

**CONTEMPORARY SHAMANIC PRACTICE IN SCOTLAND:  
A NEW PARADIGM OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CONTEMPORARY SHAMANIC PRACTICE IN SCOTLAND: A NEW PARADIGM OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION**

**By**

**MARYCATHERINE BURGESS**

Like many new religious movements, contemporary shamanism is a religious phenomenon with ancient roots and modern forms. It is not included or acknowledged as a world religion; in fact, scholars debate whether it even qualifies as a religion. Regardless, over recent centuries most indigenous systems of shamanism have fragmented under many of the same pressures that have threatened organized, institutional religions. That fragmentation, the unexpected survival of various traditional shamanic cultures, and the emergence of the neo-shamanic movement all parallel the survival of a number of new religious and spiritual phenomena from within many organized, institutional religions. However, like shamanism, many of these new phenomena remain unknown, ignored, or discredited without proper study, because some of the analytical models, definitions, and methodologies available often reflect world views that have not adapted to accommodate a more contemporary understanding of pluralism, diversity, religion, spirituality, moral decision-making, faith development, and the importance of balancing an insider perspective with the subjective role of an observer when conducting ethnographic and phenomenological research.

This thesis set out to study a limited number of shamanic practitioners and their communities in Scotland; to determine a possible correlation between their shamanic work and seven basic elements of cross-cultural shamanism; to discover whether their shamanic practice corresponds to key components in French sociologist of religion Danièle Hervieu-Léger's definition of 'religion as a chain of memory'; and to identify the influence of critical factors effecting a transformation in religion and culture.

Research results show that three sets of contemporary shamanic practitioners and their communities in Scotland do reflect core elements found in the shamanic model. However, though they closely resemble the model of religion, they actually access a core lineage of spirituality, not religion. Their spirituality is global, and they reflect all the factors contributing to the transformation of religion.

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

This thesis is my own work. It has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

MaryCatherine Burgess

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Shamanism

From the Stone Age to the New Age, the figure of the shaman has continued to grip the human imagination. Being chosen by the spirits, taught by them to enter a trance and fly with one's soul to other worlds in the sky or clamber through dangerous crevasses into terrifying subterranean worlds; being stripped of one's flesh, reduced to a skeleton and then reassembled and reborn; gaining the power to combat spiritual enemies and heal their victims, to kill enemies and save one's own people from disease and starvation - these are features of shamanic religions in many parts of the world. And yet they are regarded by the communities in which they occur, not as part of some extraordinary sort of mystical practice, but as a specialized development of the relationship which every person has with the world around them (Vitebsky, 2000: 55)

In this amazing description of the shamanic figure within a shamanic community, Vitebsky captures the essence of this ancient spiritual system of shamanism that has existed for millennia as an integral part of many world cultures. He builds on the work of Mircea Eliade, an historian of religions and comparative religions scholar, who through his 1951 French version of *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, 'documented the striking correspondences in shamanic practices, world views, and symbolic behaviors in hundreds of societies around the world' (Narby and Huxley: 4). Underlying those correspondences Eliade found basic commonalities in understanding the concept of soul, believing that a nonphysical reality filled with spirits exists, recognizing that many humans experience themselves communicating with beings in the spiritual realms, and honoring shamans as ones in their midst who through soul journeys specialize in working with those spirits for the health and well-being of individuals and their communities.

Because shamanism is a rather complex system that stretches across several disciplines, scholars studying it have come from various backgrounds that include anthropology, ethnology, and religion. Understandably, the history of shamanic research reflects the values and cultural perspectives of those scholars as they have attempted to learn about shamanism and its function in society. As Narby and Huxley state in their book:

Even after five hundred years of reports on shamanism, its core remains a mystery. One thing that has changed over the last five centuries, however, is the gaze of the observers. It has opened up.

And understanding is starting to flower (Narby and Huxley: 8).

That understanding, which flowered significantly after publication of studies by Eliade and other scholars of shamanism, began to blossom into fullness in the West during the second half of the twentieth century with descriptions of contemporary forms of shamanism - sometimes called 'modern shamanism', 'new shamanism', 'urban shamanism', 'contemporary shamanism', or 'neo-shamanism' (Wallis: 30). According to Merete Jakobsen, these new forms are designed to 'reestablish a link for modern man to his spiritual roots, to reintroduce shamanic behaviour into the lives of Westerners in search of spirituality and, thereby, renew contact with Nature' (Jakobsen: xi). Because these shamanic forms often operate within the context of a 'global village', scholar Robert Wallis has approached his research in this area by using a 'multi-sited ethnography' that requires 'multiple-positioning' on the part of the researcher (Wallis, 22). He contends that despite the tendency for observers to categorize neo-shamanic forms with 'New Agers' in a derogatory manner, their impact on society has primarily been ignored. Because of that, Wallis has written a book aimed at providing a more 'balanced' examination of contemporary shamanism - one that recognizes both positive and negative aspects by addressing 'the diversity of practices and practitioners rather than catch-all stereotypes' (Wallis: xv).

Carlos Castenada, through his series of books, which were based on what he described as an apprenticeship with shaman Don Juan, has come to be considered the one who first exposed contemporary cultures on a large scale to a shamanic perspective. However, it is anthropologist Michael Harner, who in his studies of various shamanic cultures, built on the work of Eliade, communicated with Castenada, and by establishing his Foundation for Shamanic Studies, began to actively develop contemporary shamanic forms that are often considered central in the 'neo-shamanic movement'. As a scholar whose research gave him the opportunity to become a participant-observer within the Jivaro Indian tribe in Ecuador and the Conibo Indian tribe in Peru, Harner learned firsthand many of the indigenous shamanic ways (Harner: 1). Based on that experience and his understanding of

other scholars like Eliade, Harner coined the term *core shamanism* to refer to those universal core shamanic elements that are found within most shamanic cultures, though they are often expressed differently depending on each specific culture and its particular worldview. According to Wallis, the techniques that emerged from Harner's paradigm of core shamanism have been 'highly influential' and are probably the most widely known and practised in the West' (Wallis: 46).

If this is so, how has this happened, and how have contemporary shamans come to draw upon these techniques? Is their apparent similarity with indigenous shamanism, with its ancient roots, merely a romantic fantasy of days gone by, another form of spiritual oppression perpetuated yet again on indigenous peoples, or have contemporary shamanic practitioners actually been reinventing, or transforming, ancient traditions to meet contemporary circumstances and needs? How might modern scholars approach their research of this phenomenon in ways that shed light on the religious and spiritual implications for our modern society? According to Wallis:

Despite numerous studies on shamanisms, the political and ethical sensitivities of neo-Shamanisms have gone largely unrecognised. Academia consistently marginalises neo-Shamans, yet ironically, there is more literature on shamanisms written by, or aimed at neo-shamans than there are academic publications (Wallis: 2).

Why has this happened? What blocks modern scholarly attempts to understand contemporary shamanism or other new religious movements that like shamanism, have developed what many practitioners of these phenomena experience as modern expressions of ancient beliefs, or paradigms, about the religious and spiritual quality of life? How is it that academic disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, ethnology, and religious studies have encountered so many challenges in their efforts to design analytical tools authoritative enough to assist in research?

## **1.2 Cultural Change**

Perhaps part of the answer lies in the massive cultural and intellectual changes emerging in

late twentieth and early twenty-first century life - changes that continue to transform radically our modes of thought, societal patterns, structures of consciousness, and perceptions about the unconscious and unseen dimensions of life. Due to the nature of religious and spiritual issues, these kinds of fundamental changes in both individuals and society at large have easily challenged many attempts to define religion and spirituality - in great part because the desire for any definition generally reflects a desire for stability in thought, not for use of fluid parameters prevalent during times of change. Perhaps this dilemma can be further understood by looking at similar transformations of great magnitude that were experienced centuries ago, but from a somewhat different perspective. For example, starting with the Reformation, but flowering with the Enlightenment, forward-looking thinkers sought to liberate individuals and cultures from 'their embeddedness in superstition and unexamined traditions' and from 'docile obedience to unaccountable forms of governance' (Fowler, 1996: 149). A time of radical change, the Enlightenment impacted all areas of life with new theories of government and politics, empirical and analytical approaches to science and technology, new approaches to education, rigorous analyses of religion and religious traditions, separation of cosmology and theology, and scientific methodology that resulted in the development of psychology and sociology. It was a revolution in consciousness paralleled only by our own, and its primary instrument and model for change was the use of reason.

During the modernization of society that developed from the Enlightenment era right into the twentieth century, facets of religion were systematically analyzed, explained away in light of newly-formed disciplines of study, and demythologized to the extent that in the middle of the twentieth century, many historians and social scientists believed religion itself would disappear by the end of the millennium (Berger, 1973: 130)(Berger, 1999: 2). Rather than providing a coherent umbrella of meaning, religion seemed to exist as incoherent fragments that no longer fit together and were alienated from daily life. This modern process of separating the activities of daily living from a sense of sacred, something traditionally associated with religion, resulted in both individual and societal loss of memory

regarding collective traditions of meaning, and thus of continuity. In the words of Danièle Hervieu-Léger, a sociologist of religion from France:

The process of rationalization which informed the advance of modernity went hand in hand with the process of "dismantling the gods", and the triumph of autonomy - both of the individual and of society - implied the ineluctable disintegration of the religion-bound societies of the past (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 1).

However, as the millennium approached, researchers and observers discovered, to their surprise, that while participation in traditional religions was generally diminishing, religious activity *per se* had been increasing in the previous fifty years. This caused scholars to begin re-thinking their assumptions about 'secularization theory'. Though evidence of the 'secularizing effects' of modernization on society still exists, according to sociologist of religion, Berger, rather than leading to the decline of religion in society and individuals, modernization has actually 'provoked powerful movements of counter-secularization' (Berger, 1999: 2-3). These movements have often taken new forms both within and outside traditional religions, further challenging scholars to determine whether or not these new forms, or movements, can actually be considered religions.

### **1.3 Religion**

To address these phenomena, scholars have struggled with definitions of religion that are flexible enough to stretch existing parameters, yet focused enough to provide analytical rigor and clarity. There has even been a tendency in some to by-pass composing a definition of religion or to link automatically the words 'religion' and 'sacred' in their research process. As a result, many researchers have apparently found themselves back at the doorstep of traditional established religions without having discovered a tool or model to help them constructively study the newly emerging religious movements.

One exception is Hervieu-Léger, who has proposed 'an analytical method which, while enabling the circle to be broken, might also enable religion in modernity to be considered the subject matter of sociology' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 4). In her book, *Religion*

as a *Chain of Memory*, Hervieu-Léger not only provides the background and theoretical concerns of critical importance to consider when studying new forms of religious expression, but she also describes how her proposed method addresses the consequences of religion when it is deprived of memory and continuity. She employs a working definition of religion as a chain of memory embodying a chain of belief from one or more traditions, or parts of traditions, that is invoked by a community of people who experience themselves joining in a core lineage with others who have gone before them in the process of choosing that lineage and set of beliefs as the legitimizing authority for the way they believe individually and collectively. Her definition of religion has appeared to open up options for learning about those who are on the edges or outside of the institutional religious traditions.

As described earlier, shamanism, like many religious movements, is a religious phenomenon with ancient roots and modern forms. It is not included or acknowledged as a world religion; in fact, scholars debate whether it qualifies as a religion. Regardless, most indigenous systems of shamanism have fragmented under many of the same pressures that have threatened traditional religions. That fragmentation, along with the unexpected survival of various traditional shamanic cultures and the emergence of new shamanic forms, parallels what has been happening with traditional religions and other new religious or spiritual phenomena.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

This thesis began with a three-fold purpose: to study a limited number of contemporary shamanic practitioners and communities in Scotland; to determine a possible correlation between their work and the elements incorporated into the model of cross-cultural shamanism provided in Chapter Two; and to discover whether their shamanic practice corresponds to the analytical model of 'religion as a chain of memory' as described in Chapter Four. As the work developed, and it became clear that the transformation of religion provides a primary context for this re-emergence of shamanism, the purpose

expanded to include identification of critical factors in this transformation process and a subsequent analysis of the field research for evidence of trends or patterns reflecting those characteristics. Those critical factors are presented in Chapter Three.

The first research question about contemporary shamanic practitioners in Scotland is addressed in Chapter Five, which contextualises the fieldwork. Chapter Six organizes the field data around the model of cross-cultural shamanism as a way of presenting information that addresses the second research question about correlation with that model. Field research related to the third question about correspondence with the analytical model of religion is provided in Chapter Seven within a framework of key components that make up the model. Chapter Eight analyses all field data related to both models and then provides an overlay from Chapter Three of nine critical factors actively effecting, or bringing about, the contemporary transformation of religion.

## **1.5 Methodology**

### **1.5.1 Overview**

This section describes the methodology used throughout this study and the methodological challenges inherent within it. It presents my rationale for choosing shamanism and 'religion as a chain of memory' as the primary templates for my research. By extension, that includes a brief look at why I focused on contemporary shamanic practice, rather than historical or literary, and why in Scotland. Next is a description of how my statement of purpose directed my selection of research participants and their locations; what research methods I used; and why those methods best suit the purpose of this study. Following that is an explanation of how this research project is phenomenological, why it requires me as the researcher to include a self-reflexive component, and what elements in my own worldview and experience figure most prominently in that research. The chapter ends by presenting several unique challenges that have arisen from a methodological standpoint.

### **1.5.2 Rationale for Topic**

My own knowledge and experience with shamanism began in 1986 in the USA, when I first learned about core shamanism from anthropologist Michael Harner. Intrigued and personally drawn to the notion that shamanism may contain a cluster of core elements that are found in shamanic cultures throughout the world, but expressed differently depending upon those cultures, I wanted to initiate a scholarly study to determine whether evidence of core shamanic elements could be found in a broad base of academic literature and in the shamanic work of practitioners in a culture other than my own. Having been exposed to several Native American, or First Nations, forms of shamanism and to the issue of outsiders appropriating indigenous spiritualities in a kind of 'spiritual imperialism' (Geertz, 1996)(Geertz, 1992), I chose to study in the UK, because that is where most of my ancestors had lived prior to migrating to the USA, and I knew the research facilities were excellent.

That MSc year began within a month after the attacks of September 11, 2001, heightening my awareness that if shamanism truly possessed a cross-cultural core, it might provide insight into how divergent cultures with conflicting worldviews about religion and/or spirituality might find a global common ground that also respects differences. During that year I discovered scholarly evidence for a model of shamanism that does indeed include a core of cross-cultural elements. I also applied that model to three folk tales gathered in Scotland by ethnologists and stored in the archives of the School of Scottish Studies (Burgess, 2002). To my surprise, I discovered in those tales more shamanic elements than I had originally anticipated finding. Once into the Ph.D. process, I further tested the model by expanding and deepening my theoretical shamanic research into what has become Chapter Two of this thesis.

During the MSc year, I attended one shamanic journey drumming group, learned about shamanic offerings at The Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh, and eventually started meeting people who knew of shamanic practitioners or were part of an informal network of

shamanic practitioners living in Scotland. Anticipating the need for a clear focus when I moved into Ph.D. work, I narrowed my potential choices of future study to shamanism in Scotland from another literary perspective, from historical records related to the witch trials, or from contemporary practice. Because I had just completed a literary analysis, had discovered the existence of a shamanic network, and realized my own shamanic experience would probably help me develop trust with potential research participants, I decided to direct my research toward current shamanic practice when I was transferred to Religious Studies for the Ph.D.

Being in Religious Studies gave me an opportunity to hear about Hervieu-Léger's definition of religion. I read her book describing that definition and checked other scholarly sources commenting on and critiquing her work. They portrayed a picture of someone with academic credibility in her field and helped me decide that her model of 'religion as a chain of memory' would serve as a useful tool for looking at religious phenomena, including contemporary forms of shamanism, that function on the edges of or outside historical faith communities and institutional churches. Though existing definitions of religion tend to remain too limiting and circular to be helpful when studying new religious movements, the parameters of her definition are flexible, yet focused. Her model, presented in Chapter Four, is a credible tool for developing insights and communicating new understandings of these phenomena.

As noted earlier in the section describing the research questions of this thesis, learning about Hervieu-Léger's new model of religion and about how she had developed it from extensive research into issues contributing to the transformation of religion made it clear that this transformational process was also the primary context for contemporary expressions of shamanism. That realization led to the final research question related to analyzing the fieldwork for evidence of trends or patterns reflecting the critical factors presented in Chapter Three's look at how culture, and thus, religion, have been changing and transforming.

### **1.5.3 Selection of Field Work Participants**

When deciding how to select fieldwork participants, I returned to the initial purpose of that research, which was to study shamanic practitioners in Scotland who are connected to some form of community. I intended to discover whether the ways in which they function exhibit evidence of cross-cultural shamanic elements or of components in the Hervieu-Léger model of religion. I would then insert an overlay of the change and transformation characteristics to the analysis of my findings.

In addition to having attended a drumming group and found a network of shamanic practitioners in Scotland, I decided to participate in my university supervisor's course on shamanism and to attend a nine-week shamanic class taught for the Open Studies Program at Edinburgh University by a retired university anthropology lecturer. This combination of courses and personal contacts helped me see that enough potential participants lived in Scotland, and I would not need to expand my research into the United Kingdom as a whole. My primary task would be identifying those people willing to work with me in a research study. Because both the cross-cultural shamanic model and Hervieu-Léger's definition require the presence of a community, it was important to assure that those functioning in the 'shaman' role of this study had established themselves as shamanic practitioners and felt connected to some form of community. Furthermore, I sought depth and richness, not breadth, which meant that ultimately I would select a limited number of shamanic practitioners and their 'communities'.

Settling for three fit my plan quite well. All three are located in different parts of Scotland with varying geographical landscapes; they reflect three different types of communities; and though there are some similarities, they have three different ways of offering shamanic services. I had attempted to contact some practitioners who were referred to me and appeared to fit the criteria; however, they did not respond to my calls, e-mails, or letters of introduction and enquiry. There were others I did not contact, because they were working primarily in a solitary, one-on-one manner, not in community. The three

sets of practitioners and communities who agreed to work with me met the criteria I had established. I decided this was a manageable number for my fieldwork and that I had found the appropriate research participants.

#### **1.5.4 Selection of Research Methods**

Though this study contains a multi-faceted purpose that is supported, guided, and semi-structured by quantitative aspects, such as theoretical underpinnings of shamanism, Hervieu-Léger's model of religion, and basic elements in the transformation of religion, it is fundamentally a qualitative research project that incorporates quantitative tools when they serve a functional role (Corbetta: 37). It provides perspectives that are both *etic* and *emic*. Not only am I using *etic* cross-cultural models with identified criteria and/or characteristics, but also I am correlating those external models with *emic* information gathered from groups of people who are living in culturally-specific areas and providing internal viewpoints about what they are doing, their motivations, and the meanings they experience from their shamanic work (Pike: 29).

Research is generally formed and guided by an overarching paradigm with its own characteristics that frame the research questions. This project has operated primarily out of an interpretive paradigm concerned about 'what's going on within and between individuals' who share some common social context; focused on discovering meaning for what is said and done by those people; and oriented toward comparing results to other related processes or phenomena, in addition to developing workable and shared understandings about what happened (LeCompte, 1999: 60). It has a phenomenological dimension in that it utilizes methods of empathic interaction between the researcher and the one being studied in order to help the researcher understand meanings that the individual perceives (Corbetta: 24).

In his book *Rational Ancestors*, James Cox summarizes the stages of a phenomenological method. The researcher must first perform *epoche*, which is suspending

judgments about what is to be investigated, in order to be open to the perceptions of those being observed. Next the researcher attempts to see the world through the eyes of each individual being studied, also known as performing empathetic interpolation. According to Cox, The purpose of *epoche* and empathetic interpolation is to provide researchers with a clear method for entering into the religious experience of those they are seeking to understand (Cox, 1998: 4-6).

I have used phenomenological methods throughout this project. Though I have almost twenty years of shamanic study and experience, most of that has been in the USA, not in Scotland. My desire to learn how shamanism is approached in another country has strengthened my ability to suspend my judgments, be open to different perspectives, and grow in my understanding of how the participants in this study experience religious meaning. Not all I observed was familiar or particularly compatible with my own shamanic or religious experience, yet I do not think the perceptions of truth I did share with those I studied have prevented me from describing what occurred from a social science perspective or have caused me to turn my descriptions into theology. Indeed, my background in shamanism and my years of experience with people from many religious and spiritual traditions have contributed to my scientific ability to make comparisons, see interrelationships, and identify processes that exist across these traditions.

Furthermore, I consistently strive for a constructive dialogue between my intuition and my reason when discerning the meaning of what I experience, see, and learn from others. Within that interactive process, I attempt to consider factors such as cultural paradigms reflecting world view; perceptions of self in relationship to others; beliefs, attitudes, and expectations about life that are reflected in language; and the impact of history on the way people interpret meaning. The ways in which I present my fieldwork, analysis, and conclusion will provide the ultimate judgment about whether I have been successful in achieving these methodological ends.

Relevant at this point is a brief discussion of the insider/outsider issue in the study

of any religion. What phenomenologists attempt to do is move beyond explaining facts that are observed from an outsider perspective to a closer understanding of the meaning people on the inside attach to their beliefs and actions. Another approach described by Russell McCutcheon is that of methodological agnosticism, or neutrality, in which the researcher 'selects a number of tools, or methods of research, that purposely avoid asking questions of truth where there exist no means of acquiring empirical evidence to determine that truth' (McCutcheon, 1999: 8). Though each of these approaches contributes to scholarship, McCutcheon concludes that a fourth one, best understood as a reflexive stance, may help researchers see how their own experiences and positions are intertwined with what they observe. He points out that the questions chosen shape the answers received; in that way they reveal as much about the presuppositions and biases of the researcher as they do about those interviewed. 'Reflexive scholars, therefore, are more interested in questions of point of view and the stance of the observer than they are with issues of neutrality, objectivity, and fact' (McCutcheon, 1999: 10). McCutcheon also cautions scholars to conduct a theoretical analysis of the research results, rather than simply presenting participant self-reports of meaning and affirming them through self-reflexive accounts. If this analysis does not occur, researcher may 'miss an ideal opportunity to make a significant contribution' to scholarship (McCutcheon, 2005: 15). This research project incorporates both a phenomenological dimension that seeks to understand meaning and a self-reflexive component that contributes to my analysis of this fieldwork.

Another methodological issue has been determining whether my field research could be described as case studies or ethnographies. For case studies, questions of 'how' or 'why' are asked about contemporary events 'over which the investigator has little or no control' (Yin: 9). The goal in using case studies is 'to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)' (Yin: 10). Though case studies can include 'direct observation and systematic interviewing' (Yin: 8), Yin warns about incorrectly confusing 'the case study strategy with a specific method of

data collection, such as ethnography or participant-observation', because case studies do 'not depend solely on ethnographic or participant-observer data'; indeed, some can be conducted without ever leaving the library or telephone (Yin: 10-11). McKie further points out that a case study examines a bounded entity with a unique life, and its purpose is to describe and characterize how it functions (McKie: 268).

Ethnography is a scientific approach used to investigate and discover within a given community, or culture, what community members do and the reasons they give for those actions. According to LeCompte and Schensul in their book *Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research*, 'The basic tools of ethnography use the researcher's eyes and ears as the primary modes for data collection', and they do this 'by interviewing and carefully recording what they see and hear, as well as how things are done, while learning the meanings that people attribute to what they make and do' (LeCompte, 1999: 2). As with case studies, ethnographers do not control what happens in field settings, and they use both qualitative and quantitative data sources. However, ethnographers work in the field through face-to-face interaction with participants in order to accurately reflect participant behaviors and perspectives and ultimately, to construct local cultural theories based on those interactive data collection and analytic strategies (LeCompte, 1999: 9). They conduct their research locally, but they seek to understand how local experiences relate to national, regional, and global issues (Schensul: 7).

This research project has characteristics of both the case study and the ethnography, though as a whole, it falls primarily into the category of ethnography. Beyond what both approaches have in common, the design and application of pre-determined research questions used to interview participants who are part of three distinct 'communities' makes the 'case study' category seem appropriate. To address my research questions, I had already decided to interview people. However, those questions also included the element of community, which made it important for me to learn about the culture of each community. After receiving permission to attend several shamanic events as part of my

fieldwork, my methodology then expanded to include participant observation. The combination of studying community culture and functioning as a participant observer tipped the balance toward ethnography as a better descriptor of this research project. Regardless of category, the goal would be to reflect accurately what participants do, how they feel, and what their experiences mean to them.

In the case of each 'community', I already knew that the shamanic practitioners were willing not only to let me interview them, but also to allow my participation in at least one of their shamanic experiences. Together we arranged specific interview times, and I traveled to where they were staying for those interviews. Regarding the interviews of others in their 'communities', I made those arrangements on a more spontaneous basis. For example, during the weeklong shamanic workshop at the Findhorn Foundation in Forres, Franco Santoro, the shamanic practitioner who was conducting that workshop, introduced me on the first day and supported my work by allowing me to tell people why I was there, that I would be interviewing him at the end of the week, and that during the week I was hoping to interview participants who were willing to talk with me. I was also able to share some of my own background in shamanism and explain that though I would be participating fully, I would also be taking notes about what was happening throughout the workshop.

#### **1.5.5 Participant Observation**

However, my role as a participant observer actually began when I decided to attend a trance dance conducted at The Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh by Cláudia Gonçalves, one of the shamanic practitioners who ultimately formed part of my study. This was followed by participating in a weekend shamanic workshop with Franco, also held at The Salisbury Centre, as a way of exploring whether he and I might decide to work together later. In both cases, my participation in these preliminary events helped us decide we could proceed together with the larger research project. These experiences and a segment of the more extensive weeklong workshop I attended at Findhorn are primarily presented in Chapter

Five, where the field research is placed in context.

The theoretical underpinning for each set of interview questions, briefly introduced below, but supported by information provided in Chapters Two and Four, also guided my process of participant observation. However, the interpretive paradigm out of which this research was designed required that I be open to 'discovering theory' and to observing actions that might not match my expectations, but may provide insightful. Participant observation calls for looking at areas such as physical and social settings, formal and informal interactions, and participant interpretations of social interactions (Corbetta: 246-249). I have provided that kind of data, along with observations that may not be obvious to participants, in Chapter Five.

#### **1.5.6 Interview Process**

Due to prior experience with interviewing, when I discovered that a free-flowing conversation guided by selected questions had yielded good results for me, I decided to do the same for these field research interviews. I wanted those I interviewed to know I was listening, trying to understand, and doing my best to accurately reflect their stories in the way I wrote their responses. To assure that, once I had written my account of their interviews, I sent each one a copy, along with the questions I had used to guide our discussions. I asked them to read what I had written and let me know if I had accurately understood what they had meant or intended to say; I also encouraged them to make any changes they thought were appropriate. All of them responded to my request by providing either minor changes or telling me the account was fine. The two sets of interview questions I used, along with brief explanations of how they were designed, are respectively incorporated into Chapter Six, which presents the field research on shamanism, and Chapter Seven, which contains the field research on religion as a chain of memory.

In those fieldwork chapters and in the analyses provided in Chapter Eight, when I refer to responses related to all who were interviewed, I use the term 'participants'. If

specifically referring to the shamanic practitioners, they are called 'practitioners' or 'shamanic practitioners'. For reference to those who have formed the respective shamanic communities, the term 'community members' is used. All of those interviewed gave me permission to use their first names. Because the shamanic practitioners also advertise their work publicly, I have included their surnames as each is introduced initially into the thesis.

## **1.6 Self-Reflexive Contribution**

In addition to aspects of my own worldview that have already been described, I bring several other perspectives that influence my work. Though my father's family were Protestant, I was raised Catholic in a small Midwestern town in the USA and was a young teen when Pope John XXIII convened the Vatican II Council. His call to open the doors and windows of the church and let the breath of creativity and spirituality shape contemporary ways of expressing fundamental values had a profound effect on me. I began to look beyond external rules, practices, and rituals that may have lost their relevance toward underlying meanings and values that had become hidden and perhaps might need to be retrieved, understood, and re-created in light of modern life circumstances. One of those areas was social justice, and council documents strongly supported the civil and human rights work I began to undertake in the late 1960s. A companion to council documents that supported these 'renewed' perspectives was the mystical tradition that the church had continued to uphold, however begrudgingly at times, over the centuries. All of these propelled me into a dialectical exchange between mystical experiences and critical analyses of my own religious beliefs; this process formed a regular part of my thinking. I also joined with others in informal small communities that creatively explored religious and spiritual matters cognitively and experientially.

In 1977 I completed a masters in religious education - focusing heavily on the cognitive, moral, and faith development research on adult men and women that had been conducted and was being published at that time. Those studies expanded and deepened a

developmental perspective that for me had begun to grow in importance during my undergraduate teacher training study of human development in children and teens. That theoretical perspective of development is part of how I see the world.

From 1980 until 1992 I worked for a major US railroad in the areas of personal injury management, program development, organizational change, and leadership. During that time I also began training in psychodrama and earned a masters in human relations. The corporate work increased my ability and commitment to goal setting, planning, program implementation, and communication in a context that values human relationships, diversity, problem solving, conflict resolution, and collaboration. At the same time, the human relations work and the psychodrama training deepened my ability and commitment to see and understand another person's perspective through role reversal and similar techniques designed to help someone enact part of a life story. Both processes require reflection on and differentiation of personal issues and concerns from those of others. They also start with the individual's perspective and move from there into seeing how an individual operates and is influenced by group contexts of varying sizes. One result of that training and experience has been my consistent focus on how an individual worldview might be connected or linked with perspectives common to larger groups, societies, and cultures.

My exposure to shamanism and shamanic training arose inductively in response to experiences that had occurred during prayer, meditation, Jungian active imagination, and guided imagery sessions. Others who knew about shamanism recognized shamanic aspects in my experiences and suggested I learn more about what was happening to me. I began shamanic training with the Foundation for Shamanic Studies in 1986 and continued with it until I moved to Scotland in 2001. During those years I eventually started teaching, or facilitating, basic shamanic workshops, in addition to providing shamanic healing sessions for those who sought my help in that way. In 1994, shortly after leaving the railroad and starting my own business, I became licensed as a mental health practitioner and a certified professional counselor - primarily as a way of helping me maintain a grounded, ethical

perspective for my human relations consulting and my shamanic healing. Seeing the connection between mental and spiritual health, I also wanted to build bridges with the mental health community. One way I did this was through regular supervision sessions with a senior mental health professional.

In addition to shamanic work, I have maintained relationships with people who walk the edges of institutional religions. Many of them have come to me for counseling or to participate in spiritual retreats I have facilitated for about fifteen years. Though I have also provided many retreats for women only, since 1998 I have also co-facilitated numerous feminist spirituality retreats and experiential workshops that have included both women and men as participants. These have taken place in the United States and in Edinburgh as part of the University of Edinburgh Chaplaincy, where I have worked part-time as a chaplain serving 'all faiths and none' since September of 2004. As with mental health practitioners, I have also worked to build bridges with religious communities. To that end, I was asked and agreed to serve as a panelist on 'The Re-Emergence of the Divine Feminine' forum that was part of the Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, held in Edinburgh in March of 2005. I am no stranger to facing conflict or difference, but my experience and training have led me to a paradigm of striving to discover and affirm both differences and commonalities. Because I realize my viewpoints can support and hinder how I see situations, I have kept them continually in the mixture of theoretical analysis that fills this project.

## **1.7 Challenges**

The primary methodological challenges centre around how my experience as an insider with an *emic* perspective toward shamanism and religion interacts with and balances my outsider *etic* approach to these issues. I possess firsthand awareness of shamanic and institutional religious experience, yet I also stand outside both as a white woman from a Western culture and as one who has questioned both. As a researcher I bring a variety of social science tools to analyze effectively larger patterns, trends, and implications of this research. I take

as read that shamanic spirituality exists, and I have found evidence of it in my fieldwork. However, it would be possible for others to interpret my findings differently.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

In summary, the first three chapters provide the theoretical foundation for subsequent fieldwork and analyses. Chapter Five places the field research in context and grounds participants in the milieus relevant to their lives and work. Chapter Six presents the aspects of fieldwork that relate to elements contained in the model of cross-cultural shamanism. Similarly, Chapter Seven provides the fieldwork that relates to Hervieu-Legér's model of religion as a chain of memory. Chapter Eight contains an analysis of all the fieldwork as it pertains to the stated research questions. The thesis closes with Chapter Nine, which summarizes the major conclusions, presents overall themes, discusses the significance of the analytical tools used, and suggests future trends and research directions.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SHAMANISM**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Laying a theoretical foundation for the fieldwork and subsequent analyses begins in this chapter with a solid grounding in shamanism. This chapter focuses primarily on shamanism in indigenous cultures, though it also contains an introduction to contemporary forms of neo-shamanism. The context is set with an historical overview of shamanism and the various ways it has been understood over the years by many scholars who have studied it. Out of that context comes a series of working definitions that support a fairly comprehensive look at several basic terms commonly associated with shamanism. The chapter concludes with the presentation of a model of cross-cultural shamanism that is made up of seven elements found in many different indigenous shamanic cultures, though understood and expressed in variations that reflect the unique perspectives of those cultures. Much of the information from this foundational chapter is integrated into the presentation of fieldwork found in Chapter Six and into its analysis, which is presented in Chapter Eight.

### **2.2 Historical Perspective**

For over 500 years, people from various backgrounds have observed and/or studied shamans. Intrigued by accounts from 'travellers and traders who had visited among indigenous people' (Harvey: 5), academics from disciplines such as ethnology, 'anthropology, archaeology, gender studies, history, performance studies, psychology, and religious studies' (Harvey: 1) have sought to learn more about shamans and their communities. Naturally, their interpretations of those observations have often been filtered through the cultural lenses of their time. A short review of how this has occurred may illustrate this point.

Scholar Margaret Stutley's research has revealed 'large numbers of shamanesses in China during the second century' and that shamanism 'deeply influenced Taoism (and to a lesser extent Confucianism) with its concept of an ideal society' (Stutley: 22). Stutley also found evidence of shamanism in Korea dating back to the first century CE, though as new

religions arrived in the country, practitioners of shamanism began to lose various privileges (Stutley: 23). In addition, during the last century, many Korean shamans suffered persecution from the occupying Japanese government and hostility from numerous Korean Christians, resulting in many cases, with these practitioners going underground. In his study of Korean shamanism, another scholar, Chongho Kim, described how this history of alternating between both high and low statuses during various centuries and/or eras has caused the presence of contemporary shamanism in Korea to represent 'a cultural paradox'. He discovered that 'Koreans still use shamans as indigenous healers' in a way that places those shamans in the category of 'traditional medicine', but that many of the users feel shame for having accessed what is officially looked down upon (Kim: 6). Prior to Kim's research, scholar Laurel Kendall had written about a shamanic, female-centred 'folk religion' that existed in Korea during the latter half of the twentieth century (Kendall, 1987). Though focused on the seer as healer in Japan, rather than on shamanism *per se*, scholar Carmen Blacker has described an ancient Japanese cultural premise that 'most of the ills of the world have their cause in invisible spiritual beings which impinge forcefully on the human community' in the form of ancestral ghosts, intrusions of animal spirits, and kami spirits, or divinities who are understood to feel neglected (Blacker: 116).

Moving to what is now Britain, scholar Geo Trevarthen's research into Celtic shamanism from approximately 500 BCE to around 500 CE has revealed evidence of shamanism and/or a shamanic worldview playing a part in Celtic religion, even into the early days of Christianity (Trevarthen: 10-11). Looking at shamanism during the time of the Anglo-Saxons in England has been another scholar, Brian Bates, who has presented much of his academic research in the form of novels about the meeting of a Christian scribe and a 'pagan' shaman, who worked together based on an agreement in which the shaman was to teach the scribe about his work (Bates, 1983)(Bates, 1996). Though the story is fictional, most of the historical information about shamanic ways emerged from scholarly sources describing Anglo-Saxon sorcery. Bates later wrote a another related novel (Bates, 1996).

Regarding shamanism in North Asia, Ronald Hutton tells us 'there are no accounts

of Siberian shamans which date from before the sixteenth century', but travellers like Marco Polo and Franciscan friar William of Rubruck, who went to the courts of the Mongol Great Khans during the thirteenth century, 'reported figures who were culturally similar' (Hutton, 2001: 30). In the mid-sixteenth century, an Englishman named Richard Johnson visited Siberia and wrote an eye-witness account of what he called 'devilish rites' in North Asian shamanism as practiced prior to Russian rule (Hutton, 2001: 30). This was followed by an equally pejorative late-seventeenth century description of shamanic practitioners among the Tungusic and Samoyedic-speaking peoples of Siberia, written by Nicholas Witsen, who portrayed the shaman as a 'Priest of the Devil' and whose writings actually popularized the term shaman in Europe (Hutton, 2001: 32).

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when witch hunts and persecutions were prevalent in Europe, and when many believed that any spirits other than those sanctioned by the official Christian churches were evil, most Christian clergy saw shamans as 'ministers of the devil' (Thevet: 13), because they communicated and worked with spirits not always understood within a Christian context. In the 1700s, Enlightenment rationalists tended to view shamans as imposters and jugglers who deceived 'their fellows with song and dance, tricks, and sleight of hand' (Narby and Huxley: 22). For example, John Bell, a Scottish surgeon who travelled throughout the Russian empire in the early-eighteenth century concluded from his observations that most shamans were a 'parcel of jugglers' (Hutton, 2001: 33). This eighteenth century pattern of hostility and prejudice was reinforced by another European traveller to Siberia, Eva Felinska, who called shamans 'corruptors and parasites' and contributed to a social milieu in which it was 'dangerous for natives to discuss such matters with Europeans' (Hutton, 2001: 34).

When the field of social anthropology began in the late 1800s, observers began to write more objective accounts of who became shamans and what they did. This was also the time when one of the founders of anthropology, Englishman Edward B. Tylor, 'proposed the term *animism* to refer to the belief of spiritual beings in nature and in humans' (Tylor: 41). Toward the end of the nineteenth century, V.M. Mikhailowskii, Vice-President of the

Ethnographical Section of the Imperial Society for Natural History, Anthropology and Ethnography, compiled a general survey of information known about Siberian shamanism. In it he incorporated the work of three well-respected and effective anthropologists: Waclaw Sieroszewski, Waldemar Jochelson, and Waldemar Bogoras. Sieroszewski and Jochelson, in particular, 'showed a sympathy for the natives, and an imaginative ability to understand the appeal of shamanism to them' (Hutton, 2001: 35).

By the twentieth century, when some anthropologists and ethnologists began to record first-hand accounts by shamans about their work, scholars Sergei M. Shirokogoroff and Vilmos Dioszegi provided extensive data about shamans in Siberia. In addition, other scholars like Claude Levi-Strauss, Mircea Eliade, Knud Rasmussen, John Neihardt, Anna-Leena Siikala, Mihaly Hoppal, M.A. Czaplicka, Alfred Metraux, Verrier Elwin, Lorna Marshall, and Ronald Rose deepened available understanding by contributing valuable information about shamans from various cultures throughout the world. In Levi-Strauss' case, he went so far as to call shamans 'psychoanalysts' (Levi-Strauss, 1949: 108).

Building on this research during the last half of the twentieth century, scholars such as Francis Huxley, Holger Kalweit, R. Gordon Wasson, Barbara Myerhoff, and Harner went on to embrace Malinowski's method of 'participant observation' by taking part in actual shamanic sessions (Narby and Huxley: viii). Their experiences and subsequent writings led many other observers to pay closer attention and gain deeper respect for what they were seeing. More anthropologists and ethnologists began learning native languages and tape recording interviews with shamans in a variety of settings - sometimes just publishing their transcripts (Narby and Huxley: 185-186). Piers Vitebsky has conducted research in a number of shamanistic cultures, while I. M. Lewis, former Professor of Anthropology, has specialized in studying and writing about shamanism and spirit possession.

Finally, a topic addressed extensively in popular literature, but minimally included in academic research, is that of contemporary forms of shamanism. Fortunately, that situation is beginning to change - due in great part to the efforts of scholars such as Wallis, Graham Harvey, Vitebsky, Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, and Ward Churchill. Wallis tells us his aim

in writing about what he calls neo-shamanisms 'is to encourage people who may currently think neo-Shamanisms have nothing to do with them to think again' (Wallis: xiv). Furthermore, he contends that his study 'explores the complex and controversial issues neo-Shamanisms raise for archeologists, anthropologists, indigenous communities, neo-Shamans themselves and related interest groups' (Wallis: 3).

