key Testimony." *In In Gods We Trust: New Patterns of Religious Pluralism in America*, 2nd ed., revised and expanded, edited by Thomas Robbins and D. Anthony, 295-341 (1990). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

above PG). Singer also thought that people were restricted from seeing newspapers, another rule that applied only during the three-month Summit University course.

Next, Singer gave the jury her diagnosis of Gregory. She believed that he suffered from an incurable case of post-traumatic stress disorder. “The trauma of what happened to him while he was in the group was so extensive and so severe that he’s never really gotten going again in life.”¹⁵⁴ Gregory, according to her, was “permanently psychologically disabled” by his time in the church, which treated him, “in the end,” as “a disposable object like a used empty pop bottle.”¹⁵⁵

I could imagine that was how it felt to Gregory, kind of an empty, hollow feeling after turning against the belief system he had held to so strongly for seven years. One can see the seeds of such a feeling of abandonment in his attitudes towards Mother during the June 6, 1980, meeting. He was clearly contemplating the difficulties of life without his social network. I later learned that Gregory had endured a painful separation from his own mother, who had sent him to live in a sanatorium (though he was not ill) after her second marriage, when he was eleven or twelve, and he never lived with her again after that. No doubt this experience brought up difficult memories of the past rejection. I myself would struggle with feelings of loss while trying to sort out my identity from the church.

And I could not deny that my mother had a pattern of behavior in terms of courting individuals with something to offer the church, only to drop them once they had given what she wanted. But is it a crime to drop people? She had personal relationships with thousands of people, which waxed and waned. And control of members, even the most devoted staff, was not nearly as monolithic as Singer had made it out to be. People argued with Mother, questioned her, left and returned, as had Gregory. In short, no one, not Lawrence Levy nor even Randall King, offered evidence to prove that Mother and the church had deliberately designed a

program with the intent Singer had described. Or that it had been applied to Gregory as a “psychotechnology” rather than a genuine religious system.

Deception was often said to be the necessary ingredient of a thought reform program, in that individuals could get involved with a group without knowing that it was a church. The Unification Church (commonly known as the “Moonies”) was said to use such tactics. But my mother’s Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT), while it did work through subsidiaries like Summit University which might not sound religious at first contact, and while it may occasionally have bought properties in the name of a subsidiary or private individual in order to stave off neighborhood opposition to its presence, did not conceal its identity from new members. Gregory certainly knew it was a church soon after his first contact.

People were free to interact with the church in a number of ways, including just being on the mailing list. Of the fifty-thousand or so total people on the church’s mailing list during the 1980s, who had attended some kind of event, between five and ten thousand actually took the step of becoming church members, and only a few hundred joined staff.

It was hard to read the jury. Did they know how open Camelot was? I thought of a Friday afternoon during 1979 when Gregory was living at Camelot. I remembered seeing him drive off in a car through the archway that leads out of the main square, formed by the mansion and the Chapel of the Holy Grail, a three-story white building where he lived. He was off for home, going to spend the weekend in San Francisco. He looked fit, in command of his life, like he was having fun. I wished I could let the jury see that.

The presentation of my mother’s interactions with Gregory also seemed distorted to me. As far as I could see, the only thing Mother might have done wrong to Gregory was to try to convince him to join permanent staff (which he didn’t do) and to sign over

his house to the church (which he didn't do), and to read him the Ananias and Sapphira story, which was, after all, in the Bible.

Yes, Gregory as he sat there in 1986 in the courtroom was a man who inspired pity and appeared to have been damaged. But did sufficient evidence even exist to demonstrate that Elizabeth Clare Prophet and her church had caused the damage? Singer's conclusions seemed based on very partial evidence.

In response to Klein's cross-examination, Singer admitted that it would have been a good idea for her to have examined Gregory's letters written during his time in the church. But she declared that the June 6, 1980, meeting had given her enough information on which to form a conclusion as to the extent of the thought reform. The letters might only have helped her to understand the efficiency of the thought reform program insofar as they demonstrated his use of church language. (According to her theory, an individual's adoption of a group's insider language is a key indicator of the influence of thought reform.) Had she read his letters, she said, "it would have given me more evidence of...how much of the thought reform program operated in terms of keeping his language within the language that the group would sanction" but they could not have convinced her that he was not under the influence of thought reform.¹⁵⁶ Of course, many groups use insider jargon, and Gregory's letters indicated that he was capable of switching between the insider language and more generalized idiom when he chose.

Singer doubled down on her conclusions, also stating that her opinion as to Gregory having been a victim of thought reform would not change if she were presented with new facts that he had spent less time at Camelot than she had previously been told or if he had been depressed or unsuccessful before joining the church. Her conclusions were based on what she called the total picture. In fact, she made the sweeping statement that she believed that he had

been a victim of coercive persuasion since 1974, and was still a victim twelve years later, six years after leaving the church.¹⁵⁷

The coercive persuasion was kept alive, she declared, to the extent that the church continued harassing him, which she believed had been the case as recently as her interview with him in 1985. She maintained that the fact that her interviews with him occurred in 1982, 1984, and 1985—years after his exit from the church—had no bearing on the validity of her conclusions.

Klein: Did you reach a conclusion as to when he first became the victim of coercive persuasion, what year?

Singer: Yes, sir.

Klein: What year was that?

Singer: It began—and it was your introduction of the word ‘victim’—his victimization began in 1974.

Klein: And when did it end?

Singer: It’s still continuing. He is still a victim of the consequences of that original contact and all the subsequent behavior that was done to him.

Klein: My question is though when did he cease being coercively persuaded by this group?

Singer: I am not sure that it’s happened yet because I haven’t talked with him recently to see if any harassment in recent times has happened to him.

Klein: So any time there is some harassment, then that would mean he is still being coercively persuaded by them?

Singer: Yes, sir. If there is a connection between the harassment and the organization, it would remain part of it.

Klein: When he's told you about the harassment, what have you done to check out to determine if the harassment actually occurred?

Singer: Sir, in my business, my assessment is of his state of mind, what the material, what the contact, what the behavior that he experiences means to him. And I felt that he was giving me an honest presentation of what he thought was happening to him.

In summing up, Singer speculated that the only difference there would have been had she spoken with Gregory earlier, were that he would have been under *more* stress and would have expressed "more intenseness of his suffering, more intenseness of the life anxiety and agony that he was suffering then." She said she knew she could trust his descriptions of his condition and experience "because he is a truthful appearing man and he tries as best he can to be an honest and truthful person. So I feel he would have been honest with me no matter when I saw him."¹⁵⁸

Though Singer was treated with deference in the courtroom, her lack of rigor eventually caught up with her. It was her near universal application of theories of influence which would eventually bring Singer's body of work on cults as well as her theory of thought reform into disrepute in the psychological community, as discussed later. The church's expert witnesses, who testified later in the trial, laid out the basic framework of arguments that would eventually lead to the demise of Singer's theories.

The Church's Experts Respond to Coercive Persuasion; Levy Cries Jonestown

The church's expert witnesses presented quite a different picture from that of Singer and Robbins. They testified that "cult" was a problematic term and that the church's indoctrination programs were no different from those someone might encounter in the Catholic Church or the military.

The first, Robert Moore, whose PhD was in interdisciplinary studies in psychology and religion from Duke University, had spent much more time studying the church than either Singer or Robbins. Moore, who was in 1986 a professor of psychology and religion at the Chicago Theological Seminary, had investigated CUT between 1977 and 1980. During that period, he talked with more than fifty members and attended a conference at Camelot, in addition to about a hundred decree sessions. During the conference, he spent the night in the dormitories and ate meals on campus. His conclusion was that he “saw no evidence of coercive persuasion or brainwashing or thought reform,” though he had expected to see it.¹⁵⁹ He also saw “no evidence of hypnosis.”¹⁶⁰

Moore, who had counselled about a hundred former members of “so-called minority religions or cults,”¹⁶¹ had begun his research with the idea of writing a book about the “pathological effects” of membership in New Age religious organizations, but decided there wasn’t enough evidence and the premise was wrong.¹⁶² He said that people join and leave new religious movements on their own, when they are ready. He called decrees a “very powerful ritual technique which is used by this group to create a sense of group solidarity and a sense of enhanced energy and commitment.”¹⁶³

He had reviewed Singer’s testimony about thought reform and he commented that “every religious group is interested in influencing the behavior of its members. That’s part of what all religions do....What some would call thought reform, other people call Christian education.”¹⁶⁴ He did not believe that “coercive persuasion” was possible without the threat of physical confinement.

Judge Margolis became so interested in Moore’s testimony that he began to ask him questions himself, and drilled him on the question of whether thought reform could occur in situations where physical force was absent. Moore responded that the research on

the phenomenon had all been done in cases of physical force, and that “the application to situations like small religious groups is a total misapplication of that theory.”¹⁶⁵

Levy tried to get Moore to admit that if he was willing to become silent in response to the judge’s gavel that he was “persuaded, controlled or possibly even manipulated,” rather than simply responding to his own social conditioning.¹⁶⁶ Moore responded that if one bought into that line, one would have to “totally throw out a vision of the human being as having free will and autonomy and the capacity to live in a democratic state.”¹⁶⁷

Moore testified that if the six characteristics of a thought reform program such as described by Singer existed, they could allow a group to control persons “to a degree,” such as for an individual undergoing military boot camp or joining a Catholic religious order. But “participation in a religious group is an interactional phenomenon.”¹⁶⁸ People who join groups have agendas just as groups have things they want out of individuals. Individuals conform so long as they are getting what they want out of the group, but stop conforming when they are disappointed, for example priests and nuns who stop allowing the Catholic church to dictate their sexual behavior after they leave.

* * *

Saul Levine, the church’s next expert witness, was a highly qualified psychiatrist and medical doctor who had published dozens of articles in the field of cults, new religions and what he called “intense belief systems.”¹⁶⁹ Over a fifteen-year period, he had interviewed and counseled over four hundred members of new religions, which included urban communes and orthodox yeshiva schools in Israel. He testified that he found it important when researching a group to interview people who are both inside and outside, as well as the leaders, rather than basing an opinion on a single individual’s experience. “It is very difficult to make any kind

of global generalization on the basis of a single point in time.”¹⁷⁰ Both “true believers” inside of groups as well as people who are angry at a group have “a vested interest” in promoting their point of view.¹⁷¹

Countering Singer’s cookie-cutter definition of a thought-reform program, Levine stated that even if the characteristics are present, the effect on members varies. The six characteristics do not take into account “the individual personality, needs, problems, conflicts, whatsoever of the individual, the personality characteristics of the type of member.”¹⁷²

He used the term “true believer,” coined by Eric Hoffer in the 1960s, to describe some members of new religions, those who tend to proselytize intensely, to be closed to conflicting points of view, and to idealize leaders. When they encounter the leader’s fallibility, they tend to become quickly disillusioned. He also stated that he had not seen any evidence that the “cults” he had studied use the type of “strategically managed psycho-technology in order to break their spirit and enslave them.”¹⁷³

Although he had not interviewed Gregory or any other church members, Levine had read his letters and testimony, along with that of Singer and Robbins, and the transcript of the June 6, 1980, meeting. He said that in his opinion, there were “strong indications” that Gregory was a true believer who believes, while in an organization, that it can do no wrong, and when he leaves, he flips, and hates it as much as he had loved it before.

Levine also offered a different perspective from Singer on whether Gregory had been permanently damaged by the church. He stated that it was his conclusion that people who leave a new religion may go through a period of up to six months where they may have culture shock and need counseling to adjust to the change, but that in general, “almost invariably there is no permanent emotional

scarring.”¹⁷⁴ Levine was still at that time (1986) following group members he had first interviewed in the mid-seventies.

When cross-examining Levine, Levy employed an extended hypothetical designed to support the idea of Singer’s thought reform program. I quote it in full to demonstrate the extent to which the insinuations about a thought reform program permeated the trial. It reads:

Now, if someone were sequestered at a church setting or let’s call it a school setting, like a Summit University, while they were there they were subjected to the extent that they could participate, some isolation from their family and the outside world, some group suggestibility, certain degree of peer group pressure, and the good fellowship or love bombing that goes on in new wave [sic] religions, the removal of their personal privacy, being dormitoried or quartered in barracks type settings, where their days are full from early in the morning to late at night like Dr. Moore told us his were when he went to a conference...if they are subjected to subliminal messages where there is a limitation upon questioning because the usual response is, ‘eventually we will get to that question, don’t disturb the group at the present time,’ if there is a confusing doctrine...if there is the suggestion that they should reject their old values even send letters to their old minister that they now reject their old religion, if they are subjected to mandatory confessions, if there is a certain amount of guilt with regard to whether or not their past lives are such as they are going to allow them to make their ascension, if there is a certain amount of fear, fear of not following a particular spiritual path, if they are subjected to hours of repetition decreeing, if in the course of what they do they get plenty of good old vegetables, but what they get is controlled by the group leader...if there are dress codes, if there is a flaunting of the hierarchy, if the precult family is disturbed or destroyed, if there is a financial commitment that they are obligated to, if they undergo a period of fasting and

enemas and colonics, if the average person were subjected to that over a three-month period in a sequestered setting, would it be your professional opinion that that might play an important part in a thought reform program?”¹⁷⁵

Levine responded only by saying that if all those factors were present without redeeming features, “and the individual has no volition on his own, I would say it would affect and influence the individual.”¹⁷⁶ In fact, it mischaracterized not only the six months Gregory spent in Summit University but the entire tenor of life either at Summit University or on staff.

The testimony turned to the question of whether an individual could be permanently damaged through association with a New Age religion. Levine replied that in his experience, individuals could suffer “culture shock” and “depression” after leaving a group, as well as shame for having left the group and concern about the future, but these were temporary and not permanent effects, which tended to resolve within “six months” of leaving.¹⁷⁷

Most people he had studied tended to leave the groups within six months to two years. A person who had been involved for a number of years would have a harder time reintegrating. Levine responded that there were some circumstances in which he could imagine permanent damage, but he had not seen it.

Levy replied sarcastically: “Do you think the people who went to Jonestown suffered any irrevocable damages or permanent damages as a result of their cult experience?”*

* In November 1978, more than nine hundred members of the People’s Temple at Jonestown, a religious community based on Christian and communist principles and located in Guyana, but primarily composed of United States

Levine: “You want me to answer that?”

Levy: “If you want to bother.”¹⁷⁸

Klein jumped up and objected. This time, his objection was sustained. During break, he said he was going to demand a mistrial, or that the jury tour Camelot. “This is outrageous! He’s comparing Camelot to one of the most heinous places in history.” But the next day, we were back in court. The judge said it was a passing reference, asked counsel to refrain from mentioning Jonestown again, and told the jury to disregard Levy’s statements. In spite of these instructions, Levy later did also bring up Jonestown again, as well as the “Happy Hookers for Christ” which had been members of a group known as the Children of God in the 1960s.

The next expert witness for the church was the religion scholar J. Gordon Melton, PhD, who had researched the church during the course of compiling his *Encyclopedia of American Religion*. Melton had interviewed both current and former members of the church. He compared decreeing to Shin Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu worship. He also contextualized a vegetarian diet, fasting, belief in reincarnation and volunteer work as being common features among both new and established religions.

He clarified the process of decreeing “against” a person’s energy, stating that people would not decree against a person because all people are believed to be part of God. So decrees could not be given against God but “if they see someone who is particularly caught up in a morass of evil energy, they would pray to have that morass of evil energy that surrounds them dissipated so that their god self can show through.”¹⁷⁹ He pointed out that in

citizens, committed suicide or were murdered by other group members at the direction of their leader, Jim Jones.

addition to praying against other people's evil energies, that church members also prayed against their own evil tendencies.

Concerning CUT's recruiting practices, he explained that in his opinion, they were "low-key" compared to other groups, in that advertising was used, rather than buttonholing people in the street.¹⁸⁰ Most members of the church were already familiar with esoteric ideas and "ascended master teachings," and they tended to take a long time to commit to a higher level of membership, such as joining staff.

Levy, defying the judge, asked Melton if the church could be compared to the Jonestown community and he said it couldn't. It was more like a Catholic church with monastic orders.¹⁸¹

Levy also took the chance to cast doubt on Mother's practice of receiving channeled messages from invisible beings by asking another long hypothetical: "Let's say the spiritual leader of this church...were to be communicating with someone in her church and a communication that she was giving to the other person purported to come from one of those spiritual beings that she gets messages from. Do you think it might have been presumptuous of her if she signed that ascended master's name instead of her own name?"

Melton responded that such practices were "quite common in occult religious circles."¹⁸² But Levy was undeterred. Several more times during the expert testimony, he asked long hypotheticals implying that the very practice of receiving messages from departed spirits or saints was deceptive and manipulative. But he continued to affirm that the religion itself was not on trial.

The Negotiator

James Richardson, PhD, a sociologist who specializes in social psychology, identified Gregory's correspondence as evidence

of negotiation, and evaluated it with respect to coercive persuasion models.

He began by discussing active versus passive conversion models, that many members of new religions encountered them while actively seeking. They negotiate with groups before joining them. He thought that Gregory's letters represented a good example of such negotiation.

He identified the letter of February 22, 1979, which he said "clearly illustrates again that he is involved in some pretty straightforward negotiation. This is a very rational letter."¹⁸³ In the letter, Gregory asks for two thousand dollars per month, and states that he will give the church "ten percent of all profit I make from the sale of my property."¹⁸⁴ The letter goes on to state that he would "pay over and above that sum if necessary to see you are paid back in full for all monies paid to me to-date."¹⁸⁵

Richardson also cited the April 20, 1980, letter discussed during the June 6 meeting. In this letter Gregory had offered to pay ten thousand dollars if the rest were made "null and void by calling it salary or independent contractor payment or a forgiveness of debt."¹⁸⁶ In Richardson's view, this letter was an example of negotiation.

Offering an alternative view as to why Gregory's view of his church experience had shifted so widely during 1980, Richardson proposed it could partly be explained by what he called the phenomenon of "reconstruction," whereby people reinterpret their past in light of the present experience. People who join new religions tend to reinterpret their past in a worse light—for example, "I was such a sinner...and now I'm saved."¹⁸⁷ And people who leave tend to reconstruct again to make sense of why they had moved on. He felt that Mull's letters gave evidence of reconstruction in both senses.

Reconstruction is often inaccurate, Richardson pointed out. And especially when an individual is attempting to align with a new “reference group,” it is best understood “in terms of the current interest of the person....the values and the perspectives of that new reference group.”¹⁸⁸ In Gregory’s life, the new “reference group” would have been the anti-cult movement.

Richardson summed up by concluding that the letters from Gregory which he evaluated showed “that he was a person who was trying to take control of his life and he was acting as an active agent. I would not accept the idea based on what I have read of Mr. Mull that he was a passive kind of object being pushed around.”¹⁸⁹

During his cross-examination, Levy tried to get Richardson to admit that Gregory may have been “distraught” and “emotionally upset” while writing some of the letters, which he claimed was at odds with the picture of someone in control of his life. But Richardson said that it was possible to both negotiate and to show emotion. Under Levy’s questioning, Richardson became confused about the timeline of the negotiations and whether they were finalized before Gregory’s arrival at Camelot in 1979, but his observations about the incompatibility of negotiation and slavish obedience remained unchallenged.¹⁹⁰

Levy tried to distort the question of reconstruction to refer to parents lying to their children about the tooth fairy and children discovering the truth. Richardson explained that reconstruction is a complicated process. Levy responded with another hypothetical: “Let’s say that for whatever reason, you decided I was your spiritual leader, and I told you I could fill your pockets and make you levitate. If you found out that I really couldn’t, and you left my group and then you talked about my inability to do what I said I could do, would that be a reconstruction of biography?”¹⁹¹

The hypotheticals, to say the least, were becoming more bizarre. Since Mother had never promised money or levitation skills,

it was difficult to see how they could have been relevant other than to question Elizabeth Clare Prophet's claim to speak for God, something courts in the U.S. do not generally address. After the expert witnesses had finished testifying, the church wrapped up its case and both sides prepared for closing arguments.