A number of scholars have come to see shamans and the shamanic systems within which they operate as having much in common with global issues facing the world today. Levi-Strauss has placed 'magic, which includes shamanism, on the same intellectual footing as science' (Levi-Strauss, 1962: 245). In an article based on his own book about shamanism, anthropologist and medical doctor Roger Walsh contends that shamans are pioneers in exploring the human mind (Walsh, 1990: 257). Ethnobotanist with training in anthropology and biology, Wade Davis 'considers shamans to be researchers and intellectual peers' who can work with scientists to promote folk medicine and save the rain forests (Davis: 286).

## **2.3 Working Definitions**

As the term implies, working definitions are not exhaustive. Their dual purpose is to establish a solid grounding and to provide a common language. To facilitate a basic understanding of shamanism, I will provide working definitions for the terms *shaman*, *shamanism*, *core shamanism*, *neo-shamanisms*, *shamanic culture*, *shamanic spiritual allies*, *spirit possession*, *mastery of spirits*, *soul*, and *shamanic healing*. In several cases, my definitions will be preceded or followed by those from known scholars of shamanism.

### **2.3.1 Shaman**

According to Eliade, the word shaman 'comes to us, through Russian, from the Tungusic *saman*' and refers to a person who 'specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld' (Eliade: 4-5). He

further acknowledges the possibility of *saman* actually coming from the Pali *samana* (Sanskrit *sramana*, meaning 'an ascetic person') through the Chinese *sha-men* (Eliade: 495).

Though scholars Siikala, Jakobsen, and Ake Hultkranz also note the possible Sanskrit origin, they have stated their consideration of Dioszegi's theory that the root of *saman* is the Tungus-Manchu verb *sa* meaning 'to know' (Siikala: 14)(Jakobsen: 3)(Hultkranz, 1973: 26-27). However, Hutton effectively shows how 'the Tungusic term "shaman" is itself a crude and convenient piece of European labelling' - primarily because 'it was not the word which would have been used of such figures by the great majority of native Siberians', who instead used comparable terms from their own distinct languages (Hutton, 2001: 47).

Narrative definitions help provide a sense of the diversity, yet commonality, when describing shamans. Shirokogoroff, a Russian authority on the Tungus, wrote that shamans were 'persons of both sexes who have mastered spirits, who at will can introduce these spirits into themselves and use their power over the spirits in their interests, particularly helping other people, who suffer from the spirits' (Shirokogoroff: 269). He also said that the main objectives of a shaman were 'to discover the causes of present troubles and to divine the future', which is similar to Siikala's characterization of shamans as 'troubleshooters' when dealing human crises (Hutton, 2001: 51). According to Harvey, 'In the language of Tungus-speaking peoples of Siberia, shaman (pronounced *sharmam*) refers to a communal leader chosen and trained to work for the community by engaging with significant other-than-human persons' (Harvey: 1). Jakobsen states that 'The shaman is, as I have argued, first and foremost a master of spirits in the traditional society. His role is to contact and to possess spirits so that a communication on behalf of an individual or society as a whole can be established' (Jakobsen: 9). For Vitebsky, 'a shaman is a man or woman whose soul is said to be able to leave their body during trance and travel to other realms of the cosmos' (Vitebsky, 2000: 55).

Because a shaman is considered a master at entering a state of consciousness that

facilitates direct communication with spirits in the nonphysical realms, I would define the term shaman as one who undertakes each ecstatic soul journey, also called a soul flight, in order to work with spiritual allies and ultimately bring information, inner power, and/or soul healing back to individuals and the larger community within which the shaman lives. This view is advanced by scholar Hultkrantz, who says we 'may define the shaman as a social functionary who, with the help of guardian spirits, attains ecstasy in order to create a rapport with the supernatural world on behalf of his group members' (Hultkrantz, 1973: 34). This is similar to psychologist of religion Peter Connolly's view that a shaman could be a 'person who, on behalf of a community, enters a trance state and, by means of spirit helpers, obtains a range of benefits for that community (Connolly: 12). It also finds commonality with anthropologist Mettraux's 1944 definition of a shaman as 'any individual who maintains by profession and in the interest of the community an intermittent commerce with spirits, or who is possessed by them' (Narby and Huxley: 4).

Like Mettraux, American anthropologist Michael F. Brown has acknowledged that shamans can use their power to harm others (Brown, 1989: 251). In her thesis on Celtic Shamanism, Trevarthen also addressed this issue and described how in Celtic Scotland, one understanding of this ability of a shaman to harm has been described as using the 'evil eye'. Drawing upon Kalweit's research into the ways in which a shaman can use power, Trevarthen noted that shamans are known to gather a kind of neutral spiritual power through their partnership with spiritual allies, but that power can be directed to heal or harm depending upon their intentions and upon what they think any harm would accomplish (Trevarthen: 157)(Kalweit, 1992: 177-191). Though I agree that this can and does occur with some shamans, I also think proper use of power is an ethical challenge for any person with the ability and leadership position to influence, and in critical ways, control others. This research has relied primarily on evidence gathered by scholars who have focused on the healing, helpful dimensions of shamanism. However, this in no way diminishes the power and control issues that are present within shamanism.

### 2.3.2 Shamanism

I define shamanism as a system of interrelatedness that exists among shamans, their cultures, and the spirits as each interacts with the other(s) to provide and maintain spiritual healing, support and guidance for both individuals and the community. As a system, these interrelated components express themselves differently according to the cultures in which they function. Because a shaman is designated as the one to intercede with the spirits for others through a soul journey, or flight, that involves a type of ecstasy, Eliade has said that 'a first definition of the complex phenomenon, and perhaps the least hazardous, will be shamanism = *technique of ecstasy*' (Eliade: 4). Supporting that, but expanding upon it, Louise Backman and Hultkrantz say the following:

The central idea of shamanism is to establish means of contact with the supernatural world by the ecstatic experience of a professional and inspired intermediary, the shaman. There are thus four important constituents of shamanism: the ideological premise, or the supernatural world and the contacts with it; the shaman as an actor on behalf of a human group, the inspiration granted him by his helping spirits; and the extra-ordinary, ecstatic experiences of the shaman (Backman and Hultkrantz, 1978: 11).

According to Nevill Drury, whose Master's degree thesis compared traditional shamanism and Western magic:

A distinguishing feature of shamanism, then, is the journey of the soul. It is because the shaman can project consciousness to other realms that he or she is called a 'technician of the sacred' or a 'master of ecstasy'. It is this capacity to venture consciously among the spirits and return with sacred information for the benefit of society, that is all-important (Drury: 13).

Another related, but different, perspective is that of Siikala, who says that 'the technique of communication used by the shaman as a creator of a state of interaction between this world and the other world is fundamentally ecstatic role-taking technique' (Siikala: 28). This is consistent with Lauri Honko's view that

the shaman actualizes a large number of frames of reference and takes the roles of different beings. We may here speak of the momentary 'picking' of different roles, as a result of which there is actualization of that role-set which makes the most important integrating factor, that is to say the shaman's own role (Honko: 41).

Stutley contends that all forms of shamanism share three things: a 'belief in the existence of

a world of spirits'; the 'inducing of trance by ecstatic singing, dancing and drumming'; and the treatment of 'some diseases, usually of a psychosomatic nature', but also including 'various difficulties and problems' experienced by clan members (Stutley: 2). Though there are more definitions by worthy scholars, this section ends with Vitebsky's view that 'Shamanism is not a single, unified religion but a cross-cultural form of religious sensibility and practice' (Vitebsky, 2001: 11).

### **2.3.3 Core Shamanism**

In the words of Harner, core shamanism consists of 'the basic principles that are common to most shamanic practitioners in most societies' (Wallis: 51). Building on his definition of a shaman as 'a man or woman who enters an altered state of consciousness - at will - to contact and utilize an ordinarily hidden reality in order to acquire knowledge, power, and to help other persons', Harner's fundamentals of shamanism emerge (Harner: 20). Generally through initiation experiences, a shaman achieves a state of consciousness that allows him or her to travel back and forth between a nonordinary reality, where 'spirit helpers' are met and acquired as protectors and teachers of shamanic divination and healing, and the ordinary reality of daily life (Harner: 44-45). This state of consciousness is usually facilitated by steady, monotonous drumming or rattling (Harner: 50-51), and the nonordinary realms reflect a cosmology of at least three areas: a lower world, an upper world, and a middle world (Vitebsky, 2001: 5-17). Harvey says that

The label 'Core Shamanism' is used by many practitioners, indicating that it is based on the identification of central themes and practices within the different localised shamanisms known from ethnographic and historical texts as well as from significant encounters with indigenous shamans themselves (Harvey: 304).

Harner has been criticized for 'decontextualising and universalising' traditional shamanism through his teaching of core shamanism. Indeed, in Wallis' fine study of neo-shamanisms, he supports that criticism and places core shamanism in the same category as other neo-shamanisms. One of his points is that any shamanism is reflective of its

cultural context and as such, cannot be politically neutral. Because Wallis interprets Harner's intention to teach common basic principles of shamanism as a belief that cultural context is not important, I think he misses a valuable insight. Denying the importance of cultural context and expression is not the same as identifying underlying patterns that appear to exist in shamanic societies regardless of their cross-cultural expressions. I also think Wallis' response to Harner's statement that core shamanism, especially its healing dimensions, is not inherently political, may also reflect different understandings of the terms political and politics. Taking political action as an extension of one's shamanic world view and call to participate in healing the planet is not the same as changing the focus of one's shamanic vocation from a soul healer to an activist consistently engaged in governmental politics. However, Wallis raises important issues that must be addressed by those engaged in neo-shamanisms.

#### **2.3.4 Neo-Shamanisms**

Neo-Shamanisms is a term used by Wallis to sensitively encompass the variety of contemporary shamanic expressions that otherwise tend to be lumped together as one type of shamanism. By using this term, Wallis is not suggesting all forms of contemporary shamanism must be accepted without study and critical analysis. However, he thinks the term neo-shamanisms 'does require that we address the diversity of neo-shamanisms and shamanisms, and the subtleties of their engagement and interaction' (Wallis: 32).

#### **2.3.5 Shamanic Culture**

I define a shamanic culture as a society whose worldview encompasses an experience of the spirit realms as a legitimate reality; an appreciation for the ability of the shaman to travel between realms and work with spiritual allies as a valid source of maintaining equilibrium for the community; and an understanding that the shaman's sharing of information, power, and healing is actually necessary for their well-being. The society, or culture, calls forth a

shaman to work on their behalf. As Eliade wrote about shamans and their relationship to their communities:

This small mystical elite not only directs the community's religious life, but, as it were, guards its 'soul'. The shaman is the great specialist in the human soul; he alone 'sees' it, for he knows its 'form' and its destiny (Eliade: 8).

### **2.3.6 Shamanic Spiritual Allies**

In this context, I refer to shamanic spiritual allies as those beings in the nonphysical spiritual realms who protect, guide, inform, strengthen, and partner with a shaman in the process of soul flight on behalf of others. Though some shamanic cultures distinguish between powerful guardian, or tutelary, spirits and the less powerful familiars, or helping spirits, the concept is similar. Whatever their apparent status, these spiritual allies can reveal themselves in human forms, such as gods or goddesses, heroes, or ancestors; or they can show themselves as animals, plants, or other nature spirits (Eliade: 88-89).

Harvey disagrees with using the word 'spirits'; he says it 'unhelpfully mystifies matters', especially when according to Warren's *Dictionary of Psychology*, 'the concept of "person" is not, in fact, synonymous with human being but transcends it' (Harvey: 10). Instead, he uses the term 'other-than-human persons' in order to encompass the variety of forms that spiritual allies take. His point is well-taken; in fact, I have experienced very clear conversations with Native Americans who refer to the stones in a sweat lodge as 'the rock people'. I also think that kind of personification for all creation promotes a sense of oneness with what the Lakota call 'all our relations' - a concept that not only is shamanic, but also is common in many spiritual traditions. However, I think using the word 'person' for animals, plants, and rocks is generally more confusing than clear. As a result, I will occasionally refer to spirits when I mean spiritual allies.

### **2.3.7 Spirit Possession**

Related to working with spiritual allies is the concept of spirit possession. There is little question that a distinguishing feature of shamanism is the reality of shamans working

closely with spirits. However, understanding that working relationship, how it develops, and what effect it has on shamans and their communities is a challenge that includes sensitivity to differing cultural worldviews within shamanic societies and among those studying this subject. Because an extensive discussion of spirit possession is not my primary focus here, providing my own working definition, along with an overview of key scholarly perspectives, seems appropriate.

Cited by Lewis in his research on spirit possession, British anthropologist Raymond Firth has defined spirit possession as involving "phenomena of abnormal behaviour which are interpreted by other members of society as evidence that a spirit is controlling the person's actions and probably inhabiting his body" (Lewis, 1996: 107). The main question is whether or not this possession is voluntary or involuntary, pointing toward the shaman's ability to consciously 'allow' this experience to occur and stop it at will. While possession for some people means their personality is completely displaced, leaving them amnesic of the experience, that condition is not what characterizes shamanic possession. For shamans, it is better understood in T. K. Oesterreich's description of lucid possession, in which the one possessed

. . . does not lose consciousness of his usual personality but retains it . . . he remains fully conscious of what is happening; he is the passive spectator of what takes place within him (Connolly: 6).

Connolly does not distinguish between trance and possession (Connolly: 3); instead, he identifies a trance as the way in which a shaman contacts spirit helpers and works with them on behalf of the community (Connolly: 12). Disagreeing with those like Connolly 'who regard trance primarily as a form of supernatural possession', Lewis argues that 'possession thus has a much wider range of means than our denatured term trance' (Lewis, 2003: 25).

Drawing upon these perspectives, I define spirit possession for a shaman as a conscious and voluntary choice to enter a trance-like state in order to unite with a spirit in a type of role-taking experience of intimate partnership that facilitates communication with the spirit and enables the shaman to receive direct access to information, gifts and/or powers available from the spirit. In this the shaman is not completely overtaken or controlled, but

retains choice and consciousness (Eliade: 6). In fact, this union reflects a 'contractual relationship' that 'binds the shaman and the spirits which he incarnates' in a mystical 'fusing of man and divinity . . . part of controlled spirit possession everywhere' (Lewis, 2003: 50).

### **2.3.8 Mastery of Spirits**

Tied closely to spirit possession is the concept of mastery of spirits. According to scholar Daniel Merkur, some cultures, like the Inuit, generally perceive certain types of spirits as malevolent and dangerous, thereby resulting in the need for their shamans to overcome those spirits, much as one 'tames' wild animals (Merkur: 226). Others may not hold that initial malevolent image of the spirits, but still believe that to be effective and respected, the shaman must be in charge, or control, of the spirits and not be overtaken by them.

Referring to shamanism in Greenland, Jakobsen says:

Mastery should therefore be understood in its broadest sense: an angakkoq masters his spirits insofar as he is able to use their power (Jakobsen: xiii).

I define mastery of spirits for shamans as the ability to develop and maintain the kind of close relationship of mutual respect and understanding with spirits that allows the shaman to 'count on' and 'know' the spirits will always provide assistance, help, and guidance whenever asked, because that is the nature of these relationships. Worth also considering when trying to understand this concept is Merkur's comment about the role of thought and intention in mastery of the spirits: 'It is significant that Inuit shamans are well aware that shamanic power consists of a mastery of their own thought, i.e., of auto-suggestions' (Merkur: 237). In other words, control over one's thoughts and intentions can be a very powerful aspect of knowing that the spirits will respond helpfully to a request.

### **2.3.9 Soul**

Inherent in these concepts and fundamental in the process of shamanic healing is the term soul. For our purposes, soul refers to the intangible essence of life, which precedes and

survives material existence. One of its counterparts is the Latin *anima* (Pearsall: 52), which suggests a life force, power, or energy present in humans, animals, nature, and the entire world. In one of his *Collected Works* - on alchemy, Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, who spent many years developing a theory of soul, stated that the soul's 'essential characteristic is to animate and be animated; it therefore represents the life principle' (Jung: 213).

Some scholars of shamanism refer to soul dualism. That term reflects a view that there are actually two types of soul: a body-soul needed to maintain human life and a free-soul that is able to leave the body and return at will (Hultkrantz, 1973: 30). According to this theory, it is the free soul that enables the shaman to take soul journeys. From another perspective, Paul Johnson refers to Harner's first-hand description of three kinds of soul among the Shuar and their shamans. One is an *arutam wakani*, which must be acquired by seeking a vision or by stealing it from another; its function is to protect a person from being assassinated or dying in warfare. A second one is a *muksak*, an avenging soul whose mission is to avenge the death of its owner. The third soul, *nekas wakani*, is called the true or original soul; it is born with each person, is present in the individual's blood, and it hovers around the community until its transformation into an impersonal, formless mist (Johnson: 340-341).

Building on Jung's work with soul and his understanding of shamanism, C. Michael Smith states the following about Jung and shamanism in dialogue:

The shaman views the soul as a plurality of psychological energies which must exist in some loose harmonious balance within the individual; Jung similarly viewed the soul as a multiplicity-in-unity. When stressing its mystery, variety, and impenetrability, he tends to use the word *soul* (*Seele*). When stressing its integrity, ordering, archetypal patterning, and striving towards wholeness, he tends to use the term *psyche*. Whatever the terminological usage, *psyche* and *soul* are largely synonymous for Jung (Smith, 1997: 101).

### **2.3.10 Shamanic Healing**

Specializing in soul work in a culture that sees the dimension of soul as important as, if not more important than, the physical, emotional, and mental dimensions of human life, it naturally follows that when illness or disease occurs, the shaman helps with healing on a

soul level. Shamanic healing as I use it here refers to soul healing provided by a shaman primarily, though not exclusively, by retrieving lost power animals or soul parts, removing harmful soul intrusions, and conducting souls of the dead to the spirit realms (Eliade: 181-182, 215-216). Hultkrantz says the three main reasons for shamanic soul flights, those ecstatic soul journeys into the nonphysical spirit realms, are to gather information from the spirits, escort a deceased person to the realm beyond, and restore a lost soul part (Hultkrantz, 1973: 29). Though lost soul parts will be addressed in more detail when I discuss shamanic healing in my model of cross-cultural shamanism, from a shamanic perspective, when a person experiences a severe emotional, physical, or spiritual trauma, sometimes a part of that person's soul spontaneously separates from the whole soul, travels into the spirit realms, and stays there until someone like a shaman finds it and brings it back to be reunited (Eliade: 300-301)(Ingerman, 1991: 27-28). In-depth descriptions of the soul retrieval concept and process presented from a contemporary perspective are found in Sandra Ingerman's books *Soul Retrieval* and *Welcome Home*.

With these working definitions in mind, we now turn to a model of cross-cultural shamanism.

## **2.4 A Model of Cross-Cultural Shamanism**

As shamanism has become more well known, scholars like Eliade, Harner, Lewis, Vitebsky, and Harvey have identified components that appear to be significant in distinguishing shamanism from some other forms of mystical or magical practice and to be present across many shamanic cultures. For example, Vitebsky provides three key characteristics he sees as 'distinctively shamanic': a 'layered cosmology, with the flight of the shaman's soul to other levels of this cosmos, and the power to use this journey to fight, command, and control spirits' (Vitebsky, 2003: 278). Though there are cultural variations in how key components are described and experienced, what follows are descriptions of those fundamental elements that form what I think is a basic model of cross-cultural shamanism. They include *shamanic vocation and initiation; shamanic cosmology; a shamanic state of consciousness;*

*shamanic soul flight/journeying; shamanic spiritual allies; shamanic soul healing; and community support.*

#### **2.4.1 Shamanic Vocation and Initiation**

Shamans usually receive the call to a shamanic vocation through illness or suffering, dreams, or spontaneous ecstatic experiences with spirits. According to Vitebsky,

Though there is much variation across societies, shamanic power and practice are often inherited within a lineage or kin-group. But at the same time it is generally said that a future shaman does not choose his or her profession, but is chosen by the spirits themselves to serve them. The young candidate may be made aware of this through dreams or by other signs (Vitebsky, 2000: 60).

Even when the vocation is expected because of heredity, Eliade says one or more 'death and resurrection' processes still occur - often during soul journeys, but sometimes through physical illness. According to him, these experiences usually have three components: dismemberment and renewal of the shaman's body, ascent to the sky, and descent to the lower world (Eliade: 34-35). Hutton argues that the visionary experience of 'death and resurrection' Eliade described was not clearly cross-cultural. He states that 'The truly universal pattern was that the prospective shaman underwent a period of withdrawal in order to develop her or his skills and knowledge' (Hutton, 2001: 74). In any event, the shaman must in some way(s) die to the life that existed before the call came in order to ultimately accept that the new abilities of experiencing ecstatic soul flight and providing spiritual healing are actually gifts. That often includes some kind of apprenticeship that involves initiation experiences.

According to Harvey,

Initiation establishes relationships, knowledges and abilities that define who shamans are and what they do. Relationships with powerful helpers are not only formed but also cemented in dramatic encounters which demonstrate or negotiate power, control, authority, and boundaries. Shamans are taught what their helpers require and offer, what etiquette will maintain and enhance their on-going relationship (Harvey: 27).

For many, the experience of traveling to the spirit realms or communicating with the spirits is frightening; for others, seeing themselves as healers is equally frightening. Facing

these fears, allowing the new gifts, and participating in traditional instruction regarding shamanic roles and functions can provide intense and powerful initiation experiences for one who becomes a shaman (Drury: 11)(Smith, 1997: 26). With the Inuit shamans, part of their initiation process often involves obtaining from 'the spirits' a song that fills them with power (Merkur: 199). For East Greenlanders, rock grinding to call forth spirits that become helpers (Jakobsen: 52) and successfully initiating a soul journey and song while tightly bound with ropes in order to ask spirits for release from the ropes (Jakobsen: 63-64) are two initiation rites Jakobsen describes as ways of mastering the spirits during a potential shaman's apprenticeship.

An initiation crisis occurs for a small percentage of shamans, raising a concern about whether the newly emerging shaman is having a psychotic emergency or a spiritual emergence. It is helpful to remember that a community's recognition of the experience as 'initiatory' and its support for the new shaman throughout that process are important in the shaman's healing or recovery (Walsh, 1990a: 41)(Cameron: 3). According to Lewis, a shaman's career follows three main phases: first is an involuntary, uncontrolled possession by spirits; next is a time of accommodating to, or domesticating, those spirits; finally, it culminates with the shaman either dying or successfully learning to initiate controlled, voluntary and solicited trance and possession as a healer (Lewis, 1996: 118).

#### **2.4.2 Shamanic Cosmology**

A shamanic cosmology is possible when one distinguishes between an ordinary reality that is material and visible to our physical eyes and a nonordinary reality that is not material, but is seen through the eyes of imagination or experienced through an intuitive ways of knowing - often called a vision (Eliade: 226). It is in the spirit realms that the shaman finds a geography usually made up of three primary cosmic regions: a lower world, sometimes called an underworld; a middle world, often described as the spiritual dimension of the physical earth; and an upper world, referred to at times as the sky. Generally these upper and lower regions are accessed through a kind of hole, or opening, in the sky or the earth,

depending upon the direction of the journey (Vitebsky, 2001: 17). A journey to the upper world may begin with a soul ascent from the top of a hill, mountain, tree, or other high place exiting on the earth in ordinary reality (Drury: 17); a journey to the lower world may begin with the soul descending into a cave, body of water, root system of a tree, or other natural passage that can take one downward into the earth (Harner: 24-31).

Common in descriptions of sacred space, a center axis, often called the tree of life or the world pillar, is identified by many shamanic cultures as a symbol connecting the three cosmic regions (Drury: 38-39). A further aspect of this cosmology is that both the upper and the lower regions contain numerous levels through which the shaman may travel (Eliade: 259-60).

In her book about Yup'ik Eskimo oral tradition, scholar Ann Fienup-Riordan describes a slightly different cosmology - one of circles within a circle, reflecting the Yup'ik 'structure of daily life and movement in the world at large' (Fienup-Riordan: 259). This daily movement of people within a circular village space is mirrored in the seasonal movement of villagers as they circle around their land at different times of the year. All of this movement takes place within a circular framework of universal space, which is experienced as inhabited by the *ellam yua*, 'the person of the universe' who watches the world. Though shamans may still journey up or down, within this cosmology, one journeying quite far in one direction might 'eventually arrive at a point where the earth folded back up into the skyland home of the spirits of land animals' (Fienup-Riordan: 259).

An important point when identifying a shamanic cosmology is that one journeying from ordinary reality to the nonordinary reality of the spirit realms usually discovers a nonordinary reality geography that can be explored and revisited - a geography that provides special meeting places with spiritual allies. Furthermore, that territory often has characteristics not unlike those of the land in which the one journeying lives.

### **2.4.3 Shamanic Soul Flight/Journeying**

Central to shamanism is the soul journey, or flight of ecstasy, taken into the spirit realms by

the shaman, in partnership with spiritual allies, for the purpose of helping self and others.

With this in mind, Vitebsky tells us

So while it is reminiscent in some ways of mystical experience in the mainstream historical religions, shamanic journeying is at the same time extremely pragmatic and goal-oriented (Vitebsky, 2000: 61).

He elaborates by describing how this pragmatic process functions in ways that include re-enacting central experiences in the shaman's initiation, performing seasonal rites that maintain order, and responding to a problem experienced by an individual or the community (Vitebsky, 2000: 61). Examples of this are ritually and dramatically portraying an initial meeting of the shaman's guardian spirit, enacting the seasonal battle between seasons as one gives way to another, and providing something like a soul retrieval for an individual or a divination to access information regarding a community problem like how to deal with young people who no longer want to maintain cultural traditions. Harvey reminds us that Korean shamans are good examples of people who do not "journey" beyond their bodies' (Harvey: 19). However, I think the commonality is the experience of something shifting when a shaman meets with spiritual allies who partner with him or her in doing shamanic work.

Consistent with the cosmology described earlier, the shamanic journey has a basic structure in which the shaman: begins at a starting point in ordinary reality; ascends or descends into the nonordinary realm of 'the spirits' to partner with them for information or healing; and ends by returning to the ordinary reality starting point. Though the unique aspect of this journey is the ecstasy experienced by the shaman, it is worth noting that soul flight is accomplished by using a fairly straightforward methodology. This ecstasy is often compared to 'magical heat' - a kind of burning with joy that occurs when that lost connection between spirit and matter are reunited. For this reason, from both a metaphorical and a physical standpoint, a shaman is sometimes said to have 'mastery over fire' (Eliade: 272-276). The experience of journeying has its parallels with meditative processes like guided imagery and active imagination, a term coined by Jung. Guided imagery is generally directed by another person who instructs the one meditating in what to do, but active imagination is more interactive and less dependent on another's guidance. It is closer to a

shamanic journey in that the one meditating takes control of focusing and of willfully interacting with images that appear in the realm of imagination (Noel: 170-171).

This soul journey can take place alone or in the presence of one or more people, often the family and friends of one asking for healing, but sometimes members of community who have asked for shamanic assistance regarding a common problem. Researchers who have observed these more public journeys have often called them seances. During a 'seance', the shaman will often enact what is occurring in the journey. In that sense, this kind of 'shamanistic seance is high theater' - a 'performance' in which the shaman embodies his or her spiritual allies and 'tells the story' of the healing or the information gathered from the spirits (Lewis, 1996: 120).

#### **2.4.4 Shamanic Consciousness**

What shamans do is inseparable from the music they (or their helpers) play, the costumes they wear, the art they create, the movements they make, the performances they enact. A shaman banging a drum, wearing mirrors, moving like an animal, chanting, is someone shamanizing (Harvey: 155).

In order to take flight, or journey on a soul level, the shaman must access a state of consciousness that facilitates that process. Most shamans utilize the rhythmic music of consistent drumming, rattling, singing, and/or dancing to enter into a trance. To further deepen the trance state, some wear costumes or masks that reflect their spiritual allies or that have bells or shells sewn into them. Many possess objects of special spiritual significance to them - objects they believe actually strengthen and align them with their spiritual power. Furthermore, during ritual 'performances', the participation of everyone present not only facilitates a shaman's own spiritual work, but involves those present in accessing and enhancing their own spiritual power.

One example of the importance of ritual dress is given by scholar James Cox during his shamanic research in Kivalina, Alaska. Though applied in a Christian setting, not a traditional shamanic ritual, the officiating priest at an Episcopalian service asked Cox to assist with distributing elements of the Eucharist, but would not allow him to do so without

wearing a clerical shirt. Cox tells us 'The costume of the religious practitioner thus mediated the spirit world to the people, and without the costume, such mediation could not occur' (Cox, 1999: 275, 278).

There are shamans who use drugs to enhance their soul journeys, but that is not a cross-cultural practice. Drury describes some of the ways shamans from Pakistan, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Arctic Regions move into a shamanic state of consciousness 'following periods of fasting, sensory deprivation, meditative focusing, chanting, through the beating of drums, or through a particular response to a dream' (Drury: 15). Connolly emphasizes the fact that 'trance is rarely an end in itself. Usually it is a means to the attainment of some other end' (Connolly: 5). For shamans, that end is passage into the spirit realms, or nonordinary reality, to work with spirits for healing and/or information. To an observer, this passage may appear to be quite intense and frenzied, or it may seem rather quiet and inward. This depends in great part upon the shaman's personality, his or her susceptibility to trance states, and the nature of his or her relationship with spiritual allies.

#### **2.4.5 Shamanic Spiritual Allies**

As discussed in the working definitions, a shaman works with spiritual allies of various types in a kind of partnership. Drury expands upon this:

In the shaman's world, spirit allies have many functions: they can detect the origins of illness, be despatched to recover lost souls, be summoned in acts of aggression, and show a clear path past obstacles which might arise on the shaman's quest. As we have already seen, spirit guides may appear to shamans in dreams, in visions, and spontaneously after initiations. In some societies, shamans also exchange or inherit spirit guides. In all cases, however, spirit guides are perceived as crucial to the shaman's resolve and power: a literal embodiment of psychic and magical strength (Drury: 42).

Because of this close relationship, shamans often sing, dance, and perform certain rituals as if they were these allies; they are uniting with the power and energy that the allies are sharing with them in order to more effectively fulfill their functions in society (Eliade: 93).

According to Harner,

To perform his work, the shaman depends on special, personal

power, which is usually supplied by his guardian and helping spirits. Each shaman generally has at least one guardian spirit in his service, whether or not he also possesses helping spirits (Harner: 42)

This guardian spirit corresponds to the 'tutelary spirit' of Siberian shamanism, the 'nagual' in Guatemala and Mexico, the 'assistant totem' in Australia, or the 'familiar' in European literature; without it one cannot be a shaman, though possessing a guardian spirit does not automatically make one a shaman (Harner: 42-43). Often a (power) animal, a teacher in human form, or a plant (possibly tree) spirit, the guardian spirit protects, serves, and guides the shaman when he or she is journeying on behalf of others. In conjunction, helping spirits support the shaman in diverse and specialized ways - much like a crew of assistants available when needed for specific tasks (Harner: 43).

Sometimes a shaman's alliance with a spiritual ally who appears in human form takes on aspects of a spiritual marriage with a beloved. Lewis states that

the relationship between the devotee and the spirit, which he or she regularly incarnates, is often represented directly in terms either of marriage or of kinship (Lewis, 2003: 52).

This kind of union is another way the shaman can be helped through initiation into spiritual power and fulfillment of his or her healing vocation (Eliade: 79-81)(Cameron: 3).

Regardless of the diverse descriptions of spiritual allies, their categories, or their names, research points to the fact that they are essential to the successful functioning of a shaman. It is in partnership with these allies that a shaman is initiated, learns to discern the shamanic path, and serves the soul needs of those in the communities in which he or she lives. Their presence does not necessarily eliminate the need for apprenticeship with human teachers, but without these spirits, shamans would be unable to do their work.

#### **2.4.6 Shamanic Soul Healing**

Shamans gather divinatory information for themselves and others, but that function serves primarily to help them in their main work of soul healing. Referring to Siberian shamanism, Hutton tells us

A function of shamanism which was as widespread as healing and almost as prominent in the records, was divination, either

in the form of clairvoyance, to trace lost or stolen goods or animals, or of prophecy, to advise people on how best to prepare for hunting, fishing, journeying or seasonal migration (Hutton, 2001: 54).

We also learn from Chungmoo Choi that contemporary Korean shamans regularly use divination to obtain information helpful in working with those who come to them for shamanic assistance (Choi: 171-74). Both examples from Siberia and Korea underscore the importance of good relationships with spirits as part of maintaining the health of individuals and their communities.

As mentioned in the definitions, the shaman is a specialist in soul issues. For that reason, when a person or a group experiences some kind of disease, illness, or malady, the shaman operates on the soul level to cure, or heal, the problem. Fienup-Riordan tells us that the Yup'ik peoples in Alaska 'primarily regarded healing as a spiritual enterprise aimed at either exorcism of unclean essences or restoring wholeness by recalling something lost' (Fienup-Riordan: 196). Therefore, when the shaman, with the help of spiritual allies, determines that the underlying cause of that problem is loss of power, retrieving a power animal, or spiritual ally in animal form, for the one(s) with the malady is usually the healing practice used (Harner: 69-70). Similarly, when an individual or group has experienced a severe trauma, as likely to happen in war, disasters, accidents, various type of abuse, or other terrifying occurrences, the shaman and his or her allies will often diagnose the underlying issue as soul loss (Ingerman, 1991: 12-13). In other words, from a shamanic perspective, a part of the soul reacts to a trauma by separating itself and traveling into the spirit realms for protection. While Hultkrantz suggests that the free soul is what departs, Sandra Ingerman, pioneer in modern-day shamanic soul retrieval, contends that any lost part is a fragment of the vital soul, what Hultkrantz calls the body-soul. It is essential to life and the reason healing is needed (Smith, 1997: 189)(Ingerman, 1991: 11-12). The shaman's role is to journey into the spirit realms, find any lost parts, bring them back in a ritual of reunion, and support the process of integrating the parts (Ingerman, 1993) (Jakobsen: 251-252).

Sometimes individuals or groups feel as if an 'evil spirit', or a harmful illness,

attitude, or belief has intruded in their physical or emotional space. If a shamanic diagnosis (via consultation with a spiritual ally while journeying) confirms the presence of a spiritual intrusion, the shaman may remove that intrusion by performing an extraction on a soul level (Harner: 115-123). Some Yup'ik shamans accomplish this by putting a frog on top of a sick person's head - holding the belief that 'the frog could draw sickness out of the body and carry it away when it left' (Fienup-Riordan: 201). Other methods of extraction include the shaman physically removing the intrusion with his or her hands or by a sucking technique; with each method, the shaman uses divination to determine the problem and then works with spiritual allies to conduct the extraction (Harner: 115-122).

A shaman may be called upon to help one who is about to die or one who has just died. From a shamanic perspective, teaching a person close to death about how to journey and how to meet spiritual allies can increase that dying person's sense of familiarity with the spirit realms and bring comfort in the dying process. Likewise, when necessary, a shaman may function as a psychopomp, one who helps those who have already died cross over into the spirit realms (Eliade: 215-217). Disagreeing with Eliade's claim that shamans in general always functioned as psychopomps, Hutton identifies the work of the Nanais *kasanti* as only one Siberian example of those who

conduct the souls of recently deceased tribespeople to the land of the dead, in a long and elaborate ritual which allowed the bereaved an opportunity to work through their grief and conclude their relationship with the dead (Hutton, 2001: 55).

Regardless of whether or not every shaman specializes in psychopomp healing, it seems clear that work with those who are dying and those who have died is part of an overall soul healing function provided by many shamans throughout the world.

#### **2.4.7 Community Support**

To conclude this section, shamans function within the context of the societies in which they live. Though they may feel alone in their shamanic call, it is for the community that they do their work. It is also the community that acknowledges their vocation, supports them in their work, or chastises them if they refuse or ignore what is theirs to do. According to Vitebsky,

after a shaman passes through a severe initiation experience, he or she

must always be re-socialized and psychologically reintegrated to serve a social function within the community. The mystic is also a social worker (Vitebsky, 2000: 63).

In Alaska, Yup'ik communities want their shamans to help them prevent illness, rather than cure disease, and their ceremonies reflect that focus (Fienup-Riordan: 203-204). Likewise, with the Sora, an aboriginal tribe in eastern India, 'instead of being called in for a crisis, the shaman is involved in a constant regulation of social relations (Vitebsky, 2000: 64). In essence, shamanism as a system is fairly practical in that it encompasses and attends to a network of relationships that a community and its shaman(s) deem important for their health and well-being and vital for their overall survival.

#### **2.4.8 Conclusion**

These are basic elements that appear to exist cross-culturally, though it is unlikely that every shamanic practitioner or shamanic culture always exhibits each component at all times. Highly influenced by Harner's concept of core shamanism, the elements in this reflect an underlying pattern of shamanic characteristics that exists globally, but is expressed locally. Not alone in exploring this concept, Vitebsky also presents a list of distinctively shamanic aspects: a layered cosmology, the flight of the shaman's soul, and 'the power to use this journey to fight, command and control spirits which inhabit these realms and affect human destiny' (Vitebsky, 2003: 279). He, too, sees shamanism as a system, but one 'of contemplative thought with an implicit set of propositions, and a blueprint for action' (Vitebsky, 2003: 279). I agree with his insights and his contention that shamanic thinking has important implications for our world.

*Table 2-4* (below) portrays the elements just described in the model of cross-cultural shamanism. Following that is Chapter Three, which introduces a multifaceted approach to addressing critical factors currently contributing to the transformation of culture and religion, and therefore, highly influencing this research project.

**MODEL OF CROSS-CULTURAL SHAMANISM**

<b>Key Element</b>	<b>Examples</b>
1. Shamanic Vocation and Initiation	Hereditary or Spontaneous Call Illness and/or Dreams Death and Resurrection Experiences Bestowal of Spiritual Allies and Possible Power Song
2. Shamanic Cosmology	Ordinary/Nonordinary Reality Upper, Lower, and Middle Worlds Earthly starting points for journeys Tree of Life/Axis Mundi
3. Shamanic Soul Flight/Journeying	Ecstatic experience Either ascent or descent Partnership with spiritual allies Magical Heat/Mastery of Fire Focused and interactive
4. Shamanic Consciousness	Rhythmic music: drumming, rattling, chanting, dancing Costumes Fasting
5. Shamanic Spiritual Allies	Protective and Supportive Partnership Source of power Guides to information and healing Human, animal, and plant form Spiritual marriage
6. Shamanic Soul Healing	Divination Power Animal Retrieval Soul Retrieval Extractions Death and Dying/Psychopomp
7. Community Support	Call Acknowledged Work Supported Effectiveness Monitored

**Table 2-4**

## **CHAPTER THREE: RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

### **3.1 Introduction and Context**

To explore contemporary shamanic practice in its relationship to a model of cross-cultural shamanic elements and to its possible role as a religion, it is important to understand significant dimensions inherent in the process of religious transformation. Knowing how religion and religious expression actually change and develop over time can widen academic perspectives and provide a multi-disciplinary context not only for understanding Hervieu-Léger's model of religion as a chain of memory, but also for examining how critical factors currently effecting the transformation of religion and culture may be present in the results of this research project. The issue of religious transformation, set in its context of cultural transformation, is a theoretical topic unto itself and not the total focus of this thesis. However, its major components do come together as an informal multifaceted 'system' that is highly influential in the ways both shamanism and religion are perceived and understood today.

As a starting point, this chapter addresses many of the diverse approaches scholars have developed in their attempts to define religion. It then provides an overview for each of the following critical factors: social and cultural change; secularization; changing religious forms; personal and collective memory; consciousness; spirituality; faith and belief; developmental theory; and the patriarchal paradigm. All of these could be addressed individually at great length, but again, that is not the purpose of this study. Though explained more fully in Chapter Four as part of presenting Hervieu-Léger's model of religion, issues such as tradition, legitimizing authority, and believing are integrated into several of the above critical factors. The conclusion includes a chart listing these nine critical factors and the relevant points contained within each of them.