Gregory Mull and his sister, c.
1960s.

Chapter 8: Biblical Flourishes and the Final Outcome

On Wednesday morning, March 19, when Mother, Edward, and I showed up at court, Ken Klein was sitting outside of the courtroom, hunched over a yellow legal pad. Levy was sitting to the other side of the door, working a crossword puzzle.

When closing arguments began, a little after eleven, Levy's argument reflected his lack of preparation. It was rambling, bombastic and generalized. Rather than detailed notes, he worked from a time line and a list of causes of action. Walking back and forth between the chalkboard and his lectern each time he became lost, he began by writing "1974. Recruited....I hope that is how you spell recruited."¹⁹² He went through his version of Gregory's story, which I had heard many times through the trial, restated in his windy questions: Gregory was deliberately recruited and indoctrinated, his confession letter was misused, and Randall King told the truth.

As he defended the truthfulness of his clients, Levy began to display emotion:

And Randall King, Elizabeth's ex-husband, who Mr. Klein pointed a finger at and accused of lying...and Randall King sat there and the more he told the truth, I submit to you the more Ken Klein got angry. You remember what Gregory Mull said when he got on the stand? He said, "Mr. Levy, I did what you told me. I told the truth." Gregory Mull has got M.S. Excuse me just a moment.¹⁹³

Levy turned away from the jury and wiped a tear from his eyes. He was getting caught up in emotion, which was probably not too difficult to summon given Gregory's increasingly bedraggled and confused appearance. But I found Levy's defense of his client's truthfulness disingenuous. While Randall probably was telling the

truth as he remembered it, with respect to Gregory's testimony, the question of truthfulness should have been more in line with which version—that in his letters to the church, his deposition, his trial testimony or his statements to the press after his exit?

Gregory's overall inconsistency did not come up in Levy's defense: "He can't—he *can't* lie. What he can't do is he can't—he can't do for you what he couldn't do for me when I first knew him....He has got to tell it like it is. And if he tries to mix it up, if he tries to manipulate, he can't do it."¹⁹⁴ Levy had strayed far from the point of his argument, which at that moment was discussing Gregory's confession letter.

After a break, Levy continued his rambling summation, talking about how the church treated people who had left. Testimony had shown that Gregory was on the "clock of betrayal," a list of former members whose energy was addressed in staff decree sessions. "And whether they decree against your energy or your body or your back or your shoulder or your arm or whatever part of you it is, they decree against you."¹⁹⁵

Concerning the fraud charge, next on the list, again he ranged far afield, saying, "We've heard an entire course of conduct of Elizabeth Clare Prophet and of the church. You heard about thought reform. You heard about hypnosis. We heard about food right up until the time we had heard about Mother Clare's [vegetarian] lunch. And what did dear Elizabeth tell us then? 'You got teeth and you got saliva. I don't want to hear any more complaints. Chew.'"¹⁹⁶ He was referring to a memo Mother had written encouraging staff to chew their vegetables. It was hard to see what chewing food had to do with fraud. He went on. "We heard about colonics. If you didn't get it in one end, you got it in the other end."¹⁹⁷

Finished with fraud for the time being, he took up coercive persuasion. "Thought reform?...It is a very strange thing I submit to

you. All of the things for thought reform were present. But they don't want to call it thought reform. You know, if it waddles like a duck and it quacks like a duck, there is a damn good possibility it might be a duck."¹⁹⁸ I was at this point glad I would not have to listen to Levy's folksy witticisms after today.

After attacking the expert testimony, Levy eventually arrived at intentional infliction of emotional distress. "Let's see what—what we have got so far...let's talk about the intentional infliction of emotional distress....Was there some emotional distress? There was the destruction of an individual's life. Is that distressful? It was the destruction of a family. Is that distressful? There was a destruction of a man's economic future. Was that distressful?"¹⁹⁹

I had to admit that emotional distress was the one cause of action on which Gregory might have had a case, if the decrees against him could be considered to have caused him stress. But Levy did not focus on the question of whether knowing his former friends were decreeing about him was stressful. Rather, he seemed to make the decrees themselves frightening, of which further discussion below.

Finally, Levy got down to damages and awards. How much did he want the jury to give Gregory Mull? He went up to the whiteboard and said, "What I am tempted to do is put a great big "P" right here and write punitive damages all over the whole damn board because that is what it is all about. Punitive damages. Gregory is entitled to be compensated....Look at Mr. Mull, look at his tongue. Did it have any effect on him what they did to him? Is he entitled to be compensated for it? Yeah."²⁰⁰ He drew a huge "P" and a huge "D" over the time line and his other writing. He didn't want just a million or so. He wanted tens of millions.

We talked about a lot of millions when we first came in here. And I asked each and every one of you if it came down to it, could you in all good faith talk about 30 or 40 or 50 million? We

know what this church has got....We know about their 250 acres at Camelot, and their 40,000 acres in Montana, and their property here, there and everywhere else...No, ladies and gentlemen, no three or four or five million dollars. They can do that standing on their head. They can raise that kind of money without even batting an eye. They can accumulate that in cash in nothing flat. What we need here is a verdict that will educate, that will teach them a lesson, that will keep that kind of conduct from being repeated.²⁰¹

He wound up with an appeal to divine justice. “Yeah, I talked about God. Since this trial has to do with the church, maybe God has intervened. It is just possible that Gregory Mull, as painful as it’s been for him, and Randall King, as uncomfortable as it was for him, that by their telling the truth here, that God’s work really is being done.”²⁰²

* * *

After Levy finished, Klein asked Margolis if a short break might not be in order, but Margolis said it was too early, and told him to proceed. In contrast to Levy, Klein was focused, organized and stuck to the facts. His wife, who had never attended any of his court proceedings, was sitting in the audience. This was probably the most important case he had ever tried. His theme was: When trying to find out who is telling the truth, start with the documentary evidence. First, Klein talked about whether Gregory was telling the truth, and pointed out the many places where his testimony conflicted with his letters.

He moved on to Randall. Could he be believed? “It was Randall King who told you that he had an affair with Elizabeth Clare Prophet while he was a good friend of her husband, Mark Prophet. It was Randall King who told you that he had an adulterous relationship with his secretary while he was married to Elizabeth Clare Prophet.” He called Randall a “one-man rebuttal case.

Whatever gaps had developed in Mr. Mull's case up to that point, Mr. Levy just called on his other client, Randall King, and he came in and he took care of them."²⁰³

He talked about whether Gregory Mull was entitled to receive damages. "Now, in the very beginning of this case, both Mr. Levy and myself said that you cannot find for Mr. Mull out of sympathy because every single person in this courtroom has compassion for Mr. Mull...But...your duty as jurors is to decide this case based on the evidence and the facts before you."²⁰⁴

Klein took his own walk through the causes of action. Concerning fraud, which is the broadest of the causes of action and probably the most damaging in the eyes of the public, Klein said:

Mr. Mull says he was defrauded by the church. The fact is Mr. Mull ended up with the church's \$32,000....In determining if Mr. Mull was defrauded by this church, I would suggest that it is probably the first time in the history of jurisprudence where the victim of the fraud started out broke, as Mr. Mull testified he was, and ended up with \$32,000 from the person who was the alleged perpetrator.²⁰⁵

He also turned to thought reform, the unnamed cause of action, saying, "If people did become as easily hypnotized as has been suggested in this courtroom, then we all really would be in trouble because people who really know how to use hypnosis would have us all doing all sorts of things. But that doesn't happen in the real world because people can't be hypnotized in the way it's been suggested."²⁰⁶

He then returned to the First Amendment, a topic of concern given all the testimony about the religion. He asked, "Since when in the United States of America does anyone have the right to review the prayers of a church?"

Judge Margolis interrupted: “This case does has nothing to do with monitoring prayer.”

Klein continued, “I am referring to the decree that had been put in evidence and read to you. When you judge that decree ask yourself whether you want somebody to come into other churches and synagogues in this country and judge the prayers....Because if you are going to do it to Church Universal and Triumphant, then you have to be ready to do it to any other churches in this country.”²⁰⁷

This led to his own rhetorical flourish. He said, “I’d suggest when you consider just how terrible that decree is, then maybe you take a look at the Holy Bible.” He read from Deuteronomy, from a passage in which Moses informed his own people what would happen if they did not obey God’s laws: “The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew and they shall pursue thee until thou perish.”²⁰⁸

Klein followed up, “Maybe somebody should have sued Moses for intentional infliction of emotional distress. I’d suggest that the kind of punishments I have read to you from that section of the Bible as well as other sections are more severe than anything suggested in the decree that’s been read in this court.”²⁰⁹

Summing up as to whether Gregory was damaged by the church, he said, “I am sure there are people who eat garbage from the Dumpster behind Vons. But I doubt there are any others who drive up in their new Toyotas, and go home to their condominiums in Westlake and go on nationwide videotaping tours.”²¹⁰ Finally: “Don’t believe what I say, don’t believe what Mr. Levy says. Believe your notes, believe your memory.”²¹¹

Levy had the opportunity to rebut, and he made sure to let the jury know who to blame for Gregory’s state. Referring to the letter

in which Gregory told his wife Kathleen he wanted a divorce, which mentioned that the ascended master El Morya (speaking through Mother) had told him he did not have to continue his marriage, he said: “Where is El Morya? Who in this courtroom talks to El Morya? Sitting right over there on that side is El Morya.”²¹² He pointed at Mother, who sat in profile to the jury, impassive.

He went on: “She gave him permission to get divorced...She is the one who called him into the meeting and said, ‘Okay. You don’t like the way I run my church, you don’t like the way I do this, you don’t like that, get out.’ It was Gregory Mull’s wife who left the next day. And by whose order? El Morya? No. By Elizabeth Clare Prophet, who would have you believe that she is just the kindest, sweetest, lovingest person you have ever seen.”²¹³

He had thought of a way to get in his own Biblical flourish: “We heard about Deuteronomy. Well, let me tell you there is another—there is another thing in the Bible. And I’d remind you that the lady’s name—her maiden name was *Wulf*. Take a look in Mark. What does it say? Beware of wolves in sheep’s clothing.”²¹⁴

It seemed to me that Levy and his buddies had been spending too much time patting each other on the back about their wit. In spite of the flat pun, it did provide insight into their motivations. If Elizabeth Clare Prophet really was a she-wolf, then any tactics at all could be justified to prevent her from damaging others. So, too, if her channeling and dictation work was truly not of God, but of the devil or Satan. Having returned to his Christian roots Gregory and some of his supporters believed that it was their divine obligation to stop this “false prophet.”