### **3.2 Diverse Approaches to Defining Religion**

First of all, there are scholarly differences regarding the need for even defining the term

'religion'. We find two basic orientations to this: a non-essentialist approach, which contends that a clear definition of religion is not possible, and an essentialist approach, which claims that it is possible to define religion. Of interest to this study is recognition that use of the term 'religion', as we attempt to understand it today, is a relatively recent phenomenon. During Luther's time religion was generally seen as the source of truth, but the Deists of the Enlightenment subsequently transformed that meaning into an abstraction more familiar to twentieth century thinking. According to Gavin Flood,

The abstraction 'religion' - along with the abstractions 'culture', 'mysticism' and 'spirituality' - originated in the context of the critique of Christianity in the Enlightenment and the rise of the modern individual, which has since become an etic category in being applied outside of Christianity (Flood: 45).

In similar fashion, scholar John Hick referred to the pioneering work of North American scholar of religion Wilfred Cantwell Smith by noting that Cantwell Smith's research has shown that

the notion of a religion as a particular system of belief embodied in a bounded community was unknown (apart from early adumbrations which he notes at the beginning of the Christian era) prior to the modern period. . . . It was later, after the red-hot volcanic experience and thought of the great reformers had cooled into the abstract theological disputes of the seventeenth century, that the notion of a religion as a system of doctrines was effectively formed (Smith, 1991: vii).

Among the scholars who have thought that defining religion was a worthwhile endeavor is Emile Durkheim, who said religion was

a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions - beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church (Durkheim: 46).

For him it was also a social function - a system of collective activities that includes rituals, which support and express beliefs shared by people united in their common conception of the sacred. Perceived in this way, the sacred then confers an ideal and transcendent quality to the physical universe (Durkheim: 38), and it is this perspective that religion contributes to society. Flowing from that, Durkheim contended that the fundamental categories of human thought and science have religious origins, and therefore, religion has given birth to all great social institutions. He concluded that

If religion generated everything that is essential in society, this is because the idea of society is the soul of religion. Religious forces, then, are human forces, moral forces (Durkheim: 314).

In line with this, the notion of 'god' for Durkheim was more related to the highest aspirations and potential of society itself - to the 'god of society' - than to a separate or distant supreme being. He further held that believing in a supernatural power fosters a sense of dependence on that 'god', which for him was society; thus, believing in this way engenders loyalty and unity within society. According to Robert Segal,

Durkheim never claims that religion alone unifies society. Indeed, society must be sufficiently united for its members to assemble and thereby to create religion in the first place. Religion is, however, the best means of preserving and, more, intensifying that unity (Segal: 8).

For Max Weber, who along with Emile Durkheim, was a founding father of the sociology of religion, individuals, not society, were the prime movers in shaping both religion and society, though society plays an important role in creating both. Weber's focus was on

the relations between religious ideas and commitments and other aspects of human conduct, especially the economic characteristics of human conduct within a society' (Weber: xx).

He was concerned with the subjective motives of individuals, in order to discover typical patterns, and with systems of meaning, or cultural complexes, that might link societal perspectives with individual interests. Like Durkheim, Weber thought in evolutionary terms and contended that belief in the supernatural was a universal phenomenon. He used the process of rationalization to clarify and systematize his ideas, especially those related to how human beings conceive of their place in the universe and in doing so, legitimize the ways in which they go about achieving goals that express and fulfill a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives (Weber: xxxii-xxxiii).

Weber saw religion as originating and functioning initially through societal interaction with a magician who could use specific techniques to help secure immediate physical ends such as food, clothing, shelter, and health. The next stage of religion for him was development of a priesthood in response to the existence of a cult, or congregation; out

of that emerged a metaphysics providing a comprehensive explanation of the world and an accompanying code of ethics that replaced magic (Segal: 11). This new kind of rationalized religious social organization actually highlighted for Weber the seeming paradox of how a transcendent god may be reconciled with the imperfect reality of suffering. It followed for him that religions of salvation then emerged as ways to 'save' those oppressed with suffering and to provide a 'theodicy of good fortune for those who are fortunate' (Gerth: 271). Concerned with undeserved suffering, Weber pointed out that one's world view, closely related to one's social class, directly affects one's understanding of salvation or redemption. He said that underlying all the possible worldviews is a desire to be 'saved' from something senseless in order to live in a world order that reflects a meaningful 'cosmos'. Furthermore, he claimed that one result of this thorough rationalizing of the world and of life was the shifting of religion into the realm of the irrational - to a dimension of 'mystery' that became the only possible 'beyond' in a world robbed of gods (Gerth: 281-282). Another result he observed was the continued presence of those who want to monopolize administration of religious values and goods by gaining and maintaining power and control, especially over those irrational dimensions.

One potential threat to those in power, though a key figure announcing salvation and one of significance to Weber, has typically been the 'irrational' prophet - one who breaks through established societal and religious norms and declares another order to be legitimate by invoking a source of moral authority. Prophetic charisma, according to Weber, belongs not only to that individual, but also to the new normative order itself, thus leading to a lineage of charisma or a charisma of office. Talcott Parsons says that Weber's concept of charisma is identical to Durkheim's concept of the collective sacred (Weber: xxxiv). Weber further describes two types of prophets, each one implying different ways of relating to a source of legitimation: an exemplary prophet, who is a model for others to follow in their own immanent relationship with the divine principle; and an ethical prophet, who demands that others follow in compliance with a transcendent, externally legislated call

from outside the self (Weber: xxxv-xxxvi). Related to this, Weber wrote:

The sacred values that have been most cherished, the ecstatic and visionary capacities of shamans, sorcerers, ascetics, and pneumatics of all sorts, could not be attained by everyone. The possession of such faculties is a 'charisma,' which, to be sure, might be awakened in some but not in all. It follows from this that all intensive religiosity has a tendency toward a sort of *status stratification*, in accordance with differences in the charismatic qualifications. 'Heroic' or 'virtuoso' religiosity is opposed to mass religiosity (Gerth: 288).

Because fully developed 'church' institutions, which organize 'mass religiosity', claim corporate authority to bestow or deny sacred values, Weber acknowledged that they naturally struggle with the presence of prophets and virtuosos who often ally themselves with another authority.

With Durkheim and Weber providing a context for modern sociology of religion scholarship, we turn to social anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who has urged researchers not to abandon the valuable contributions of Durkheim and Weber, but to widen them and place them in a broader context of contemporary thought. Committed to a cultural dimension of religious analysis, Geertz is known for his use of the term 'paradigm' in order to conceptualize the worldview of a culture. He has defined religion as

a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, persuasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Geertz, 1973: 90).

Like Weber, Geertz sees religion as fulfilling an individual need for meaning, which includes the challenge of explaining the inexplicable. For him the inexplicable falls into three categories: experiences like death and dreams, which cannot be explained, but only accounted for, though they need not be justified; experiences like suffering, which are unendurable, but must be borne and accounted for, though still not justified; and experiences like the Holocaust, which are unendurable and must be justified, not merely accounted for and borne (Geertz, 1973: 100-108)(Segal: 15). Along with Durkheim and Weber, Geertz's perspective is that the nature of society can shape the nature of religion,



though in areas beyond just social organization. He has described how a society's conception of reality, as seen in its world view, and its way of life, or ethos, as expressed in its attitude, character, and mood, must fuse; in other words, ethos must be a living reflection of a society's view of reality - embodying its most comprehensive ideas of order (Geertz, 1973: 127).

Reflecting on Durkheim, Geertz wrote the following:

If Durkheim's famous statement that God is the symbol of society is incorrect, as I think it is, it remains true that particular kinds of faith (as well as particular kinds of doubt) flourish in particular kinds of societies, and the contribution of the comparative sociology of religion to the general understanding of the spiritual dimensions of human existence both begins and ends in an uncovering of the nature of these empirical, that is to say lawful, interconnections (Geertz, 1968: 20).

To Geertz, a religious perspective involves a vital link between the values that guide how one ought to live and the way one's life is actually lived. It is made up of religious patterns, or frames of perception, through which one interprets experience and accepts guidance for action or conduct; and its main context for creating and sustaining belief is ritual (Geertz, 1968: 99-100). For him, loss of power on the part of classical religious symbols was caused by the secularization of thought and the ideologization of religion. Elaborating, Geertz said that

the brute empirical fact is that the growth of science has made almost all religious beliefs harder to maintain and a great many virtually impossible to maintain. Even if they are no direct antitheses, there is a natural tension between the scientific and religious ways of attempting to render the world comprehensible, a tension which need not, in my opinion probably will not, perhaps even cannot, eventuate in the destruction of either of them, but which is nonetheless real, chronic, and increasingly intense (Geertz, 1968: 103-104).

Similar to Geertz in his attention to the collective nature of religious endeavors, Berger wrote in his 1973 edition of *The Social Reality of Religion* that human society is a dialectical phenomenon in which people form and are formed by society itself; in that process, they engage in the collective enterprise of world-building, also known as the creation of culture (Berger, 1973: 13-16). In addition, the experience of living within a

society takes people to marginal situations, the most precarious and terrifying being that of death, all of which threaten social order, assumptions, and established meaning. For Berger, efforts to face these threats, restore stability, and re-enforce meaning call for aligning with sources more powerful and comprehensive than local societal efforts - sources that are perceived to be cosmic or inherently universal. In that context he defined religion as 'the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established' (Berger, 1973: 34). Sacred for him was a 'quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience' (Berger, 1973:34). Berger explained that an orderly sacred cosmos emerges from and transcends its own opposite, which is chaos; as such, living in right relationship with the sacred cosmos is an important way people protect themselves against the threats of chaos and its resultant meaninglessness.

How does one know how to live in right relationship with a sacred cosmos? In response, Berger addressed the issue of legitimation, which he called a socially objectified 'knowledge' that explains and justifies a social order by establishing symmetry between objective and subjective definitions of reality. He continued:

All legitimation maintains socially defined reality. Religion legitimates so effectively because it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality (Berger, 1973: 41).

In that process, religion represents an alignment of a society's deepest aspirations with what is perceived as the fundamental order of the universe, thereby reinforcing the understanding of 'as above, so below' and reflecting an image of a world family of all beings. Furthermore, religious ritual is then seen as a 'reminder' of the legitimate story of ultimate meaning that has been accepted by a society. The action of ritual, together with the telling of religious legitimations and mythology, restore continuity between past and present and between the individual and the collective in a way that transcends them all. As Berger said, 'society, in its essence, is a memory', and 'through most of human history, this memory has been a religious one' (Berger, 1973: 49).

Another important perspective active in contemporary religious studies is exemplified in the work of scholar James Cox. Utilizing a phenomenological approach when trying to understand religion, Cox defined 'religion', but incorporated the concept of 'prior intuition' into that definition. For him, intuition meant

a seeing into meaning that largely originates from the creative interplay of the mind with the data of the external world. Intuitive insight is at the core of almost all advances in human knowledge (Cox, 1999: 267-268).

Referring to a 'scientist's creative genius' - to what might also include the maxim 'to sleep on it' as a way of freeing up creativity when approaching a challenge, Cox contended that religious scholars should personally reflect on and clarify their own intuited sense of religion prior to interpreting the data they gather about the religion of another, thus improving their ability to analyze and interpret results. Influenced by anthropologist Felicitas Goodman and her use of the term 'alternative reality', and confident in his own understanding of how important a shared reality is to a religious community, he has defined religion as

comprised of an identifiable community's beliefs about and postulated experiences of a non-falsifiable alternate reality; such opinions and experiences are influenced by and expressed through varied, symbolic and observable phenomena such as rituals, oral and written traditions, ritual specialists, morality and art (Cox, 1999: 271-272).

As part of his phenomenological method, Cox uses *epoche*, which is the 'holding back of judgments' when investigating or gathering data. He contends that by performing *epoche* and including 'prior intuition', students of religion may be able to better 'appreciate the perspectives of the people they are observing' (Cox, 1998: 5). Through his inclusion of both *epoche* and 'prior intuition', Cox has attempted to address a concern raised by some scholars who question whether or not even a phenomenological approach can sufficiently identify biases of the researcher and the research program.

One of those scholars is Gavin Flood, who wrote about the relevance of a scholar's personal biography, the importance of recognizing that 'the researcher is a social actor in a socially legitimated activity, as are the people or community whom are the object of

research', and the critical need for bringing to light and evaluating the values held by that researcher (Flood: 38-39). He has placed religion within the context of a cultural worldview and identified language as a critical constraint affecting any religion. With that as a context, he has broadly defined religions as 'value-laden narratives and behaviours that bind people to their objectives, to each other, and to non-empirical claims and beings'. As narratives, religions are then

less about truth claims and more about identity, less about structures and more about texts, less about abstraction and more about tradition or that which is passed on (Flood: 47).

Another scholar is Graham Ward, who reflected in his recent collection of essays on a postmodern god, the opinions of those whose current perspectives on religion include the following interpretation of key developments that occurred after the Reformation and the Enlightenment:

The reorganization of spatiality, temporality, corporeality, and language reflects a change in social relations and the practices which inscribe them: the secularization of those relations in which religious associations were expunged from the public realm (where they had been the source of far too much contention and internecine warfare). The privatization of the religious led to the erasure of God-talk from the public arena – privately one could believe what one wished, but these beliefs had no 'street value'. Secular ethics and politics flourished in the wake of a flagrant humanism. I wish to argue that with postmodernism God emerges from the white-out nihilism of modern atheism and from behind the patriarchal masks imposed by modernity's secular theology (Ward, 1997: xxi-xxii).

Ward has contended that with modernity, god-talk became privatized, and the metaphorical and literal interpretations of religious language, which originally had been coextensive, became decontextualized. However, with the emerging understanding from Nietzsche that 'there is no foundation, no ground, no origin that ultimately is not governed by a perspective', modernity actually brought the death of its own 'god', and in so doing, restored freedom to irrationality and metaphor (Ward, 1997: xxix).

Concluding this review of definitions is the work of scholar Martin Prozesky, who has called for 'a radically new understanding of religion, because the ones we have inherited cannot do justice to the global phenomenon of faith in all its basic forms and

characteristics' (Prozesky 1984: 1). Not unlike Geertz in his recognition of the interactive role between religion and cultural worldviews, Prozesky has contended that over time both have been challenged to expand their parameters based on new discoveries about the world and their role in it. In light of that, he has described religion in its various cross-cultural forms as fundamentally 'a quest for ultimate well-being' (Prozesky, 1984: 234).

With these definitions and perspectives about the nature of religion as a backdrop, the next step in understanding the transformation of religion is to explore its roots in the ways societies and cultures change.

### **3.3 Social and Cultural Change**

#### **3.3.1 Sociological Theories**

According to US scholar of sociology Charles Harper, there currently are three established and most widely recognized sociological theories about society and change. Because they each reflect a different image of society, they also provide differing approaches to change within society. The structural functionalist view sees change emerging through the necessities of survival, while conflict theory relates change to the conflict that comes from trying to gain power and control over scarce resources. A third symbolic interactionist approach contends 'that society and change are both shaped by the meanings and definitions that emerge from interaction between the various actors and parts of society (Harper, 1989: 76)(Harper 1989). Harper further explains that while all three perceive and explain change in different ways, what they have in common is that 'All three perspectives argue that at some point cultural and symbolic factors are critical in understanding change' (Harper, 1989: 96)(Harper 1989).

#### **3.3.2 Modernity**

One major example of social and cultural change that has dramatically affected religion has been what has come to be called the modernization of society over the last several hundred years. Described in general terms in Chapter One, this process for a great number of

people set religion and science against each other, rationally explained why religion would eventually be discarded, and distributed to various societal disciplines many responsibilities and areas of control that had previously been under the umbrella of Christian churches. Modernity has brought severe fragmentation in many contemporary manifestations of belief and the disappearance of numerous links between society and religion. However, also stated in Chapter One is the surprising emergence in the last half of the twentieth century of new forms of religiosity, which is an important aspect of this research project.

### **3.3.3 Global Interdependence, Religion, and Identity**

This new religiosity has occurred on individual and small group levels, but it has also happened at the same time as another, much larger, phenomenon has come into focus – namely, the development of an emerging world system marked not just by economic interdependence, but by ‘interpenetrating dimensions’ that ‘affect the future quality of life (if not the survival) of individuals and nations’ (Harper: 1989: 257). As this global awareness increases, the question of identity on many levels comes to the forefront for societies in general and for religions and spiritualities in particular. According to UK sociology of religion scholar Kieran Flanagan,

Personal identity, that which is the responsibility of the actor to craft, is intermingled with collective identities, thus making efforts to reconcile levels of analyses of both highly problematic. In these many shapes and sizes of identities, there is a property of searching, of insecurity and distrust (Flanagan, 2005: ix).

He goes on to describe how, as familiar societal structures are uprooted in this era of postmodern relativity, people tend to seek ways of securing a stable identity. An example he gives is of fundamentalism, which he says ‘expresses a form of resistance to the indefiniteness of a culture of postmodernity’ and highlights the importance of looking at the relationship between religion and identity (Flanagan, 2004: x-xi).

There are other ways in which identity and religion come together, too. Scholars Simon Coleman and Peter Collins, who edited the book *Religion, Identity and Change*, have pointed out that religion and identity merge in areas of ambiguity that can prompt

considerable creativity as localized boundaries expand to include a global field. Indeed, they describe how the process of globalization has brought a growing self-consciousness among increasing numbers of people whose individual levels of identity include that of self, a national society, a world system of societies, and all humankind (Coleman, 2004: 15). What remains is discerning whether those in the West who adopt views and practices from around the world reflect a truly 'global' perspective and not just a Western understanding of global.

### **3.3.4 Postmodernism/Postmodernity**

Earlier references to postmodernism and postmodernity raise the need to expand upon the meaning of those terms. According to religious studies scholar Ursula King, the dissolution of long-established societal 'certainties' – even those ushered in by events described in the above section on *Modernity* - has created a crisis of fragmentation in Western culture in which everything is called into question, including meaning and the traditional values of faith. She has described 'postmodernism' as that ongoing process of change, which results in the condition of postmodernity, though the terms are often used synonymously (King, 1998a: 6). In her opinion, the negative aspects of postmodern fragmentation are matched by a number of positive influences. For example, she wrote:

In criticizing the individualism and dualism of modernity, postmodernism makes room for a more holistic and organic understanding of human existence with its personal, communal and ecological dimensions linked to the sacredness of life (King, 1998b: 7).

Furthermore, King has contended that the deconstruction of postmodernism 'is not necessarily destructive of all certainties and meanings, but can provide new threads for weaving dynamic patterns of new significance and promise' (King, 1998a: 13).

Agreeing that postmodernity is 'less indifferent to religious belief than it might seem' is Kieran Flanagan, mentioned above, who has suggested that postmodernity has actually given rise to the seemingly contradictory movements of New Age spirituality and to the rehabilitation of tradition found in fundamentalism (Flanagan, 1996: 6). However, scholar Paul Heelas argues that New Age spirituality is not postmodern. Referring to the New Age,

he said:

Its teachings, concerning the idea that there is a core truth – to do with being authentically human – at the heart of apparently different religions, reflect, as well as being directly bound up with, cultural assumptions concerning the idea of a highly valued 'humanity': a de-differentiated human-kindness beyond socio-cultural divisions. In short, the New Age, promising that it is possible to experience this spiritually-informed sense of humanity, is associated with a major, perennialising, shift within modernity (Heelas, 1996: 76).

Concluding this exploration of postmodernism is scholar Steve Bruce's perspective, which he relates to his theory of secularization – the topic of the next section. Not convinced that the term postmodern really distinguishes something very different from modern, Bruce would also disagree with the hopeful statements quoted earlier by King and with Berger's case for a positive future for liberal religion in this age of relativity and fragmentation. Indeed, he has said he doubts 'it is possible for people to sustain indefinitely a loose and amorphous faith that accepts uncertainty' (Bruce, 2002: 238). What follows is a closer look at the theory of secularization.

### **3.4 Secularization**

Initially introduced in Chapter One, the concept of secularization has been described by Bruce as a social condition in which religion has declined in several areas: its importance for the operation of non-religious roles it used to play; the social standing of its roles and institutions; and the extent to which people participate in religious practices, express beliefs of a religious nature, or live their lives in ways that reflect religious beliefs (Bruce, 2002: 3). In general, this secularization paradigm of 'long-term decline in the power, popularity and prestige of religious beliefs and rituals' has demonstrated for Bruce that the Western world is considerably less religious than it was in earlier days (Bruce, 2002: 44). According to Bruce, 'the most potent and the most neglected part of the secularization paradigm' is relativism, which he considers more of an 'operating principle' or 'cognitive style' that represents the move from the authoritarian and exclusive claim to a single truth held by the Christian Church to a 'social and cultural diversity' that has combined 'with egalitarianism to

undermine all claims to authoritative knowledge'. In his opinion, a natural outcome of this is that the tolerance needed to maintain harmony in diverse egalitarian societies weakens not only religion, but also codes of behaviour and most forms of knowledge (Bruce, 2002: 29).

Another voice paralleling some of Bruce's assertions is that of history scholar Callum Brown, who brings a social historical perspective to the sociology of religion and to an understanding of religious change. Brown has said that the secularization Bruce and others describe is actually 'de-Christianization', not just the decline of religion. In addition, he has noted that this decline in Christianity, especially in Britain, has been significantly impacted by the decline in participation on the part of women. In his preference for analyzing this issue more in terms of cultural history and forms, rather than from an organizational and social empirical perspective, he has suggested that of great benefit would be knowing what people are thinking, rather than from just observing their practices. He wants to know their motivation – what is in their head (Brown, 2005).

Challenging Bruce's secularization theory and Brown's 'de-Christianization' theory is religious studies scholar Steven Sutcliffe, who has written about the devolution of the Scottish Parliament as a case study showing not secularization or de-Christianization, but an emerging post-Christian culture. Sutcliffe has argued that the diffusion of Christian culture and values during a time of growing cultural pluralism in Scotland has actually signaled the 'laicisation and domestication of religious discourse and action in culture at large: literally, in "profane" culture' (Sutcliffe, 2004: 88). For Sutcliffe, this shift has relocated, rather than erased, religion; in effect, it has become an appropriation of religion from professional church leaders and ministers by nonclerical people who are interested and enthusiastic about it. In the process, Christian discourse must place itself within the broader context of cultural pluralism and face the fact that 'previously latent or implicit functions of religious practice in constructing biographies and collective cultural identities are replacing claims to historical uniqueness and truth centre stage in public discourse on "religion"' (Sutcliffe, 2004: 99).

Other scholars also disagree with Bruce regarding secularization. One of them is

Berger.

My point is that the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today, with some exceptions to which I will come presently, is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. This means that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labeled 'secularization theory' is essentially mistaken (Berger, 1999: 2).

That body of literature, culminating in the 1950s and 1960s, described a wave of secularizing factors, hastened by the Reformation and the Enlightenment, that anticipated the end of traditional forms of religious life by the close of the twentieth century. Primary factors in the demise of religion were identified and summarized by Bruce as individualism, which was expected to de-construct communal aspects of religious life, and rationality, which appeared likely to systematically eliminate reasons for the existence of religion and, thereby, render it irrelevant (Bruce, 1996: 230)(Davie, 2000: 24). According to Berger, whose perspective compliments Sutcliffe's, those processes did lead to the loss of societal influence and power by some religious institutions, but they also resulted in the development of new forms that have subsequently become vehicles for new religious expressions (Berger, 1999: 3).

Recent research into the patterns of religion in Europe, especially in the North, being conducted by sociologist Grace Davie from the University of Exeter, has shown that in Britain since 1945, increasing numbers of people have tended to retain dimensions of religiousness, but not belong to institutional religions. She said, 'believing without belonging is a pervasive dimension of modern European societies, it is not confined to the religious lives of European people' (Davie, 2002: 2). Looking for ways to understand this situation, she used the term 'vicarious religion' to describe how a minority of people actively participate in religion on behalf of a larger number who understand and approve of what the minority is doing, but choose not to participate themselves. In addition, she observed that as people learn about the many new religious forms currently developing throughout the world, they move 'from an understanding of religion as a form of obligation to an increasing emphasis on consumption' (Davie, 2002: 6). That, in turn, raises the question of how religion is currently 'marketed' in order to attract members or followers.

Many well-respected contemporary scholars, who have built upon the work of classical sociologists like Durkheim and Weber, have been surprised initially that the powerful cultural transformations begun in earlier centuries and profoundly accelerated in the twentieth century would bring a surprising resurgence of religious activity. The question at hand is whether the apparent demise of traditional religion, especially Christianity, is truly heralding the end of religion or an emergence of new forms of religiosity that can and will survive the major cultural upheavals occurring in contemporary societies. That question takes us to some of the research that has been conducted about changing religious forms.

### **3.5 Changing Religious Forms**

From his 1973 perspective, Berger sounded more like Bruce does today in his description of how the secularization process had actually 'collapsed' the 'plausibility of traditional religious definitions of reality' and moved religion into the private sphere of life, thereby shifting the emphasis from community to the individual and from institutional requirements to personal choice. For Berger at that time, this kind of polarization had ruptured the traditional role of religion as the holder of a society's 'common universe of meaning'. He continued:

The world-building potency of religion is thus restricted to the construction of sub-worlds, of fragmented universes of meaning, the plausibility structure of which may in some cases be no larger than the nuclear family (Berger, 1973: 138).

He further saw religious institutions becoming bureaucracies that, in a pluralistic environment, organized themselves in order to 'market' their view of reality to the public, rather than to 'legitimate' an entire world view. In that process, religion appeared to be moving from a universal cosmology to an individual psychology.

Another sociologist who wrote in the early 1970s, Henri Desroche from France, approached religion from the standpoint of spiritual forms. His perspective was that forms of spirituality are social; therefore,

where social structures are relatively fixed, their spiritual content is regularized. Where history moves again, spirituality is heightened, seeks new forms (Desroche: xi).

He also conceptualized two sociologies of religion - one addressing the non-religious factors

of religious phenomena, and the other analyzing the religious factors of non-religious phenomena (Desroche: xiii-xiv). By doing this, Desroche was contributing to the expansion of perspectives from which religion could be studied.

Resembling Brown in his 'de-Christianization' theory and Sutcliffe in his 'post Christian' argument, scholar Michel de Certeau has addressed the issue of religion in modernity by asking the question of whether Christianity is even thinkable today. Of particular relevance in his work is the way de Certeau described how Christian experience repeats the experience of Jesus, but in different ways. He wrote that just as any significant event 'makes possible or in a very real sense permits another type of relationship to the world', the early Christian church's experience of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus left traces, or effects that led to more than the events themselves. He continued:

It is, in historical research, one more trace of the relationship which from the beginning believers have fashioned when what they heard and learned became for them an event by 'opening their hearts' to new possibilities. And the writings of those believers express not the event itself, but that which the event made possible in the first believers (de Certeau: 144).

In his focus on different expressions of a primary event, de Certeau sounds somewhat like Borg, whose work is addressed in the section on faith and belief, and to some extent, like Halbwachs, whose work is presented in the section on personal and collective memory.

As the end of the twentieth century approached, Berger and other sociologists began to openly acknowledge the challenges facing this earlier view of how secularization was impacting traditional religion. Two of his contemporaries, Thomas Luckmann and James Beckford, wrote about the changing face of religion. They summarized emerging threads of understanding:

For some, religion was expected to continue to contribute towards the stability of the new type of society even if it had to assume heavily modified or disguised forms. For others, religion in all forms would have to be swept away if the potential benefits of the new social order were to ever to be realized. Still others refrained from such a long-term speculation, preferring instead to examine in detail the shifting and possibly unpredictable relationships between religion and political forces, economic affairs, moral values, education, and the practical affairs of everyday life (Beckford: 1).

Beckford and Luckmann also addressed their concerns that sociologists not only become more critical in determining an appropriate use of the term 'secularization', but that they begin to think about religion in broader categories than only within the context of a nation state. Following this, both acknowledged the tension between the globalization of religion and Luckmann's concept of invisible, privatized religions. In an attempt to highlight syncretic developments in religion worldwide, they provided an example describing the *umbanda* movement in Brazil (Beckford: 5-6).

Just as *umbanda* is a movement, many other people have bridged their 'privatized' religions and have joined what have come to be known as new religious movements (NRMs). One scholar who has specialized in researching these movements is Eileen Barker, an eminent sociologist of religion from the UK. In her introductory book on new religious movements, she explained that most of these movements began after the Second World War and have offered its members either 'a religious or philosophical world-view' or a 'means by which some higher goal such as transcendent knowledge, spiritual enlightenment, self-realization or "true" development may be obtained' (Barker: 145). Though she has urged against applying generalizations about NRMs to all the movements, some typical characteristics she has attributed to them include variety and generalization in their beliefs; a cadre of converts, or first-generation believers; charismatic leaders, rather than 'committees'; a socio-economic status that is generally 'from the more privileged sections of society'; and a primary appeal to young adults in their early twenties (Barker: 9-15).

Related to Barker's work is that of scholars Marion Bowman and Steven Sutcliffe, who are both cited in other parts of this thesis. Most of their research and writing has related to alternative spirituality that is often labeled New Age or folk religion. Though there is not space for an in-depth exploration here, some of their work is contained in the publication they edited jointly, *Beyond New Age* (Sutcliffe, 2000b) and in Sutcliffe's recently-published *Children of the New Age – A History of Spiritual Practices* (Sutcliffe, 2003).

Memory is one of the important issues prompting the question of whether these new spiritualities will survive during this time of fragmentation and relativity. The next section explores how memory affects religion and its transmission, especially in cultures of change.

### **3.6 Personal and Collective Memory**

In 1992, French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' pioneering work on collective memory was translated into English. Its relevance to the transformation of religion in modernity is Halbwachs' insight into how important memory is in the process of passing on cultural, especially religious, traditions from one generation to another. Influenced by Durkheim in his understanding of the collective aspects of society and by process philosopher Henri Bergson in his appreciation for the psychological aspects of individuals, Halbwachs balanced both perspectives in his approach to memory. He believed 'that collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present', that 'it needs continuous feeding from collective sources', and it is 'sustained by social and moral props' (Halbwachs: 34).

To him, a society in the process of transforming its religion is essentially moving into unknown territory by asserting new principles that shake the societal centre of gravity and eventually require re-establishment of equilibrium. Because that society knows the new religion is not a complete beginning, it strives not only to adopt larger and deeper belief systems without losing the collective framework that had developed over time, but also to incorporate into that framework elements from older traditions (Halbwachs: 86). As the religious society stabilizes, it begins to articulate what it considers legitimate and what is heretical. Halbwachs explained that the distinguishing feature in both orthodoxy and heresy is the way in which each perspective 'recalls and understands the same period of the past which is still close enough for there to exist a great variety of remembrances and of witnesses' (Halbwachs: 94). This, in turn, leads to the presence of two religious currents who each speak for the legitimacy of new traditions: the dogmatics, who claim 'to possess

and to preserve the meaning and understanding' of doctrine, and mystics, who claim 'to recover the meaning of texts and ceremonies' by means of personal experience, or interior light. Both strive to go back to the origins, yet each risks losing contact with those origins.

The result is

a constant conflict that is worth stressing, for in it we can clearly see the contradictory conditions under which collective memory is sometimes obliged to operate (Halbwachs: 100).

When an event of spiritual significance passes from individual consciousness or family experience into the thoughts of an extended, but related group, that event ultimately is defined by those in control of the group. In other words, the immediacy of the initial and personal experience(s) becomes translated into generalities and abstract meanings that may reflect commonly-perceived truths, but may not be faithful to factual nature of the original experience(s). When that happens, the dominant story, or dogma, grows into a system that often loses contact with its earlier reference point. According to Halbwachs,

it is of the nature of remembrances, when they cannot be renewed by resuming contact with the realities from which they arose, to become impoverished and congealed (Halbwachs: 106).

It is often at this point that mystics step in and access neglected and little known parts of the tradition, thus highlighting the dialectic between lived remembrance and tradition reduced to formulas. Sometimes mystics and heretics are difficult to distinguish, yet Halbwachs identified their commonality as being their

wish to return religion to its sources and its origins, either through trying to reproduce the life of the early community, or through claiming to abolish the passage of time and to enter as directly into contact with (the initial spiritual experience) (Halbwachs: 115)

In effect, when a religious community creates rites and rituals that reflect their beliefs about a lived experience that remains in their memories, their celebrations maintain direct remembrance of significant spiritual events. However, when the rites, rituals, and beliefs become uniform and unchanging, but passing time allows the remembrance of religious history to fade away, the context for those rites, rituals, and beliefs no longer

adequately explains their value and purpose. They then need to be interpreted, and that leads to the birth of dogma, which is promulgated by those in authority. The result is often a system based primarily on perceived 'legitimate' group authority, rather than on a religious feeling emerging from direct contact with original spiritual experiences.

How does this kind of forgetting occur? According to Halbwachs, each society creates a framework of collective memory that provides a 'feeling of reality' for people when they attempt to understand and find meaning for their experiences. As these frameworks, or parts of frameworks, change or disappear, primarily because society is distracted or focuses its attention in different directions, recall diminishes, and people forget. In the process, new conventions emerge to affect what people remember and ultimately, to evolve the collective memory. Halbwachs says, 'It is language, and the whole system of social conventions attached to it, that allows us at every moment to reconstruct our past' (Halbwachs: 173). Furthermore, in reconstructing the past, society tends to erase from memory all that might separate individuals or distance groups, in order to promote a sense of greater coherence and create a collective memory relevant to the present. This appears to be the special responsibility of those considered able to represent 'legitimate' authority.

Building on Halbwachs and paralleling Hervieu-Léger, Davie has also written recently about religion in Europe from the perspective of memory. Reviewing the secularization theory, she has attempted to distinguish and describe differences between the vicarious memories of churches and churchgoers, the precarious memories of religion in the educational systems of Europe, the alternative memories of pluralism and religious innovation, and the aesthetic or symbolic memories embedded throughout culture (Davie, 2000: ix). Throughout her research Davie has focused on two crucial questions: how much of the dominant Christian memory remains intact, and how can scholars adequately address the gradual diversification of religion in Europe in ways that don't neglect either the historical religious traditions or the 'other-faith communities, a variety of religious innovations, and the growing secular tradition' (Davie, 2000: 176-177).

Also related to Halbwach's work on collective memory are the achievements of another Frenchman, Pierre Nora, who gathered contributions from colleagues in a variety of academic disciplines in an attempt to identify 'memory places' from French history. Their purpose was to understand and portray these places within a 'sacred context' as 'imaginary representations and historical realities that occupy the symbolic sites that form French social and cultural identity'. In his introduction to Nora's edited book *Realms of Memory*, Lawrence Kritzman wrote that the authors had not wanted an historical, empirical approach, but sought to

construct a symbolic encyclopedia that attests to the values and belief systems of the French nation. Conceived as a history of France through memory, Nora's work not only demonstrates how memory binds communities together and creates social identities but also dramatizes how one's consciousness of the past is symptomatic of the disappearance of certain living traditions (Nora: ix).

This 'encyclopedia' includes stories related to geographical places like Lascaux; historical figures like Joan of Arc; monuments and buildings like Versailles; literary and artistic works such as books; and emblems, commemorations, and symbols like the French flag - all of which represent the consciousness of France and 'signify the context and totemic meaning from which French collective identity emerges (Nora: x). Through these stories, Nora showed how French memory has undergone a metamorphoses from a 'unitary framework' of collective memory into 'smaller configurations or identities' that caused the politicization of memory. In addition, the fact that the term 'realms of memory' has significance today is a sign that memory has actually disappeared, and society needs to represent what effectively no longer exists. According to Kritzman,

Our knowledge of the past is less a question of our empirical grip on the past than on our apprehension of the past as we represent it through the lens of the present. Accordingly, Nora and his contributors engage in an archaeological quest through which they are able to retrospectively 'uncover' traditions and delineate the manner in which they took shape (Nora: xii).

This work is a form of 'genealogical revisionism' that gives people the opportunity to recycle knowledge through new symbolic representations and to mediate cultural myths by

infusing them with their own desires. Though memory used to unify society, today it reflects nostalgia for what has been forgotten or lost. As a result, Nora and his colleagues have shown how rewriting the history of memory in this way can actually forge new paradigms of cultural identity (Nora: xiv) by looking beyond historical reality 'to discover the symbolic reality and recover the memory that it sustained' (Nora: xvii). In doing so, they seek to relate the symbolic whole to its symbolic fragments. For example, Nora described the qualitative difference in perspective between acknowledging the factual discovery of the Lascaux caves and framing that discovery as something that provides France with a memory that extends back in time to 'our ancestors the Gauls' (Nora: xx). It reflects a history interested in memory as an overall structure of the past within the present.

Nora addressed religion in part by including it as one of the institutions that once transmitted values from one generation to another, but now no longer functions that way, because memory has been uprooted, and its bonds with ancient times have been broken. He also has described memory as being the present embodiment of life in living societies; and he has seen history as divesting the lived past of its legitimacy and becoming a representation of the past and a reconstruction of what no longer exists in a paradoxical attempt to establish 'true memory' (Nora: 3-4). Two examples provided by Nora to illustrate the separation between memory and history are the need to initiate special commemorations, because they don't happen naturally, and the tendency to study celebrations, rather than to actually celebrate significant events. Nora consistently reminds us that realms of memory are a complex mixture of material, symbolic, and functional components that all co-exist.

He also has described how people who have been separated from past memories can shift their consciousness and perspective in order to look differently at their individual and collective pasts as a way of recovering threads of symbolic connection about the meaning and coherence of life. With that in mind, we turn to the emerging field of consciousness studies and its potential role in providing a better theoretical understanding

of how our minds work and how we actually relate to ourselves, each other, and the world.

### **3.7 Consciousness**

From a basic standpoint, consciousness refers to the state of being aware. Faced with all the changes described in earlier sections, learning to become more aware of perceptions, thoughts, and options for responding to these situations may be an invaluable source of information individually and collectively. Recognized expert in the field of consciousness studies, Ken Wilber, has stated that 'Consciousness, interiority, and awareness in the broadest sense – and science – empirical investigation based on reproducible evidence – are arguably the two most important branches of the human knowledge quest' (Wilbur: 175). In a summary of nine diverse and sometime contradictory schools of consciousness studies, Wilbur has placed cognitive science, neuropsychology, and clinical psychiatry in a 'hard-headed' category, because of their vigorous attempts to ground themselves in empirical observables. Moving into a somewhat 'softer' category that begins to give 'substantial weight to inferiority and consciousness' are schools such as psychosomatic medicine, quantum approaches, individual psychotherapy, developmental psychology, and social psychology. His third category includes the 'softhearted' approaches, such as looking at subtle energies, nonordinary states, and contemplative endeavours. Noting that researchers often choose one school and ignore the others, Wilbur has called for an integral science of consciousness that measures its progress by its 'capacity to include, synthesize, and integrate all twelve of those important approaches' (Wilbur: 179-180). He has also recommended three steps he sees as necessary for the future of consciousness studies. One is to 'continue research on the various particular approaches'; another is to 'confront the simple fact that, in some cases, a change in consciousness on the part of the researchers themselves is mandatory for the investigation of consciousness itself'; and last is to 'continue to grope our way toward a genuinely integral theory of consciousness itself' (Wilbur: 183-184).

Focusing on the approaches that require the researcher's personal involvement in consciousness studies is Professor of Comparative Religion and Physics Ravi Ravindra, who has drawn upon the work of ancient and medieval thinkers in Europe, China, and India known to be studying the sciences of alchemy, astronomy, and cosmology. In doing so, he has agreed with some of them in perceiving that subtler and higher levels of consciousness are needed for certain types of learning. Furthering his argument, he has stated that 'True knowledge is obtained by participation and fusion of the knower with the object of study, and the scientist is required to become higher in order to understand higher things' (Ravindra: 188).

Comparing Eastern and Western ways of approaching consciousness is psychology scholar David Fontana, who has described the Western worldview as one in which consciousness is seen as secondary to the external material world and the Eastern worldview as one in which consciousness is perceived as being primary. Making a case for the latter, Fontana writes:

In contrast to the Western view that consciousness is secondary and merely an epiphenomenon acted upon and arising out of the material world, the East sees it as primary, a spiritual reality which creates the illusory material world by the act of experiencing it (Fontana: 195).

Though siding with the Eastern approach, he has referred to the developments in Western scientific thinking based on the research into quantum physics by scholars such as David Bohm, who wrote about the implicate order of the universe; Dana Zohar, who has written about human nature and consciousness as defined by this new physics; and Ervin Laszlo, who has studied consciousness and its relationship to new paradigms, system theory, unified science, and unified philosophy (Fontana: 197).