In conclusion, Levy got to the point of all of his statements about Camelot being a “show,” referring back to Mother’s deposition comment about “getting on with the show.” “Camelot was a scam. Lanello’s retreat [a property the church had owned in Colorado] was a scam. They raised money, but they never built. Six,

seven, eight times they raised money, but they never built. Now they are off to Montana. And the New Jerusalem moves on. It is a tent show. It is a great tent show.”²¹⁵ The inference was clear. Mother was a modern-day Elmer Gantry, who must be stopped. A few minutes later, Levy finished. The judge dismissed everyone and told the jurors to come back in the morning to begin their deliberations. It was 4:32 p.m.

Back home, I thought about what Levy had said. Camelot was so much more than a tent show. And more than Elizabeth Clare Prophet. It had its problems but it was a spiritual home for many. It was bake sales and maypole dances and picnics and a school and weddings and baptisms and holidays and plays, all celebrated in a unique and yes quirky way that meant something special to a lot of people. And that was what Levy and Mull wanted to take away, much as they clothed it in the language of justice.

The Verdict

Mother did not go down to court to hear the verdict, which she already knew couldn't be good. “The church can afford that,” one of the staff had overheard a juror say, leaving the courtroom the day after they finished their nine days of deliberations.

Outside the courtroom as we waited for the verdict, Ken told Edward, Sean, and I that Carole Snow (the woman Mother had spoken to in the restroom early in the trial) had been elected as the jury foreman. He also told us that Margolis had once again indicated his bias against the church by refusing to give the jury a directed verdict form, which would have had them specify the causes of action to which damages were related. Instead, he gave them a form that would allow them to assess damages in general without saying what they were for. I could only conclude that Margolis did this because there wasn't enough evidence on any of the causes of action to assess millions of dollars in damages.

As for the church's ability to pay, the church did not have tens of millions of dollars. Its cash in the bank was rarely more than a few hundred thousand dollars. Mother had raised a million and a half dollars a year for five years—the seven and a half million dollars it took to buy the Forbes ranch (which later became the church headquarters in Montana). But that had been the most money she had ever raised in her life, and had taken numerous creative speeches and letters.

Camelot's purchase price had been more than five million dollars, but it had been bought with a down payment of a few hundred thousand and its mortgage was heavily dependent on monthly tithes. As for the mansions, the Ashram in downtown Los Angeles had been sold to buy a second Montana ranch, called the North Ranch, and the La Tourelle mansion in Colorado was valuable, but not in the tens of millions of dollars. A verdict like Levy wanted would have been more than the church was worth and would have sent it into receivership at the expense of everybody who had ever donated their money or time. Perhaps if it had liquidated everything, it might have been worth twenty million dollars. But Klein hadn't wanted to put on any real information about the value of the church, not wanting the jury to know exactly what to take away.

The jurors filed in as normal and took their seats. They did not look at us. The judge asked, "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, have you reached your verdict?"

"We have, your honor," Carole Snow said.

She handed the verdict to the court reporter, who read it aloud. They found in favor of Gregory, and awarded five-hundred-twenty-one thousand dollars in compensatory damages against Mother and the church, the same amount in punitive damages against the church, and in punitive damages against Mother personally, totaling roughly 1.6 million dollars.

Judge Margolis polled the jury individually to discover if this truly was their verdict. They answered, eleven times, “Yes.” When he came to Carole Snow, he asked, “Is this your verdict?” She gave an exhausted yet firm “No.”

After the verdict, the judge thanked the jurors and invited them to see his chambers. Ken said he was doing it so we couldn’t talk to them. He led us quickly downstairs to the exit where they would be going out to the parking lot. Carole Snow and an alternate juror named Ernie Kaufman were the only ones who came over to talk to us. The rest escaped quickly through the door, shepherded by the diminutive, black-robed judge. I thought—what has the world come to, that people could believe such awful things about us, that they had to hide the jurors from us as if we were the mafia or something.

Ken Klein went back to Camelot with us, where children carrying flowers greeted him at the broad, concrete steps of the chapel. One girl handed him a bouquet, which he carried down the center aisle of the ornate, high-ceilinged room and stood embarrassed on stage, flowers askew. The congregation gave him a spontaneous, thundering standing ovation, followed by a round of “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.” Ken had never lost a case but nobody blamed him. During the two-hour meeting, he explained the verdict to the congregation, which he thought was based on the errors the judge had made in allowing irrelevant testimony.

A couple of days later, the enormity of what happened was still sinking in. Carole Snow had lunch with Ken and filled him in on the details. She was actually a professor of sociology at the University of Southern California, where I had been a student, though I had taken a semester off in order to support my mother during the trial. No one had been aware of Carole’s status during the trial since she had sidestepped her exact place of employment during her *voir dire* interview as juror, stating only that she taught at a local college. Carole told Ken how narrowly the church had

escaped a multi-million-dollar verdict. She said that when the jury first went into chambers, after they elected her foreman, she polled them. *All* of them thought the church was guilty and most of them wanted to bring in a verdict in the tens of millions of dollars.

“I kept bringing them back to the correspondence, the letters,” she said. “I would say, now what did Mr. Mull say in his letters? I had them read every single letter out loud. We talked about it every day for nine days and I finally got them down to a more reasonable number. But they wouldn’t change their minds, and they could have turned in their verdict without me. They only needed nine people. We were all getting exhausted.”

“The only reason we talked for so many days was that we were such good friends. We’d gone to a Lakers game together. I was a vegetarian and they knew that because we had lunch together every day.” This information was like gold to me after all the time I had spent wondering what went on in the jury chamber. Ken also found out that one of the consultants Levy had hired was from a firm that helped attorneys pick jurors. He had warned Levy not to have Carole on the jury, but Levy kept her because he thought she might identify with his wife, Kathleen, who was also a marriage, child and family therapist.

The woman Carole identified with, at least on some level, was Mother. On her private pink note paper, which had ragged edges and a faint Vicar of Christ seal, Mother wrote Carole a thank you note, something like, “What can I say to a fellow woman, someone I don’t even know, coming to my aid.”

I reflected many times how different things might have been if Carole Snow hadn’t been on the jury. Whether it was a twist of fate or, as Mother believed, divine intervention, without Carole, a lot of things wouldn’t have happened. The church certainly would not have been able to move to Montana and build the fallout shelters as it did in 1989 and 1990, three years later. But if the verdict

had been larger, the appellate court also might have taken a closer look.

That fall, I had the chance to meet Carole for myself and get more information and insight than I could have hoped for. I had gone back to USC for my final semester and one day, while I was heading out of one of the restrooms in the journalism school, who walked in but Carole Snow, looking much different than she had during the trial. She was wearing a tailored, bright pink suit with shoulder pads and seemed every inch an executive. “What are you doing here?” she asked.

“I’m a student. What are *you* doing here?”

“I work here.” We went out into the hall and down to her office. I started to realize why Carole might have identified with Mother. She had a supervisory role in the Letters, Arts and Sciences advisement office. I decided that she had seen her share of office politics and business deals gone sour. Maybe that was why she was able to understand better than the other jurors.

“You look different than you did at the trial,” I said.

“You do, too,” she said, eyeing my tank top edged with rhinestones. “I thought you lived in a convent. I didn’t think you’d even be allowed to live in the outside world.”

Through her eyes, I started to realize how we seemed to the jury. Even Carole, who supported us, thought we were strange. She noticed that all the women who testified were pale and wore high-necked blouses. I told her we were usually too busy to tan. Among ourselves, we didn’t notice the similarities. But to an outsider, our solid-colored clothes and gold jewelry probably looked like a uniform.

She told me that she had chosen to view her time on the jury as a sociological experiment, and had gotten a replacement to teach her class. She deliberately wore cheap-looking clothes so that she wouldn't seem intimidating to the other jurors. A week later, Carole and I had lunch at the faculty club. I was still feeling sensitive about the trial, especially what had been said about my mother's lifestyle. "My mother does live well but she works hard and brings in most of the money for the church," I said. "And her beach house," I said, "she needs that to write."

Carole gave a "tsk." "That might not be necessary," she said. "I don't think that everything your mother has done is right. But I don't believe she did anything to Gregory Mull that deserved damages." Wow, I thought. I hadn't been prepared for her to give Mother so much latitude.

I asked her, "What did you think of him, at the end?"

"I see him as a person who had a hard time living with the results of his decisions."

I asked how she had managed to both keep the jury schedule and stay abreast of her office work. "It was stressful," she admitted. "At one point, I didn't know if I was going to make it. I had a nightmare and woke myself up by sitting straight up in the dark and calling 'Spirit! Spirit!' It felt spooky." The other jurors, I thought, must have been more spooked than the rational Carole.

Carole confirmed this. "What was very important to me was to keep the jury together, as a unit. Some of them were just petrified of your mother." She told me that a young, overweight Hispanic man named Fernando couldn't even look at her. "I used to say to him, 'Look at the nice dress Mrs. Prophet has on today,' or something like that, just to humanize her."

The jurors were afraid of Mother, said Carole, and they were also concerned that the church members who packed the courtroom day after day were decreeing “against” them. In this they were correct, at least that they were mentioned in decrees on a daily basis, but wrong that they were being decreed “against.” Decrees on the jury usually involved asking for their protection and ability to discern the truth.

I had one more question for Carole—had they really bought into the coercive persuasion argument with respect to Gregory’s borrowing money from the church. “What did they think about the promissory notes? Did they really think he was under mind control?”

“They weren’t sure,” she said. “But they thought there was something fishy.”