Another related perspective comes from scholar and co-founder of the Consciousness and Transpersonal Psychology Research Unit at Liverpool John Moores University, Brian Lancaster, who has claimed that most authors distinguish between a passive phenomenal quality of consciousness – its 'is-ness' – and its active informational

quality – its 'about-ness' (Lancaster: 68-69). In a way somewhat similar to Wilbur, he has also described four levels of inquiry into consciousness. The first is neuro-physiological; the second is cognitive and neuro-psychological; the third is depth-psychological; and the fourth is spiritual/mystical. Though human beings operate on all of these levels, the depth/psychological refers specifically to systems of the psyche, such as affective states and meaning-making processes. It is accessed through hermeneutics, explained by systems of the psyche, and allows an experience of the numinous, significant moments, and of meaning beyond what is seen or heard. The spiritual/mystical refers to revelation and to contemplative and ritual practices such as meditation, prophecy, and analysis of sacred language. It is explained by transcendent and quantal systems, such as higher self/soul, ground of being, pure consciousness, emanated principles, and godhead; and it allows an experience of emptiness, pure consciousness, the numinous, and god/all-self/the observing self (Lancaster: 22-23). Lancaster has written that the emerging focus in neuroscience on positioning 'experience at the centre of our agenda' has paralleled changes at a cultural level, and this 'shift has been towards a participatory consciousness reconnected to the universal' (Lancaster: 44-45).

Not unlike Ravindra in his reference to consciousness as being a focus in earlier centuries, he sees the roots of this current 'awakening to consciousness' as already having started in the self-consciousness of the Renaissance. In both eras, the known world expanded through exploration; people encountered different cultures and traditions; and communication capacity burgeoned. Relying on W. P. D. Wightman's analysis (Wightman, 1972), Lancaster has contended that the roots of modern science grew from a Renaissance interest in magic and the possibility of aligning the human mind with 'supernatural' powers to bring about 'miraculous' changes. In effect, it fostered an experimental attitude that led to development of the scientific method; brought about a resurgence of Neoplatonic concepts, such as the relationship between the macrocosmic and microcosmic realms; and restored interest in kabbalistic texts. He described these factors as having come together in the

Renaissance magus, who integrated all of them in experiments designed to discover the secrets of nature, synthesize information gained from diverse sources, and reach a knowledge of the divine through participation in the NeoPlatonic mysteries. Most importantly for Lancaster, who this time has drawn upon the work of D. R. Griffin (Griffin, 2000), the natural world for the magus 'was animate, imbued with a world soul' (Lancaster: 54-55).

According to Lancaster, who in this case appears to parallel Fontana, this Neo-Renaissance approach to consciousness studies is one of two main camps within academic study, and its integrative and participatory research embodies a paradigm that views consciousness as a fundamental property of the world. However, the other Neo-Reductionist approach reflects a paradigm that does not view consciousness as intrinsic to all matter, but as generated by computational – perhaps biological – activities (Lancaster: 55-56).

This brief exposure to contemporary studies of consciousness provides a partial background for another issue that is emerging with consciousness in contemporary society - that of spirituality.

### **3.8 Spirituality**

The overview of spirituality presented in this section comes from several perspectives. One grows out of the recently-completed Kendal Project, which has claimed that religion is giving way to spirituality in Britain. Organized and directed by scholars Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead from the Religious Studies Department at Lancaster University, this research study set out to see if a spiritual revolution was underway and if spiritualities in the holistic milieu were overtaking traditional theistic religions. As anticipated, the study showed there were two primary worlds – a congregational domain that promotes a 'life as' form of the sacred by emphasizing 'a transcendent source of significance and authority to which individuals must conform at the expense of the cultivation of their unique subjective-lives',

and a 'subjective life' form of the sacred, which emphasizes 'inner sources of significance and authority and the cultivation or sacralization of unique subjective' (Heelas, 2005: 6). Furthermore, it revealed that 7.9% of the population of Kendal participated in 'life as' congregations, and 1.6% participated in the 'subjective life' holistic milieu - though the congregational domain was in a decline, and the holistic milieu was increasing (Heelas, 2005: 45).

Based on their discovery that personal beliefs were tending toward spirituality and the highly relational 'unique you', also known as 'the we of me', Heelas and Woodhead have started asking whether Christianity can cater to those involved in this massive subjective turn of culture and still remain theistic. They have also noted that the proportion of women involved in congregational church life has begun to fall – due in part to overall changes in women's roles and also to the way it reflects the changing relationship between society and religion. Finally, the issue of power and control has emerged. Woodhead has explained how power in religion often takes the form of 'power over' another, whereas power in spirituality is imagined differently. It is seen as an 'energy' acting from within to unblock one's natural energy and release it to tap into the wider life force energy (Woodhead, 2005). According to her, when faced with a rigid 'power over' leadership in a given religion, those interested in spirituality tend to move away from religion and toward practices and/or groups they perceive will help them grow spiritually.

Cited earlier, King has written about spirituality in the new millennium as being something urgently needed 'for the cross-cultural, mutually interdependent context of our new global society' (King, 2001: 2-3). Convinced that spirituality has become a universal code word for the crisis of meaning and commitment in contemporary society, King has written about how important she sees the task of humanity addressing what she calls a

spiritual well-being, of a balanced and wholesome spirituality which relates to our political, economic, scientific, educational and cultural activities as well as to our deep personal needs and our sense of embodiment (King, 2001: 3).

Acknowledging that much traditional spirituality has been bound up in dualistic patterns of thinking, she has pointed to postmodern thinkers who 'champion a more integral, naturalistic

and panentheistic spirituality which is in rhythm with the energy of the universe and that of our own inner life force.' Furthermore, because the spiritual in contemporary society is more diffuse and less tied to religious institutions, she contends that 'it can be given a more focused meaning when it is understood as the core dimension of the human as well as the centre and heart of all religion' (King, 2001: 4). Drawing upon the work of David Ray Griffin, King has come to support a view of spirituality that refers to 'the ultimate values and meanings' by which people live – whether or not they are 'otherworldly' and regardless of their content. She claims that spirituality can now also refer to an academic field of study, and she affirms Ewert Cousins, editor of a twenty-five volume cross-cultural series on *World Spirituality*, who has described the emerging new discipline of 'global spirituality', which goes beyond merely retrieving 'an ancient discipline in a modern academic mode' (King, 2001: 5-7).

Finally, we turn to Richard Potter, an academic who heads the social work department at a liberal arts college in the US and has addressed what he calls 'understanding the core of spirituality'. His perspective is that 'there are central processes relevant to all forms of spirituality, regardless of the cultures in which they are embedded' and that understanding those processes is crucial. Potter has identified those processes as opening the heart; mastery; creating personality; spiritual teaching and transmission; and spiritual freedom. He further has claimed that they are 'beyond culture because they are necessary for the expansion of consciousness under all cultural circumstances' (Potter, 2004: 67).

The challenging relationship that many see has developed between religion and spirituality spills into discussions about faith and belief – the topic of the next section.

### **3.8 Faith and Belief**

Different, yet related, approaches to religion and its development have occurred from a religious studies point of view during the last few decades of the twentieth century. In keeping with the intention to present relevant threads of perspective from various academic

disciplines, not an in-depth analysis, only specific issues directly related to understanding the transformations of religion in modernity will be addressed here. One of those is that of how cultural 'lenses' deeply affect the way in which religion is understood - a concept not unlike Clifford Geertz' description of worldview or paradigm. Another is an exploration of how the concepts of belief and faith relate to each other, and a third is a look at the challenges of defining religion.

Cantwell Smith, who was mentioned earlier, has addressed these three issues by embedding them within a framework of questions that are fundamental to late twentieth century life: socially, how differing world societies might transform themselves into a world community, and personally, how people can find meaning within modern life. Rather than asking about the nature of religion, which he thought leads to disputes that are counterproductive, he traced the development of the word 'religion' from its initial Latin *religio* to its present usages - in great part to show how cultural context influences the meaning and use of words. In that process he included a contrast between St. Augustine's interpretation of *religio* as a 'vivid and personal confrontation with the splendour and the love of God' and the more modern understanding of religion as a 'system of observances or beliefs' (Smith, 1991: 29). Smith drew the following conclusion:

I have become strongly convinced that the vitality of personal faith, on the one hand, and on the other hand (quite separately), progress in understanding - even at the academic level - of the traditions of other people throughout history and throughout the world, are both seriously blocked by our attempt to conceptualize what is involved in each case in terms of (a) religion (Smith, 1991: 50).

As implied in the above quote, Smith's research had led him to determine that distinguishing between the terms 'faith' and 'belief' would be far more helpful than defining religion when trying to understand (contemporary) religious phenomena. For him, faith

is deeply personal, dynamic, ultimate, is a direct encounter relating one in anguish or in ecstasy or in intellectual integrity or simply in humdrum household duties to the God of the whole universe, and to one's Samaritan neighbour - that is, to persons as such, oblivious of the fact that he be outside one's organized religious community. If faith is vivid, therefore, one has little concern for abstractions, and at most a secondary interest in institutionalizations (Smith, 1991: 127).

Perhaps surprisingly, the earliest meaning of 'belief' was somewhat similar. Its etymology as the verb 'to believe' initially meant 'to hold dear' or 'to cherish' - other ways of saying 'to love'. Smith has traced its historical development through English and German, providing examples of how 'to believe' in someone meant 'to trust or hold in esteem and affection'. Even in early Modern English, the noun 'belief' meant a holding of someone as a beloved or as one in whom confidence or commitment is placed (Smith, 1998: 106-107). 'Believe' and 'belove' were used interchangeably, though that eventually started to change. Smith showed that the Oxford English Dictionary refers to 'belief' as the word originally used for what we now call 'faith', or 'fidelity'. He then described how belief came to be associated with a perceived objective truth - whether there was evidence or not of its veracity; in other words, in some cases, it also connoted holding on to something that might be false. In any case, its meaning had moved away from the notion of commitment to an honored relationship. At the same time, the meaning of 'faith' began to evolve to the point in which one of its meanings became something akin to 'belief' in 'objective truths'. According to Smith, the Enlightenment brought the first era of widespread discussion 'centred not on transcendent realities, and not on faith, man's relations to them, but on the conceptualizations of both, and on man's relation to those conceptualizations: on believing' (Smith, 1998: 123). From that time until the present, these concepts have continued to develop a new outlook. For Smith,

To a significant degree, the very concept 'believing/belief' had become an integral aspect of the new detranscendentalized ideology: an intellectual instrument for secularizing one's understanding of the human. 'Believing' had become a category of thought calculated to denature the religious life (Smith, 1998: 144).

Similar to Smith in his approach to understanding the terms 'belief' and 'believing' and to reflecting on their implications for perceiving 'the Divine' is Marcus Borg, professor of religion and culture at a state university in the USA. He has written extensively about the different ways in which the initial experiences of Jesus have been interpreted over the years, noting that the 'most common modern understandings of God in the Church (as well

as in our culture) are deist or supernaturalist'. According to Borg, these concepts of the Divine being 'out there' and separate were 'products of the Enlightenment, which removed God from this world' (Borg: 38). However, Borg claimed that another way Christians have traditionally interpreted initial Jesus events has been seeing him as a spirit person, and therefore, someone with whom a relationship could be established. That view

shifts the focus of the Christian life from believing in Jesus or believing in God to being in relationship to the same spirit that Jesus knew (Borg: 39).

A further point Borg has made is about Jesus' relationship to his Jewish tradition, reminding us that Jesus spoke with an 'authority' which Jesus himself indicated came from his own experience of God. In that way, Jesus appeared to perceive himself as 'knowing' from experience, not just as someone quoting tradition. Relationship took precedence over tradition when it came to legitimization.

An example that supports this different way of interpreting initial spiritual events and of looking at authority comes from Dr. William Shaw, minister, retired professor, and official observer from Scotland at the Vatican II Council in the 1960s. For years he has told audiences how he listened to Council participants discuss sources of revelation, with much discussion about whether scripture or tradition had more importance. However, when Council fathers finally reached a conclusion, it was to proclaim that Jesus was the source of revelation; scripture and tradition were there to support that reality (Shaw, 2003). At least in theory, their decision affirmed that the relationship with Jesus took precedence over the more 'objectified' elements of scripture and tradition - important as they may be to the Church.

Given the emergence of so many societal perspectives on the factors presented in this chapter, an exploration of selected developmental theories may shed light on several aspects of this phenomenon.

### **3.10 Developmental Theories**

Because humanity is currently immersed in such immense whole-system changes, it seems appropriate to access some of the research coming from those who study how people approach and understand change during various life stages. This section reviews some of the research describing how women and men think, face life stage crises, make moral decisions, progress through adulthood in order to integrate into the larger society, and grow in their 'faith'.

### **3.10.1 Lifespan Theories**

Though much can be written about lifespan theories, for the sake of clarity and focus, the elements most relevant to this thesis are the only ones included. Best known in the field of lifespan development is Erik Erikson, who introduced the concepts of developmental stages and tasks, along with their accompanying crises and opportunities for choice. In Erikson's mind, the results of those choices determine the nature of the path taken to the next phase of development. Unlike Freud, he recognized the importance of cultural factors in those processes, though he did tend to see white American males as the norm. Where this gender difference has become particularly apparent is at adolescence. From that point on Erikson described the challenge of forming a coherent sense of identity and moving into later stages as centring on the process of becoming an autonomous and separate adult. US scholar Carol Gilligan has argued that an equal voice should be given to women, whose developmental choices appear to be different. She wrote:

Only the initial stage of trust versus mistrust suggests the type of mutuality that Erikson means by intimacy and generativity and Freud means by genitality. The rest is separateness, with the result that development itself comes to be identified with separation, and attachments appear to be developmental impediments, as is repeatedly the case in the assessment of women (Gilligan: 12).

Elaborating on that, Gilligan pointed out that because men and women experience attachment and separation in different ways, 'each sex perceives a danger which the other does not see – men in connection, women in separation' (Gilligan: 42). In like manner, Nicola Slee, a scholar from the UK who has researched women's faith development, has added the following:

Feminists have critiqued Erikson's model for its implicit bias towards separation and autonomy as primary developmental goals, with intimacy only appearing in the later stages; a model which, it is suggested, may describe typically male patterns of development in the western world, but does not do justice to women's experience of connectedness and relationality, nor to very different cultural models of development where individual identity is considered less important than kinship loyalty and commitment to the group (Slee: 18).

With that as a brief background, we turn to how some of these developmental differences are expressed in the ways women and men make moral decisions. Starting with an overview of Piaget's stage theory of cognitive development, the focus of this section is on Lawrence Kohlberg's research directed at the stages of moral decision-making primarily used by men and on Carol Gilligan's research about the moral decision-making processes most often used by women. Both Piaget and Kohlberg have been criticized for ignoring the affective domain; Kohlberg has been cited for assuming that the results of his all-male study automatically applied to women; and Gilligan has been critiqued for not including a wider range of variables and for taking an essentialist gender stance (Slee: 24). However, all three are used here, because they have provided new insights and valuable contributions to this field of study.

### **3.10.2 Cognitive Development**

Piaget is known for having identified three primary levels of cognitive development – each containing stages within them. The first is preoperational and includes ways of knowing that arise from sensori-motor functions and intuitive thinking without logical thought. Following that is concrete operational knowing, which involves inductive and deductive logic that is applied only to specific situations or occurrences. The third level is formal operational knowing, and it requires the ability to think abstractly and hypothetically (Fowler, 1995: 244-245).

### **3.10.3 Moral Development and Decision-Making**

Building on Piaget, Kohlberg's research with males led him to conceptualize a progression of three levels – each with two stages. On level one, overlapping with Piaget's

preoperational and concrete operational levels, males were found to make moral judgments based on individual need – initially experienced as reward or punishment and then as reciprocal fairness. Level two, paralleling Piaget's early formal operational and his dichotomizing formal operational functions, revealed a conventional conception of fairness based on shared social conventions that began with interpersonal expectations and then moved into rules, law and order. The post conventional third level, which compared with Piaget's distinctions between dialectic and synthetic functions at the formal operational level, started with forming moral judgments based on a 'principled understanding of fairness that rests on the free-standing logic of equality and reciprocity' which was perceived to have existed prior to creation of laws. It then moved to a kind of 'loyalty to being' that involved identification with and love for the entire species – for all life (Gilligan: 27)(Fowler, 1995: 244-245).

Responding to Kohlberg's initial application of his 'male' model to both men and women, in 1982 Gilligan published her research on the ways women tend to make moral decisions. In it she stated:

Thus in all of the women's descriptions, identity is defined in a context of relationship and judged by a standard of responsibility and care. Similarly, morality is seen by these women as arising from the experience of connection and conceived as a problem of inclusion rather than one of balancing claims (Gilligan: 160).

This discovery provided new information not accounted for in Kohlberg's theory of abstract moral principles and showed how the relational and contextual ways in which women worked to resolve moral dilemmas were basically different from men. Both sets of research results reflected contrasting moral ideologies – one of separation, which is justified by an ethic of rights, and another of attachments, which is supported by an ethic of care. However, what brings them together is the life stage described by Erikson as when 'the knowledge gained through intimacy changes the ideological morality of adolescence into the adult ethic of taking care' (Gilligan: 164). In other words, though men and women may approach intimacy in different ways and in different times of their lives, the processes of reaching that state and coming to understand each other's perspectives create a morality

that includes integrity and care.

Having looked at moral development in the context of life span and cognitive development, the next area to review is the process of faith development. What follows also relates in part to the earlier section on faith and belief.

#### **3.10.4 Faith Development**

As Vatican II changes were being implemented and Cantwell Smith was researching, teaching, and writing about faith, belief, and religion, one of Smith's students, another American scholar, James Fowler, began conducting his own research on stages of faith development. He had read Smith's publications about faith and belief; and he had studied Piaget's writings about cognitive development, Erikson's work on stages of human development, and Kohlberg's research on stages of moral development. Equally familiar with the work of Paul Tillich and his writing about 'ultimate concern', Fowler wrote:

Faith is a person's way of seeing him-or herself in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose. . . . Faith as a state of being ultimately concerned may or may not find its expression in institutional or cultic religious forms. Faith so understood is very serious business. It involves how we make our life wagers. It shapes the ways we invest our deepest loves and our most costly loyalties (Fowler, 1995: 4-5).

Embracing a theoretical approach that was developmental, Fowler's research revealed faith as a general life orientation, but also one that could be sustained by religious traditions that brought a sense of alignment with chosen values.

In his stages of faith development, Fowler provided parallels with Piaget, Kohlberg, and Erikson by indicating the thought and decision-making processes operative in each stage of faith development. He showed how faith moves from the mutuality and trust of an infant, who has pre-images of the 'Ground of Being' in the undifferentiated state, to the intuitive-projective images of 'Numinous' and an 'Ultimate Environment' during early childhood. Faith then moves from the 'rise of narrative' and the forming of stories of faith' during the mythic-literal stage of childhood to the formation of identity and the 'shaping of a personal faith' in the synthetic-conventional stage of adolescence. The last two stages start

with the 'reflective construction of ideology and formation of a vocational dream' during the individuative-reflective stage of young adulthood to the 'paradox, depth and intergenerational responsibility for the world' contained within conjunctive stage of adulthood (Fowler, 1995: 290).

In addition, Fowler provided an analysis of the 'locus of authority' existing at each stage of development. As might be expected, in stage one, the locus starts with attachment to visible symbols of authority and moves to incumbents of authority roles. In stage two, the locus moves from the 'consensus of valued groups and in personally worthy representatives of belief-value traditions' to 'one's own judgment as informed by a self-ratified ideological perspective' in which norms and authorities must be congruent. Finally, stage five starts with a 'dialectical joining of judgment-experience processes with reflective claims of others and of various expressions of cumulative human wisdom' and moves to 'a personal judgment informed by the experiences and truths of previous stages, purified of egoic striving, and linked by disciplined intuition to the principle of being' (Fowler, 1995: 244-245).

Fowler recently applied these faith development stages within a larger cultural context. In that research, he presented a theoretical model that correlates faith stages with overall consciousness, approach to religion, type of politics likely to be desired, and organizational approaches likely to be adopted within a given society (Fowler, 1996: 174). Not only does Fowler's model provide an opportunity for further analysis of faith stages that may be operative within groups of people who are currently involved with modern expressions of religiosity, but because it parallels research conducted by other contemporary developmental theorists, it also allows for similar analysis of how Piaget, Kohlberg, and Erikson's stages might provide insight into modern religious thought and behavior on a collective level, not just an individual one.

Slee has praised the significance of Fowler's work in its presentation of faith as something 'dynamic and changing over time, involving cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects', though she has joined others who are concerned about some of its limitations.

According to Slee,

The sources drawn upon, the images and metaphors of faith employed, the models of mature faith adumbrated, the theoretical understanding and operationalization of faith, and the account of stage development proposed can all be critiqued for their inbuilt androcentric bias. Something more is needed for an adequate understanding of women's faith lives (Slee: 9).

There is not space to provide her theories in much detail. However, Slee's research has revealed three overall patterns in women's faith development: alienation, awakening, and relationality. Regarding alienation, field interview accounts have shown 'a cluster of related experiences which are very common in women's faith lives, constellating around the themes of powerlessness, alienation, impasse and fragmentation'. Furthermore, 'the experiencing of oneself and one's faith as fragmented, disconnected, unreal, paralysed, broken, alienated, abused or even dead, seems to represent a major developmental challenge for women in a patriarchal culture' – even if the women seem surprisingly creative and hopeful (Slee: 106). The pattern of awakening for women had a strong emphasis on 'ordinary, concrete and mundane experience as the locus of spiritual awakening'; another strong emphasis on the 'priority of intuition, bodily knowing and instinct over rational thinking, abstract thought or the dictates of conscience or authority'; often evidence of 'preparation' just before the awakening or breakthrough itself; a marked sense 'of the coming together or coherence of different parts of the self – inner and outer, "secular" and "religious", emotion and thought – acting in a unity'; bringing together a sense of actively taking responsibility for the self with the sense of a process of unfolding or bringing to birth which goes far beyond conscious choice or control; and a 'new consciousness' that 'demands a "new naming" of self, of reality and of God or one's core values' (Slee: 133-134). Finally, the relationality pattern has revealed a striking 'range of relational conceptualization' in the imaginative and extensive use of metaphors and models; 'the dynamism and flexibility of their relational consciousness' as these women maintained an 'enduring connection to God or Being', while the ways in which those connections were construed changed over time, often quite dramatically; the 'generativity of a relational consciousness', especially in how the women

understood the interdependence of the divine-human relationship and relationships with others; the variety of faith expressions – depending upon the setting or the need; and relationality as ‘a more fundamental epistemology which underlies and undergirds the whole of a women’s spiritual journey’ (Slee: 159-160).

### **3.10.5 The Dynamics of Stage Change**

In all of these developmental theories that incorporate stages, the movement from one state to another is of significance in its overall uniformity and consequences. Initially, the existing stage is deconstructed by any number of internal or external changes, resulting in ‘a time of maximum discomfort and confusion for the individual’, for the normative way of operating has broken down. Whether this happens suddenly or gradually, it is a time of dislocation, intense dissonance, emptiness and waiting for something new to emerge. The new stage does not appear overnight, but actually comes forth from what has just dissolved. Though it is a time of great bewilderment and anxiety, it is also when new possibilities can come into consciousness (Slee: 20). However, most people can stand the cognitive and emotional dissonance of this situation only for a limited time before they either break through into a new way of functioning, or they revert back to the fragmented constructs of the stage that has been deconstructing and ‘causing’ the anxiety. One major influence in determining whether someone will grow into another stage, or fall back into the ‘familiar’ with great intensity, is the attitudes of those around that person. Supportive communities can inspire courage to move into the uncharted territory of growth, but fearful ones can generate insecurity, fright, and withdrawal.

Moving on from developmental theories, this chapter concludes its look at critical factors by briefly examining what is meant by the patriarchal paradigm.

### **3.11 The Patriarchal Paradigm**

Many scholars have written about and referred to the existence of a patriarchal paradigm, but one person who has conceptually brought together key elements in the paradigm and

presented them in an understandable and articulate way is Joan Chittister, a Benedictine Sister, best-selling author, and international lecturer from the US, who researched this topic while on a fellowship in the UK in the 1990s. Chittister's starting point was that while there is one humanity with two genders, the prevailing patriarchal paradigm has placed intrinsic value only on one of those genders – the male - and on what Western society has considered 'masculine' qualities. In this paradigm, the male is the norm, and as such, is superior to the female, who, along with nature, is flawed. Patriarchy, according to Chittister, 'rests on four interlocking principles: dualism, hierarchy, domination, and essential inequality' (Chittister: 24-25).

Flowing out of these principles are polarities that do not lead to balance, but are perceived as being in competition and therefore, dominated by a 'winner'. Not surprisingly, the 'winning' polarity is usually a quality assigned by society as typically 'masculine'. Because both women and men share many qualities, Chittister has contended that both are penalized when they exhibit qualities considered by society as being 'feminine'. A general listing of the polarities highlights the parameters of this paradigm, showing how they emerge naturally from worldview embodied in the above-mentioned principles. Some of the polarities are competition over collaboration; authoritarianism over dialogue; spirit over matter; reason over feeling; 'power over' over empowerment; pyramids over circles and networks; violence over nonviolence; exclusivity over inclusion; beliefs over experience; religion over spirituality; and humanity over nature (Chittister: 49, 59, 73, 109, 121, 133, 141, 159). The issue for Chittister is how to bring these polarities into a new paradigm of balance and choice based on what serves all of humanity. From her standpoint, this paradigm confines each gender to half of its potential, provides severe consequences for stepping out of societal expectations to conform to the paradigm, and has provided a rationale for environmental destruction. Furthermore, it has been part of western society for so long that many women and men alike have unconsciously internalized it as normal.

Echoing Chittister's concerns is King, who has written that

Much spirituality in the past was developed by a social, cultural and intellectual elite that was exclusively male. A comparative study of the

counsels of holiness and perfection in different religions reveals that the spiritual search of men was often related to their contempt of the body and the world. Frequently this included a specific contempt for women (King, 1998b: 101).

As a result of this, King has noted that many women have been leaving traditional religious institutions in western society and seeking spiritual experience and 'nourishment' elsewhere. According to King, the women's movement is one of many 'often situated on the margins of or completely outside traditional religious institutions because these are seen as too patriarchal and oppressive to respond to women's deep spiritual needs' (King, 2001: 10).

Though more has been written about the patriarchal paradigm, the purpose of this section has been to provide a brief overview of what comprises the paradigm and how its presence in contemporary culture has been influencing and prompting many of the transformative changes present in society.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

The factors explored in this chapter form part of a multifaceted, but loose, 'system' of influences, research findings, concepts, and experiences that are present in and at times contributing to the transformation of contemporary society. In-depth analyses have not been provided, but in most cases, enough information to further understanding and stimulate insight into the issues and their potential relevance to this research project. Nine of these factors, listed on Table 3-13, which ends this chapter, will be used in the final analysis of field research that is presented in Chapter Eight.

The next chapter will be devoted to establishing Hervieu-Léger's distinctive importance in the field of sociology, presenting her analytical model of religion as a chain of memory, and showing how in creating that model, she incorporated significant contributions from many of the scholars just cited and wove them together in an attempt to understand and integrate issues such as definitions of religion, the development of tradition, the role of memory, the nature of belief and believing, determining legitimate authority, and invoking a lineage of belief.

## **CRITICAL FACTORS IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGION**

<b>Critical Factors</b>	<b>Aspects</b>
1. Social and Cultural Change	<p>Sociological Theories: cultural and symbolic factors critical in understanding change</p> <p>Modernity: fragmented belief systems, but emergence of religiosity</p> <p>Global Interdependence, Identity, and Change: emerging world system with levels of identity - self, national society, world system, humankind</p> <p>Postmodernity: questioning and relativity</p>
2. Secularization	<p>Decline of religion in the West</p> <p>Relativism, Diversity, and Pluralism</p> <p>De-Christianization or Post Christian</p> <p>Individualism and Community</p>
3. Changing Religious Forms	<p>Religion: from holder of universal cosmology to psychology of individual in private sphere</p> <p>Spirituality Seeks New Forms and Refocuses on Initial Experience/Event during Change</p> <p>Globalization of Religion and Invisible, Privatized Religions</p> <p>New Religious Movements</p>
4. Personal and Collective Memory	<p>Importance of Memory in Passing on Cultural and Religious Traditions/Codes of Meaning</p> <p>Memory Linking Past and Present</p> <p>Power and Control: determining orthodoxy and heresy; balancing dogmatics (tradition reduced to formulas) and mystics (lived remembrance)</p> <p>Memories that are Mutating, Metaphorical, and/or Fragments often Kept in Folklore</p> <p>'Genealogical Revisionism' and Identity</p>
5. Consciousness	<p>Growing Awareness of Bigger Picture</p> <p>Nine Diverse Schools of Consciousness Studies</p> <p>Future Steps: continue research; personal shifts in consciousness for researcher; move toward integral theory</p> <p>Internal and External Worlds: implicate and explicate orders; quantum physics; system theory</p> <p>Shift Toward Universal Participatory Consciousness</p> <p>Awakening to Consciousness with Roots in Renaissance</p>

6. Spirituality	<p>The Spiritual Revolution - The Kendal Project: traditional theistic religion and holistic milieu; 'life as' and 'subjective life' forms of the sacred; 7.9% and 1.6%</p> <p>The 'We' of 'Me'</p> <p>Role of Women</p> <p>Power and Control Different in Religion and Spirituality</p> <p>Global Society Requires Integral Spirituality</p> <p>Spirituality as Core Dimension of the Human</p>
7. Faith and Belief	<p>Faith and Belief - Original and Current Meanings</p> <p>Relationship Between Faith and Belief</p> <p>Belief and Believing</p> <p>Legitimate Authority from Relationship and/or Tradition</p>
8. Developmental Theories	<p>Lifespan Theories: cultural factors, emergence of identity; gender differences</p> <p>Cognitive Development: Piaget</p> <p>Moral Development and Decision-Making: research on males (Kohlberg) and females (Gilligan)</p> <p>Faith Development for Men (Fowler) and Women (Slee)</p> <p>Dynamics of Growth and Changing Stages</p>
9. The Patriarchal Paradigm	<p>One Humanity with Two Genders</p> <p>'Socially Assigned' Male Qualities are Norm and Considered Superior</p> <p>Rests on Five Interlocking Principles that Generate Polarities that are Competitive, rather than Approached with Balance and Choice in Service to Humanity</p> <p>Internalized by both Women and Men</p> <p>Confines Both Genders to Half Their Potential Harmful Effects for Men, Women, and the Environment</p>

**Table 3-13**

## CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF HERVIEU-LÉGER MODEL

### 4.1 Hervieu-Léger as Sociologist among Colleagues

In addition to her position as principal investigator of the Secularity Project mentioned in the last chapter, Danièle Hervieu-Léger is Director of Studies at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris and also chief editor of the *Archives des Sciences Sociales des Religions*. The respect she has gained from many of her academic colleagues is reflected in what they say about her and about the importance of the research she described in her book *Religion As a Chain of Memory*. According to Nicholas J. Demerath, Professor of Sociology from the University of Massachusetts,

It is hard to imagine a student of religion who wouldn't gain from this book. Every generation of religious scholars tends to produce one eminent figure who has a way of digging beneath the surface to find and shape the most critical issues. This splendid book stakes Hervieu-Léger's claim to that mantle (WCFIA, 2000).

From the Director of the Institute on Religion and World Affairs, Peter Berger, comes the following endorsement:

This book establishes Hervieu-Léger as one of the most important contemporary sociologists of religion. In the best tradition of French sociology, she places the problem of modern religion within a broad interpretation of modern consciousness. Her book will be a classic in the field (WCFIA, 2000).

One of the scholars who reviewed her book, Jerome Baggett from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley in California, called it a 'gold mine of insights pertaining to the nexus of religion and modernity (Baggett: 779). He praised her originality, as seen in part by her refusal to dwell on the issue of modernity destroying religion, and by her explanation of modern religiosity, which he said 'comprises the chief theoretical contribution of her book', though the 'richness of her contribution' lies in the details (Baggett: 779). Another reviewer, Hubert Knoblauch of the University of Zurich, offered support for her efforts to define and refine religion, suggesting that she 'may be truly preparing the ground - if not for the discovery of new religious forms, then for the renewal of the sociology of religion as a

discipline that tries to account for the transformation of religion in modernity' (Knoblauch: 528). Sophie Gilliat-Ray from the University of Wales in Cardiff, also a reviewer of the book, referred to Hervieu-Léger as being 'highly respected' within the sociology of religion community and said that Hervieu-Léger's book 'poses some key theoretical challenges' for the sociology of religion and also provides broad insights into modernity and social relations. In these ways, 'it is a rich, original, thought-provoking and rewarding read' that Gilliat-Ray contends will stimulate 'many future discussions in the field' (Gilliat-Ray: 125). She also called Hervieu-Léger 'a leading sociologist of religion whose reputation is deservedly international' (Gilliat-Ray: 126). With this kind of support and encouragement from academic colleagues regarding the quality of Hervieu-Léger's contributions, the next step is to present her analytical model and explore its key elements.

#### **4.2 Overview of Model**

Published first in French in 1993, and then in English in 2000, Hervieu-Léger's book *Religion As a Chain of Memory* is a sociological redefinition and reexamination of religion. Convinced that no religion survives in the modern world without 'deep roots in traditions and times' in which it was considered relevant, Hervieu-Léger's studies led her to develop the concept of religion as a chain of memory. Her reasoning is that individual believers must become part of a community that links past, present, and future members; in that way, 'religion may be perceived as a shared understanding of collective memory that enables it to draw from the well of its past for nourishment in the increasingly secular present' (WCFIA: 2000). Furthermore, this 'act of believing together' is a process in which the authority of a tradition is invoked as support for the community and as evidence of its legitimacy. In that way, any communities who claim a 'heritage of belief' can be designated 'religious'.

To support her model, she explores concepts such as modernity and secularization, the sacred, believing and belief, legitimizing 'religious' authority, tradition, collective memory, and the future of religious institutions. Regarding secularization, Hervieu-Léger counters the

assumption that modern secular societies have found secular substitutes for religion by claiming that they have, instead, become *amnesiacs* who are 'no longer able to maintain the chain of memory that binds them to their religious pasts' (WCFIA: 2000). However, like Berger and other researchers, she points out that the process of losing those historical religious connections is actually creating a new hunger for spirituality and opening up a space that only some kind of religion seems able to fill. To the question of how a collective memory is transmitted, she suggests that the process in which a community invokes, celebrates, and otherwise elaborates its chain of memory is actually the very process in which it constitutes, transcends, and transforms itself as a religion.

Making a distinction between the transformation of religion in modern societies and the disintegration of various traditional religions that had originally helped shape the very cultures and societies that now reject them, Hervieu-Léger describes how sociologists now are freed from the empirical study of religion's decline to explore instead the religious productions of modernity both within and outwith historical religions (Hervieu-Léger, 1999: 74-75). In doing so, she shows that even though behaviors or practices are often out of alignment with identified beliefs, and former social supports for a religious culture have disappeared, 'religion' remains alive in various and surprising forms.

Hervieu-Léger states that her goal in designing the model she presents in her book is to 'enable religion in modernity to be considered the subject matter of sociology' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 4). Supporting that goal, she outlines in the first third of her book problems facing the sociology of religion when grappling with religion in modernity. In the second third she presents a definition of religion that centres around the concept of memory, with its particular form of belief - one that implicitly calls on the authority of a tradition as its reference. She concludes with an exploration of how this definition might be applied in modern societies that are characterized by no longer being custodians of memory. Throughout her book, Hervieu-Léger reminds us of the 'hypothetical nature of the propositions made', insisting that she is trying to find a way to impose 'some shape and

meaning on the profusion of empirically observable phenomena', not to make 'a definitive statement about the place of religion in the context of modernity' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000:4).

The purpose of this chapter is to present the Hervieu-Léger model in a way that is understandable, coherently related to many of the diverse issues she addresses, and incorporated into the key components used from her model in the fieldwork conducted for this thesis. Doing so will support Hervieu-Léger's process of pursuing her objective:

to untangle a number of highly intractable theoretical knots: the definition of modernity, the problem of belief, an explanation of the concept of tradition, an elucidation of the of the question of collective memory, and so on (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 5).

Of particular interest and focus are her concepts of the sacred, believing, legitimizing authority, tradition and memory, and how she see them interacting and influencing the religious and spiritual expression of a community. Some of the issues that have been presented in Chapter Three will be supported and/or expanded here to show more directly how they contributed to the rationale for her analytical model. The chapter ends with a brief look at the five components drawn from this model as a basis for the fieldwork interview questions presented in Chapter Seven and used for the subsequent fieldwork analysis in Chapter Eight.

### **4.3 Modernity and Its Impact on the Study of Religion**

Hervieu-Léger lays the groundwork for a sociological approach to religion by describing its birth pangs as an academic discipline. For sociologists of religion, recognition that their branch of sociology is capable of investigating religion and treating it as a social phenomenon able to be 'explained in terms of other social phenomena' has over time been the source of considerable controversy (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 9). Particularly in France, where Hervieu-Léger lives and where a history of conflict and suspicion has marked relationships between the Catholic Church and other educational and research institutions regarding claims of authority on the nature and role of religion, moving from what was formerly called religious sociology to what is now sociology of religion has been an uphill

struggle. As one might imagine, religious sociology implied in France that sociologists were being used to promote Church teachings, whereas sociology of religion reflected a more independent role - one in which sociologists of religion could, in the opinion of Gabriel Le Bras, 'identify a common aim, "the structure and nature of organized groups for whom the sacred provides both the principle and the purpose"' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 11).

Momentum in the 1950s for French sociologists to move toward a more empirical sociology of religious phenomena among diverse groups somewhat facilitated their emancipation from perceived Church manipulation, even though this movement skirted the issue of defining religion itself or more clearly articulating what actually constitutes a religion. They did not want to incite further conflict with the Church, nor did they want to become larger targets for those who already had decided that a sociologist of religion must be studying that field only to perpetuate personally-held religious biases stemming from either membership in a traditional religion or rejection of that kind of membership. It appeared as if sociologists were in a no-win situation.

Acknowledging that all who work in the social sciences have some degree of personal investment when choosing their work, Hervieu-Léger cites Pierre Bourdieu's contention that

"The field of religion, like all fields, is a realm of belief, but one in which belief has the active role. The belief that is systematized by the institution (belief in God, in dogma and so on) tends to mask belief in the institution . . ." (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 13).

Hervieu-Léger's concern, however, is that belief in the institution is not necessarily indicative of belief in all articles included within the institutional structure's system of beliefs. To her, when belief in institutions of secularized society, such as schools, political institutions, and universities, is perceived to be less of a threat to a scientific attitude than belief in a religious institution, religion itself is the stumbling block and must, therefore, be directly addressed as a subject in its own right. She says that

religion as such is the obstacle that continues to stand in the way of the process of unimpeded critical rationalization which, in Bourdieu's mind, is the aim of sociology (Hervieu-Léger, 2000:14).

It is this insight that prompts Hervieu-Léger to face the challenge of defining religion by

reviewing similar efforts by other scholars, reflecting on her own research in this area, and building on insights gained through both processes.

Contextually, the sociology of religion owes its origin to the birth of sociology itself, which was established as a social science whose purpose was to study society. Because religion has been perceived as a system of meanings that helps people make sense out of the world and their experience in that world, sociological attempts to scientifically study those religious systems initially met with fierce resistance from those within the systems who were incensed that 'outsiders' would dare to analyze and potentially question religion's traditional role of authoritatively mediating societal meaning. Hervieu-Léger reminds us that 'sociology is defined less by its content than by the critique it implies' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 16). However, she also points out that sociology and religion do meet in a mutual understanding that human free will is typically bounded by religious dictates perceived to reflect divine purpose. This conflict between the Church fighting to retain its authority and science striving to remove scientific exploration from the control of religious institutions has a long history that ultimately brought Western science to define itself in terms of its historical break with religion.

The sociological objective of using conceptual tools to analyze and describe religious phenomena objectively and rationally - as one of many social phenomena - has run headlong into the very nature of religion not to accept self-limitation or to be reduced to empirical data that 'explain away' transcendent meaning incapable of being grasped, explained, or quantified empirically. How to scientifically study religious phenomena, without being perceived as intending to sacrifice religion in the process, has been a major challenge for sociologists of religion - especially when prevailing rationalist assumptions within society have included a belief that shining the light of modernity on religion would reveal it to be illusory and thereby, usher in its demise.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, religions have declined, but they have not been eliminated. Instead, changes in religion due to modernity, as expressed in science and

politics, have actually stimulated the development of new religious movements and strong support for the legitimacy of a new way of understanding religion. As Hervieu-Léger says, religion, 'even in the act of disintegrating, shows astonishing resistance; it re-emerges, revives, shifts ground, becomes diffuse' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 24). Taking a broad social perspective, she also notes that religion has not declined just because science has claimed to be a superior form of knowledge, but because social change has eroded society's collective ability to set up ideals; and that has effectively loosened social bonds. Furthermore, science has no power to assume religious functions, such as providing moral guidance and attending to the need for ritual, which are found outside the realm of knowledge.

Drawing upon Durkheim and Weber in an attempt to understand this paradox, Hervieu-Léger builds a foundation for further exploration. Because Durkheim's ultimate goal was 'to uncover the universal character of religious life in order to disclose an essential, enduring aspect of social life' (Durkheim: xvi), he came to see religion as a system of symbols, including beliefs and practices, by which society expresses and represents its essentially sacred self, or soul, to itself. For him, society was not a substitute for God; however, he saw how the gap left by religion could be filled by making society the basis of morality and the herald of ethical ideal that could transcend individual instincts and self-absorption. Durkheim was charged with an 'evolutionary optimism' in his vision of a 'religion of mankind' that would require no church, rigid orthodoxy, or organization. This vision would stand with others as an example of how the question of religion was broader and far more important than analyzing the loss of religion in modern societies (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 26).

Weber's perspective on the future of religion followed a somewhat different line, though he did address the question of what would replace historic religions in a world where supernatural references have declining credibility. According to Weber, not only did a 'polytheism of values' emerge on the religious landscape, but shifts in belief that marginalize religion did not necessarily imply the disappearance of a need for meaning or transcendent

moral imperatives. Weber did not clarify what new religious forms may be emerging, and unlike Durkheim, he did not define religion.

Wanting to create a new perspective that moves beyond Weber and Durkheim, Hervieu-Léger urges sociologists of religion to pay attention to the social reasons for why religion no longer retains a central place in modern societies and to follow contemporary manifestations of religion to their limits, which are apparently more extended than originally assumed. Acknowledging the difficulties inherent in addressing these analytical concerns when the current religious climate is so complex, fragmented, and diffuse, she identifies the 'fragmented character of modern manifestations of belief' and the 'disappearance of the link between society and religion' as two sides in the 'process of secularization which is historically one with that of modernity itself' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 29). One example of this is the increasing divide between stated beliefs and actual practices for both individuals and communities.

Nevertheless, Hervieu-Léger reminds us that religion still makes itself felt 'implicitly or invisibly throughout the gamut of human expression' and that the problem is to know what parameters to set in conducting an investigation (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 29). Understanding that sociologists are not alone in trying to investigate complex phenomena, she draws upon the work of Pierre Nora in identifying 'realms of memory' that make up the symbolic history of a people. What history and sociology share in this instance is the 'erosion of structured systems of representation (political in the one, religious in the other) linked to precise social practices and developed by clearly identifiable social groups' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 30). Hervieu-Léger suggests that the current move toward looking at a variety of social issues from a systems and interdisciplinary perspective reflects the need to re-establish coherence that has been disrupted by institutional differentiation and specialization.

In light of this background and the essentialist/non-essentialist orientations toward the need to define religion, as described in Chapter Three, she says that defining the scope of religion, identifying indicators that distinguish it from other phenomena, and wrestling with

the fact that research methodology is guided by the definition one gives to religion, remain blocks that must be cleared. Another challenge she sees is differentiating between definitions of religion that are associated with the substance of belief and those that provide a more functional, process-oriented approach. Using substantive criteria could restrict a researcher to the exclusive and narrow limits of established historical religions, whereas adopting a functional, or process, definition may be so inclusive that it could pose the problem of knowing where to set limits.

What has called for moving beyond this kind of debate into action has been the development of new religious movements (NRMs), cited in Chapter Three, and described by Hervieu-Léger as

an umbrella for a wide range of phenomena: cults and sects that have recently come into competition with traditional churches (dominant or the historic minorities), eastern-inspired syncretism, movements aiming to renew institutionalized religions; then, the various and amorphous components of a 'mystico-esoteric cluster' which show a marked ability to assimilate and recycle available knowledge, be it 'scientific' or marginal and fragmentary with roots in ancient learning, and which purpose and promise individual self-transformation (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 32-32).

Sometimes considered among the 'invisible religions', these are the groups that have actually prompted questions regarding the limits of religion and an intense discussion over the relative merits of pursuing an intensive sociology of religious groups, an extensive sociology of belief systems, or both.

Prior to their emergence as a powerful presence, 'modern symbolic consumers' were already being explored by Luckmann to determine how they were incorporating a 'multitude of meanings' into a 'sacred cosmos of modern industrial societies' that could help them 'respond to ultimate questions' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 33). According to Luckmann, an expanded and modern view of the sacred emerged when modern societies stopped asking institutionalized historical religions to provide a framework for social organization and instead started to rely on individual or group ability to achieve direct access to available cultural symbols in constructing their own universes of meaning. Needing no institutional

mediation for meaning, the personal freedom inherent in this shift has helped individuals transfer their attention from a transcendent other world to a more immediate experience of the sacred in this world. In many ways, it reflects Durkheim's philosophy of the sacredness of society and Max Weber's insistence on understanding religion as a 'galaxy of meanings' that can help humanity transcend the challenges of daily life. When pressed to the limit, we find in Luckmann an inclusive, functionalist approach in which 'everything in humanity which lies outside biological survival taken in its most narrowly material sense has to do with religion' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 35).

In contrast, Bryan Wilson has constructed an exclusive, substantive type of ideal religion that draws upon the supernatural and directs its creativity to projects and activities designed to transform society. Hervieu-Léger says that approach effectively excludes NRMs, because they 'strive to bring about individual regeneration and fulfillment, rarely to change the world' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 36). Even though she sides with Luckmann's view, which she thinks represents a more expansive and needed approach to religion, Hervieu-Léger and Luckmann both doubt that the fragmented systems of beliefs present in the NRMs and perceived by them to focus only on individuals, not society, could coalesce enough to form new religious institutions or a coherent and modern sacred cosmos. I agree with Hervieu-Léger in her contention that both functional and substantive definitions of religion available thus far have contained radical limitations that continue to hinder a clear understanding of religion in modernity. However, I think more research is needed before declaring that most NRMs rarely strive to change the world. She and Luckmann are probably accurate in contending that the NRMs may not coalesce into new religious institutions, but that may be due to a paradigm shift among the NRMs - one in which individual growth within the context of community actually does foster a transformed and coherent understanding of sacred cosmos, but does not express that new-found understanding within familiar institutional forms. Follow up studies about this will be needed.

In an attempt to resolve this dilemma, Hervieu-Léger researched the work of Roland Campiche and Claude Bovay, who in their study of religion in Switzerland, attempted to 'go beyond the substantivist and functional positions by bringing them together and finding in one a solution to the drawbacks of the other' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 39). Their writings incorporated an analysis of process on two levels: the disintegration and reintegration of belief due to modernity with its individualization, pluralization and uncertainty; and the demolition and reconstruction of social and cultural structures that provide denominational identification. Hervieu-Léger says that

the relevance of the project to an analysis of the transformations undergone by religion applies best within a social and cultural milieu in which the structures of institutionalized religions, though no longer directly and exclusively arranging for individual and collective access to a state of transcendence, still offer major symbolic references and at the very least define the social functions of such a reference (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 40).

Because the split between traditional culture and religion is often more severe in some countries more than in others, this type of analysis will not work everywhere. As such, Hervieu-Léger takes us to the next important component in striving for a definition of religion: the sacred.

#### **4.4 The Sacred**

Almost as difficult to define as religion, attempts to define sacred and its relationship to religion in modernity have frequently brought more confusion than clarity. Likewise, in an age when the differentiation and individualization of modernity have wrested from institutional religions their monopoly on authoritatively responding to essential questions about existence, the space remaining is often filled in by individuals with an expanded notion of the sacred that encompasses any reference to mystery, the transcendent, or fundamental values. Even so, Hervieu-Léger suggests the possibility that

the notion of the sacred may serve to cover a structure of meanings common both to traditional religions and to new forms of response to the ultimate questions about existence, extending beyond the beliefs developed on each side (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 43).

Perhaps, she says, the 'domain of the sacred' refers to an innate structure that is differentiated by a commonality shared by all its diverse forms of expression. Though Hervieu-Léger does not specify this directly, I think that innate structure is the interrelatedness and interdependence of all existence. Following this, the sacred itself would actually be a state of consciousness in which all aspects and expressions of existence are valued, and their interdependence is perceived and experienced on a personal level. Naturally, awareness of this value and connection can grow slowly or emerge suddenly in moments of spiritual, or religious, intensity.

One of the recurring challenges in modernity is the tendency for researchers to portray 'sacredness and religiousness (or the domain of the sacred and religiosity)' as 'mirror-images of each other', rather than as distinct, but potentially related, phenomena. Liliane Voye argues that 'the sacred must not be reduced to the religious', but her further description of religion as 'the means by which sacredness is given form, sacredness as the raw material of religion', brings the notion of sacred back into the lap of traditional religions as the ones holding 'the supreme imprint of the sacred within the social' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 45). Even Albert Piette fell into this convergence. In an initial attempt to avoid the trap of tying religion and the sacred together, Piette proposed the notion of religiosity to refer to 'the presence of characteristic elements of religion in the different secular fields', and the term *sacrality* to mean 'the construction of a sacred dimension, based on contemporary values which are productive of meaning' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 46). However, when he attempted to use these separate meanings to study his own Christian religion, he found himself reestablishing the religion-sacred link. Because the notion of the sacred is so ambiguous, and it is difficult to distinguish its presence in symbolic productions of modernity, Hervieu-Léger thinks the problem of this continual linking of religion with the sacred lies in the genealogy of the notion of sacred.

Francois-Andre Isambert's analysis of the sacred explained that there was no isolated concept of the sacred until Robertson Smith; then Durkheim and his followers

began to address it. To the Durkheimians, defining a notion that appeared to be common to all peoples and was generally found in all religions, appeared to be a way of giving voice to a mysterious power that stood in opposition and contrast to a profane world. Relying primarily on an Enlightenment rationality that cast soul against matter, Durkheim had already identified this profane world as being different from the sacred when he wrote that 'sacred things are cast into an ideal and transcendent setting, while the material world is left entirely to others' (i.e. profane) (Durkheim: 38).

I think Durkheim's desire to name and describe the sacred as something in opposition to the 'mere' physical led him and his followers beyond mere differentiation into the prevailing cultural paradigm of dualism and hierarchy. Not only did he limit matter, but also by ignoring the ability of the nonphysical mind to reflect on and become aware of the value and interrelatedness of both physical and nonphysical forms of existence, he limited the soul. His new definitions of sacred and profane moved these newly articulated concepts from descriptors of different types of experience into principles behind all diverse religious expressions and through which all spiritual and religious paths converged (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 49). Even though identifying the sacred came to be seen as a subject that bound all religions together and separated them from the rest of the world, in effect, this perspective still operated out of a paradigm in which difference did not mean equal, and it naturally resulted in a hierarchical struggle for dominance and legitimacy.

To this day we see how the struggle for legitimacy continues to manifest itself in relationships among many existing organized religions and between those religions and individuals as they differ with each other about whose voice more authoritatively reflects the sacred. One example from modern times, where the individual is often perceived to be more highly valued than the authority of a religion and of mediated revelation, is the increasing use by individuals of this principle of the sacred as the new legitimizing authority for subjective convictions about the nature of religious experience. Not only can more individuals now claim the sacred with greater confidence, but also their subjective religious

experiences are often seen as validating the existence of the sacred as an objective reality. However, even with this development, the notion of the sacred as being attached to the image of institutionalized religions remains prevalent.

Though based on the Durkheimian contrast between sacred and profane, Isambert noted that this concept of sacred does not actually correspond to the worldview of all religions. Referring to Eliade's work with indigenous and shamanic religions, in which sacred can be experienced in any substance, she pointed out that this Durkheimian construct is not universal, but is valid only if one is studying institutionalized historical religions. In light of this, Isambert suggested that Durkheim's conceptual framework for the sacred appears to be a transposition of a Christian, and specifically Catholic, perspective reflecting the opposition between church supporters and opponents. Though there may be truth in that, I think it also reflects a contrast between Enlightenment rationality and subjective experience, a difference between institutionalized historical religions and indigenous spiritualities, and as described earlier, an example of the prevailing cultural paradigm of dualism and hierarchy.

Isambert's analysis portrays a process in which the intentions of those who sought to separate sacred from religion were hindered. Referring to the sacred was initially designed to further two primary goals. One was to help identify religious dimensions existing beyond the confines of institutionalized historical religions and thereby, 'to wrest the definition of the religious from religion' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 50). The other was to prevent institutionalized historical religions from becoming the only authority for defining answers to fundamental questions about existence and meaning. For Hervieu-Léger, the conditions that created the need to define the sacred are the very ones that block its usefulness - 'namely, the preponderance of the Christian model in thinking about religion' and 'in analysing modern systems of meaning' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 51). I would add 'rationalist perspective' and its context of dualism and hierarchy to Hervieu-Léger's conditions blocking the usefulness of the term 'sacred'.

Undaunted, Hervieu-Léger proposes that another approach may be helpful - one that focuses less on the opposition between sacred and profane than on how the emotional experience of communicating with a mysterious 'other' power is facilitated. This approach incorporates the work of Paul Veyne, who contended that the "essential core of traditional religions" is humanity's irresistible attraction to "a force that is at once overwhelming and lovable", thus framing the modern quest for the sacred as consisting

in tracking present manifestations of the experience, which are themselves resurgent and recurring insofar as secularization has lessened the capability of institutionalized religion to contain the experience (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 51).

Though Hervieu-Léger moves away from Durkheim's sacred-profane dichotomy, she points out the value of his analysis of the primary experience of the sacred as being a 'wellspring of emotion'. In addition, she notes that it is aligned with a well-established sociological and psychological tradition, found in the writings of Joachim Wach, Henri Bergson, and Roger Bastide, that

religious expressions (beliefs, rites, types of community, etc.) are never other than transmitted (and limited) manifestations of a religious experience which merges with the emotional experience of the sacred (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 52).

Hervieu-Léger then describes the influence of William James in the development of the above-noted writing. For James, validating the inner experience of human beings who communicate with that mysterious 'other' allowed him to distinguish between emotions, which are at the heart of religious feeling, and institutional manifestations of those emotions. Referring to Hubert's contention that religion can be understood as administering the sacred, Hervieu-Léger adds that individual and collective religious experience can never be fully reduced to doctrines or contained in liturgies. For her, distinguishing between the two levels of religious experience and administration of the sacred allows for the identification of a 'pure religious core' that is distinct from the forms in which those primary religious experiences are socialized (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 53). In this she parallels Halbwachs' reference to an initial spiritual experience that subsequently stimulates and is supported by

memory; Cantwell Smith's focus on the original meanings of belief and faith as 'holding dear', or cherishing, the experience of a relationship; de Certeau's perspective that the experience of a significant spiritual event 'opens the heart' to new possibilities; and Borg's contention that the experience of a relationship with Jesus has taken precedence over dogmatic tradition for many Christians over the centuries.

In summary, religions were designed to mediate and pass on sacred experiences. However, in many cases the doctrines and dogmas defining those experiences have taken precedence over a conscious awareness of value and interrelatedness; in doing so, they have effectively snuffed out the affective, experiential dimension that is the sacred. For Hervieu-Léger, 'the experience of the sacred may under certain conditions testify to the end of religion, not to its return' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 58).

Anticipating the question of how the modern emotional experience of 'sport' relates to the primary religious experiences referred to above, Hervieu-Léger acknowledges that sport does in some way fulfill a function that used to belong to religion. To describe their experiences, athletes do often use language that sounds like religious mysticism when they describe 'the intoxication of transcending one's limits and becoming one with the elements'. Furthermore, there is a clear parallel between 'the mythological structure of sport and the mythological structure which characterizes traditional religions' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 54). Finally, the mobilization of crowds in a variety of symbolic rituals even shows how sport has incorporated yet another traditionally 'religious' activity.

However, Hervieu-Léger cautions us to refrain from assuming not only that the return of emotion or the presence of mass ritual equals the resurgence of the sacred, but that a return of the sacred equals religion or marks religion's return to the centre of modern society. In fact, for Hervieu-Léger, modern manifestations of ecstasy actually might be symptomatic of 'an impoverished religious imagination, manifesting itself in the quest for immediate contact with supernatural powers'; as such,

the emotional experience of the sacred in modernity may well mark

not the final triumph of religion over the imperialism of reason but the completion of the process of ridding the modern world of its presence (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 57-58).

Citing examples of contemporary Christian communities that attempt to short-circuit doctrinal and ritual regulations in order to develop more suitable expressions of their subjective religious experiences, she acknowledges that 'sacred and religion relate to two types of distinct experience' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 58) that often conflict with each other. Again, a parallel exists in Weber's description of the prophet in relationship to the established norm and in Halbwachs' description of the differences between dogmatists and mystics.

#### **4.5 Re-Thinking Belief**

Drawing on the advice of Henri Desroche to students studying sociology of religion, namely, to approach religion as essentially something society claims it to be, and also to examine other social manifestations which *by analogy* seem to call for a similar approach, Hervieu-Léger decides to employ the study of analogically religious phenomena in order to avoid repeating the common pitfalls already described and to open up possible avenues for fresh insight. She starts by introducing the work of Jean Seguy and his concept of metaphorical religion. Seguy, steeped in the work of Weber and his ideal-typical definition of religion, laid his groundwork by referring to Weber's contention that religion's distinguishing feature, the relationship between humans and supernatural power, lies at the convergence of a formal characterization of religious phenomena and a comprehensive approach to phenomena of belief. Building on this, Seguy presented his own ideal-typical outline of religion that is relational:

"religion is a form of collective action, accepted by society as 'other', and as such meaningful; it relates to 'supernatural powers', the subject of individual experience and collective worship; it determines the relations between humans and these powers" (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 66).

Immediately he acknowledged his omission of Weber's reference to social or political phenomena in which belief plays a part. However, Seguy seemed confident that

when Weber referred to those 'profane' phenomena in religious terms, he was 'making metaphorical use of religious concepts'. Rather than identifying 'authentic' religions in the theoretical sense, references to the conflicts of values in the modern world were actually analogical, or metaphorical, religion; in other words, though they did not refer to a supernatural power, they still produced meaning, were open to transcendency, and provided a foundation for moral obligations - factors typically ascribed to 'religion'.

The process of metaphORIZATION for Seguy expresses a principle intrinsic to modernity, one in which modernity is 'at work on itself'. Because of modernity, societal components such as politics, art, science, sexuality, and culture, have broken free from the control of institutional religions and in the process, begun to manifest their inherent religious features differently - metaphorically. As this has happened, their new autonomy has made them available for a new kind of religious function that can now be compared 'with that performed by traditional religions in premodern society' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 67). For example, many business leadership books and quality training programs call for leaders to develop organizational mission and vision statements, along with lists of company values and guiding principles, as part of preparing their company's strategic business plan (Senge, 1992). International change management companies like The Pacific Institute provide programs aimed at helping individuals, groups, organizations, and businesses identify habits, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations that help or hinder personal and/or collective goal setting and achievement, including their ethical practices (Tice, 1976). Finally, modern spiritual figure Sri Sri Ravi Shankar started The Art of Living Foundation, which is designed to help foster human values (Shankar, 1982). Shankar primarily speaks of his work as spirituality, not religion.

An analogical approach to manifestations of believing that lie outside the bounds of established historical religions has often led to the conclusion that metaphorical religions have become substitutes, or replacements, for institutional religions. However, Seguy has contended that institutional religions are themselves subject to this metaphORIZATION process

initiated by the 'ever-increasing intellectualization and spiritualization of the beliefs which form their basis'. As a result, metaphorical religions can be seen not as residues of past religion, but 'the formative apparatus of modern religion' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 67-68).

Though Hervieu-Léger says there are few examples of this kind of self-transformative process, she does provide Isambert's description of the change in the Catholic liturgy of the sick, brought about by church reforms implemented in the early 1970s. Another example from Vatican II Council reforms is the expansion of the term 'church' to also mean and refer to 'the people of god' who are called to actively participate in the transformation process personally and collectively. Both reflect the spiritualizing of dogma and of ancient interpretations by reinterpreting the meanings of those practices in order for some variations to retain relevance in modern circumstances. Both also reflect the essence of the word metaphor, which is to go beyond the literal understanding of something into a variety of symbolic meanings it can represent.

Even more important than raising the issue of traditional religions metaphorizing the substance of their ancient practices, Seguy has asked whether modernity, by accelerating the 'intellectualization and rationalization of the process of acquiring knowledge, and hence of cognition itself', does not actually force religion into a metaphorization process. Hervieu-Léger sees several advantages in pursuing this line of thought. One is that it confines the definition of religion to a sociological viewpoint necessary for analysis; by doing that, the definition becomes a working instrument that can dynamically point to lines of religious transformation. Another is that transformations occurring now in the field of religion are new; historic and secular religions cannot be 'purely and simply assimilated'; and the significance of these shifts must not be obscured by giving prominence to structural similarities or links of substance. The final advantage for Hervieu-Léger is that it helps us understand that the shift 'from traditional religions toward spheres outside conventional religion' does not necessarily herald the disappearance of religion in modernity; indeed, it may represent 'a complete recasting of the substance of religion' and lead 'to traditional

religions themselves being transformed and remodelled' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 69-70).

Motivated by Seguy's work, Hervieu-Léger moves a step further in her search for a dynamic definition of religion. However, she sees Seguy himself as reluctant to do that, in great part because his research objective had been to delve deeper into Weber's work, not to construct a theory of religious modernity. Furthermore, if the process of metaphorization, as described by Seguy, truly brings about the loss of reference to a supernatural power - regardless of whether the cause is abandonment or transformation through spiritualization and intellectualization, that loss would directly challenge Seguy's own personal reference to supernatural powers, which he shares with Weber. Building on the notion of loss, Hervieu-Léger says that the existence of new metaphorical religion, or of an institutionalized historical religion that has been metaphorized, may mark

a transitional phase between a cultural world where to invoke supernatural forces is self-evident or plausible, and a world – the disenchanted world of modern rationalism - where such an appeal has become improbable, if not impossible (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 70).

This perspective is similar to Graham Ward's statement that modernity has tended to reflect the erasure of 'god' and 'god-talk' from the public arena. I would add that it has also ushered in a new opportunity to address the issue of spirituality - often called religiosity by Hervieu-Léger. What Hervieu-Léger finds most valuable is Seguy's profound insight that the loss prompted by modernity has been change in a *way of believing*. By showing how metaphorical religion also operates within established historical religions, Seguy has opened the door for seeing religion as 'a specific mode for articulating belief' and 'a way of believing' that can draw upon the pre-modern traditions of historic religions, not just declare their erosion and imminent ending. Viewing religion as a way of believing, a concept Seguy has at least implicitly introduced, requires, in Hervieu-Léger's opinion, that metaphorical religion be valued equally with established historical religion, and as such, be recognized for being as fully religious as established historical religions.

Following this line of thought leads to a closer look at the concepts of belief and believing and the logic behind contemporary religious transformations. By taking an

approach that looks at these concepts from the standpoint of the change process itself, definitions become less about 'fixing' an object and more about identifying dynamic 'axes of transformation around which the object reconstructs itself'. Regarding belief and believing, Hervieu-Léger explains:

it is important that all analysis be focused not upon the changing contents of belief, but upon *the mutating structures of believing* which these changes in content partially reveal (Hervieu-Léger, 1999: 84).

In addition, these mutating structures are seen as part of a global dynamic that includes the encompassing, transforming, and reorganizing of the historical religions themselves. Thus, for Hervieu-Léger, the term 'to believe' has come to designate

the totality of both individual and collective convictions which do not arise from verification, experimentation or, more generally, from isolation and control criteria which characterize scientific knowledge; convictions which have their basis in the fact that they give meaning and coherence to the subjective experience of those who hold them (Hervieu-Léger, 1999: 84).

Rather than the substance of belief being separate, or distant, from the believer, that substance becomes an experiential enactment of itself through action, language, and practice in the lives of its adherents. It reflects an alignment between convictions held and actions taken.

Hervieu-Léger explains that believing has several levels of structuring. One which is common to all humans was described by Bourdieu as a self-evident state generally experienced unconsciously as 'the way life is' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 72). At the opposite extreme is the 'range of formalized, rationalized beliefs' that are the subject of people's conscious attention and reflection about possible implications in their lives. Recognizing how central believing is in the lives of all people brought Hervieu-Léger to say that the act of believing is actually at the centre of human thinking and therefore, plays a major role in modernity.

She refers to those who were steeped in the rationality of science and technology of the last two centuries and assumed that by shifting the key question of meaning from *why* to *how*, they would remove 'most of the mystery of the world', and thereby, eliminate the need

for belief. Instead, the uncertainty brought on by modernity has raised society's need for assurance when facing the existential questions of meaning and survival. Whether one agrees or disagrees with Berger that the sacred is none other than a 'construct of meanings which humanity objectifies' and projects as a separate power - a kind of sacred cosmos - to escape feeling overwhelmed by chaotic change, modernity still takes the form of

many fragmented demands for meaning whose urgency reflects a world that is no long fixed and stable, representative of the natural order, but unpredictable and unprotected, where change and innovation have become the norm (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 73).

Because the dismantling of meaning systems has stimulated even more questions of meaning, Hervieu-Léger suggests that to identify modern believing, one must analyze how the different ways used to resolve uncertainty are 'refracted in a diversity of beliefs'.

Returning to Seguy and the implied expulsion of reference to a supernatural power contained in his description of metaphorical religion, Hervieu-Léger discusses how this in some ways exemplifies the classic understanding of the rationalist imperative of individual autonomy in determining belief. At the same time, she clearly points out that the process of believing has not died. The sociosymbolic systems of belief may have been toppled, along with their figures of transcendency, who insured stability and coherence of beliefs and practices, and their externally-set norms for governing the belief of their members. However, 'modernity has deconstructed the traditional systems of believing, but has not forsaken belief' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 74). Hervieu-Léger notes the dynamic interplay between a rational homogenization of belief, as expressed in the modern world through frequent removal of a reference to the supernatural, and an individualization, or dispersion, of belief, as displayed in the rise of various 'secular religions' and transformations of traditional religions that are currently emerging with metaphorical imagery and new ways of believing that are fluid. Furthermore, she asserts that any sociological definition of religion will be meaningful only if it is perceived as 'a process of becoming or as a movement', and if it contains this lively interaction between a particular form of organization and the function of

believing (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 75). Though not entirely the same, her discussion of belief and believing relates to some common themes of fluidity, movement, and development in the writings of Cantwell Smith, Fowler, Borg, and Davie.

In light of her research, Hervieu-Léger proposes we abandon the traditional markers of content and function when defining religious belief and instead, concentrate on the type of legitimation that is applied to the act of believing. She makes the assumption that 'there is no religion without the authority of a tradition being invoked' to support the act of believing. With that in mind, she refers to a study conducted in the 1970s to learn about intentional neo-rural communities, or utopias, that had been recently established in France, though they were reflective of newly-developing intentional communities springing up throughout the world. Often with an apocalyptic bent, the groups in France on the surface appeared to be protesting modernity by drawing upon pre-rational modes of thought that they perceived would help them access societal power. This was not, however, what led researchers to suspect the presence of a religious dimension. As their communities developed, members seemed to move collectively through several stages in what turned out to be a system of believing. The first phase started as a quest for independent survival, along with the lifestyle changes needed to enable that independence. Development of a code of frugality marked the second phase. In this process, members looked

beyond the norm of primitive simplicity toward values that would ensure the group's survival (a settled way of life, controlled use of resources, action for a common purpose, etc.) (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 78).

By doing that, they were creating a system to help them in this new lifestyle. The third phase became a deepening of their belief in the importance of the lifestyle they had chosen to adopt, setting them in symbolic opposition with those in society who had not chosen this kind of lifestyle. Durkheimian in approach, they had decided that their way of life was sacred, while others were profane. Furthermore, their vision of the world emerged from their day-to-day life in community, and that life included ritual observances. These characteristics appeared to researchers to be classic signs of constructing a sacred

cosmos.

However, subsequent reflection led researchers to think that a more accurate indicator of a sacred world view was existence of a symbolic dialectic, which involved sacred/profane and ad intra/ad extra polarities, and was reflected in each community's need to develop, shape, and clarify a way of believing that legitimized their choices to separate from mainline society and distinguish themselves by creating a new model of living.

Sacred though they may have been, Hervieu-Léger goes further to determine whether their way of believing had become religious. She identifies another factor whose importance the researchers eventually recognized: a community's choice to invoke 'a cloud of witnesses whose presumed existence gave validity to the experience'. Within these neo-apocalyptic communities

reference to witnesses enabled groups, which were isolated in their struggle to survive, to model themselves on any forerunners who had faced up to the dangers of destruction brought upon humanity by human self-sufficiency (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 80).

Researchers noticed the 'symbolic significance' that communities seemed to draw from seeing themselves as 'part of a prophetic tradition'. Rather than being of secondary importance, it became clear that of primary significance to members of these communities was 'invoking a core lineage' that was 'seen to confirm the passage from a secular to a religious apocalyptic' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 80).

Apparently, what seems to matter here is not that the specific tradition invoked is religious in an objective or dogmatic way, but that it is a tradition through which communities can appeal to past witnesses in a way that links them across time and binds them together in an all-absorbing chain of belief. Furthermore, this 'self-legitimizing of the act of believing by reference to the authority of a tradition' effectively moves a community from a rational perspective of doing something because it's the 'right thing to do' to a relational perspective in which they are 'begotten' from a lineage which confers membership in a larger spiritual community (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 81). On this point we find echoes of Durkheim and

Weber's collective sacred; Weber's prophetic charisma found not only in individuals, but within groups; Halbwachs' description of the mystics' desire for direct contact with the original spiritual experience, along with society's need for coherence when reconstructing the past to create a collective memory; Flood's claim that religions are narratives concerned about identity; and Cantwell Smith and Fowler's contentions that faith and belief originally referred to a beloved relationship.

Hervieu-Léger's comprehensive and multi-faceted study of phenomena such as religion, the sacred, belief and believing, their interaction with modernity, and her observations about the significance of invoking a core lineage, or tradition, as a legitimizing authority for a community's way of believing, led her to finally present her own working definition of religion:

one might say that a religion is an ideological, practical and symbolic system through which consciousness, both individual and collective, of belonging to a particular chain of belief is constituted, maintained, developed and controlled (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 82).

Acknowledging that this raises objections and naturally contains implications, she reiterates her understanding that this is not the last word on religion; it is a 'working concept' that she hopes will enable researchers to grasp what justifies treating traditional and secular religions, along with their future within modernity, from a sociological viewpoint. Her objective is also to determine whether contemporary expressions of any traditions regarded by society as having to do with religion can be characterized as religious when viewed through her definition.

#### **4.6 The Concept of Tradition**

If we are to consider one aspect of religion as a way of believing that appeals to the legitimizing authority of a tradition, it is appropriate to delve into our understanding of the concept of tradition. Squarely facing the paradox that her definition of religion in modernity connects religion to traditional society, which as we have seen, is generally identified as being opposed to modernity, Hervieu-Léger asks us to refer to M. Gauchet's description of

tradition. Noting that tradition generated continuity in pre-modern societies, Gauchet explained how it has always symbolized a relationship with the past that imposed conformity with a code of meaning, and therefore values; in doing so, tradition has governed individual and collective life and has been transmitted from one generation to another. However, though tradition has continued to retain a core from the code's creation, it has consistently allowed for transformation in its expressions over time. In effect, the continuity that a tradition generates reflects a kind of evolutionary process in which old forms are plunged into disarray and chaos only to be re-structured, re-employed, and transformed into reconstructed expressions of the code within modernity.

Hervieu-Léger says that 'in the world of tradition, religion is the code of meaning that establishes and expresses social continuity' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 84). Countering objections that this understanding of religion relegates it to a passive and nostalgic function of 'remembering the old days', she responds in two ways. She first looks closely at the relationship between tradition and social change; then she considers whether an active and dynamic tradition can be a force for renewal in modernity.

Regarding the relationship between tradition and social change, the role of religion as the code of a tradition is, in her view, to provide for societies that are changing and evolving over time, a norm for action in the present. This religious code functions as a norm because it is a set of constant values that are solid enough to withstand a variety of interpretations and expressions. It has 'the authority attributed to the past to settle the problems of the present' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 86). Furthermore, it confers 'transcendent authority on the past' in order to link past and present through the continuity of what is essential and can incorporate the transformations demanded by the present.

People invested with the power and ability to regulate, shape, and pass on a tradition are often challenged by those - sometimes considered prophets - whose personal revelations call for redefining aspects of that tradition. This kind of social conflict can be part of a dynamic in which 'a society creates itself and creates its own history', and an example of what Louis-Marie Chauvet called a 'rereading', in which tradition actualizes the past in the

present, rather than simply repeating that past. Familiar with Weber and Halbwachs' writings on the role of prophets and mystics, and steeped in her own research, which reveals the continuity of tradition as having a dynamic component, it seems clear that Hervieu-Léger thinks religion as a code of meaning within a tradition can play an active role in social change.

To help her consider how effective it can be as a force for renewal within society, she begins by asking a question: If modern society values change for the sake of change, questions continuity as foreign to change, and places tradition, perceived as rigid, in a minor role when producing and legitimizing societal norms and values, how can religion play a significant role and not become marginalized as folklore? Building on the work of de Certeau, folklore in this sense refers to the sources of cultural heritage - stories, songs, customs and beliefs that reflect a way of life and are 'revered for their historical significance and their emblematic function', but are not configured to produce a coherent system of collective meaning. With the development of modernity, in which rationalization has gradually provoked and dislocated systems of meaning that had provided coherence, and secularization has either eliminated or scattered the fragments of those systems throughout society, folklore has become a logical repository for some of the remains. As Hervieu-Léger reminds us, 'the marginalization of traditional religions as folklore constitutes one of the outcomes facing religion in modernity' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 90), and researchers like Niklas Luhmann and de Certeau found religion in modernity destined to a folkloric role.

In contrast, Hervieu-Léger points out that modernity itself has been instrumental in 'mobilizing religious symbols for the cause of utopian politics'; in several cases, such as democracy in eastern Europe and identity for North African immigrants in France, this mobilization has given religion an active role in the production of meaning for actual social groups. This process also suggests that modernity's inability to address the overall need for coherent systems of meaning without calling upon religion, with its authoritative tradition, may provide an opening for the renewal of 'belief linked to the authority of tradition'. Hervieu-Léger asks us to consider that modernity, which is defined by self-affirmation and

the autonomy of the individual, may actually 'prompt' the need for individuals and society to call upon the authority of tradition. She further argues that modernity and religion are not mutually exclusive - that religion can play a creative role within modernity, and that modernity is willing to submit to an external order when that order is perceived to be needed, or essential.

Much like the dialectic between individual and family, the relationship between individualism and collective meaning systems within society displays a continued and paradoxical dynamic. Modernity has not eliminated the need to believe; in fact, the rate of change has deepened that need. Research by philosopher Paul Ricoeur has shown that at some point in the search for meaning, an individual needs to share that meaning with others and in some way have it socially affirmed in order for the meaning 'to have an effect' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 94). In modern society this social confirmation has tended to be experienced by a person joining one or more affinity, or support, groups, of his or her private choosing, designed in many cases to provide social recognition of individual meaning. Not only that, but support groups typically appeal to their tradition of a shared past as the authority for how they sustain each other. When that process of appeal, or recall, engenders development of a strong social bond with the tradition invoked, it makes little difference whether or not that sense of continuity can be historically verified. Its importance has been established. To Hervieu-Léger, religious productions of modernity, like support groups and new religious movements, are not residues of modernity; indeed, their source is the very way in which modernity 'undermines the traditional foundations of institutionalized belief' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 97) and thus, opens up new avenues for exploration of belief and meaning.

Following this line of thought does not mean that anything society claims to be an important heritage from the past must be incorporated into the sphere of religion. Hervieu-Léger argues that in her definition of religion, one must closely adhere to three primary elements - 'the expression of believing, the memory of continuity, and the legitimizing reference to an authorized version of such memory, that is to say to a tradition' (Hervieu-

Léger, 2000: 97). In doing so, the fragmented world of believing does not automatically overlap with the equally fragmented world of tradition. She also says there are two implications for this kind of definition. One is that everything having to do with tradition is not integral to believing, and therefore, does not need to fall within the sphere of religion. Another is that anything society relates to believing does not necessarily relate to tradition, and therefore, cannot be considered implicitly or potentially religious.

Hervieu-Léger contends that the concept of religion she has adopted is an instrument that can identify religious believing in any social context. Referring again to sport, she acknowledges that there is a sacred quality in the immediacy and 'in the moment' emotion of many sporting events, but to her, sacrality is one of many religious features in society, and its presence does not constitute religion. Likewise, traditional religions may be able to manifest the sacred, but they do not have a monopoly on contact with the divine. Sacredness for Hervieu-Léger constitutes one method of organizing collective meaning so that humans can make sense of their existence; it finds expression in emotional contact with an external force and in symbols and values found to evoke awareness of the 'absolute'. Religion, on the other hand, corresponds to 'another system of organizing meaning, based upon identification with a chain or line of belief' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 106-107).

Of significance is Hervieu-Léger's analysis of why the dimensions of religion and sacred do not necessarily link automatically. First, she describes how they did overlap in many pre-modern traditional societies, where their code of meaning encompassed the sacred in all life and their prophetic heritage enabled change to be incorporated. Next she reminds us that when modern societies dissociated the sacred from religion by pluralizing ways of producing meaning, the linkage broke. As a result, religion in modernity has not only lost its position of being the *only* access to the sacred, but at times it appears to have limited, if any, access at all. To support this claim, Hervieu-Léger refers to both external and internal ways in which religion has responded to the rationalism of modernity and to the freeing up of the sacred to be encountered in diverse ways.

Externally, traditional religions have distanced themselves from 'secular' modes of

identifying a 'sacred cosmos' and instead, have become more ethically-oriented in their support of ascetic behaviors and practices that foster 'withdrawal' from a world seen as not being sacred. In addition, they have developed a perception that humans have the freedom to choose their involvement and its form. For example, Christians are more aware of their choices when responding to what they are taught is a divine covenant being offered to them. In that recognition has come acute awareness of inherent conflict between individuals and hierarchical structures of control.

Internally, many traditional religions have responded to rationalization by severely diminishing, and sometimes excluding, emotional experience that facilitates a community becoming aware of a divine presence. They have also initiated what Weber called legal-rational forms of organization. Within those frameworks, church ministers and priests 'conduct their office according to abstract rules', and as church employees, 'exercise their command in the name of an impersonal norm, and not on behalf of a personal authority' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 107). In effect, by rationalizing religious power, many religions have tended to cut off emotional experience of the divine both within their own church communities and between those communities and the persons who have been designated to incarnate the chain of belief for them.

This split between religion and the sacred, which began with the gradual emergence of modernity many years ago, has found a focus in current attempts to define the sacred. Church, state, and related movements, aware of society's search for symbolic systems of meaning, compete with each other in an intense struggle for the 'prize' of articulating not only what sacred means, but also what constitutes religion in the modern world. With this in mind, Hervieu-Léger reminds us that modern experiences of a fragmented sacred should not automatically be linked with a 'chain of belief, which should be seen as the source of any religion' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 108).