Carole changed the subject, telling me that it was good that Tatiana had given Edward a public hug and I had given one to Mother. “You seemed rigid to us, like you didn’t have feelings.” Lunch was over too quickly and I was amazed at the quantity of insight that had fallen into my lap.

We soon got more evidence of the church’s narrow escape. In a Scientology trial taking place simultaneously with *CUT v. Mull* and just across the hall in the same courthouse, and where Margaret Singer had also testified, the jury awarded Larry Wollersheim twenty-eight million dollars. I am not familiar with the facts of that case, or damage to Wollersheim, but I do not believe they were proportionate to twenty-eight million dollars.

In July of 1986, Gregory finally succumbed to complications of multiple sclerosis and he died. A month before, he had signed an agreement with the church that there would be no new trial. Whatever the result of the appeals process, we would both abide by it. He was quickly revered as a martyr by his partisans, who

whispered that he had been killed by the church's decrees. Most church members, of course, believed that it was only his own "karma" that had caught up with him.



Gregory Mull. c. 1984

The Appeal

The church appealed the verdict on the grounds that the trial court had made errors by permitting the introduction of irrelevant and prejudicial material, including prayers, which should not have been admitted on First Amendment grounds.

However, the appeal was not successful. In April 1989, the California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, affirmed the judgment, finding that although the trial court had made errors, they were not reversible errors. The errors involved the admission of

irrelevant material. The court found that it was irrelevant to bring in the silver futures investment debacle known as the Clayton Brokerage case, but that other evidence supported the jury's verdict.²¹⁶ The testimony regarding an extramarital affair was also irrelevant but did not constitute a reversible error since it detracted equally from the credibility of both Randall King and Elizabeth Clare Prophet.²¹⁷

The court also argued that putting decrees into evidence was not irrelevant, since the decree "corroborated Mr. Mull." According to the appellate court, Mull had described decrees "as lengthy chants which were used for a number of purposes, including the discipline and control of CUT members. These latter goals were effected by requiring members to decree for many hours."

The court went on: "King testified that he thought decreeing could be dangerous because the activity could lead to a 'kind of a hypnotic state where you are super-suggestible.' He also stated that some decrees involved shouts, hand signals, and vitriolic language directed at organizations or persons (which could include former members) thought to oppose CUT....The subject document included a blank space which one could reasonably infer was provided so that names could be inscribed therein and become the objects of the decree. Counsel for Mull inquired of various witnesses whether Mull's name had been so inscribed. The beliefs expressed in the decree were not called into question."²¹⁸ I will address below the conflicting arguments that appear to have been made concerning decrees.

But overall, the opinion adopted wholesale the facts of the case from Mull's side. It declared that "the record is replete with admissible evidence which overwhelmingly supports the verdict of the jury."²¹⁹ It accepted uncritically the allegation that Prophet had taken Mull's last five thousand dollars, leaving him to eat out of a Dumpster. It said, "As one example of the many despicable acts perpetrated against Mr. Mull by Prophet and others of her

organization, Prophet...used her influence to extract from him a check for \$5,489....As a result of this last 'donation,' Mull had so little money that he and his daughter were forced to get food from garbage bins from behind grocery stores." The opinion also referred to "the reprehensibility of the acts of appellants," which "also supports the award."²²⁰

Finally, the opinion supported the amount of the damages by stating that Gregory's architectural drawings had been used to raise "two million dollars...within a few months and eight to ten million dollars more in pledges."²²¹ This was certainly not based on any accurate depiction of the church finances, but rather speculation by Lawrence Levy, Gregory Mull and Randall King. However, the court ultimately decided that since the jury had not indicated on which causes of action damages were being awarded, it was impossible to tell. The court also did not consider the amount to be excessive, based on evidence presented about the church's assets and Prophet's own resources, including that a church member paid the thirty-thousand-dollar annual lease on her beach house.

The church's appeal did not attempt to lay out the truth of the facts at issue, since the appeal was supposed to be about whether legal errors were made, not re-trying the case. But clearly the judges on the panel were swayed by the one-sided presentation of the evidence, and who can blame them? It does sound "reprehensible." If only it had been supported by the bulk of the evidence, particularly the documentation, or by anything but the testimony of Levy and his clients.*

* In 1990, Lawrence Levy published an article in the *Cultic Studies Journal* entitled "Prosecuting an Ex-Cult Member's Undue Influence Suit." The article gives advice to former members and attorneys considering legal action against cults. It is largely a self-congratulatory piece that provides almost no citations of trial testimony or any documentary evidence. It begins by repeating Levy's version of the facts, describing Mull as "penniless and damaged" in 1981. He was described as someone who no longer spoke English, due to his indoctrination

I do not doubt that Gregory experienced financial pressure after leaving Camelot. I have heard from his friends that he took on renters in his condominium to make ends meet. Although he was not destitute, he did go through a period of financial difficulty after he realized he would not be employable in Southern California at the wages he had been able to command in San Francisco. He chose to focus on his campaign against CUT rather than restoring his career, and did indeed use the Dumpster for food for a time. This was just one of the ways he economized. He also borrowed money from friends and lived on the eventual proceeds from his house.

From the perspective of the higher courts asked to review the appellate court's opinion, First Amendment arguments were not enough. Both the California Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court declined to review the case. The judgment was eventually paid to Linda Mull, Gregory's daughter.

The church had previously settled Randall King's sixteen-million-dollar suit for a much lesser amount, most of which went to pay expert witnesses. And after fees, Linda received only about a third of the judgment. Following the verdict, the "enemies" camp did not have much cohesion. Randall eventually found both domestic happiness and personal success. And Levy continued to get professional as much mileage as he could out of the case, which became the biggest success of his career.

I have written elsewhere that I thought my mother should have settled the Mull case as soon as he became ill. Or never sued him at

with cult jargon, someone who "rarely spoke above a whisper about the group." He had not put the religion on trial, Levy claimed. In fact, he "never questioned the validity of CUT as a religion...I never questioned the belief system....I discussed religion once or twice, but only as it related to conduct....I did not even mention other noted cult cases." See <http://www.icsahome.com/articles/prosecuting-an-ex-members-undue-influence-suit-levy>

all. But at the time, she retained a polarized view of the world, and could only perceive that she was being attacked. In spite of her spiritual gifts and ability to heal and transform other people's lives, she did not seem to be able to heal the schisms in her own life, as I realized more fully when I finally learned the truth about her own sexual hypocrisy.

A Religion on Trial?

In spite of the views of the appellate court judges and Judge Margolis, if *CUT v. Mull* did not put a religion on trial, I have a hard time imagining what a trial would look like which actually did so. It questioned and ridiculed the validity and sincerity of many of the closely held beliefs of the church, including the reality of the channeled messages known as dictations (or the sincerity of church leaders in promoting those messages), the belief in past lives, the efficacy of prayers or decrees, the legitimacy of church training programs, and the purpose of its rituals.

By my estimation, at least fifteen percent of the trial testimony was taken up with discussion of decrees and their alleged involvement with either hypnosis (the foundation of the thought reform argument) or in support of the tort of intentional infliction of emotional distress. Carole Snow's revelations about jurors' fear of Mother and concerns that they were being "decreed" against demonstrate that the evaluation of religious beliefs in the courtroom played a sizeable role in the verdict.

In supporting the inclusion of decrees in the evidence, the appellate court appeared to be advancing a set of contradictory arguments. (1) Decrees really could harm people, regardless of the intent of those giving the decrees. (2) Decrees caused mind control and hypnosis, inducing Gregory to be compliant with the church. (3) Knowing he was being decreed about was emotionally stressful for Gregory.

The first argument raises a series of questions. Was the contention that these practices actually harmed Gregory and caused his illness? If decrees and their strange practices (conducted in church and the privacy of people's homes) were so uniquely effective, then why did they not secure the church's victory in the case? If they were capable of causing Gregory's death, why did they not injure Randall King or other members of Gregory's team? Furthermore, what about all the other people who were decreed about (or on, or "against") over the years, such as members of rock and roll bands, or members of the United States government? Clearly, these practices, conducted in privacy, are harmless.

In the case of the second argument, if decrees were capable of causing hypnosis, how effective was it, and why did it not prevent Gregory from leaving or threatening to leave the church? Why, for that matter, did it not prevent me from leaving, and why did Gregory continue to use these "hypnotic" decrees—now against Mother and the church—after leaving?

The third argument is the only valid one that I can see for including decree practices in the trial. Gregory's awareness that he was being decreed about (or "on," or "against") might have caused him emotional distress, especially after he learned that the inner staff circles thought he was the mouthpiece of the Beast of Blasphemy. However, I think that if so, he willfully misinterpreted the intention of those who decreed about him, and that an equal distress could have been claimed by those in the church concerning his decrees and public attacks on them.

If threats of divine retribution are to be evaluated in civil courts, many members of the clergy would be at risk. The fact that an appellate court could consider that such a peaceful religious practice, however warlike and martial its vocalizations and gestures, was an appropriate area of inquiry for courts is hard to fathom. Anyone who seriously delves into what is now an obscure case will probably come to the same conclusion.

I do have a few final thoughts on the practice of decrees: As already discussed, it is always possible that, by labelling individuals as enemies and decreeing about them, the church and its leaders could have inspired an unbalanced member to independently enact divine retribution by physically harming these “enemies.” Had such an event occurred, that would have been another story, and a matter for criminal prosecution.

But such a scenario is highly unlikely given the church’s culture of respect for the law, constant admonitions that God would be responsible for justice, as well as the belief that negative karma would ensue for violent acts. While physical attacks on former members may be a practice in some groups, and should be prosecuted when it does, it did not happen in CUT. Nevertheless, I now disagree with my mother’s practice of making religious pronouncements about any living individuals. However, to put things into perspective, she often labeled even family members with evil past lives or cosmic epithets. She later reconciled with many of those she had so labeled. This labeling culture, while it persisted primarily among a circle of staff and not the larger church membership, was a toxic one but also complex.

I myself, upon leaving the church, was given an evil past life by my mother, though she later accepted me as her legal guardian. I became aware at different periods that some individuals had decreed on me or my “energy.” Not only do I not believe I have been injured by this practice, I have concern for those who engage in it. I view the practice of decreeing about people’s energy (as practiced in the church from the 1980s forward) to be spiritually and morally risky—not to the person being decreed about, but to the individuals giving the decrees. Why? It dehumanizes the person being decreed about, and makes the individual giving the decrees feel superior and less likely to seek a face-to-face resolution.

Some of my mother’s prayer techniques are less than beneficial, in my view. Her extensive use of the practice of “clearance” to target

sources of negative energy went too far, in my opinion, but that does not invalidate all of her spiritual work. Many of the decrees and songs that she and my father developed are and continue to be helpful to people whom I know, both inside and outside the church. Thus I do believe that they should continue to be protected under the same standards that apply to more traditional prayer practices.

Conclusion: Aftermath and A Final Confession

As I have argued in *Prophet's Daughter*, the trial and its aftermath, coupled with the need to put up the money for the verdict in 1986, contributed directly to the church's decision to sell Camelot. And, I have argued, it also played a role in my mother's prophecies of war and economic devastation, which led to the church's move to Montana.²²²

Although my mother did not “bilk” Gregory's last dollar out of him as Levy said so many times, the fact is that many people suffered financially from her actions as guru. Even if Gregory did not join permanent staff at her request, many other people did. And after they had donated all of their money, they were sometimes let go with only a few hundred dollars and a bus ticket.

Especially in Montana during the “shelter episode” of 1989–90, many people gave up their livelihoods to come to Montana and build bomb shelters in response to her prophecies, and many were left scrambling after the “danger period” passed with no war. During that period, poor decision-making brought on by her autocratic rule contributed to the waste of much of the funds that had been gained through the 1986 sale of Camelot.

Many of the “enemies” probably concluded that she had needed to be stopped, whatever the cost, and the Mull trial was the way to do so. My own view is that the dishonest tactics used during the trial and the violent kidnapping and deprogramming of church members organized by the anti-cult movement, along with the marshalling of government forces through letter-writing campaigns and spreading salacious stories in the press about the church's beliefs and practices are not the way to secure change in a nontraditional religion. Most new religions will eventually modify themselves as their second and third generations desire greater integration with a larger society.

And this is what finally happened with Church Universal and Triumphant. After the shelter episode, Mother entered a period of reassessment of her role and behavior. She transferred more power to the board, and tried to implement a new leadership structure, which would have given more power to the church members themselves. Church staff began to receive real wages, and benefits for retirement and health care were added. Greater care was taken with confidential information, and eventually the practice of Mother reviewing confession letters was ended, and all letters that had been kept were destroyed.

The hope was that with her reduced responsibilities, Mother could have time to relax and write. But she received little enjoyment from her twilight years. She was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's Disease in 1998 at the age of fifty-nine.

I was undergoing my own transformation at this time. In 1992, my mother had privately admitted to me that she did have an affair with Randall King while my father was alive. Although they did not have intercourse until after his death, they were sexually involved for nearly a year, which would have included masturbation, forbidden for staff and church members. This revelation affected me deeply and was a catalyst for my own journey of self-discovery, which led me out of the church. I explore portions of that journey in *Prophet's Daughter*. It took me some time to imagine how my parents could have maintained their deep and apparent spiritual and physical connection while my mother simultaneously sought physical and emotional comfort outside the marriage.

My exit journey also gave me just a bit more insight and compassion into the feelings of both Randall and Gregory. Both of them had suffered from application of the church's rules. They had been cut off and ostracized by their friends and spiritual community. Both felt some obligation to rescue those they had convinced to join the church. Gregory returned to a Biblical perspective of his youth and decided that if my mother was not speaking to divine beings,

she must be speaking to the devil, and he had a moral obligation to stop her and to help those who remained in the church. He had once encouraged people to join the church, and he felt it was now his duty to rescue them from what he now considered an evil organization.

Another motivation may also be seen in his personal feelings about his guru's hypocrisy. One has to also consider that Gregory had been pressured into marrying a woman, and to adopting a belief system that contextualized whatever homosexual desires he may have had as sinful and something to be overcome.* I suggest that one strong motivation for him to have spent the last years of his life fighting my mother and her church was the impact of learning about her own infidelity.

Although I do not think that testimony about the affair belonged in a lawsuit about money and coercive persuasion, I can see that my mother's hypocrisy could have a deep effect on all current and former members of the church. I myself have spent years traveling around like Gregory, interviewing people who knew her, collecting information, copying newspaper articles. But my goal is to show the complexity of her personality, character, and relationship with those who were both her friends and enemies. I hope to have the opportunity in the future to further explore my

* During the 1960s, my mother was progressive in matters relating to race relations, and challenged other esoteric groups which preserved a whites only policy. I like to think that she might have eventually re-examined her ideas about homosexuality as the psychiatric profession changed its own views on the subject. It is worth noting that the period of Gregory's association with CUT coincided with controversy in the psychiatric community about whether homosexuality was a mental illness. Although the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed the diagnosis of 'homosexuality' from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) in 1973, it was not until 1987 that homosexuality was completely removed from the DSM-III-R version of the manual.

views on her secrecy surrounding this issue, and how it related to her own life and work.*

I know that many people who left CUT, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, have suffered negative effects as they struggled to replace their lost support network, and regretted the time and money that they gave. But many have constructed a new network, often among other former members. Most of them have accepted responsibility for their own decisions. I do not believe that continuing to repeat simplistic phraseology about “coercive persuasion” and “thought reform” will do much to clarify our understanding of how authority and influence function in religious groups—or what both leaders and followers can do in the future to prevent abuse while maintaining the right for all to worship as they choose.

Coercive Persuasion and Brainwashing Revisited

Since 1986, there have been significant legal developments concerning coercive persuasion theories. In 1990, in the criminal embezzling case of *U.S. v. Fishman*, a former Scientologist attempted to blame his criminal acts on diminished capacity caused by Scientology. The judge refused to admit the evidence. In 1991, the same principle was applied in a civil trial brought against Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of Transcendental Meditation, by two former members. Margaret Singer’s testimony was barred from that case and the Federal Court of Appeals upheld the decision.²²³

Singer was a maverick who applied her one-size-fits-all theory not only to religious “cults,” but also to training programs such as

* For a deeper analysis of gender and sexuality in my mother’s teachings, see Erin Prophet. “Elizabeth Clare Prophet: Gender, Sexuality and the Divine Feminine” in *Female Leaders of New Religious Movements*. Edited by Inga Bårdsen Tøllefsen and Christian Giudice. London: Palgrave Macmillan (2018).

that used by the Snap-On Tools corporation. Although U.S. courts would ultimately rule against admitting this kind of testimony, Singer's logic is still accepted today in many courts in Europe and Asia.²²⁴ While there is no question that people whose environments are carefully controlled as Singer described can demonstrate outward conformity, almost all of them revert to their original beliefs once the physical coercion is removed, and this was true even with the prisoners of war studied by Lifton and Schein. Attempts to apply the prisoner-of-war framework to non-coercive settings are simplistic, inflammatory and obscure the real interactive process of religious behavior.

The American Psychological Association, while it has not issued a formal rejection of coercive persuasion theories, rejected Singer's attempt to gain its specific support for her work in 1990.²²⁵ The theory of coercive persuasion does not have traction in either mainstream sociological or psychological literature, although it is clearly recognized that groups and their leaders can be deceptive, manipulative and unethical. The consensus is that these acts should be evaluated on a case-by-base basis and not on the foundation of an over-arching theory.

The rejection of Singer's specific version of thought reform does not mean that scholarly consideration of coercive forms of indoctrination does not continue. Scholars have expressed concern with more physically coercive methods of indoctrination, as well as the long-term effects of group involvement. The dialogue has shifted in recent years towards whether "brainwashing" can be used not to describe conversion but retention of individuals and their transformation into "deployable agents," i.e., those who will continue to promote the group even outside of physical control.

For example, in the Church of Scientology, a controversial discipline regime known as Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF) is used to encourage doubting members of the elite Sea Org (the church's leadership and headquarters staff) to recommit to the

church's ideology. The scholar Stephen Kent maintains in the 2001 edited volume *Misunderstanding Cults* that such practices, involving forms of physical coercion, do constitute "brainwashing."²²⁶ However, these techniques are clearly not as effective as they might be, since numerous members of Scientology's elite have escaped the regime to share their experiences with the public.

Sociologist Lorne Dawson, writing in the same volume, points out that though some of the techniques, such as confinement and forced labor, may resemble those used in Chinese "brainwashing" programs, they have not been demonstrated to be effective.²²⁷ However, Benjamin Zablocki, who supports using the term to describe retention techniques practiced on a small percentage of highly committed individuals, not the entire group membership, suggests that leaving becomes more costly the longer an individual belongs to a group, although he allows that "brainwashed" members are able to leave groups, provided they are willing to pay the emotional and spiritual price.²²⁸

Groups can be cruel, and the more power they have over an individual, the deeper the cruelty. I have great empathy for anyone who leaves any religion after long association. It is my hope that my evaluation of *CUT v. Mull*, thirty years afterward, may contribute to future attempts to de-escalate tensions between new and nontraditional religions and the societies they call home, and to educate both the religious and non-religious about the dynamics at play. It's important to remember that although some religious groups have entered a cycle of escalated tension that culminated in violent outcomes, many more have mitigated the effects of polarization and tension when thoughtful individuals from both inside and outside the group managed to prevail.



¹ *The Manchurian Candidate*. Directed by John Frankenheimer (1962).

² *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of “Brainwashing” in China*, Robert Jay Lifton. New York: W.W. Norton (1963), p. 150.

³ Anthony, Dick, and Thomas Robbins. Pages 243–297 in *Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, 1st ed. Edited by James Lewis. Oxford: Oxford University Press (2004). See p. 251 regarding Schein and “coercive persuasion.”

⁴ p. 251, Anthony and Robbins.

⁵ *CUT v. Mull*. Cal. Superior Court C358191, transcript p. 1286. Testimony of Margaret Thaler Singer. (Hereafter “trial transcript.”)

⁶ p. 256, Anthony and Robbins. See also note 138.

⁷ Lifton 1963, p. 456.