She then explains that the notion of 'religious field' developed at the same time theories of secularization were developing. It was a way of giving religion 'its own strictly limited space' with a 'compact, organized, formalized appearance' during a time in which

religion was losing its claim 'to govern society as a whole'. Not surprising, those boundaries have retained a fluid quality that motivates Hervieu-Léger 'to try to dissociate religion from its institutional, more specialized, aspects and to trace the way it has fragmented across the social spectrum' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 109). She wants to allow study of those fragmented religious expressions within social, cultural, and even scientific spheres, while avoiding the assumption that religion in modernity refers only to traditional, or conventional, religions.

Bourdieu developed the concept of religious field within the context of a general theory of social fields. That means the notion of religious field has little relevance without being viewed as part of a system that contains 'objective relations between positions' and is 'governed by distinctive rules' for interaction among "relatively autonomous social microcosms" that constitute the 'social cosmos of highly differentiated societies' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 110). He found that belief in some form is a dimension of every social field. However, in the religious field, belief is not only the cause of its very existence as a field, but the dynamic operating principle that struggles for control of 'legitimate belief'. In other words, this field was born out of the sacred-profane dichotomy that emerged in the opposition between specialized religious professionals, recognized by society as exclusively possessing secret knowledge that allowed them to claim the monopoly for administering the sacred, and the non-professional laity, who were excluded from being recognized as possessing knowledge of the sacred. Hervieu-Léger holds that while this approach seems to reduce religion to the single function of 'consecrating the social order', the questions raised by Bourdieu's work are helpful when considering struggles for control of legitimate tradition within contemporary Christianity. However, she says another method is still needed to trace the dissemination of religion in society.

Still searching, Hervieu-Léger asks what factors must emerge within the social, political or cultural context of specific historical circumstances in order for areas that had broken away from the hold of tradition and assumed an independent form, to be significantly reinvested with meaning by becoming the legitimizing authority for a chain of belief. Formulated differently, knowing that a dimension of believing is present in all human activity,

Hervieu-Léger asks what happens that allows ordinary believing to start assuming a religious form and become 'an essential ingredient in phenomena we can term religions' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 111-112).

Drawing upon an essay by Emmanuel Terray, she explores the issue of Marxist communism, which Terray said was 'a historical process which brought about a religious mutation in political believing'. He further explained that the mutation occurred because in the application of Marx's non-religious philosophy, implementers divorced themselves from the scientific attitude of openness to new forms of rationality. In addition, they disregarded both the individual - by forming a closed group of experts with power to enforce a closed code of meaning, or doctrine, and politics itself - by using the political process of collective mobilization to become self-appointed 'declarers of truth' for society and history. As Hervieu-Léger says, 'society's ability to determine and follow through its policies' is destroyed when a group claims to be all-inclusive and in the process, refers to a predefined meaning of history (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 112).

In 1989 in Poland, political and religious principles joined together to overthrow a communist system that had undermined its system of government and its code of meaning, which had formed the basis of that society. Hervieu-Léger reminds us that because politics attends to how people live together and make sense of that togetherness by forming a system of government, it is a fundamental dimension of the symbolic in society, and its relationship to religion is therefore, organized around the different symbolic functions they share in society. In their extremes, religion can at times encompass politics, just as a political response to a question regarding the basis of society can dissolve any religious response by interpreting that meaning as an on-going result of collective development. Between these two extremes lies a path, reflected in something like a democracy, that 'contains the emergence of a society of individuals whose association is no longer represented as inherent, but as a construct that has been collectively willed and brought about' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000:114). However, the next problem to be confronted is how a society of individuals, created by and emerging from the process of rationalization,

secularization, and fragmentation of coherent systems of meaning, can bind itself together in reciprocity, or common respect for the whole society, when that very process of individuation has destroyed the possibility of a collective determination of meaning. In response, Hervieu-Léger poses the question of whether a compulsory transcendence of individual wills in favor of the collective will might point to a religious recoding of modern politics - indicating that when this kind of recoding cannot take place, social ties within society unravel.

That leads her to reinforce a sociological definition of religion that would prevent using a reference to the transcendent value of a given value or social order as a religious component. In her view, 'affording positive recognition of one's obligations to others as a means of realizing one's own humanity, is not in itself a religious reference' and does not become one, even if the basis, or source, of that transcendent reference is God (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 116). It may become one if a society sees itself as a manifestation of a utopian community with transcendent values, but historically, when politics has been the initiator of an egalitarian utopian community and has subsequently formalized it institutionally, the result has been establishment of utopia's antithesis - the very authoritarian type of structure initially rejected. This political distortion of utopia is particularly dangerous when it develops the religious dimension of confining social imagination by limiting its possible manifestations to one identified point of origin. Hervieu-Léger says this robs utopia of its ability to regenerate itself and grow with and through change and asks whether 'the religious deviation in politics does not reveal something of the inescapable totalitarian propensity of religion' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 117).

Rather than follow that line of thought, Hervieu-Léger suggests that the presence of the religious within the political may mean that politics and established religions are susceptible to the same methods of analysis, since autocratic tendencies in both search for ways to impose extensive external control over religion and to internally segregate those who actively participate in the chain of belief. Within religion itself, the Church generally places initial emphasis on external control, while sects focus on internal control. One

challenge is discovering the degree of tension within a religious group as it wrestles with how to integrate itself by balancing conformity with its tradition through expansion and discovery of ways to intensively apply that tradition internally. It is important information, because conflicts like these embrace 'both the interpretation of the core tradition and the designation of the authority properly empowered to supply this interpretation' - significant aspects in Hervieu-Léger's definition (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 118).

#### **4.7 Collective Memory**

Once tradition, which in this context is reference to a chain of belief, takes the central role in a discussion of religion, the next step is to explore how a tradition is to be accessed, or remembered. That brings up the question of collective memory, because an individual or a group must somehow draw upon memories from the past in order to consciously share them with others and extend the linkage. As discussed earlier, a significant characteristic of modern societies is change, not memory. Because of this, individuals and groups caught up in this change are not socialized to nurture their innate ability to remember, assimilate, or project a lineage of belief. Hervieu-Léger explores how this phenomenon affects her attempts to define religion as a way of believing that calls upon the legitimizing authority of a tradition.

Related to Berger's statement that throughout history society's memory has primarily been religious, she examines the structural connection between memory and religion, noting that from the perspective she has adopted, 'all religion implies that collective memory is mobilized' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 124). Whereas traditional societies contained their memories of religious symbolism within their structures, language, organization, and daily observances, differentiated societies with established religions and distinctive faith communities must constantly re-construct their religious memory as a way of enabling the significant core events of their historical past to be experienced as meaningful in the present. To do this, these core events become 'symbolically constituted' outside time and history, capable then of assuming new forms in different contexts. This normative character

of religious memory, which is common within any collective memory, allows it to endure 'the processes of selective forgetting, sifting and retrospectively inventing' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 124). This is reinforced by the fact that a group holding a religious memory defines itself as a lineage of belief that embodies a continuity affirmed and manifested by recalling a past that gives meaning to the present and contains the future. Furthermore, the recalling of foundational events that enabled the chain to form in the first place generally takes the form of rites and rituals that contain regular repetitive patterns designed to facilitate the remembering. Again, this perspective is also present in Berger's writings about how societies might live in right relationship with the sacred cosmos. Hervieu-Léger acknowledges that ritualized practice can give a religious dimension to secular ritual, and that some religions, such as Quakers and Baha'i, retain minimal, if any, ritual. However, she reiterates her contention that an authentic religion is a way of believing that calls upon a tradition, or chain of belief, as its legitimizing authority.

Religions manage their collective memories in different ways, but the core of religious power is the recognized ability to 'expound the true memory of the group'. Hervieu-Léger once more draws upon the work of Halbwachs and his description of how the main source of religious conflict often lies 'in the opposition between a rational, dogmatic type of memory (which he called theological memory) and memory of a mystical nature' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 126). Halbwachs described the dogma of a religious group as the end result of a process designed to reach a unified religious memory and protect the chain from disturbances caused by mystical memory with its claim to information gained through direct access to the divine. He also pointed out the dialectic between the internal process of emotive and symbolic evocation of the chain - the act of believing, and the external elaboration of the contents of belief - the beliefs themselves. To Hervieu-Léger

this dialectic, which one can see as tradition in the act of becoming itself, constitutes in our opinion the central dynamic of all religion (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 127).

If memory is the crucial dynamic in accessing a tradition, or chain or belief, and change has severely damaged individual and collective ability to retain an integrated and

organized memory or coherence, the future of religion as defined by Hervieu-Léger may be dim. Willing to explore whether religion can still function in society, Hervieu-Léger takes us back to the emergence and historical development of modernity as the crisis point for a comprehensive social memory. With its emphasis on the 'autonomous individual', the rational dismantling of 'sacred canopies', and the rise of 'institutional differentiation', modernity not only radically altered the role of traditional religion, but it effectively brought an end to societies based on memory. This crumbling of collective memory coincided with the growth of secularization, in which structures of religious meaning were dislocated and placed in a specialized religious field. As religious memory was marginalized, society also witnessed 'the differentiation of total social memory into a plurality of specialized circles of memory', which caused 'the piecemeal destruction of communities, societies and even ideologies based on memory' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 127). According to Nora, the various forms of globalization, along with democratization, the development of mass societies, and media encroachment then brought the final blow to these societies of collective memory.

In Halbwachs' research on collective memory, he identified two apparently contradictory trends that caused the disintegration of memory in modern societies. One was 'a tendency toward the expansion and homogenization of memory'. For Halbwachs, the emergence of the bourgeoisie brought a new fluidity of input from people in all areas of society, with one result being the destruction of a hierarchical social framework that had previously held the power to assure transmission of collective memories from generation to generation. In conjunction with that, he saw the advent of capitalism and technology as signifying all spheres of social life being aligned with production, and therefore, stimulating only technical, neutral memories related to function. Referring to Halbwachs' work, Hervieu-Léger says,

at the end of this homogenizing, functionalizing process, the memory of modern societies took on the aspect of surface memory; dull memory, whose normative, creative capacity seemed to have dissolved (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 128).

Also, the glut of information available to any person at any one time is so overwhelming and unintelligible that meaningful continuity is destroyed. In addition, the immediacy and frequency with which media images of local and global occurrences are communicated saturate and inhibit our ability to bring any one of those occurrences into context.

The second tendency Halbwachs addressed, one facilitated by conditions created through the homogenization just discussed, was to develop an unlimited fragmentation of individual and group memory. Without a unified social memory, individuals and groups have access only to fragments of memory contained within their areas of specialty. In that way, the collective social memory is primarily found in bits and pieces spread throughout society, not in a coherent whole. This raises the question of whether or not young people today have the capacity to organize the massive amounts of information they receive in a way that connects them to a lineage to which they see themselves belonging. To Halbwachs this challenge of transmission was more than adjusting educational methods; as Hervieu-Léger tells us, it is

structurally linked to the collapse of the framework of collective memory which provided every individual with the possibility of a link between what comes before and his or her own actual experience (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 130).

However, Halbwachs and Hervieu-Léger hold some hope that in spite of the dissolution of its collective memory, a society might be able to reconstitute its sense of unity if enough individuals and groups within that society can develop sufficient unity of views. This clearly points toward the importance of social ties when considering the future of religion in modernity. It also raises the question of whether or not a group, whose context of memory has been 'reduced to fragments and made instantaneous', actually can 'recognize itself as a link in a chain of belief and entrusted with the task of extending that chain into the future' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 130).

As part of exploring that question, Hervieu-Léger returns to the Weberian understanding of conflict between the substantive rationality of religion and the formal rationality of science and technology. Research shows that this two-fold secularization

process has diminished the sphere of religion in society, but it also reveals a more complex process at work. Using the example of French Catholicism, Hervieu-Léger says that the drop in religious observance may be due in part to a rational outlook, but adds that a decline in observance does not necessarily reflect a loss of belief. New expressions of belief and practice, including NRMs, often relate to what has been marginalized by Church leaders and to paranormal and parascientific phenomena that certainly do not represent modern rationality. In following these reactions against 'the official orthodoxy of modernity', Hervieu-Léger uses a term that Jean Baudrillard called 'psychological modernity', describing how it

seals the collapse of the world of tradition by calling into question any authority that claims to direct conscience and behavior, in the name of individual autonomy and the inalienable rights of subjectivity (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 132).

Within the Church this reflects a crisis in the authority of the priesthood and the institution, but even that is only one factor in a breakdown that in France extends beyond priesthood to the 'whole realm of religious practice and parochial culture' that 'gave substance to religious authority'. Hervieu-Léger proceeds to explain how the parish, which had functioned for centuries in the centre of village life as *the* society of memory and the main way people identified 'themselves as members of a lineage', eventually lost its dynamic function and became a 'register of observance'. That, along with breakdown in family structure, signified the loss of two significant ways the French had mobilized their collective memory in a religious sense: 'the ideal of continuous transmission and the ideal of rootedness in a locality' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000:134). When collective social memory began to dissolve, that affected not only the dissolution of religious believing and its imaginative grasp of continuity, but also disintegration of the religious dimension present in all forms of social behaviour. In all domains that meant loss of the conviction of believing, which was based on a tradition initially designed to be preserved and passed on.

Continuing to use her native France as an example, Hervieu-Léger again draws upon the work of Nora to more clearly understand the social factors that in an advanced

capitalist society effectively obliterate memory. One is the economic change that 'favoured pragmatic individualism at the expense of long-lasting forms of co-operation and social solidarity' and directed the economic system toward consumer satisfaction. Another factor is the chain of effects resulting from modernity's focus on individual rights to happiness and self-fulfillment. When individuals began to face the insecurities that accompanied difficult economic changes, their general response was to seek the immediacy of getting by. In Hervieu-Léger's opinion,

the individualistic pressure for immediacy, which accords perfectly well with the coming of mass societies and the increased role of the state – that all categories call for – has finally achieved the expulsion of memory from society, so completing a process which began with modernization (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 138).

These developments have certainly impacted both institutionalized religion and new forms of religious expression, especially as people make more conscious choices about what they believe and which forms of observance fit their individual needs. The question remains whether religion is totally disintegrating or being radically transformed into new patterns. If it is to be saved, Hervieu-Léger believes modern societies must learn how to gather together those diffuse, fragmented, and disassociated memories that are capable of forging new social bonds and promising some kind of collective identification, and form them into what she calls 'substitute memories' they can then invoke.

Paradoxically, the instantaneous nature of rapid change appeals to memory, which in turn, points to an underlying need for people 'to recover the past in the imagination without which collective identity, just as individual identity, is unable to operate' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 141). Fortunately, the accompanying demand for meaning and search for identity lead to the assumption that members of the human society possess at least 'a minimal imaginal grasp of continuity' in order to envision a common future. However, the consistent dislodging and fragmentation of that imaginal grasp causes societies to continually reconstruct themselves in new forms 'to ensure continuity for both the group and the individual' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 142). Referring again to Nora's research on realms of

memory in the French society, Hervieu-Léger says the challenge in this reconstruction process is that its lack of an organized and integrated social memory forces an equally fragmentary development. Nora's work has identified particular points when a 'reconstituted' memory crystallizes at the same time that other indicators reveal the 'loss of a unifying collective memory'. In spite of this, research shows that the search for partial continuity has actually escalated and is evident in phenomena such as the passion for genealogy, historical novels, heritage days, and pageants - not only in France, but also in other Western countries. Hervieu-Léger suggests that examining ways in which societies are reconstituting their fragmented memories should assist in understanding how this may also be happening in religious modernity.

This suggestion takes Hervieu-Léger directly to the notion of utopia, which she paraphrases from Seguy as being a reinterpretation and magnification of a golden age that projects an image of the future which is foretold to be different from the unsatisfactory present (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 143). From there she moves to Desroche's major study of 'contraband religions', which he characterized as typically accessing religious imagination by drawing upon a past for help and inspiration while projecting a new vision of the future. Linking religion and utopia in a genealogical way, Desroche described seven 'constellations' of traditional utopian populations that stand as 'milestones and witnesses of the alternative route taken by religion in modernity' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 144). Considered hopeful by Desroche, these utopias reached as far back as the eleventh century, and they covered locations such as Russia, Britain, and America. They also exhibited a motivating force from within religion that extended beyond institutional religion and paralleled revolutionary movements, utopian forms of socialism, and experiments in communal living. For Desroche, this supported his argument that a religious dynamic of society functions steadily through and beyond all forms of secularization.

Not only that, but a utopia fosters renewed ways of creating an alternative imagined continuity - one that reaches back as far as necessary to feed the consciousness of the chain and one that provides a vision of hope that inspires action in the present. Of course,

this invoked memory incorporates imagination, which turns it into a reinvention. As Hervieu-Léger says, what is specific to utopia

**is that it makes of the complete and total break with the old order the condition of access to a new one, which is glimpsed by means of a memory that has been replenished at a source for which greater authenticity is claimed (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 145).**

This implies some loosening of the original tradition, or authorized memory, in order for its transformation into a new memory to occur. The new order of memory then allows for redefining ways in which society operates and functions. However, drawing upon the work of Seguy, Hervieu-Léger says that the utopian dynamic must materialize as a social movement if it is to move beyond the limitations of a voluntary group and develop broader social consequences.

Interestingly, Desroche's analysis of the internal dynamics of utopia reveals a complex process in which memory is both secularized and religiously recharged. Another paradoxical utopian dynamic is its search for its own realization and the inherent dilemmas discovered therein. Desroche pointed out how any utopia faces a series of options: it either creates the new vision or fails; if it succeeds, it may lose its momentum by achieving cultural integration, rather than maintaining its unique quality; or if it succeeds, it may become institutionalized and rigid - representing and preserving the new authorized memory in the face of alternatives. Hervieu-Léger reminds us that any religious group or movement is absorbed into religion when it 'monopolizes the ideal of expected change and erects it as a norm for the present' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 147). That can happen in the extreme when the monopoly extends to defining the legitimate memory of the foundation, along with its implications for the present. However, utopias generally maintain a fidelity to their initial inspiration, often identifying with a founder whose message can be invoked or explored and whose life can be an example to be followed. Furthermore, some kind of religious stabilization may help a utopia become incorporated into a culture without losing its identity - as evidenced in the history of religious orders. Alternatively, sometimes when traditional religions have allowed alternative readings of its foundational stories, that allowance has

triggered its own internal protest - as witnessed in radical movements of the Reformation.

What seems clear to Hervieu-Léger is that the collapse of memory in traditional societies became the condition that freed the imagination of modern societies to construct history. She also thinks that the intensifying social and cultural contradictions that prompt social change can also be the catalysts for renewal of utopian potential and its association with the possible emergence of religious innovation. Pointing to base communities in Latin America and denominational feminist movements in the United States, Hervieu-Léger contends that

the innovative resources of religion now find expression through a different articulation of this reference, which is itself inseparable from the formation of individual and collective identities (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 149).

One articulation is that of elective fraternities, which develop through 'shared interests, experience and hardships' among people not necessarily related by blood, but whose relationships embody a sense of 'real solidarity, transparency of thought and communication, and common values and memories' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 50). Hervieu-Léger says members of an elective fraternity often attach to the charismatic founder, who is frequently designated as 'father' or 'elder brother' in this extended family of choice. In many ways an acknowledgment of the void in the socializing function of one's birth family, elective fraternities provide freedom of commitment and a stability that is different from the natural family. When a group starts seeking ways to represent itself beyond the context of the interrelationship of its current members and calling upon a common spirit that transcends its individual members, that group is beginning to present religious features. Furthermore, its transformation reflects a powerful change that depends on the strength of emotional ties uniting the individuals who have made this choice.

Hervieu-Léger tells us that according to Hegel (1988: 114), the love that permeates an elective community does not make it a religion, and in some cases prompts it to clash with religion, especially when commitment to the relationships takes precedence over fidelity

to the chain of belief (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 152). When an elective fraternity does not initially develop as an intensely emotional community that centres around a charismatic leader, it often faces an intense struggle when some of its members do intensify their emotional commitment, thereby raising larger group suspicions that the minority members, in some cases, should be expelled. Of course, this can work in the opposite way. Sometimes the increased emotional intensity and 'union of hearts' is experienced as transcending individual experience and as evidence of a spirit that pre-dated and will survive the group's break-up. With all this in mind, the decisive factor in a decision to institutionalize an elective fraternity is a rejection of the volatile nature of these emotional states. This rejection opens the way for a community of people to imaginably reconstitute their cloud of witnesses and possibly re-formalize what they consider an authentic chain of belief in which the authorized memory is preserved.

Elective fraternities, with their characteristic re-socializing of religion, find themselves both outside and within traditional religions. As forums where men and women can take authentic personal initiative that finds expression and recognition, sometimes reference to a chain of belief turns out to be secondary importance or of no value. One example Hervieu-Léger provides of an elective fraternity outside tradition religion is what grew out of an affinity network that had followed singer Jim Morrison of The Doors. After Morrison's early and sudden death, this network effectively turned itself into a religion that twenty years later still buys his recordings and song texts, makes pilgrimages to his grave, gathers to read his poetry and sing his songs, and affirms his dream of another life.

Sometimes groups operating within the parameters of traditional religion decide to maintain a high visibility of endorsing a given lineage as a way of avoiding the pitfalls of communal excess. This means that as the emotional ties deepen for those experiencing a deeper spiritual commitment through membership in the group, the push for a more public symbolic display of 'membership in a religious family' becomes prominent. Examples in the Catholic Church include Pax Christie, an international Catholic peace movement, which

draws upon church traditions of nonviolence and social justice; the Women's Ordination Conference, which points to elements of church tradition that they consider supportive of women's ordination; and Call To Action, a lay and clergy group that advocates dialogue, collaboration and shared leadership within the church. All of these 'elective fraternities' have existed for at least three decades, consistently invoke 'original' elements in the Catholic tradition, and hold fast to their right to have a 'different' voice from within the institution. Hervieu-Léger asks why elective groups like these and the charismatics value such displays of identity when the official Church does not require that in order to fully recognize them as loyal Catholics. She suggests that references to past witnesses, or saints, may be an example not of wanting to return to a pre-Vatican Council state, but of emotionally stabilizing the group by imagining its genealogy and also of validating it as something permanent. Hervieu-Léger also stresses that

the ongoing deregulation of authorized memory, which favours the burgeoning of elective fraternities, at the same time, favours the pluralization - hence incompatibility - of forms in which these same fraternities can bring about, should the need arise, their own religious consolidation (Hervieu-Léger, 2000:156).

When the issue of symbolic representation of religious affiliation arises, Hervieu-Léger leads us into a discussion of what is ethnic and what is religious in the reconstruction of ethnic memory. Acknowledging that both areas are part of religious reconstruction of memory in modernity, and as such, establish social bonds based on an assumed genealogy, she then explains that an ethnic revival calls upon a naturalized genealogy relating to soil and blood, while the religious invokes a symbolized genealogy constructed with belief in and reference to a myth and a source. The occurrence of both religious and ethnic revivals in western democratic societies reveals that these movements generally either compete with each other or join together to re-establish a sense of collective identity that modern society both destroys and longs to re-create. Examples of ethnic and religious memory joining together include Northern Ireland, Poland, Israel, Kosovo, immigrant communities in the USA, and other eastern European countries.

Referring to Dominique Schnapper's research into ethnic and religious renewal, Hervieu-Léger outlines how a modern convergence between these two has occurred. It started with the modernization of conventional religion in a way that converted a personal God into a moral and ethical ideal. That process, along with the increasing tendency to view objects of religious belief as symbols, resulted 'in the transformation of religion into a system of ethics which, taken to its extreme, can allow one to confuse it with a morality of human rights' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 158). One might conclude that this 'ethical standardization' would cause historical religious traditions to assume a universalist design which would prevent individuals and groups from appropriating religious symbols for their own use, but Schnapper said the opposite has occurred. Religion has instead become a fragmented mass of symbols and values that can be molded, changed, and re-appropriated by those wanting to restore a sense of identity, including ethnic identity. This is further complicated by ethnic groups who take on a religious function by assimilating the symbols and values of religion and by marking their place in history as transcendent, thus claiming meaning for their existence. Sometimes this transcendence takes the form of replacing reference to a weakened chain of belief with recognition of the common ethical heritage held by historical religions in modernity. As Hervieu-Léger says,

Thus the convergence of the ethnic and the religious is a dual movement, operating both through the ethico-symbolic homogenization of traditional religious (confessional) identities and through the neo-religious recharging of ethnic identities (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 161).

This interplay between disintegration and reintegration in the process of referring to the continuity of a line of belief implies access to new ways of inventing a common memory - whether using symbols derived from historical religions or resources available from 'profane' history and culture. For Hervieu-Léger, this perspective marks a shift in the nature of religion and makes it now possible to believe only in the continuity of the group, while still preserving symbols from traditional religion that provide meaning.

## 4.8 The Future of Religious Institutions

Hervieu-Léger says that from a sociological perspective, the late twentieth century has brought the first of the post-traditional generations, a group that finds itself living in the midst of structural uncertainty within society, including the final collapse of the world of tradition. In a similar vein, Alain Touraine described this situation as postmodernity and said it is characterized by fragmentation of everything from an 'individual personality to life in society', and by 'complete dissociation of instrumental rationality', economic strategies, and forms of society, culture and personality, all of which contribute to 'elimination of the individual rationally engaged in creating a society' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 164-165). Though supporting Touraine's process of searching for a new definition of modernity, Hervieu-Léger recommends we concentrate on Anthony Giddens' notion of high modernity. Acknowledging the prevalence of risk and uncertainty, which he said are the result of globalization in modern societies, Giddens is paraphrased by Hervieu-Léger:

Deprived of the security of stable communities which supplied evidence of a code of meaning that was fixed once and for all, deprived too of the great universalist visions imparted by modernist ideologies, individuals are adrift in a universe without fixed bearing. Their world is no longer one they can construct together. Self-fulfilment is now the chief aim (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 165).

Given this context, Hervieu-Léger suggests that deliberately choosing to invoke the authority of a tradition, thus being incorporated into continuing lineage, may be a viable 'post-traditional way of constructing self-identity among others, all of which call upon an individual's affectivity and are fed on his or her search for community, and his or her memories and longings' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 165).

With that in mind, Hervieu-Léger invites a discussion of differentiating between the rise of the religious and the existence of post traditional religion. Evidence for the rise of the religious is seen in individual attempts to reconstruct meaning for themselves through reflection on their experiences and imaginatively reconstituting a chain of belief in order to acquire religious coherence and provide an organizing principle for their lives. This

reference to a chain of belief affords a symbolic resolution to the loss of meaning, but it does not necessarily lead to establishment of a religion. For that to happen, the tradition called upon would have to be capable of generating minimum conditions for a 'collective validation of meaning necessary for a community of believers to be able to establish itself'. Those conditions would include taking the form of 'a tangible social group - whose organization may range from very informal to very formal - and an imaginary lineage, both past and future' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 166). In addition, this pattern of relating and believing would have to arise from individual commitment to membership in a 'genuine spiritual community'. For Hervieu-Léger, a postmodern religion would focus on the 'effectiveness of individual commitment' in recognizing the power of a tradition to generate continuity, rather than on the assumption that a tradition must impose obligations upon its individual adherents. In this way, an authoritative system of belief would be less able to 'impose itself in society' in an effort 'to exercise exclusive control' over what is believed and how those beliefs are proclaimed.

For sociologists, the resulting issue is not whether secularization is reversible, but what this 'radical de-institutionalization of the religious' means for traditional institutions of religion. Hervieu-Léger contends that the challenge faced by these institutions is their ability to give serious attention 'to the flexible nature of believing as it affects them' and to a new role they would need to play in 'the propagating and reprocessing of religious signs' - understanding clearly that grappling with these issues would be 'an essential part of their function and a mark of their credibility in the world of high modernity' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 168). It would also require that they reform their own system of authority and stop seeing themselves as 'dispensing the true memory'. In that way, the 'repository of the truth of belief' would shift from the institution to the believer, which brings its own set of challenges. Most apparent are the trends toward 'metaphor-fed subjectivizing' of belief, separating belief from practice, reconsidering the notion of religious obligation, and questioning the sources of 'authorized recall'. Whether within traditional religions or neo-integralist movements that

view the entire world as religious, this 'subjective fundamentalism' reveals the separation 'between the real world, with its own laws, and the subjective world of constructed meaning' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 169). Hervieu-Léger gives examples of how Christianity, even more than Judaism or Islam, has actually facilitated this process of destabilizing the religious structure of reference to an authorized memory by supporting the subjectivization of religious experience. She also refers to Herbert Danzger's study of a Jewish movement in the United States, initiated with the purpose of reconstructing their Jewish identity by reviving memories of the past, but in the process, causing a mood of destabilization within the tradition.

Moving to the question of how this crisis of authority affects those traditional religions that formalize their tradition under a recognized magisterium that regulates religious observance, Hervieu-Léger describes how the Catholic Church has reacted strongly by reaffirming the 'doctrinal authority of Rome' not only for their own believers, but for all people. Though attempting to provide some stability in a changing world, their ability to offer meaning at this time in history is countered by the overall societal attitude of primacy in the subjectivity of the individual. Even in the Reformed Church there is the problem of legitimate interpretation of the Bible, reflecting conflicts about recognizing the legitimate authority for conveying the true memory. A further issue is the Protestant 'inclination to institutionalize ideological power' as a way of constructing and reconstructing religious memory.

In Hervieu-Léger's opinion, the problem facing major religions today is how to manage their relationship with the truth as they perceive it, particularly when the 'capital of memory' held by each one may 'continue to create tradition' by taking on 'lasting representation as a chain of belief' that transcends 'the different communities in which the chain has been and is made actual' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 173). Following this, she sees the challenge for all religious denominations to attend equally to those members who search for authority in a message, rather than an institution, and to those who choose allegiance to

the community, not to a set of beliefs and values. Her observation is that traditional religions can transcend some of these conflicts by 'recreating an individual and collective consciousness of emotional belonging' and by 'playing down conflict by giving it the appearance of a worthwhile expression of diversity in culture and feeling'. Citing the 1991 Jewish festival in France and the Roman Church's appeal to young people during the 1990s, Hervieu-Léger shows how the strategy of 'marrying the emotivity of belonging with a reasoned appeal to ethico-cultural heritage' is something many are already trying to implement.

In her conclusion, Hervieu-Léger reiterates that her purpose was to 'prepare the ground' for ways in which the sociology of religion can move beyond lamenting the damage caused to traditional religions by secularization and instead, shed light on how the transformations inherent in religious modernity may actually contain the seeds of renewal and the insights necessary for understanding the new religious phenomena emerging throughout the world.

#### **4.9 Summary**

In summary, Hervieu-Léger's model of religion as a chain of memory has emerged from extensive research into underlying issues at work in the transformation of religion in contemporary societies. The solid academic grounding she has established provides a comprehensive context and rationale for the following key components that appear to represent the essence of her model: forming community, understanding tradition, invoking tradition, determining legitimate authority, and believing. These components are addressed specifically in the fieldwork described in Chapter Seven and in the 'model of religion' portion of the analysis in Chapter Eight. A brief summary of can be found in Table 4-10, which is found below. Before proceeding to any of the fieldwork, the next chapter introduces and provides a context for the participants who contributed to this research project.

**COMPONENTS IN HERVIEU-LÉGER'S MODEL OF RELIGION**

<b>Key Component</b>	<b>General Characteristics</b>
1. Forming Community	Types, Sizes, Purposes Creating, Maintaining, Supporting
2. Understanding Tradition	Religious, or Spiritual Backgrounds Plurality of Ways, Multicultural Sources Kinship with All Life Forms
3. Invoking Tradition	Calling upon Cloud of Witnesses Begotten into Core Lineage Affirming Commitment to Set of Beliefs
4. Determining Legitimate Authority	Link with Cloud of Witnesses Commitment to Set of Beliefs Chain of Belief Legitimized by Community
5. Believing	Process of Joining with Others Shared Content of Beliefs Shared Determination of Beliefs and Meaning

**Table 4-10**

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONTEXTUALISING THE FIELD RESEARCH**

### **5.1 Overview**

This chapter is designed to present information about the contexts in which the field research for this project took place. It begins by identifying the three groupings of shamanic practitioners and some of the people who in some way have formed part of their respective intentional shamanic communities. Next comes a look at the overall contextual features the three groups share in common and possess as areas of difference. Following that is a more particular look at the contexts that are unique to each group.

As part of that look, I incorporate some of the experiences I took part in as a participant observer. This information complements the research that is presented in Chapters Six and Seven by providing another way of understanding how several of these practitioners have functioned in their shamanic roles. It also sheds light on how they and I developed a relationship of trust that enabled the subsequent research to take place. A final reason for including most of the participant observation experiences in this chapter is for clarity and focus. Doing so enables Chapter Six to contain research findings that relate specifically to the seven elements that form the model of cross-cultural shamanism and Chapter Seven to provide the research that is particularly relevant to key characteristics in Hervieu-Léger's model of religion as a chain of memory. Chapter Eight then ties all the field research together by presenting analyses of both sets of findings, followed by a subsequent analysis of how those findings reveal significant elements present in the transformation of religion and culture (locally and globally).

### **5.2 Overall Observations**

Those who agreed to participate in this study are in some way related to The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre, the Findhorn Foundation Community, and/or Lendrick Lodge. These three organizations have at least one not-for-profit charitable dimension to their organizational structure, though private ownership allowed each of them to begin functioning

initially. They are intentional spiritual communities with three different ways of coming together as a community. In addition, all of them have web sites that describe their philosophy and shamanic programs (EdinburghShamanic, 2004b)(Santoro, 2004) (Findhorn, 2004)(Lendrick, 2004c).

I interviewed six shamanic practitioners who lived in Scotland - a key criterion for choosing them. One was female, and five were male; an additional female functioned occasionally as a shamanic assistant for one of the practitioners. Four practitioners were in their thirties, and one was in his fifties. Two were born and raised in Scotland; one grew up in Brazil; another came from Denmark; one is a native of Italy; and another was raised in Ireland. Those who migrated from elsewhere arrived as adults who had chosen to come to Scotland for a variety of reasons. However, once here, they found enough receptivity to their work that they decided to stay.

Of the twenty-three people who were not practitioners, but in some way formed part of a shamanic communities with the practitioners, I interviewed five women and one man. I also spoke informally with seventeen other community members – thirteen females and four males. Two of those people functioned as members of staff, and the remaining community people were participants in an astroshamanism workshop at Findhorn. All twenty-three came from countries that included Scotland, England, Holland, Italy, New Zealand, the USA, Germany, and Sweden. The age cohorts included four in their twenties, seven in their thirties, five each in their forties and fifties, and two in their sixties.

Each of the communities focuses on shamanic work that includes both individual healing and/or divination and group work that usually occurs through shamanic drumming sessions, trance dance, or training workshops. Furthermore, most of this shamanic work takes place within the centres that form the locus for their communities, though practitioner Franco Santoro, who lives at Findhorn, also offers a number of workshops in other countries. All must in some way determine how to earn an income that can sustain their work.

## **5.3 The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre**

### **5.3.1 Meeting Cláudia Gonçalves**

I first met Cláudia Gonçalves at a shamanic journey drumming group we both attended in Edinburgh in the winter of 2002. Though neither of us returned to that group, we remembered each other and were pleased to discuss our common shamanic interests the following year, when in January of 2003, we met each other rather spontaneously through her shamanic work at a metaphysical bookstore in Edinburgh. Cláudia said that during the last year she had begun practicing as a shamanic healer and was regularly attending various health fairs throughout Scotland. At those fairs she had met other shamanic practitioners who were living in Scotland; together they formed a somewhat loose network of shamanic colleagues. She also told me she was expanding from primarily working one-on-one with clients to starting trance dance groups.

About a month later Cláudia rang me to ask if I would be one of her helpers at a trance dance she would be conducting at The Salisbury Centre. Though I'd previously experienced a trance state while drumming, dancing, and singing with various shamanic groups, I had never been to a trance dance and was curious to know what it was like. She told me she would be asking participants to close their eyes during the dance, which meant that the helpers would act as a 'wall' or shield to protect people from bumping into each other when that seemed likely to happen. Pleased that she trusted me, I agreed to help.

### **5.3.2 Trance Dancing**

I had heard about and even visited The Salisbury Centre prior to this trance dance with Cláudia. 'Founded in 1973 with the aim of serving the community of Edinburgh and promoting personal development' by offering 'educational courses, workshops and therapies for spiritual, emotional and physical well-being', The Salisbury Centre describes its philosophy in the following statement:

The interconnectedness of body, mind and spirit, as symbolised

in the Celtic Trine, is the foundation of our work and we believe that healing arises naturally from this recognition (Salisbury, 2003: 1) (Salisbury, 2004).

This would be my first time attending a function there. I arrived about thirty minutes early on February 28, 2003, to visit with Cláudia and to help prepare the meeting room. Because that room was not yet available, and four of us were early, we were all shown to the kitchen, where we informally introduced ourselves while we waited. One woman came from Galicia in Spain and said she was very interested in Celtic culture; a young man from Fife told us that until recently he had focused more on Native American spiritual influences than his own Scots heritage; and Cláudia herself said she had moved several years ago from Brazil to Scotland. This first encounter had brought together four people from four different countries. When the room was finally ready, we went to prepare our meeting space.

At the top of the stairs, just outside the meeting room, there is a sign inviting all who enter to remove their shoes and leave them outside the door. Once inside the large square room, I saw a polished wooden floor, large windows on two sides, green plants, and soft lighting that contributed to a welcoming atmosphere. As more people arrived, Cláudia asked a couple of them to help her place about six small lanterns around the room; they facilitated an even warmer atmosphere when the other room lights were eventually turned off. After informal introductions by people as they came into the room, participants were encouraged to pick up large cushions from the back of the room and use them for sitting on the floor in a large circle for the opening session.

There was silence for about five minutes as participants watched Cláudia light some sage and use a feather to wave the smoke from the burning sage around her own body and over some of the objects she was going to use for the evening, including several necklaces she then put around her neck and wore during the session. I recognized this as a purification, or smudging, ceremony, variations of which I have seen many times in the last eighteen years. This ceremony of purifying, or smudging, herself and her special jewelry, and then ritually placing that jewelry on her body, appeared to be part of her personal

preparation for the trance dance. It is something I have watched other ceremonial leaders do, though I could not determine how many other participants understood her actions, because Cláudia did not speak or explain herself during the ceremony. In fact, she sat outside the circle at one end of the room with her side and back to the participants in a preparation that was essentially separate from the group. Though I had seen this kind of preparation before, most of the previous purification ceremonies I had witnessed had actively involved group members in the ceremony itself; several had also included explanations about the meaning of what was happening. When she finished, Cláudia joined the circle and officially welcomed everyone. She told them how pleased she was that they had come to this group trance dance, the first of which she had ever facilitated in Edinburgh. She explained that most of her experience with trance dance has been on her own or working with individuals during healing sessions.

Cláudia told participants about her move to Edinburgh from Brazil, where there are strong influences from Africa and from the indigenous people of Brazil, who all mix together in what she described as a wonderful blend of rich culture. She said she had started trance dancing when she was thirteen years old and that it was one of her passions. According to Cláudia, the purpose of trance dancing is to connect with the spirits for healing. She said this happens by letting the energy of the music and the movement of the body help each individual tune into an issue or issues, such as depression, sadness, or hurtful memories, and then release what needs releasing in order to bring about the desired healing.

Participants were told to start by keeping their eyes closed, paying attention to their breathing, and then going within to experience the music and allow their bodies to respond; they were not to speak or sing, but to let internal prompting be expressed only through movement. Cláudia explained that since participants would have their eyes closed, she had asked another woman, also from Brazil, and me to keep our eyes open and help prevent people from bumping into each other - telling the group that she had chosen special people to fulfill this role of helper. She said they would dance for ninety minutes and that as the

music slowed down toward the end of that time, those who wished could lie down as a way of finishing the experience. Someone asked if there would be a break, and Cláudia said no, though people who might need a drink could access water from the sink at the side in the back of the room.

Before beginning the dance, Cláudia asked participants to take turns telling their names and where they lived. Among the twenty participants, most of them women, there were people from Scotland, England, South Africa, Germany, Spain, and the United States. When we were ready to begin, Cláudia instructed everyone to put their cushions near the side of the room to make way for the dancing. Soon the music began. It consisted of CDs carefully selected by Cláudia and supplemented with sounds from rhythmic instruments that she also played occasionally throughout the evening. Those instruments included a rattle, shaker egg, and a rain stick. Some songs were slow; some were faster; and most had a distinct beat that was hard to miss.

A few participants were more active than others, though as the evening progressed, more people appeared less inhibited. Most seemed in a trance-like state, moving to the beat of the music and clearly experiencing something that their bodies were expressing. A few reached times that approached a mild frenzy, and one man seemed possessed by something that he later said was the spirit of bear. Because he had been very active in his expression of bear, I was kept quite busy trying to protect other participants from his extravagant gestures and wild movements. As the music played, Cláudia lined up other songs that would follow throughout the evening. Periodically, she played a percussive type of instrument like a rattle, shaker egg, or rain stick, and walked through the group making rhythmic sounds that enhanced the mood of the recorded music.

When the CD music ended, leaving Cláudia's rhythmic shaking of a shaker egg as the only remaining sound, most people were lying on the floor. However, the young man who embodied bear still had a fair amount of moving around to do - providing a challenge to the helpers to assure he didn't step on those who were lying about. Finally, Cláudia

stopped the shaker and invited all to sit quietly for a moment and then find a cushion and reform the circle. Once back together, she told us we had gone over our closing time deadline, and those who needed to leave could do so. Most stayed. She then invited us to say 'thank you' and 'good-bye' to the spirits - not with words, but by taking turns shaking a small wooden percussive instrument, which she passed around the circle in a counter-clockwise direction.

After that was over, Cláudia explained that another shamanic trance dance session was scheduled for April, though she was trying to arrange for a trance dance group to start meeting weekly or every other week. The Salisbury Centre was one of the venues she was considering for that group. She then asked if any others had announcements about their work. Soon we all thanked each other and began to disperse. However, I remained in telephone e-mail contact with Cláudia throughout the next several months.

My own experience at the trance dance had been a mixture of familiar elements that were packaged in somewhat different ways. I had relaxed and enjoyed the music - allowing myself to move with it. However, my attention had been focused primarily on participants and not on my own emotional or physical responses to the music.

### **5.3.3 Founding The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre**

Cláudia and I continued to communicate over the next several months. Due to the time involved in finding, organizing, and renting various venues needed in order to conduct shamanic group events, and based on the desire for a regular place to hold individual shamanic healing sessions, Cláudia began looking for property to start a shamanic centre in the Edinburgh area. The following summer she and Mark Halliday, another shamanic practitioner, found a suitable building at a price they could afford, bought it, and began refurbishing it to better accommodate the type of work they would be doing there. In September of 2003, they opened The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre in Portobello; by late that month they had created an internet web site (EdinburghShamanic, 2004b) and had

prepared a publication describing the Centre:

Here you will find a spiritual library, a meditation room and a Shamanic shop. Daily groups and classes, healing circles, personal shamanic guidance, readings, workshops, Shamanic Healing with Cláudia Gonçalves, Solar Shamanism with Mark Halliday and much more (EdinburghShamanic, 2003).

Though Cláudia and Mark own the Centre, they created it as a registered charity. As such, they committed themselves to hold annual general meetings, build a membership of shamanic and financial supporters, receive feedback and guidance about Centre business, and rely extensively on volunteer help.

By January of 2004, Cláudia and Mark had invited shamanic practitioners Preben Eagle Heart Olsen and Alistair Bate to provide shamanic work at the Centre; they also asked other guest practitioners, including Franco Santoro from Findhorn, to teach occasional shamanic workshops. At the same time, another woman named Collette helped the Centre move forward by volunteering several hours a week; she also participated in some of the Centre offerings. As I met both paid and unpaid core staff and asked if I could interview them as part of my research, each one said yes.

An open day was planned for January 10, 2004, but when I arrived, I discovered the event had been postponed to the next week, because the Centre flyers had not arrived. However, Collette and Mark were there, and we started talking about Mark's shamanic work. After a brief discussion, we arranged appointments for each of their interviews to take place during the next week. At that time I also joined the Centre as a way to support their work and guarantee I would receive regular mailings.

The following week, January 17, 2004, I spent most of the day at the Centre meeting many people who came to the open day. Groups of about fifteen went down to the lower level every hour or so for an introductory talk and meditation facilitated by one or more of the Centre staff. Though most of the time I remained upstairs talking with visitors, during the introductory session I attended, Cláudia talked about the purpose and offerings of the Centre, Mark provided a guided meditation, and Preben played the Native American flute.

Afterwards I talked with a woman who had a social work background and was looking for a more holistic approach that included spirituality when working with clients. When she said she didn't know much about shamanism, I provided a brief introduction. People continued to come in waves throughout the rest of the day. It appeared as if the ages of those who visited ranged from early twenties to early seventies. There was a substantial mix of male and female, though perhaps more females. Most of them said they were curious; some had shamanic backgrounds themselves; and others had heard the term, but wanted to know what shamanism really was.

#### **5.3.4 Participating in a Shamanic Drumming Session at the Centre**

After I interviewed Cláudia on January 21, 2004, I remained to participate in the weekly shamanic drumming group. Cláudia had told me this would be a time for participants to share in an opening ceremony and then take a shamanic journey. She said most of the shamanic practitioners at the Centre regularly attended the group, but they rotated as facilitators of the drumming session. That day Preben facilitated. We joined together in the lower room, sitting in a circle on the floor. Though many of the opening rituals for a drumming group have similarities, there are various cultural differences. Preben is from Denmark, but he had trained with some Native American shamans and drew upon some of the Lakota customs. Just as Cláudia had done in the ceremony I had attended with her, Preben acknowledged the unseen spirits and called upon them for purification and protection. His way of 'honoring the spirits of the directions' and of using sage for purification were familiar to me, because I had grown up in the USA near Lakota territory, and I, too, had learned some of those same practices from First Nations spiritual teachers.

Preben told us that he uses different drum beats for going to the upper and lower worlds and that today he felt guided to send us on a lower world shamanic journey. Though I had previously learned about using different drumbeats for various healing ceremonies, using them to distinguish between upper and lower world journeys was new to me.

However, I was open to what he said and went to the lower world. Perhaps because I was still processing the cross-cultural elements in the opening ceremony, I did not remember much of my own journey. It was the first time since I had come to Scotland that I was participating in a shamanic group consisting entirely of shamanic practitioners, not people who had come to learn about journeying. When the drumming stopped, we were able to share what we wished with the group. At the end, Preben led us in ceremonially 'releasing' the spirits - a practice Cláudia had also done in the trance dance I described earlier.

### **5.3.5 Follow-Up**

Since these experiences, I have remained on the mailing list as a member of the Centre, and I have occasionally visited there. On December 11, 2004, I participated in the Centre's first annual general meeting and found myself surrounded by about thirty people. That group was a fairly equal mix of women and men - most of who had not been present a year earlier at the open house. Cláudia and Mark had asked a trained facilitator to organize and conduct the meeting. That helped expedite a number of organizational decisions that freed them to do more of their shamanic work and allowed others to help more extensively in different aspects of the business, such as membership and marketing.

In the last half of 2004 Preben, Alistair, and Collette stopped working out of the Centre as practitioners and volunteer. However, the first two quarters of 2005 found the Centre still offering regular shamanic groups, in addition to week-end workshops that are 'held throughout the year' and conducted by 'shamanic facilitators from the local community, the UK and from abroad.' (EdinburghShamanic, 2004a). One of the 'abroad' facilitators was from the Czech Republic; another was from the Andes in South America. The Centre has also entered into global partnerships with two charities that help people with HIV/AIDS; these charities are located in Brazil and South Africa.

Through the Sacred Mountains Foundation, which is located in Colorado, USA, in February of 2005 Mark began six months of living in Colorado, doing voluntary work for the

Navaho Nations, all the while under the supervision of a Navajo medicine man. The letters he has written about his experiences are published in the Centre's newsletter. His April 'Letter from America' explained how the approximately 220,000 Navajo people are spread throughout a broad belt of land that reaches from the Mexican border north to Alaska, though most live on the vast reservation in Northeast Arizona. With Mark away, Cláudia has relied even more on volunteer help and is now opening the Centre to more practitioners who may want to rent space for events or workshops.

## **5.4 The Findhorn Foundation Community**

### **5.4.1 Meeting Franco Santoro**

One of the shamanic practitioners with whom Cláudia herself had worked prior to co-founding the Centre is Franco. A member of the Findhorn Foundation Community since 1999, Franco works with people individually, but also conducts training workshops in astroshamanism throughout the year in a variety of countries. Cláudia had suggested that Franco might be someone I might contact as part of my field research. When I saw that Franco would be facilitating a two-day astroshamanic workshop at The Salisbury Centre in April of 2003, I decided to participate as a way of meeting him, observing his style, and deciding with him the feasibility of our working together on my research project.

### **5.4.2 Astroshamanism Weekend Workshop with Franco**

Called 'Astroshamanism The East Gate - A Voyage through the Inner Universe', The Salisbury Centre's winter/spring programme described his workshop as designed to explore shamanic states of consciousness as they relate to planetary energies and seasonal cycles. Using traditional shamanic methods such as drumming, singing, trance dancing, and shamanic journeys, Franco would help participants focus on the energies of Spring as a way of releasing grievances or blocks and embracing new possibilities (Salisbury, 2003a). One workshop brochure described Franco as:

a shamanic facilitator, experiential astrologer, member of the Findhorn Foundation, the developer of astroshamanism and supply director of the Sacred Cone Circle. In 1964 he started regular connections with nonordinary dimensions that led him to live a parallel life which was often cause of conflict in his relationship with conventional reality. In 1976 he had a transformational experience which, after years of practice with shamans and medicine people, allowed him to find clarity about his connections and acknowledge his function as a bridge between dimensions. His path of apprenticeship encompassed both the archaic traditions of his Italian natal descent and those of other adopted lineages. From 1996 he has run the Operative Training in Astroshamanism, an intensive programme for shamanic practitioners and healers (Santoro, 2003b).

The workshop was to run for several hours on Friday night and then on Saturday morning and afternoon. It was held in the same second-floor room that had been used for Cláudia's shamanic trance dance described earlier. As I entered, Franco stood at the door and greeted me with a friendly smile and a handshake. He was wearing dark trousers, a light shirt, and a sports coat. Inside, incense was burning, a CD of rhythmic instrumental music was playing, and large floor cushions were positioned in a circle on the floor where people could sit. In the center of the circle of cushions was a small lit candle.

After finding a cushion and sitting down, I introduced myself to two other middle-aged women who had already arrived. One of them I had met at the February trance dance with Cláudia, but the other was new to me. In addition to Franco, there were two other men - one who appeared to be in his mid-to-late twenties and another who appeared to be in his forties. In the introductions, the older one told the group he could be present only on Friday night. Nine of us were women - four of middle age, including me, and five in their twenties and thirties.

Franco welcomed us as a group and asked us to begin our time together by going 'inside' for a minute or two in order to calm down, focus, and tap into our intention for coming to the workshop. He then explained that the workshop would focus on the Eastern Gate, the time of spring, when new beginnings are around us and prompt us to pay attention to what calls for new expression in our own lives. Though there would be some explanation of how astrology and shamanism work together, Franco said we would not be concentrating

on astrology, but on how the astrological energies could support the eastern gate of spring and new life. He also explained that many aspects of a shamanic heritage had been suppressed and repressed over the years, leaving little written evidence of its dimensions.

Holding a small crystal sphere, he then invited each participant to take the sphere, share name, current location, and motivation for attending the workshop, and when finished, pass the sphere to the next person in a clockwise direction. This method of facilitating participant input was similar to that used by Cláudia at the end of the trance dance. Most of the people said they weren't exactly sure why they had come, but they were drawn to whatever would help them make some important decisions about life direction and choices. Several had either worked with or met Franco before, but most were meeting him for the first time. When it was my turn to speak, I talked a little about my own shamanic background and said something about how grateful I felt for having the opportunity to share with others in this way. Other than attending one drumming session the year before, I had not participated in any group shamanic events since moving to Scotland in August of 2001.

Franco's way of beginning the group session was consistent with how many workshops start. Though he incorporated his own manner of asking participants to focus on and share their intentions for the week-end, he followed a common pattern of welcoming participants, clarifying the overall reason for gathering, helping individuals reflect on what they specifically hoped to accomplish, and facilitating a process in which group members might begin to build trust by learning about each other and sharing what they could about their own reasons for participating. Similar to what Cláudia and other ceremonial group leaders do, by passing around the small sphere, Franco had added the dimension of ritual to the group introductions.

Once everyone had spoken, Franco began preparations for the evening's shamanic journey by explaining that astrologically, the Eastern Gate of spring includes Aries, Taurus, and Gemini. He said Aries energy, ruled by the planet Mars, is focused on self and what the self wants. Furthermore, it doesn't tolerate polarity or separation, wanting all to be united in one and doing whatever will bring about that union. According to Franco, a positive

dimension of that is clarity in knowing what the self needs and wants, along with having the necessary motivation to go after one's dreams and visions with great vigor. He then explained that our journey that night would utilize Aries energy by holding the intention of meeting with our spiritual guides and asking for clarity about what we need and want to bring about in our lives at this time. We then took a short break before beginning the journey.

After the break Franco told participants to choose a place they know in ordinary reality as the starting point for their journey. He also reiterated how important one's intent is when journeying and that each journey throughout the workshop would have a three-fold process: part one would be to meet and receive the presence of a spiritual ally or allies and identify our intention; part two would be to release barriers to the fulfilling that intention; and part three would be to integrate whatever gift, insight, or information the journey provided. Initially we all were to lie on the floor with the lights further dimmed, though Franco explained that during the release phase of the journey, some might want to stand and quietly let their bodies express what was occurring. Then and throughout the workshop he commented on how much people let words prevent them from connecting with their deepest feelings. Because of that, he regularly encouraged us to pay attention to how our bodies were feeling and what was happening physically in relationship to our emotions and thoughts. The ninety-minute journey began with Franco drumming, though at various points throughout the journey, he added music through the CD player. Occasionally he also used other rhythmic instruments as 'special effects' - much like Claudia had used click sticks and a rain stick in the shamanic trance dance.

Franco did not explain the difference between ordinary and nonordinary reality, nor did he describe what a shamanic journey is or a methodology to follow when embarking upon a journey. He instructed participants to find a starting place in ordinary reality, but explaining how one travels from that place to nonordinary reality and back, along with describing the cosmology, or geography, of nonordinary reality, were not addressed. He did stress the importance of one's intent, advise us to begin our journey lying down, and give us

the overall plan he had designed. Though I was familiar with ordinary and nonordinary reality and journey methodology, I wondered whether participants still had questions they weren't asking or if not knowing those things would actually limit their experience. Franco's three-stage journey format as a regular way of journeying was a variation on what I was used to doing. I realized I needed to be open to a different teaching style and way of drumming. To that end, my journey that night did successfully enable me to meet spiritual allies and clarify my intention; release tension I had been holding in my shoulders and emotions that had been building up; and receive the gift of taking in those experiences toward the end of the journey.

Afterwards, Franco again passed around the small crystal sphere and asked us to make a sound or gesture that might communicate our journey experience, this time passing the sphere around counterclockwise. Some people held the sphere in silence, while others moved into a certain body posture or uttered a sound. Neither then nor later did anybody raise any of the questions or concerns I had wondered about regarding methodology. When sharing had finished, we all held hands in the circle and were told to let the group energy circulate through our hands for all to experience. Then Franco urged us to be mindful of and attentive to our surroundings as we left for home, especially since we had been in an altered state for such a long time. He also suggested we pay attention to our dreams - in fact, to ask for a dream that would help us in this work.

Franco's closing process resembled aspects of closing rituals I had participated in over the years with other groups who have shared a meaningful experience. That process includes giving each person a chance to 'debrief' in some limited, but focused, way from what had just happened individually; extend that individual experience into a concrete connection with the entire group; and suggest some follow-up behaviors and actions that may help in the integration process once people have left the workshop. I took Franco's advice and asked for a helpful dream. In the morning I remembered dream segments that had elements of new life - a central theme of the workshop.

Saturday morning's opening session began again with a greeting by Franco, a

moment of quiet centering, and an invitation for each to hold the sphere, passed clockwise, and make a statement about how we were doing and if we had had any dreams. A few people remembered their dreams, while others didn't. Several were very tired, but all seemed glad to be present.

Franco then introduced us to the morning's agenda, explaining that we would be working with the aspect of Aries energy that 'killed' its polarity in order to bring about unity. We were told that our morning journey was to meet with our spiritual guides, then face and wrestle with that part of us which stands as a perceived barrier to reaching the intention, or vision, we had identified on Friday night, and finally to allow one of the two 'adversaries' to 'die' in order to be united. Furthermore, during the second stage of wrestling and releasing, we were to find a partner from among the group participants and take turns being the adversary for each other in the 'battle'. Franco instructed us not to say anything or to actually touch the other person, but to let our bodies express the conflict and the ultimate end result.

Throughout each enactment, my male partner and I both had ended up doing what was appropriate and healing for our own lives, and in the process had helped each other concretize that struggle and subsequent integration. During phase three I just lay quietly, filled with a sense of peace and inner strength that was reinforced by knowing that we both had benefited through our mutual assistance.

After the journey ended, Franco told us to find another partner. We were to face this person while sitting on the floor and then without saying a word, take turns letting our bodies tell the story of our previous battle and its conclusion. My new partner and I seemed to feel comfortable doing that with great expression. When Franco later told us we could then talk about it, the two of us discovered we had understood much of the other's story. Even though Franco had earlier said that words often obscure deeper meanings, this young woman and I had benefited from hearing each other's verbal reflections on our nonverbal expressions.

We ended that session with another holding of hands in the circle and sharing the

group energy for all. It was 1:15 p.m. - time for lunch. We took an hour, with many of us eating outside in the garden, since the day was sunny and warm.

The afternoon session began with Franco telling us about Taurus energy, which he said was about seeking pleasure and whatever it wanted or needed to bring about its desired end result. We were then instructed to lie down for our next journey and undertake the same three-fold process to gather what we needed for bringing about our intention. That was appealing after having spent the morning in 'battle'. However, shortly after the drumming began and the first phase was ending, I must have moved either into sleep or into a very deep trance state in which I no longer heard Franco's voice giving directions. Only as he was guiding us in the integration phase did I begin to hear him again. As a result, I missed the intended essence of the journey. I was also very tired and must have needed some kind of rest. Afterwards, we sat in the circle and were invited to take turns holding the sphere and sharing through movement or sound what happened. That suited me, because I wouldn't have been able to verbalize much. I do not remember if I made a sound or just held the sphere in front of me.

The last segment of the workshop and of the afternoon was designed to focus on Gemini, though Franco used a significant amount of time explaining his work and how it came about. That fit, because Gemini, according to Franco, is the great sharer of information needed to support making dreams come true. By the time we began our last journey, Franco himself appeared a bit tired. I also think he realized that participants probably didn't have the energy to take in much more. When the drumming began, I journeyed to my allies and basically thanked them for their help during the workshop. I don't remember what we else we were to do on the journey, though I assume we were to ask for any additional information we might need to further our acknowledged intention. When the journey ended, we sat in circle a final time, passed around the sphere in a counterclockwise direction, and made a final statement about what the workshop experiences had revealed to us. My response was one of gratitude. We then held hands one final time in the circle, sharing group energy, and saying good-bye. Franco asked those who were not on his

mailing list, but would like to be, to sign a paper he put out in a prominent position on the floor. Individuals said their good-byes to Franco and to each other and then left.

During the lunch break on Saturday, Franco had come up to me and asked about my studies. In the course of the conversation, after explaining that I was looking at contemporary shamanism in Scotland, I told him Cláudia had suggested he might be one I could talk with about his shamanic work. I then asked if he would mind my contacting him to discuss the possibilities of interviewing him as part of my Ph.D. research. He responded by saying he would be honored to be included and was happy to be part of anything that furthered 'the work' and built bridges of understanding. We agreed that I would contact him in May or June to arrange a late June visit with him at his home with the Findhorn Foundation Community in Forres.

#### **5.4.3 Preparing for Findhorn**

In May of 2003 I checked Findhorn's web site and re-read the brochure Franco had given me describing the weeklong astroshamanism workshop he planned to conduct at Findhorn toward the end of June. Both sources stated that it would be facilitated by 'Franco Santoro and Faculty' and called it

A workshop and retreat which offers practical tools and experiential understanding for journeying into shamanic dimensions beyond conventional time and space. The purpose is that of exploring archaic roots and original lineages, connecting with significant past lives or planetary memories, releasing grievances, discovering potentials and bringing healing in our current life and environment. Cluny Hill College and its natural territory will be used as a geomantic Sacred Circle to inspire and ground our experiences. The programme includes soul retrieval, past life regressions, shamanic time voyages and trance dances, and a basic vision quest and rite of passage (Quiure Saike). An astrological map will be drawn and journeyed for each participant. This workshop is also a shamanic celebration of the Summer Solstice and the South Gate (Santoro, 2003)(Findhorn, 2004).

That seemed a rather ambitious agenda, but one that contained the opportunity for new experiences and for participation in numerous shamanic elements with which I already had some familiarity. It occurred to me that attending the workshop would give me not only a

more extensive chance to observe and understand Franco and his work prior to our interview, but it would also allow me to observe and interview other people who would be there as participants. When I e-mailed Franco to ask about my potential involvement, he responded favorably and even supported me in receiving a bursary from the Findhorn Foundation to assist with some of my fees. It was then settled that I would be a participant observer at the June workshop. During that time I would interview as many participants as I could, and once the workshop had ended, I would conclude by interviewing Franco. As part of my preparation, I was to send Franco some birth information needed for my astrological chart.

The Findhorn Foundation, which sponsored and hosted Franco's June workshop on Astroshamanism, started in 1962 and by its own description grew into the

centre of one of the best-known intentional communities in the world. Its main focus continues to be on education, community and environment, demonstrating the links between the spiritual, social and environmental aspects of life (Findhorn, 2003).

Though it began in a caravan park, Findhorn developed into a foundation that is a registered charity in Scotland and an NGO associated with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations. Based on research about Findhorn conducted in the 1990s, Sutcliffe wrote that Findhorn

is a substantial settlement of spiritual 'seekers' (Sutcliffe, 1997) on the north-east coast of Scotland, which since 1962 has hosted three generations of religious individualists engaged in the exploration of alternative spiritualities, psycho-physical therapies, craftwork and gardening (Sutcliffe, 2000).

Though an in-depth analysis of The Findhorn Foundation Community, 'New Age' spiritualities, and the concept of 'spiritual seeker' is not the overt purpose of this thesis, Sutcliffe's work provides a valuable contribution to understanding these issues, which relate closely to my own work.

#### **5.4.4 Arriving and Settling-in at Findhorn**

Grateful for Findhorn generosity, I arrived by train in Forres shortly before noon and was

met by a middle-aged woman who was standing near a Findhorn Foundation Community van and would take me to Cluny Hill College in Forres, where the workshop was being held. During the ride to Cluny Hill, she explained that the Findhorn Foundation Community was 'like a living organism' in the way it was organized. The original site was called The Park and was located about five miles outside of Forres near the sea. At some point the Findhorn Foundation had also purchased the Cluny Hill Hotel, which they then converted into Cluny Hill College. Some of the community members live at the College, but most of that space is for visitors who come for Foundation workshops. Also considered part of the Findhorn Foundation Community are those people who live in the surrounding areas, not at The Park or Cluny Hill, but who still participate in community activities and initiatives.

When I asked about her involvement, she said she had moved to Findhorn from Germany eleven years ago after having heard the story of the place and feeling what she described as a 'heart call'. She's lived at The Park for the entire eleven years and has helped with a variety of community duties, including driving the van. Some of the other duties are cleaning, cooking, gardening, and administrative work.

Once at Cluny Hill College, I was directed upstairs, where I met Katharina, another Findhorn Foundation Community member who had moved there from Germany. She welcomed me and said she would be Franco's shamanic assistant during the week, especially regarding administrative matters. Then she took me and a couple of other participants to our rooms, pointing out along the way an area for coffee or tea, a lounge or parlour, a computer room for internet access and e-mail (five pounds for the week), and the meeting rooms.

I shared a room on the first floor with three other women who were there for the workshop. One was a forty-eight-year-old woman whose family had moved from Scotland to New Zealand when she was nine. Another woman, in her late twenties or early thirties, was from Italy. She had been staying at Findhorn Foundation Community for several months and was trying to decide whether she would continue at Findhorn or return home to

Italy. For most of the week, another middle-aged woman, who lived at The Park as part of the community, joined us, instead of traveling back and forth each day.

Before the workshop actually began, I met two other participants, Susan and another woman, who were both in their forties, and we began to learn about each other. Both of them had Christian backgrounds as children and younger adults, and they'd also been quite actively involved in their churches. Susan had taught Sunday School for years in New Zealand, and the other woman had been part of an evangelical community in Colorado, USA. At some point each of them began to experience religion as a block to their unfolding, growing spiritual development. Both had strong feelings about how stifling the rules and dogmas could be, especially when those rules and dogmas become ends in themselves, rather than tools to aid and support spiritual growth.

#### **5.4.5 Weeklong Astroshamanism Workshop**

The workshop began on Saturday, June 21, 2003, at 2 p.m. in the ballroom, which is a large open square room with many big windows that provide a view of the beautiful trees and surrounding landscape. As we entered, we were invited to take one of many large floor pillows that we could use for sitting in a circle on the polished wooden floor. Franco began by welcoming all of us and asking for a minute of silence. When the minute ended, we saw that he was holding a small sphere, which he explained would be used as a kind of 'talking stick'. This appeared to be the same sphere he had used during the Edinburgh shamanic workshop I had attended in April. As he had said in Edinburgh, he now explained that he would pass the sphere around the circle clockwise. As each of us received it, we were to state our name and where we were from. Including the two facilitators, Franco and Katharina, there were twenty-one people, and they came from such places as Holland, Italy, Scotland, England, the USA, New Zealand, Germany, and Sweden. They ranged in age from one woman in her early twenties to two in their early sixties. Most of them were about evenly divided among thirties, forties, and fifties. In addition to Franco, there were only two

other men.

When the sphere came to me, I explained to the group not only that I was there as a participant who had some background and experience in shamanic practice, but also that contemporary shamanism in Scotland was the subject of my Ph.D. research. I told them I would be taking notes about the workshop process, interviewing Franco after the workshop, and asking for interviews with any of them who might be willing to talk with me at mutually-chosen times available outside the workshop sessions. Most people seemed open and accepting of that. In fact, as the week progressed, I spent most of my 'free' time talking with people, and there still was not be enough time to interview all who had volunteered.

Franco then talked briefly about how language is not always adequate for expressing experiences and how belief systems are filters for those experiences. He described how our meeting room, the Cluny Hill territory (land surrounding Cluny Hill), and the astrological charts he would be giving us were all containers for the experiences we would be having during the week. We were encouraged to use the entire environment as part of the workshop. He then explained how later on we would be taking a walking tour of the grounds not only to familiarize ourselves with the area, but to 'physically activate' the energy of the place in order for that space to work in partnership with us by containing and supporting our shamanic experiences. Furthermore, throughout the week we would be spending time outside and holding various rituals there. He also acknowledged that today was the summer solstice and that we would honor that occurrence in the evening.

Franco went on to say his basic assumption is that everything is connected, and there is no separation. For him, shamanism heals the illusion of separation through the direct experience of unity - a view that appears to contradict the prevalent world belief system of separation. Drawing upon what he said were scientific studies that reveal how physical bodies are 99% space, he explained that for him, those empty spaces hold the key to shifting our perceptions and beliefs about separation and unity. His perception of this unity had prompted him to actively help others consider this unifying perspective. In light of

this, he told us how within shamanism all times - what we would call past, present, and future - exist at once. This viewpoint is one I had heard before in other shamanic circles, though it had not been expressed in exactly the same manner. It helped me begin to understand Franco's shamanic perspective more fully.

What followed was an explanation of the group guidelines. We were to pay attention - listening silently, without interruption, when another person was sharing; use 'I' statement when speaking, refrain from giving feedback or having a debate about someone else's experiential sharing; use the break times to approach someone and ask if he or she would be willing to talk more about what was said earlier in the group; come back from the shamanic journeys when asked to do so; deal with conflicts outside the group meeting; extinguish the central candle if the last to leave the room; and not play loud music or make noise from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m.

What Franco had done was fairly standard group facilitation. He had welcomed everyone; encouraged them to gather their thoughts; facilitated introductions by using an object that helped make clear whose turn it was to speak and when that speaking role changed; explained the purpose of the workshop, types of activities to anticipate, and the physical layout of the areas that would be accessed during the week; and had ended by addressing internal group guidelines and external expectations for living cooperatively within the Findhorn Community at Cluny Hill. He had also set the tone by presenting his overall paradigm of shamanism and its role in the world.

We were then invited to do a brief shamanic journey - one in which we acknowledged where we had been and what our energy had been like not only during the previous twenty-four hours, but from the time we had chosen to come to the workshop. Franco asked us to find a comfortable position; then he did a five-minute meditation about the season of summer, followed by drumming designed to help us take a shamanic journey. Afterwards, as we sat in the circle, he passed around the 'talking stick' sphere for sharing experiences from the journey and the intentions we had brought for both the journey and the

entire week. Holding the sphere, each person could either speak or wait for a moment in silence before passing it on the next one. After the sharing, we took a fifteen-minute break.

Though Franco had called this experience a shamanic journey, again he had not explained what a journey was, nor had he shared any methodology about how to 'take a shamanic journey'. It seemed more like a guided meditation followed by a period of personal reflection that was accompanied by drumming. However, regardless of method, the end result was that participants did clarify their intentions and were able to share them with the group. This was followed by a second journey, which we did to the accompaniment of Franco's drumming. The purpose of that journey appeared to be to open up to different perceptions about the intent we had brought for the week. When the journey ended, we wrote down what we had experienced, but we did not share within the group.

At that point Franco told us that all visitors at Findhorn workshops are asked to help with some of the household duties. In our case, we would each have one meal during the week in which we would be with a team of people who would prepare the dining room, assist with final meal preparations, help with serving the food, and clean up afterwards. We then adjourned for dinner and to check the charts that listed our time for helping in the dining room.

#### **5.4.6 Highlighting the Rest of the Workshop**

The rest of the week was filled with rituals, shamanic journeys, teachings about shamanism and astrology, experiential exercises, music, dance, and other expressive arts processes too numerous to include without detracting from the main purpose of this field research. The overall framework for the week included identifying individual life intentions; accessing and enlisting the help of spiritual allies and energies associated with various aspects of the zodiac; experiencing and utilizing the Cluny Hill grounds as reflective of astrological energies available to help us grow in wholeness; reflecting on and healing from life memories that may be current barriers to personal and spiritual growth; and celebrating

moments of healing, friendship, and unity. Throughout the week each particular journey, ritual, or experiential exercise was generally structured by setting our specific intentions; connecting with spiritual allies; releasing whatever needed to be released; asking for and accepting gifts that we were ready to receive; sharing with the group what we were willing to share of our experiences; and utilizing various tools to help us integrate all that had just happened.

As the week progressed, I participated fully in workshop events. Because my own familiarity with shamanic methods allowed me to experience a great deal - much of which I shared with the group at appropriate times, many participants seemed to recognize my sincerity and my respect for what was happening. That recognition, along with Franco's clear support for my presence, helped create an atmosphere of trust that apparently made it safe for a number of people to talk with me as part of my field research interviews with individuals and small ad hoc groups during breaks. Most of the interviews took place during afternoon or evening breaks on the last three or four days of the workshop. By intention, Franco's interview, held on the morning after the workshop ended, was the last one scheduled.

#### **5.4.7 Follow-Up**

After the workshop I contacted those I had interviewed to see how they were doing and to ask for feedback that would assure my account of their interview accurately reflected what they had intended to say. They all seemed pleased to hear from me and generally satisfied with what I had written. In a few cases, they supplied me with minor modifications, which I gratefully accepted. Nanna, Heleen, and Tessa, three of the women I had interviewed, told me they had continued to train with Franco; Jonathan said he had embarked on more in-depth study of astrology, rather than continue with shamanic training; and Susan explained that she had allowed the astroshamanism experiences to help her make major positive changes in her life when she returned home - even though she currently was not actively

pursuing shamanic training as such. Franco keeps me on his e-mail list and has expanded his workshop offerings beyond what they were in 2003. Not only does he do individual shamanic work with people, but also he conducts some workshops at Findhorn and others in countries such as Germany, Italy, South Africa, Spain, Ireland, and The Netherlands. Throughout all this, he still provides periodic workshops at The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre and The Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh.

## **5.5 Lendrick Lodge**

### **5.5.1 Meeting Stephen Mulhearn**

During my time talking with people at the Edinburgh Shamanic Centre, Lendrick Lodge surfaced periodically as a good place for shamanic study and experience. Told the Lodge had a web site, I checked it initially and found material about firewalking opportunities, but very little describing shamanic training. As a result, I delayed further exploration. However, after hearing about the Lodge again in early spring of 2004, I re-visited its web site and discovered the posting of a very comprehensive program of shamanic training. Based on that, I decided to contact Stephen Mulhearn, co-owner of Lendrick Lodge, and ask if I could come visit him and perhaps include what I would learn from him in my research. During our telephone conversation I also explained who I was, some of my own shamanic background, and what I was studying at the University. He readily agreed to meet with me, and we set a date for early June of 2004.

I took a morning bus from Edinburgh to Callander and a taxi from Callander to Lendrick Lodge, which is situated near Brig O' Turk in The Trossachs of Scotland and described in their materials as one of many scenic locations in the country. The Lendrick Lodge web site says it is a 'residential spiritual centre, nestled in remote wilderness amidst the hills, lochs, forests and natural beauty of the Scottish Trossachs' near what is often called the 'doorway to the highlands' (Lendrick, 2004c). Its vision is to 'create a safe space for healing, empowerment and the guidance to awaken your inner spirit' (Lendrick, 2004a).

Experiences available at Lendrick Lodge include attending courses, accessing holistic treatments and therapies, undertaking a private retreat, and using the space for a private group. It is the UK centre for The Sundoor International Firewalking School and the home of a school of shamanic training called The Spirit of Shamanism (Lendrick, 2004b).

The Lodge itself has a large living room with big windows, a spacious kitchen next to a large dining room, and several group rooms ranging in size from small to large. Designed to accommodate various numbers of people, it contains sleeping arrangements that range from single to double and triple rooms. Outside there is a labyrinth, a sweat lodge, an area for firewalking, paths winding through the land and near a stream, and many beautiful flowers and trees. Upon my arrival, a staff member welcomed me warmly and took me to the living room, where I waited until Stephen joined me.

Born near Glasgow, Stephen told me about many of the life experiences - in Scotland and in other parts of the world - that eventually prompted him to buy Lendrick Lodge in January of 2001. It had previously been a hunting lodge, a youth hostel, a yoga centre, and a holistic centre. When Stephen and his wife Victoria purchased the Lodge, they expanded its scope by establishing it as a residential holistic centre offering personal growth, healing, empowerment, retreat opportunities, and the program of shamanic training. They are the owners, but associated with the Lodge is The Lendrick Trust, a charitable trust set up to support individuals who would like to participate in centre activities, but are restricted by finances or in other ways; the Trust is also designed to promote public education about holistic principles and practices.

Stephen said he designed his shamanic program with the input of several shamans from North and South America - focusing especially on training those who see their shamanic work as a lifelong path. As part of a long-term case study, he does follow-up work with the people he trains by asking for reports about what they do in their shamanic practice. He said he tries to help these people develop the gifts they already have, but occasionally he finds people whose gifts he thinks are better utilized in areas other than shamanic

practice.

### **5.5.2 Talking with the Staff**

After interviewing Stephen, I explored the grounds and was then invited to stay for lunch. No groups were using the Lodge that day, which meant I was able to talk casually with the staff during and after our lunch of homemade soup and fresh bread in the kitchen. Staff members seemed quite willing to tell me about their own involvement and experience with Lendrick Lodge.

The gardener was from Fife and had come to Lendrick Lodge fortnightly to tend to the grounds. In reference to the labyrinth built on the property, he said he was aware of it and of other spiritual work going on in Fife. One with the most longevity and firsthand knowledge of Lendrick Lodge was a woman who now helps clean the Lodge, but has been working there, whether as a volunteer or as paid staff, for fourteen or fifteen years. All that time she has lived in nearby Callander and watched the facility evolve through its various forms until Stephen and Victoria purchased it. She talked about how she has become friends with many who frequent the Lodge, enjoyed the good environment it supports, and participated in yoga and firewalking activities, but not the shamanic training.

The chef, in his mid-to-late twenties, had lived in Glasgow, where he had attended 'cooking school' before taking time out to travel around Scotland. After returning to Glasgow and starting work as a cook about three years ago, he had met Stephen, who with Victoria, had been facilitating meditation classes in Glasgow at the time. Eventually he started working at a whole foods shop, where he met Stephen again. The result of that was his being hired to work as a chef at the Lodge. He explained that they buy whole foods from Tesco and other produce from the Farmers' Market. Thorn, the office administrator, had been at the Lodge for almost a year and had only recently begun to learn about shamanism. From that exposure, he said he thought most spiritual paths contained some shamanic elements.

I left late afternoon to return to Edinburgh - wishing that I had found a way to participate in one of Stephen's shamanic workshops or experiences. A Peruvian shaman was coming to Lendrick Lodge for one week in late June, but the workshop was already full. In August a two-week firewalking course that centred on Initiation, Certification and Spiritual Leadership was scheduled. Though it had shamanic elements, the time would not be focused directly on shamanism or shamanic training. As a result, I chose not to participate.

### **5.5.3 Partial Participant Observation**

However, in October of 2004, in response to a request from students to learn about shamanism, the University of Edinburgh Chaplaincy sponsored a daylong experiential workshop at Lendrick Lodge, which I facilitated. We used a group room for teaching, drumming, and shamanic journeying, and we incorporated activities such as walking the outdoor labyrinth and exploring the land into the shamanic learning throughout the day. The fee we paid included use of the room, access to the grounds, and a vegetarian lunch provided by the chef, who had changed by that time. Not only did I find the entire atmosphere conducive to facilitating the workshop, but also participants gave us positive feedback and said they would enjoy a return visit. Also using the Lodge that day, though staying for the entire weekend, was a group attending a yoga workshop. That group and ours were together for the noon meal, and that gave some limited time for individual cross-group conversations.

### **5.5.4 Follow-Up**

On the day I initially visited Lendrick Lodge, I joined as a member who supports the work of the Lodge. Based on that, I have received regular newsletters and mailings that have kept me informed about the centre's activities and offerings. In the autumn I also sent Stephen a copy of what I had written about his interview with me. He responded by saying that he could expand on a few points and make a few minor corrections or adjustments to make

everything clearer. It took us several months to finally find a mutually-compatible time to address those issues, but we did it. In late December I was invited to join Stephen, Victoria, and a small group of people for a Christmas/Solstice gathering at the Lodge. That was something I would have enjoyed doing, but the bus schedules had changed, and transport to and from Lendrick made the trip unworkable for me.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

Of the three intentional shamanic communities included in this research, Findhorn Foundation Community is the one that has been established for the longest time. Its support for Franco and his work is significant and enables him to have more flexibility in traveling beyond Findhorn to do his shamanic work. He is also older and more experienced in shamanic ways than are the other practitioners. However, because he does travel more and draws people from various parts of the world, developing a sense of community over time with participants at his workshops is probably quite challenging.

Those at The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre have created a fairly solid foundation for their work and seem to attract people who are willing to volunteer as a way of supporting what they do. They are younger and less experienced not only at doing shamanic work with individuals, but also with groups. However, they have succeeded so far in surviving a steep learning curve that has included learning the ways of business ownership and determining how to work with other practitioners. They continue to face the challenges and figure out creative ways to manage the finances and work with diverse practitioners. Unlike an established intentional spiritual community like Findhorn, The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre is located in an urban setting and is nonresidential. Claudia and Mark's understanding of community, its role and importance in shamanic practice, and their perceptions about how communities form and grow will probably remain an ongoing learning process for some time.

Lendrick Lodge is another kind of community that is actually the home of a married

couple with a small baby. The staff members who live there have more flexibility to move as their lives change, and they are not the ones responsible for paying the bills. Being in the country, Lendrick is the most secluded. All of this makes the challenge of building community a bit different. Community at Lendrick Lodge is more like an extension of family and friends who come to visit on a regular basis - sometimes staying for days and weeks at a time.