⁸ Trial transcript, p. 591.

⁹ Mull to Elizabeth Clare Prophet, personal letter, November 7, 1980, p. 6. Trial exhibit 32.

¹⁰ Mull to Prophet, personal letter, November 7, 1980, pp. 2–3. Trial exhibit 32.

¹¹ Mull to Prophet, personal letter, November 7, 1980, pp. 2–4. Trial exhibit 32.

¹² Trial transcript, p. 2253, citing exhibit 33, December 4, 1980, letter from Marvin Gross to Gregory Mull.

¹³ Trial transcript, p. 2257, citing exhibit 33, December 4, 1980, letter from Marvin Gross to Gregory Mull.

¹⁴ Trial transcript, p. 2229. Testimony of Edward Francis.

¹⁵ Trial transcript, p. 421. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

¹⁶ Trial transcript, p. 2, lines 3–16. Opening arguments.

¹⁷ Trial transcript, p. 51–53. Opening arguments.

¹⁸ Trial transcript, pp. 53–54. Opening arguments.

¹⁹ Trial transcript, pp. 56–57. Opening arguments.

²⁰ Trial transcript, pp. 61–62. Opening arguments.

²¹ Trial transcript, p. 63. Opening arguments.

²² Trial transcript, p. 78. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

²³ Trial transcript, p. 82. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

²⁴ Trial transcript, p. 342–6. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

²⁵ Trial transcript, p. 91. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

²⁶ Trial transcript, p. 95. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

²⁷ Trial transcript, p. 96. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

²⁸ Trial exhibit 67, letter from Gregory Mull to “Mr. Sosna, Editor, Thousand Oaks Chronicle,” January 1980, p. 1.

²⁹ Trial exhibit 40, letter from Gregory Mull to “Beloved Mother,” June 23, 1975.

³⁰ Trial exhibit 12, letter from Gregory Mull to Randall King, September 22, 1975, p. 2.

³¹ Trial exhibit 12, letter from Gregory Mull to Randall King, September 22, 1975, containing transcript by Gregory of Randall's Dictaphone message to him of August 13, 1975. This exhibit discussed in trial transcript pp. 253–259.

³² Trial transcript, p. 263. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

³³ Trial transcript, p. 269, citing exhibit 16, letter of September 30, 1975, from Elizabeth Clare Prophet to Gregory Mull.

³⁴ Trial exhibit 47, letter from Gregory Mull to “Beloved Mother and Board of Directors,” February 22, 1979, p. 1.

³⁵ Trial exhibit 47, letter from Gregory Mull to “Beloved Mother and Board of Directors,” February 22, 1979, p 2.

³⁶ Trial exhibit 50, letter from Gregory Mull to “Beloved Mother and Board of Directors,” March 18, 1979.

³⁷ Trial transcript, pp. 133–134. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

³⁸ Trial transcript, p. 194. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

³⁹ Trial transcript, p. 392. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁴⁰ Trial transcript, pp. 393–4. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁴¹ Trial exhibit 74, letter from Gregory Mull to “Beloved Mother,” April 20, 1980, p. 5.

⁴² Trial exhibit 74, letter from Gregory Mull to “Beloved Mother,” April 20, 1980, p. 3.

⁴³ See trial transcript pp. 2030–32. Testimony of Monroe Shearer.

⁴⁴ Trial transcript, p. 138. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁴⁵ Trial transcript, p. 362. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁴⁶ Trial transcript, pp. 236–237. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁴⁷ Trial exhibit 74. Letter from Gregory Mull to “Beloved Mother,” April 20, 1980, pp. 4–5.

⁴⁸ Trial transcript, p. 224. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁴⁹ Trial transcript, pp. 104–105. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁵⁰ Trial transcript, p. 1082. Testimony of Kathleen Mueller.

⁵¹ Trial transcript, pp. 1450–1452. Testimony of Elissa Theodore.

⁵² Trial exhibit 38, letter from Gregory Mull to “Beloved Mother,” February 10, 1975, pp. 2–5.

⁵³ Trial transcript, p. 1072. Testimony of Kathleen Mueller. Note: this is contradicted by Gregory's testimony that he had been celibate while in the church "except when I was married...for three months" p. 105, Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁵⁴ Trial transcript, p. 2752. Ken Klein closing arguments.

⁵⁵ Trial transcript, p. 2753. Ken Klein closing arguments.

⁵⁶ Trial transcript, p. 1078. Testimony of Kathleen Mueller.

⁵⁷ Trial exhibit 51, letter from Gregory Mull to "Beloved Mother," May 8, 1979, pp. 1–2.

⁵⁸ Trial exhibit 29, letter from Gregory Mull to Kathleen Mull Mueller, June 2, 1979.

⁵⁹ Trial exhibit 32, letter from Gregory Mull to "Mrs. Prophet," November 7, 1980, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Trial transcript, pp. 221, 368, 370. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁶¹ Trial transcript, p. 371–374. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁶² Trial transcript, p. 220. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁶³ Trial transcript, p. 225. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁶⁴ Trial transcript, pp. 419–420. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁶⁵ Trial transcript, p. 231. Testimony of Gregory Mull.

⁶⁶ Trial transcript, p. 1153–1155. Testimony of Hosein Afshar.

⁶⁷ Trial transcript, p. 2181. Testimony of Edward Francis.

⁶⁸ Psalms 35:1–4.

⁶⁹ pp. 351–2, *Saint Germain on Alchemy*, Mark L. Prophet and Elizabeth Clare Prophet. Livingston, MT: Summit University Press (1993).

⁷⁰ Trial transcript, pp. 479–483. Testimony of Elizabeth Clare Prophet Francis.

⁷¹ Trial transcript, p. 552. Testimony of Elizabeth Clare Prophet Francis.

⁷² Trial transcript, pp. 564–565. Testimony of Elizabeth Clare Prophet Francis.

⁷³ Trial transcript, pp. 569, 572. Transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting between Elizabeth Francis, Gregory Mull, Edward Francis, Monroe Shearer, as incorporated into trial transcript.

⁷⁴ Trial transcript, pp. 573–574. Transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting, as incorporated into trial transcript.

⁷⁵ Trial transcript, p. 581, incorporating transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting.

⁷⁶ Trial transcript, p. 581, incorporating June 6, 1980 meeting.

⁷⁷ Trial transcript, p. 583, incorporating transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting.

⁷⁸ Trial transcript, p. 583, incorporating transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting.

⁷⁹ Matthew 19:16–21.

⁸⁰ Burns, Robert. “To a Louse: On Seeing One on a Lady’s bonnet, at Church,” in Allan Cunningham, ed. *The Works of Robert Burns; with his life*, Vol. 1. pp. 474–5. Boston: Hilliard, Gray, and Company (1834).

⁸¹ Trial transcript, p. 585, incorporating transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting.

⁸² Trial transcript, pp. 589–91, incorporating transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting.

⁸³ Trial transcript, p. 591–2, incorporating transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting.

⁸⁴ Trial transcript, p. 610, incorporating transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting.

⁸⁵ Trial exhibit 74. Letter from Gregory Mull to “Beloved Mother,” April 20, 1980, pp. 3–4.

⁸⁶ Trial transcript, p. 626, incorporating transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting.

⁸⁷ Trial transcript, pp. 628–629, incorporating transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting.

⁸⁸ Trial transcript, pp. 678, 681–682, incorporating transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting.

⁸⁹ Trial transcript, p. 704, incorporating transcript of June 6, 1980, meeting.

⁹⁰ Trial transcript, p. 751. Testimony of Elizabeth Clare Prophet Francis.

⁹¹ Trial transcript, p. 753–4. Testimony of Elizabeth Clare Prophet Francis.

⁹² King, Godfré Ray [pseud.] *Unveiled Mysteries*. Chicago: Saint Germain Press (1934). *Unveiled Mysteries* is the first of three volumes which include the basic I AM teachings. The other two are *The Magic Presence* and *The “I AM” Discourses*. The books were written by Guy Ballard and his wife Edna, using the penname of Godfré Ray and Lotus Ray King.

⁹³ Trial transcript, p. 777. Testimony of Randall King.

⁹⁴ Trial transcript, p. 805. Testimony of Randall King.

⁹⁵ Trial transcript, p. 830. Testimony of Randall King.

⁹⁶ Trial transcript, pp. 844–847. Testimony of Randall King.

⁹⁷ Trial transcript, p. 780. Testimony of Randall King.

⁹⁸ Trial transcript, p. 780. Testimony of Randall King.

⁹⁹ Trial transcript, p. 787. Testimony of Randall King.

¹⁰⁰ Trial transcript, pp. 793–794. Testimony of Randall King.

¹⁰¹ Trial transcript, p. 841. Testimony of Randall King.

¹⁰² Trial transcript, p. 859. Testimony of Randall King.

¹⁰³ Los Angeles Times February 21, 1986, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ Trial transcript, pp. 880–881. Testimony of Randall King.

¹⁰⁵ Trial transcript, p. 883. Testimony of Randall King.

¹⁰⁶ Trial transcript, p. 902. Testimony of Randall King.

¹⁰⁷ Alan Landsburg Productions, “In Search Of...” Narrated by Leonard Nimoy. Season 2, Episode 2, Number 26, “The Man Who Would Not Die,” aired December 31, 1977.

¹⁰⁸ Trial transcript, pp. 1555–1560. Testimony of Jane Fleming.

¹⁰⁹ Trial transcript, pp. 1568–1571, containing the portion of the decree read by Jane Fleming.

¹¹⁰ Trial transcript, p. 1609. Testimony of Donald Anthony Fucci.

¹¹¹ Trial transcript, pp. 1609–13. Testimony of Donald Anthony Fucci.

¹¹² Trial transcript. Comment by Lawrence Levy. (unable to locate exact reference).

¹¹³ Trial transcript, p. 1481. Testimony of Elissa Theodore.

¹¹⁴ Trial transcript, p. 1984. Testimony of Monroe Shearer.

¹¹⁵ Trial transcript, pp. 1988–1989. Testimony of Monroe Shearer.

¹¹⁶ Trial transcript, p. 1997. Testimony of Monroe Shearer.

¹¹⁷ Trial transcript, p. 2027. Testimony of Monroe Shearer. See also p. 2218. Testimony of Edward Francis, for Levy’s continued characterization of the project as the “New Jerusalem.”

¹¹⁸ Trial transcript, p. 2013. Testimony of Monroe Shearer.

¹¹⁹ Trial transcript, p. 2052–2053. Testimony of Monroe Shearer, excerpting Deposition of Elizabeth Francis.

¹²⁰ Trial transcript, p. 2092. Testimony of Monroe Shearer.

¹²¹ Trial transcript, pp. 2086–2087. Testimony of Monroe Shearer.

¹²² Trial transcript, p. 2070. Testimony of Monroe Shearer.

¹²³ Trial transcript, p. 2154. Testimony of Edward Francis.

¹²⁴ Trial transcript, p. 2155. Testimony of Edward Francis.

¹²⁵ Trial exhibit 47, letter from Gregory Mull to “Beloved Mother and Board of Directors,” February 22, 1979, p. 3. Trial exhibit 56. Memo from “Architecture Dept—Gregory Mull to James McCaffrey” August 22, 1979.

¹²⁶ Trial transcript, p. 2273. Testimony of Edward Francis.

¹²⁷ Trial transcript, p. 2242. Testimony of Edward Francis. See also p. 2232, 2239, 2240.

¹²⁸ Trial transcript, p. 2272. Testimony of Edward Francis.

¹²⁹ Trial transcript, p. 2192. Testimony of Edward Francis.

¹³⁰ Trial transcript, pp. 2222–2224. Testimony of Edward Francis.

¹³¹ Trial transcript, p. 2151. Testimony of Edward Francis.

¹³² Trial transcript, pp. 2166–2161. Testimony of Edward Francis.

¹³³ Trial transcript, p. 1166, 1169. Testimony of Stephen Robbins.

¹³⁴ Trial transcript, p. 1122. Testimony of Stephen Robbins.

¹³⁵ Trial transcript, p. 1125. Testimony of Stephen Robbins.

¹³⁶ Trial transcript, p. 1172, 1175. Testimony of Stephen Robbins.

¹³⁷ Trial transcript, p. 1129–1130. Testimony of Stephen Robbins.

¹³⁸ Trial transcript, p. 1130. Testimony of Stephen Robbins.

¹³⁹ Trial transcript, p. 1136. Testimony of Stephen Robbins.

¹⁴⁰ Trial transcript, p. 1139. Testimony of Stephen Robbins.

¹⁴¹ Trial transcript, p. 1131. Testimony of Stephen Robbins.

¹⁴² Trial transcript, p. 1212. Testimony of Kathleen Levy.

¹⁴³ Trial transcript, p. 1218. Testimony of Kathleen Levy.

¹⁴⁴ Trial transcript, p. 1219–5. Testimony of Kathleen Levy.

- 145 Trial transcript, p. 1219–10. Testimony of Kathleen Levy.
- 146 Trial transcript, p. 1219–10. Testimony of Kathleen Levy.
- 147 Trial transcript, p. 1273. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer.
- 148 Trial transcript, pp. 1273–1275. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer.
- 149 Trial transcript, p. 1279. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer.
- 150 Trial transcript, p. 1276. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer.
- 151 Trial transcript, p. 1281. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer.
- 152 Trial transcript, p. 1281. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer.

153 Trial transcript, p. 1281–1283. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer. For a clearer delineation of Singer’s conditions for thought reform, see also Singer, Margaret, and Richard Ofshe, “Thought Reform Programs and the Production of Psychiatric Casualties” (1990). *Psychiatric Annals* 20:4, pp. 188–193. During her testimony, Singer answered in the affirmative when asked by Lawrence Levy “is coercive persuasion a synonym for thought reform?” (p. 1288).

- 154 Trial transcript, p. 1289. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer.
- 155 Trial transcript, p. 1291. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer.
- 156 Trial transcript, p. 1321. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer.
- 157 Trial transcript, p. 1331. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer.
- 158 Trial transcript, p. 1350. Testimony of Margaret T. Singer.
- 159 Trial transcript, p. 1748. Testimony of Robert Moore.
- 160 Trial transcript, p. 1746. Testimony of Robert Moore.
- 161 Trial transcript, p. 1736. Testimony of Robert Moore.
- 162 Trial transcript, p. 1749. Testimony of Robert Moore.
- 163 Trial transcript, pp. 1744–1745. Testimony of Robert Moore.
- 164 Trial transcript, p. 1761. Testimony of Robert Moore.
- 165 Trial transcript, p. 1772. Testimony of Robert Moore.
- 166 Trial transcript, p. 1770. Testimony of Robert Moore.
- 167 Trial transcript, p. 1771. Testimony of Robert Moore.
- 168 Trial transcript, p. 1784. Testimony of Robert Moore.
- 169 Trial transcript, p. 1871. Testimony of Saul Levine.
- 170 Trial transcript, p. 1881. Testimony of Saul Levine.

- 171 Trial transcript, p. 1882. Testimony of Saul Levine.
- 172 Trial transcript, p. 1886. Testimony of Saul Levine.
- 173 Trial transcript, p. 1893. Testimony of Saul Levine.
- 174 Trial transcript, p. 1897. Testimony of Saul Levine.
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- 178 Trial transcript, p. 1952. Testimony of Saul Levine.
- 179 Trial transcript, p. 2307. Testimony of J. Gordon Melton.
- 180 Trial transcript, p. 2311. Testimony of J. Gordon Melton.
- 181 Trial transcript, pp. 2322–2323. Testimony of J. Gordon Melton.
- 182 Trial transcript, p. 2333. Testimony of J. Gordon Melton.
- 183 Trial transcript, p. 2395. Testimony of James Richardson.
- 184 Trial transcript, p. 2394. Testimony of James Richardson.
- 185 Letter from Gregory Mull to “Beloved Mother and the Board of Directors,” February 22, 1979, p. 2. Trial exhibit 47.
- 186 Trial transcript, p. 2397. Testimony of James Richardson.
- 187 Trial transcript, p. 2405. Testimony of James Richardson.
- 188 Trial transcript, p. 2407. Testimony of James Richardson.
- 189 Trial transcript, p. 2440. Testimony of James Richardson.
- 190 Trial transcript, pp. 2416–2456. Testimony of James Richardson.
- 191 Trial transcript, p. 2424. Testimony of James Richardson.
- 192 Trial transcript, p. 2692. Lawrence Levy closing arguments.
- 193 Trial transcript, pp. 2697–2698. Lawrence Levy closing arguments.
- 194 Trial transcript, p. 2698. Lawrence Levy closing arguments.
- 195 Trial transcript, p. 2708. Lawrence Levy closing arguments.
- 196 Trial transcript, p. 2708. Lawrence Levy closing arguments.
- 197 Trial transcript, p. 2709. Lawrence Levy closing arguments.
- 198 Trial transcript, p. 2709. Lawrence Levy closing arguments.

- ¹⁹⁹ Trial transcript, p. 2721. Lawrence Levy closing arguments.
- ²⁰⁰ Trial transcript, p. 2728. Lawrence Levy closing arguments.
- ²⁰¹ Trial transcript, pp. 2729–2730. Lawrence Levy closing arguments.
- ²⁰² Trial transcript, p. 2730. Lawrence Levy closing arguments.
- ²⁰³ Trial transcript, p. 2746. Ken Klein closing arguments.
- ²⁰⁴ Trial transcript, p. 2749. Ken Klein closing arguments.
- ²⁰⁵ Trial transcript, p. 2756. Ken Klein closing arguments.
- ²⁰⁶ Trial transcript, p. 2775. Ken Klein closing arguments.
- ²⁰⁷ Trial transcript, p. 2777. Ken Klein closing arguments.
- ²⁰⁸ Deut. 28:22. KJV.
- ²⁰⁹ Trial transcript, p. 2778. Ken Klein closing arguments.
- ²¹⁰ Trial transcript, p. 2780. Ken Klein closing arguments.
- ²¹¹ Trial transcript, p. 2781. Ken Klein closing arguments.
- ²¹² Trial transcript, p. 2786. Lawrence Levy rebuttal.
- ²¹³ Trial transcript, p. 2787. Lawrence Levy rebuttal.
- ²¹⁴ Trial transcript, p. 2790. Lawrence Levy rebuttal, referencing Matt. 7:15
- ²¹⁵ Trial transcript, p. 2790. Lawrence Levy rebuttal.
- ²¹⁶ *CUT v. Linda Witt, Executrix*. (Cal. Ct. App. 1st dist. Div. 5. B021187. 1989, unpublished, p. 7). Hereafter appellate opinion.
- ²¹⁷ Appellate opinion, p. 12.
- ²¹⁸ Appellate opinion, pp. 18–19.
- ²¹⁹ Appellate opinion, p. 7.
- ²²⁰ Appellate opinion, p. 31.
- ²²¹ Appellate opinion, p. 29.
- ²²² See Prophet, Erin. *Prophet's Daughter: My Life with Elizabeth Clare Prophet inside Church Universal and Triumphant* (2009). Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press.
- ²²³ See Richardson, James. “Conversion and Brainwashing: Controversies and Contrasts,” pp. 89–101 in *The Bloomsbury Companion to New Religious Movements*, edited by George Chryssides and Benjamin Zeller (2014). London: Bloomsbury Academic. See also Young, John and Ezra F.H. Griffith. “A Critical Evaluation of Coercive Persuasion as Used in the Assessment of Cults,” *Behavioral Sciences*

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²²⁵ See “Religious Movements and Brainwashing Litigation: Evaluating Key Testimony,” 295–344 in *In Gods We Trust: New Patterns of Religious Pluralism in America*. Edited by Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony. 2nd Ed. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers (2009).

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²²⁸ Zablocki, Benjamin. “Towards a Demystified and Disinterested Scientific Theory of Brainwashing,” pp. 159–214 in *Misunderstanding Cults: Searching for Objectivity in a Controversial Field*, edited by Benjamin Zablocki and Thomas Robbins (2001).