People who are part of all three intentional shamanic communities form a very multicultural network. Furthermore, most of them know each other. Among the practitioners, Stephen at Lendrick Lodge is the one who invited Franco to do a shamanic workshop; and it was at that workshop that Cláudia and Mark discovered how many of their own spiritual experiences had actually been of a shamanic nature. Their time with Franco at Lendrick turned out to be some of the initiatory experiences that profoundly opened them up to the path they now follow with deep commitment.

## **CHAPTER SIX: FIELD RESEARCH RELATED TO ELEMENTS OF SHAMANISM**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter Five has addressed the initial purpose of this research project, which was to study a limited number of contemporary shamanic practitioners and their 'communities' in Scotland. This has been accomplished by providing the contexts of my work with these particular people and by including sufficient accounts of my participant observation experiences to enable a fuller and clearer understanding of how the people I worked with operate and how we interacted. Appendix III illustrates this fieldwork process by providing two examples of the original interview, follow-up consultation regarding accuracy, and amendments made. This chapter turns to the next research purpose - that of determining a possible correlation between what I discovered in that field work and those elements identified in the model of cross-cultural shamanism that is described near the end of Chapter Two. It begins with a brief review of the shamanic elements and a list of the questions posed in order to determine a possible correlation. Next come the participants' own verbal descriptions of what they call shamanism and how they first heard about it. This information sets the tone for their other responses - organized not as answers to the specific questions asked, but as information provided under the headings of each of the seven elements in the model of cross-cultural shamanism. The chapter ends with a few observations and themes that are incorporated in an analysis of this data in Chapter Eight.

### **6.2 Overview of Cross-Cultural Shamanic Model**

#### **6.2.1 Elements of Shamanism**

Chapter Two ends with a diagram of the Model of Cross-Cultural Shamanism, though the sections preceding that diagram describe each of the elements in detail. As a brief reminder, those elements include: vocation and initiation; cosmology; soul flight/journeying; consciousness; spiritual allies; soul healing; and community support.

### **6.2.2 Interview Questions**

Because the interviews had to support exploration of the research purpose related to shamanism, each question arose out of an element or elements in the model of cross-cultural shamanism. Below are the questions that guided the shamanic portion of the interviews:

1. What is your understanding of shamanism?
2. When did you first hear about shamanism?
3. What made you decide to learn about or practice shamanically?
4. Have you had what you would call an initiation experience or experiences? If so, please describe what you are willing to share.
5. How do you experience your spiritual helpers, or allies? What are they like? How do you work with them?
6. Have you had experience with shamanic healing? If so, what was it like? Please describe.
7. What helps you enter a state of consciousness that facilitates shamanic journeying or work?
8. How does community fit into your experience of shamanism? Or does it?
9. What does nonordinary reality look like to you? Do you experience travelling to upper and lower realms?

What follows is a presentation of the field research - first by definition and initial exposure to shamanism and then by category from the cross-cultural model.

### **6.3 Shamanism Defined and First Discovered**

As a way of opening discussion, creating trust, and understanding the overall perspectives of those who talked with me, I began the interviews by asking the first three questions listed above. The responses I received are listed below, starting with the six shamanic practitioners and then moving to six of the community members who were just beginning to learn about shamanism through workshops, reading, and/or volunteering at a shamanic centre.

### **6.3.1 Franco Santoro, Age 45 in 2003 - Shamanic Practitioner**

Franco considers shamanism to be an ancient and widespread spiritual method or system of healing - one in which shamans, who are familiar with states of consciousness that enable communication and collaboration with spirit guides in the exploration of the spiritual dimension of reality, help themselves, their communities, and their planet achieve a direct and experiential sense of the unity and interconnectedness of all life. He defines astroshamanism as 'a spiritual system of healing aimed at enlarging human perception through the integration of the basic principles of shamanism with experiential astrology, the ancient Mystery Religions, pagan and early Christian traditions in the context of contemporary society.' The basic intent of astroshamanism is 'to foster the process of release of grievances and reawakening of our original memories through a direct relationship with multi-dimensional realities.' In this way, astrology is used as a tool for the shamanic exploration of the unseen empty spaces in life that when discovered, reveal interconnectedness, rather than perpetuate a perception of separateness. In effect, shamanism for Franco, especially astroshamanism, offers an alternative to the prevalent world belief system of separation by revealing a sacred way of receiving information about the original and continued unity of the world - one which helps people come to know their multidimensional selves in a very practical way. Specifically, the astrological context provides clear access to the hidden energy of the zodiacal signs and planets, enabling them to be felt in the body, emotions, mind and spirit.

Franco didn't hear about shamanism *per se* until 1981, when he was an adult who was very consciously pursuing a spiritual path, seeking initiation from a guru, and asking for a vision 'at all costs'. At that point, significant visions from his childhood in Italy were reawakened, and he was told his life's purpose. During the next three years of spiritual training, he received many teachings and retrieved other memories - some quite painful. Throughout this he had access to animal guides as spiritual allies; they were particularly helpful, because these powerful teachings were very real to him, but they were not necessarily acknowledged by society. He realized these experiences were shamanic in

some way. That is when Franco started reading shamanic books. Around this time is also when he received the Sacred Cone wisdom, a Sumerian and Mediterranean approach to inclusion and wholeness, rather than exclusion and separation, which he has come to integrate into his shamanic practice.

### **6.3.2 Stephen Mulhearn, Age 38 in 2003 - Shamanic Practitioner**

Stephen created *The Spirit of Shamanism* training program, in which he identified key elements that 'have assisted the shaman throughout history'. Those elements include: journeying and facilitating healing; connecting with the Spirit of Nature; transmitting the information; working with the Spirit of Fire; and doing the work on yourself (Lendrick, 2004b: 1)(Lendrick 2004b). However, when I asked his understanding of shamanism, he laughed and said shamans are 'glorified donkeys with (spiritual) allies' - people whose intention is to serve others by allowing Spirit to work within. He further explained that his use of the word 'donkey' harkened to the story of an Apache shaman who described his healing work as 'traveling over the mountain to bring back healing for the people.' His humorous response actually reflects a deep commitment to the personal development he perceives is necessary for anyone following a shamanic path of partnership with Spirit in healing service to others.

Born near Glasgow, Stephen started having pre-cognitive dreams as a teen, though he was not trained well enough to know how to work with them. Lacking the necessary tools for understanding, Stephen struggled with those experiences, but he did not stop seeking opportunities that helped him learn to honor his inner intuitive callings. Eventually he discovered ways to establish contact with indigenous people from various cultures - a foreshadowing of future experiences for him. Stephen attended a program by motivational speaker and workshop leader Anthony Robbins, which he found very helpful, but it did not provide the next level of depth he sought. He also explored Buddhism and researched various forms of meditation. At some point he met a man named Mo, who without knowing Stephen well, told him to find 'the mother of fire'. Though Stephen didn't understand what that meant, it wasn't long afterwards that he met Peggy Dylan, who had founded the fire

walking movement in the West. Many of these experiences exposed him to elements of shamanism.

### **6.3.3 Cláudia Gonçalves, Age 33 in 2003 - Shamanic Practitioner**

Cláudia said shamanism was home, her culture, living in communion with spirits and sharing her gifts and medicine with others. For her, these gifts include healing, accessing spiritual insight, and teaching others about the shamanic way.

Though the word shamanism may not have been used, Cláudia grew up in a Brazilian culture that was shamanic. She told me her neighbor lady was a medicine woman, or healer - also called a *curandera*, and there were many spiritual centres in the city where she lived. According to Cláudia, Brazil was then and continues now to reflect the spirituality of the native indigenous people, African spiritual traditions that came with African slaves, European Catholics, and Allan Kardec from France. She said that the African and indigenous traditions clearly incorporate the understanding and practice of partnering with spiritual guides when doing spiritual work. Furthermore, that process of incorporating a spirit guide is understood as long and arduous, usually taking years of study and practice to become familiar and at ease with it. Cláudia remembers how at age thirteen she started going to a spiritual centre with her neighbor, the medicine woman, for a period of approximately two years to learn the traditional spirituality. Within the teachings was learning how to incorporate one's spirit guide. However, as with many teenagers, she decided at the time that she did not want to continue that path. It was not until three years ago (from this interview), when she participated in a weeklong shamanic experience in Scotland, that she understood working with spirits in a way she could begin to integrate.

That shamanic experience in Scotland opened her up to information about her life both past and present; it also marked the beginning of recognizing a focused call to begin shamanic training and work. Cláudia began offering shamanic healing at Golden Bookstore in Edinburgh and at various healing fairs held periodically throughout Scotland. Most of her work was as an individual practitioner working with individual clients, but in 2003 she also

started offering monthly trance dance and shamanic journey gatherings for groups. Eventually she and Mark co-founded The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre in Portobello.

#### **6.3.4 Mark Halliday, Age 34 in 2003 - Shamanic Practitioner**

Mark said shamanism is communion with all life. It involves a journey to the spirit realms, working with spiritual allies to return a lost soul part or to do some other healing for someone.

Though Mark didn't actually start reading about shamanism until his late teen years, he began having 'other worldly' kinds of experiences as a young boy growing up in Methil, a coal-mining community in Fife. At an early age he said he could see auras and heal animals by hugging them. When he was four, his maternal grandmother, who had recognized his inner gifts, gave him a tepee, some Native American style clothes, and an African drum - sharing with him stories about the culture of the Native North Amerindian people. He says he had a happy, joyful childhood and was brought up a Church of Scotland Christian. At about six or seven years of age, Mark began to sense that he had been a magician in another life, and he started seeing faces, which he learned later, through his study of American literature in his early twenties, were the faces of George Washington, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson. When he was eight years old he heard an inner voice tell him in a whisper that he could beat the devil within through peace, because 'Peace is the way.' From about five to twelve years of age, he developed an interest in the supernatural, especially in vampires, ghosts, and reincarnation. His grandmother, to whom he was very close, and with whom he lived for a while, was killed by a drunk driver when he was ten. He said he felt her presence when she died, but as he went on to secondary school, that stopped, and he had few spiritual experiences. At fifteen he began studying karate, the I-Ching, and Taoist philosophy on his own. He also left school and entered what he called the 'great flow of life'. When he was about seventeen or eighteen years old, he began to feel the very powerful presence of a wolf - to the point that he not only dreamed he was the essence of wolf, but he also tried several times to shape shift into a wolf or a

werewolf.

From eighteen to twenty-two Mark experienced periods of depression that included suicidal tendencies and self-harm, though he knew he could not harm another. It was as if an energy was burning within him, and he did not know how to direct it other than to hurt himself. During these years he was drawn to the writing of William Blake and to the music of The Doors with Jim Morrison and of Nick Cave, an Australian blues artist and novelist. He also learned that Jim Morrison believed himself to be a shaman. As a result of these experiences, Mark decided to read and study what he could about shamanism, especially Native American shamanism. After much self-learning, at twenty-three, he entered the University of Dundee to study English. While there he participated in seances, used the Ouija board, and discovered he intuitively knew the birthdays of other people. Once while drawing in an art class at college, he said he felt ecstatic as he completed a picture of Christ. All of these experiences prompted him to include soul, god, and more shamanism in his studies.

### **6.3.5 Alistair Bate, in his Thirties - Shamanic Practitioner**

Alistair's understanding of shamanism is found in the context of his Druidic practice, which is discussed in Chapter Seven. When he works with spiritual allies in his own spiritual practice, but especially on behalf of others - using ritual, sound, and journeying for divination and healing, he considers that shamanic. To him, shamanism is one of the four pagan denominations that also include Druidry, Wicca, and the Northern Traditions of Norse and Anglo-Saxon. Alistair said all of these denominations contain shamanic elements: guided visualisation, similar to journeying, within the Druid Ovates; pathworking within Wicca; and working with runes to connect with trees as spiritual entities in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. For further reference, he suggested books such as Ronald Hutton's books *Witches, Druids and King Arthur* (Hutton, 2003) and *The Triumph of the Moon* (Hutton, 1999) and Brian Bates' book *The Way of Wyr*d (Bates, 1999).

Alistair said he started opening up to a shamanic connection in 1999, when he

became aware of the Edinburgh High Street shops called Golden and Wildwood, which have supported alternative spiritualities for a number of years. At that time he also learned about an Edinburgh esoteric Christian group that was open to druidic and shamanic worldviews. It was then that he began a correspondence course to gain a more in-depth understanding of the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids, with its shamanic dimension.

When he joined the Ovate grade of Druids, Alistair's tutor was a man who incorporated shamanic healing in his work with the dying. Being exposed to a shamanic aspect, which included learning to journey, helped Alistair change from what he described as a fairly rigid, magical, liturgical Druidic style to a more flexible approach that aimed to balance the individual with the collective order. To Alistair, the shamanic approach helped him 'loosen up' in his work and encouraged him to celebrate diversity in ways he had not done previously. Within the next year he met Cláudia Gonçalves, who was providing shamanic healing sessions at Golden, a shop where Alistair eventually began working himself. Also at the shop he met Preben Eagle Heart, who provided shamanic readings based on Native American shamanic spiritual practice. Alistair has worked with Preben fortnightly for over a year now doing mutual shamanic drum journeys. Around the time he met Preben, he also attended a shamanic class taught by John Matthews from Oxford; in 2003 he began more formal and on-going shamanic training with John and Caitlin Matthews.

#### **6.3.6 Preben Eagle Heart Olsen, Age 33 in 2003 - Shamanic Practitioner**

Preben does not like the word shamanism, in great part because it does not adequately convey what that term means. To Preben, shamanism is 'medicine' work, or work that provides healing (medicine) for the soul. Though multi-dimensional and holistic, it remains simplistic and calls for shamans, or 'medicine people', to work with spirits of nature and others in the spirit realms to move without judgment beyond ego and the polarities of good and bad, yin and yang, holy woman and holy man, and the reality of different ways to a global 'bigger picture' of life - one that encompasses many paths toward healing and

oneness.

Born and raised in Denmark, Preben described numerous experiences of spiritual awakening, training, and growth from the time he was small. However, he first heard of shamanism in his twenties, when twenty Lakota Native Americans visited Denmark for a week of sharing their teachings, culture, and spiritual practices, including a powwow and sweat lodge. Preben felt a particularly strong impact from his experience of lying on the earth during the sweat lodge. It reminded him of when he was a child, because it brought back memories of visionary, or precognitive, dreams; telepathic knowledge about others, along with insights into what he said were past lives, including some as a Native American medicine person; and trance-like experiences of being visited by beings who lived beyond the earth in other parts of the universe. Preben realized that much of the spiritual work he had been doing all his life was essentially shamanic. From age nine he had started working with spirits who have continued providing him with much guidance and 'spiritual schooling'.

Contact with these Native Americans and the return of his childhood memories helped Preben re-frame much of his work and understand it in more of a shamanic context. He continued meeting with Ben Black Bear, his family, and other Native Americans who were in Denmark to share information about the importance of the bison for Native people. Preben began learning drumming and rattling techniques, shamanic journeys, the spiritual significance of the four cardinal directions, and how to conduct spiritual ceremonies. Sometime later, as a way of saving buffalo from extinction, a Lakota buffalo was flown to Denmark to live in the safari park where Preben was working as a zookeeper. Around that time Preben also heard that Lakota Archie Fire Lame Deer had come to Denmark to share information about the recent birth in the USA of the first white buffalo, Miracle Moon, and about the spiritual significance of that birth. Preben traveled for a short time to Ireland, but then moved to Edinburgh, Scotland. There he did healing work at the Flotarium in Stockbridge, and for a couple of years lived in residence at The Salisbury Centre, the holistic education centre described in section two of this chapter. During that time Preben traveled to Wales, where he met with Lakota Medicine Man Wallace Black Elk, who was

visiting there. While participating with Wallace in a sweat lodge ceremony, Preben not only observed Wallace doing what Preben had been taught by the spirits, but he also asked Wallace about the Star Nations. Though Preben knew that the term Star Nations referred to beings from other parts of the universe, especially the Pleiadian star system, he learned from Wallace that the Lakota believed the Stone People came from the Star Nations early in the formation of the earth. As Wallace continued sharing stories of his people's spiritual tradition, Preben's response was to feel 'I'm home.'

### **6.3.7 Collette from Scotland, Age 28 in 2003 - Volunteer at Edinburgh Shamanic Centre**

Only in the last few years has Collette come to use the term shamanism to describe the spiritual system of healing and work with spirits that was part of her childhood. She grew up in the Highlands northeast of Inverness with parents who ran a healing centre. Her father was a healer and a medium who also used medicine cards and wheels. Clairvoyant herself, Collette felt close connections with nature and investigated angels, Reiki, and color therapy after she and her family moved to Edinburgh during her teen years.

While at the University of Edinburgh, she heard about shamanism through an indigenous religions course at New College and another course through Open Studies. That gave her a good theoretical framework for shamanism as a possible religion that involved work with spirits and rituals of varying kinds. In addition to reading about shamanism, Collette also began to explore more directly the connection between spirituality and health, especially mental health. This was relevant to her, because her own family had a history of struggling with mental illness. However, all of this reading still did not provide the experiential and cross-cultural components that she wanted to explore in order to better assimilate what she was learning. She said she knew from her own experience that Spirit was the unconscious part of everything.

### **6.3.8 Heleen from Holland, Age 60 in 2003 - Astroshamanism Workshop Participant**

When I asked Heleen what she understood shamanism to be, she said it was the connection between fire, water, earth, and the heavens - something that brightens your brain and allows you to look at life in a different way. To Heleen, that 'different way' involves moving from an objective view to *feeling* - to something more behind what the physical eyes see.

Heleen said she first heard about shamanism about two or three years earlier, when her daughter had a friend who worked as a shaman with stones, purification, and intuitive choices. When she recently checked the Findhorn web site and saw Franco's astroshamanic workshop, she knew she needed to come and 'let it happen'. This workshop has been her first experiential exposure to shamanism. She came with an openness to learn, and within the workshop has begun asking for guidance from spiritual allies.

### **6.3.9 Jonathan from England, Age 47 in 2003 - Astroshamanism Workshop Participant**

When asked about his understanding of shamanism, Jonathan said it was attuning to a level of consciousness that is always present, but separate from everyday chatter and survival. For him, shamanism stills senseless and trivial chatter and takes someone to a different world dimension where 'one can see the pattern of life differently - with great meaning and joy.'

Jonathan's first exposure to shamanism was by reading about it in books, such as those describing the philosophy of Gurdjieff. Then in April of 2003 he went to a lecture by Jose Stevens, an American shaman and psychologist, who spoke about shamanism and business. In an individual conversation with Stevens, Jonathan experienced him as a levelheaded man, who was calm and had considerable academic training. Stevens had spoken at St. James Picadilly in London. Jonathan said that St. James is a very open Christian church that organizes and provides alternatives for spiritual growth. It was at St. James that he found the information about the astroshamanism workshop at Findhorn and

later decided to participate in it.

#### **6.3.10 Susan from New Zealand, Age 47 in 2003 - Astroshamanism Workshop Participant**

Susan did not define shamanism for me, but she indicated that much of what was being taught in the astroshamanism workshop seemed familiar to her. She said she had been journeying (shamanic) since she was a child, though she did not call it a shamanic journey at the time.

Susan was born in Scotland, but her family moved to New Zealand when she was a young girl. Because she was planning to visit Scotland on holiday and wanted to participate in something related to personal and spiritual growth while here, Susan checked the Findhorn web site via the internet. When she saw the astroshamanism workshop and its dates, she decided to sign up and see what happened. She said she has always been interested in ancient traditions and has had a curiosity about what she could learn or what tools she could add to her body of knowledge. Because she and others with similar perspectives about spirituality have often felt like round pegs in square holes - on the periphery, she decided that participating in a group experience of this kind of spiritual learning would be helpful.

#### **6.3.11 Nanna from Italy and Holland, Age 51 in 2003 - Astroshamanism Workshop Participant**

Though Nanna did not define shamanism directly, when I asked her what she understood shamanism to be, she started talking about the existence of so much more than we can see - about another dimension in which there are Presences that can guide us to where we want to go, help us in a very wide context, and provide answers needed to reach our life goals.

She first heard about shamanism in a field museum in Holland, where there were exhibits showing older habits of people in other, far away countries like Egypt, Africa, and Japan. Connected to the art and masks was information about shamanism. This experience immediately reminded her of a picture from Africa, which she had seen when

she was three years old. It also brought back other memories that had started when she was three - memories of 'the most important experience' to her, which was talking with her grandmother about 'other world stuff'. While working and crocheting, her grandmother had taught Nanna about her own experiences of seeing more than the physical eye can see. When Nanna was forty-four years old, her ninety-one year-old grandmother died. As the family gathered to read her grandmother's will, they discovered she had left Nanna her crocodile bag and had included a note saying, 'Nanna is my spiritual heir'. Nanna knew that crocodile meant 'Old Wisdom' to her grandmother. She also knew when her grandmother had died, because she had awakened suddenly at 6 a.m. at her home in The Netherlands, feeling a draft from a closed window and hearing a voice saying 'good-bye'. Later that day she learned her grandmother had died in Italy at 6 a.m. She said it was as if her grandmother's abilities to 'see' were passed on to her at the moment of death. Furthermore, Nanna knew she was the 'one who was able and had to do what she (Nanna's grandmother) did so far.'

Nanna is still deciding whether she will continue to follow a more classic shamanic path. Around the time her grandmother died, she started seeing images when her eyes were closed. Later a shamanic teacher she met told her she should do more. Not too much time passed before Nanna learned about Franco's workshop on astroshamanism at Findhorn. This has been her first shamanic workshop, and she said she brought great fear about what would surface. Though some of her experiences have been emotionally challenging this week, they have been helpful, and Nanna plans to attend Franco's August workshop, too.

#### **6.3.12 Tessa from England, in her Fifties - Astroshamanism Workshop Participant**

Born and raised in Kilkenny, Ireland, Tessa told me that she began seeing what others could not see when she was a child - something her mother said was a sin. However, at that time a Wolf came to her as a spiritual ally and has been with her ever since. She wouldn't have called that a shamanic experience at the time, but now she sees that working

with spiritual allies, or helpers, for her own growth and/or for others is an essential part of shamanism.

Tessa said her first official exposure to shamanism was in February of 2003, when she attended a weekend introductory shamanic workshop with Franco and found it to be the most powerful experience she had ever had. Because of that, she wanted to know more, which is why she came to this weeklong workshop. Tessa is not sure what her shamanic future will be, but what she found in this workshop is very compatible with her spiritual practice.

What follows are responses from participants based on questions relating directly to each of the seven elements in the shamanic model. As in this section of perceptions about shamanism, responses to each element begin with the shamanic practitioners and end with the community members.

#### **6.4 Shamanic Vocation and Initiation**

Shamanic vocation and initiation can occur in ways that typically include heredity or a spontaneous call; illness and/or dreams; death and resurrection experiences; and/or the bestowal of spiritual allies or a possible power song. Some of the initiatory experiences described by both practitioners and those who have worked with these practitioners are presented below.

##### ***Franco***

Raised a Christian in Italy and later drawn to study yoga and astrology, Franco began to understand how apparently unrelated experiences throughout his early life were actually part of a long initiation and learning process for him. One of those early experiences had been the ability to 'go through' a door and leave his parents without their knowing it. When that happened, he had a strong sense of *déjà vu* - that this was not new or unusual for him.

While still a small boy, he also began to notice things that the adults either did not appear to see, or that they had decided should only be for adults, not children. Among the 'things' he saw were the Bhi Jinah, spiritual beings that were to become friends and allies for

him throughout his life. At about four or five years of age, he spontaneously began playing games that involved spending time in a different world - one with twelve states, for which he drew maps to describe them. In these maps, his family's house became the world, and the various rooms in their house became towns or villages. The cosmology of this other world also developed its own mythology. There were even football teams with entire divisions. Each of the sectors in this world had a name, which Franco created as variations on family and environmental names he already knew. Though this was a creative way to integrate much of what he was learning in school, and it brought him great joy and ecstasy for many years, it was clear to Franco that this game was a fantasy.

Between sixteen and eighteen years of age, he began to question what he was doing, especially when he realized others didn't share his enthusiasm about this game. Like many young people, this realization left him feeling inadequate when dealing with ordinary reality, and he decided to destroy the maps. Shortly thereafter, at age eighteen, he experienced a very powerful response to reading a book by Alan Watts, which then awoke something else within him. That led him from his inner community of otherworldly games to an external Christian community, where he spent two years working with energy and its release. Though rigid in some areas, including a clear indication that there was no hope for his own salvation, Franco thought that community did help others. However, it was not for him to stay there, and he soon felt the need to go to other countries to perform rituals. That need took him to Loch Ness and Edinburgh in Scotland, where the rituals he performed mostly included references from his childhood.

At some point he also spent eight years exploring what he calls 'the dark side' - namely, the 'provisional order' that keeps ordinary reality alive and separate from nonordinary reality. All of these experiences from childhood into adulthood joined together to form a shamanic initiation for Franco. Among the challenges he continually experienced was his ability to see power and our multidimensional selves, yet accept that others often say they have not had those experiences and do not see what he has seen.

## **Stephen**

During one of his visits to where Peggy Dylan was living and working in France, Stephen experienced what he described as a fire initiation through firewalking. Having been faced with illness, relationship problems, and general hard times prior to meeting Peggy, he found the initiation, along with the accompanying sweat lodge experience, most helpful and insightful. During it, he said he felt as if love was both a space and a container for life. Afterwards, when his work in Glasgow was growing in a positive way, Stephen periodically called Peggy to talk and reflect on his life. He continued his spiritual work with her, and then at her invitation, trained as a teacher with her. During this time frame, which also coincided with a series of shamanic dreams he had, Stephen began learning about shamanism in a very conscious and personal way.

However, initiation experiences for Stephen had begun with recurring dreams he had as a teen. In these he would see a large fire burning in the forest and then stand back peeking at people who were dancing ecstatically around the fire. While watching, some of them would call him to come forward and join them. He also started to see teachers. At some point after he had awakened and was looking through a book, he would recognize some of the photos in the book as being people from his dreams. Shamanic dreams he experienced at some later point revealed spiritual allies who came to help and warn him about fierce energy that potentially could kill him. Once when he was seriously ill in hospital and in a state of 'twilight consciousness', he actually experienced what he called the 'bardo of death' (from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*). During this time, he traveled through a tunnel of darkness into a circle of teachers who were surrounded by love and light. In this near death experience, Stephen realized he could die, but his teacher Peggy was there and urged him to go back. He chose to return and discovered afterwards that while he had been having this experience, an ulcer in his stomach had burst and needed immediate medical attention. Finally, he said another initiation occurred with a bankruptcy and the ending of a romantic relationship. The bankruptcy left him feeling judged by others, and the end of the relationship instilled grief and loss.

### ***Cláudia***

At intervals of about five years throughout her life, Cláudia said she experienced numerous life initiations, or crises. One of those was to unlearn and heal some of the unhealthy and unhelpful thought patterns and memories that she had developed during her Christian upbringing. Another was affirming her ability as an intuitive channel and opening up 'her heart and life to Spirit in Divine and Unconditional Love, allowing what it is that her soul, in its profound and eternal wisdom, has chosen and more than that, what spirit has chosen for her' (EdinburghShamanic, 2004a: 12). To do so, Cláudia said she needed to deal with her own fears about being a medium or a shamanic practitioner. Though those fears are not as strong now, she said she still has to address them, especially as she develops new shamanic ways that integrate the ancient traditions of her youth with new shamanic learning and practices for life today.

### ***Mark***

During his second year at university, Mark described a series of three nights in which the bedroom of the flat where he stayed was icy cold, and he would awake to see a pair of eyes. On the third night, he finally saw standing two or three feet from the bed a lady in Victorian dress with long brown hair. She looked at him for a while, then turned and walked through the wall. The next day he went to the bookstore to learn about spirits. Because he also began to sense that large wolves were following him, Mark started collecting feathers as power objects. He told about meeting with a friend living in the next room who suffered from manic depression. When Mark spontaneously put his hands on his friend's heart and head, a powerful jolt of healing passed through to the friend. However, Mark had not prepared himself for that, and the experience left him understanding the need for ritual cleansing and purification when doing healing work.

At twenty-five Mark remembers walking down the Dundee High Street feeling an 'awesome connection to all life' - a sense of bliss and ecstasy that washed over him for two or three minutes. After that, he started meditation and chanting, but his spiritual experiences scared him, and he started drinking and taking drugs to lessen their intensity.

Finally, when sober, he decided to face his own shadow self. Having read *Black Elk* and other Native American literature at university, he started writing his own spiritual poetry and bought some chanting and drumming tapes. Soon after this, he remembers raising his hands to the sky and connecting the sky to the earth in a Cheyenne way. For him god then became the Great Spirit, and his shamanic work began in a 'proper' way.

When he was thirty-two, he had what he called a series of three initiation dreams. In the first one he witnessed a spiritual marriage of two beings not of this world. They each received an oak leaf crown, and Mark realized this was the divine union within himself. In the second dream, angelic energies put a cloak of golden light around his shoulders and said, 'Your job now is to bring people home - back to God. Release everything.' The third dream found him flying in the sky over a group of female shamans in an Amerindian tribe in the USA, pulled down by a kind of magnetic beam, and finally placed over a symbol drawn in the sand, where he sat as the shamans chanted. Mark realized as we talked that the tribe and the symbol were Navaho.

A few months later, while participating in a Native American drumming ceremony at the Spiritualist Church in Buckhaven in Fife, he felt filled with the color blue, which he understood to be the light of Christ and of pure love. When the ceremonial leader had lit the sage, Mark had had a flashback of being a Native American shaman in a previous life. He had then felt an eagle fly down, pick him up, and carry him to the sky. At that point, he 'blacked out', but when he came back to consciousness, someone told him his eyes were very peaceful. That ceremony became an opening for many more serious internal spiritual experiences for Mark.

After a couple more months, one day he found himself inadvertently swimming out to where the current was too strong for him to manage. Suddenly, a seal appeared. Mark said he 'felt a beautiful connection with the seal as their eyes met each other.' He felt drawn to swim towards the seal and found himself safe in shallow water soon after.

That was also the time frame in which he started going to healing fairs, where he met B.G. Bearclaw, a Cherokee medicine woman from the USA, saw Cláudia as she did

shamanic healing work there, and learned through special photography that his aura reflected the emerging presence of angelic beings. One day a few months later, while sitting in the forest, Mark said he heard the trees singing, saw their fuzzy purple auras, and felt connected to all trees. Shortly thereafter, at another healing fair, he was told in a past life regression that he had been a tree once, but that tree had been cut down, leaving him feeling rootless and cut off. At that fair, he finally met and talked with Cláudia. Not only did he see her face change into different shapes, but also he recognized one of her spirit guides and had a shamanic healing session with her.

Last year, at age thirty-four, he began attending shamanic workshops with Franco. He said that at various times he experienced Jesus entering his body to open his heart and Mary coming to bring him purity and clarity. He told me he bought a didgeridoo and started learning to play it from an Aboriginal spirit guide who came to him. Furthermore, what started as humming in the car while driving turned into Mark's ability to do Siberian throat singing. Another experience occurred in response to questions he had about shamanism and the angelic path, when he awoke one night to a voice that said, 'You're to be a solar shaman. You know everything already. Put it into practice.' He knew he was to channel 'the masculine, active energy of Great Spirit' (EdinburghShamanic, 2004a: 11). As the year continued, Mark began to do healing professionally. This occurred at healing fairs in Scotland, during a trip to the Amazon forest in Brazil, and with clients when he and Cláudia opened The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre in September of 2003. Among other things, he has incorporated clairvoyant readings, throat singing, and solar shamanism into his healing work. He told me he has learned that pain is always healed by love - of self and others.

### ***Alistair***

During one of his shamanic journeys after the original class with John Matthews, Alistair experienced a 'spontaneous initiation', in which the Celtic goddess Cerridwen ladled inspiration into his hand and gave him moss agates. These he keeps in his crane medicine bag, along with other sacred objects. Alistair said he was initiated by the spirits for his Ovate grade and again for his Druid grade. At these initiations, he described being acutely

aware of the presence of crow, water, and sun, and of Iolo Morgannwg, who was an eighteenth century Unitarian and a Druid.

### **Preben**

Preben clearly identified initiation experiences that began at age nine when he was walking home from a Scout meeting at about 7 p.m. on a dark winter's night. Suddenly he sensed a presence watching him from the sky. He looked up and saw strange lights that appeared to be part of an 'invisible' object - invisible because though he saw the object itself, he could also see 'through' the object to the stars beyond it. Later in the week he discovered that others in the village had seen it, too. That experience was followed by some disturbing dreams that ended around age twelve, leaving him feeling protected at last.

The next initiatory experience came at age thirteen, when he began having visionary dreams that revealed information he initially thought was about the future, or precognitive, but later realized referred to what he thought were some of his past lives. In one case, when he saw a television program about some people in France, he recognized the area and the associated feelings as having been in his earlier dream.

A third significant initiation was at age fifteen, when he and his family traveled to Apple Island in Denmark. While on the way, he started feeling 'weird' and afraid - so much so that by the time they reached the house where they were to stay, Preben was shaking. When the children went to their assigned room, he recognized it as the room where in a dream he had died. For the three nights the family remained there, Preben was afraid he would die. He heard his own voice saying, 'What have they done to the place?' and experienced the scene surrounding him often shift into 'another time'. Eventually he realized that in the remembered death, he had been forty years old, and the bed was different. As a late teen he had read books about telepathy and had joined with certain friends to test each other's telepathic abilities. One book, *Towards the Light*, combined Christian teaching with past lives and mediumship. Though it provided some answers for Preben, it also raised more questions.

At age nineteen, just after he had started working on an island farm, one day while

talking with a woman he loved, the sky opened and a light appeared. Preben kneeled down in tears and saw in the opening a Presence that began talking to him and showing him his entire life up until his death. However, the Presence told Preben he would not remember all of it. That year at the farm was followed by three years at a zoo, during which time he began Reiki training, joined a self-development group, studied astrology, recognized animal spirit helpers, did bio-energy work, and started functioning as a medium who could channel spirit beings, especially from the Star Nations. From that time until last year, only snatches of the 'Presence' experience came back to him, but he nevertheless felt supported and held by Spirit - humbled by the experience, grateful to be alive, and feeling quite empowered. This period marked a transition for Preben into what he called a multidimensional global consciousness in which we 'weave the web of wyrd' (destiny) as individuals and societies that have choices about how to live. It also led to his increased trust in the strong connection he has continued to feel with the beings who had started helping and advising him since age seven.

### **Collette**

Collette said she has had quite a few spiritual initiation experiences. The first she remembers was at age twelve. Though she had seen spirits before, this time the spirit was in the form of a woman standing in a bay window, staring at Collette, who learned later the woman was named Alice, and she had been Collette's father's nurse in the Crimean War. At the time Collette had felt scared and overwhelmed due to the 'realness' of that experience. However, she said she realized later that the woman had 'come from a place of love'. From twelve to eighteen years of age, Collette said she fought the spirits and made negative choices about how to interpret them.

At age eighteen she moved to Australia to begin an adventure that she hoped would facilitate her own healing. Once there, the experience was much deeper and more intense than she had imagined. She then traveled to South Africa and spent a couple years living through what she described as 'more destructive behaviors', though she eventually came 'back to herself' and returned to Scotland. In telling this part of her story, Collette said that

what she loves about shamanism is that it encompasses the shadow. It recognizes that one is not good or bad, but can utilize the theory of chaos and order to instigate change and growth.

### ***Heleen***

As her first exposure to shamanic journeys and practices, Heleen described some of her experiences as meaningful and at times powerful. Perhaps because they are so new, she has not necessarily called them 'initiation experiences', though hindsight may lead her to view them in that way. She said the consciousness (including her intentions) she brought involved a longing for experience.

### ***Jonathan***

Jonathan did not describe any experiences he would call initiations.

### ***Susan***

Susan did not describe experiences she would categorize as initiations.

### ***Nanna***

Though some of her spiritual experiences have been quite powerful, Nanna was not sure whether or not they were classic initiations.

### ***Tessa***

Though she did not call it an initiation experience, Tessa described how about eight years earlier, she fell down the stairs and knew she would die. However, in the midst of her fall, a Presence of some kind, which Tessa called an angel, actually turned her over while she was in the air and laid her on the stairs. Then there was a bump, and she sensed the Angel hovering in the air above her. Obviously, Tessa survived the fall.

## **6.5 Shamanic Cosmology**

Shamanic cosmology initially refers to the distinction between ordinary and nonordinary reality, but then further divides nonordinary reality, or the spirit realms, into an overall geography that includes the upper, lower, and middle worlds. These nonordinary realms are generally accessed from an ordinary reality starting point on earth. These points are

often associated cross-culturally with the axis mundi, the tree of life, because that image seems to portray the connection existing among all the 'worlds'. What follows are the responses that describe how those interviewed perceive a shamanic cosmology.

### **Franco**

Nonordinary reality for Franco is what he calls the Sacred Circle - something with a structure that includes sectors, energies, and archetypes that help all beings eventually come to awareness of ultimate unity. In this 'transitional' structure there are physical, mental, and spiritual levels. Also within it are a vertical axis that reflects the higher, lower, and middle worlds and a horizontal axis that contains the four major directions of east, south, west, and north. The structure possesses twelve sectors, which are the signs of the Zodiac. This entire cosmology is described in Franco's book, *Epic of the Sacred Cone* (Santoro, 2000). Franco says he can travel to any part of the Sacred Circle to learn something important about life. He believes that each part of the Sacred Circle represents a way that leads to the Centre and is also an emanation from the Centre, since there are no true separations. As a shamanic practitioner, astrologer, and spiritual explorer, Franco sees how all these dimensions fit together, and he easily travels within these realms.

### **Stephen**

Nonordinary reality for Stephen contains lower, upper, and middle worlds, though he finds himself doing much work in the lower world, where he primarily finds animals and nature. He does some work in the upper world, and there he often works with the goddess. Prior to any movement to these worlds, he generally attunes to the spiritual allies who will be working with him.

### **Cláudia**

For Cláudia, nonordinary reality feels like a meditative state that helps her connect to her feelings - a time when her mind is not talking, but is peaceful, and she is being taken care of by the spirits. Though she knows about upper and lower realms, the specific direction for her journeys is not her primary focus.

### **Mark**

Mark said his experience of nonordinary reality includes traveling to upper, lower, and middle worlds. In the upper world, he finds geometric shapes, beings, and awareness of feelings and thoughts. In the lower world are animals who sometimes talk, demonic creatures, and mythological figures. For him, the middle world contains a glow around a reality that looks like ordinary reality and provides opportunities for conversations.

### **Alistair**

Nonordinary reality for Alistair looks much like ordinary reality - with its colors and weather about the same. On his journeys, he travels to upper and lower realms.

### **Preben**

Preben's experience of nonordinary reality includes an upper world, a lower world, and a middle world of parallel existences. The upper world for him contains the big picture of the cosmos, including the Star Nations; this is where he receives guidance and inspiration. The lower world looks much like ordinary reality, and it is where he receives energy. Preben describes the middle world as being a link to parallel existences, not to past lives.

### **Collette**

Collette did not describe nonordinary reality or whether she had experiences of traveling to upper and lower realms. However, she learned to journey from Cláudia, who would have exposed Collette to the framework for exploring these areas.

### **Heleen**

When asked what nonordinary reality looks like to her, Heleen described one journey in which there were buildings, and then she was behind a gate, where she saw a scene filled with a bright green color. Suddenly a kind of tunnel appeared under the gate, and a Lady was there. The next day Heleen went back to this place and flew over the gate. As she did that, she realized she herself was that lady. She also noted that the architecture was rococo, which is not her style. It was a very sensory experience for her. In the shamanic journeys she described, Heleen did not distinguish between the upper and lower worlds of nonordinary reality.

### ***Jonathan***

Because Jonathan primarily processes information around him not visually, but with senses like touch, hearing, smell, or intuitive 'knowing', he portrays nonordinary reality as something he 'knows', 'senses', or 'feels' around him.

### ***Susan***

When she journeys, Susan naturally goes up and down, easily reaching both upper and lower realms of nonordinary reality. Though she did not make a distinction between the realms, her descriptions of what had happened on journeys show that she often visualizes her experiences, rather than primarily sensing them without seeing anything.

### ***Nanna***

Nanna did not describe nonordinary reality, but she said that her intention easily took her to wherever we were instructed to travel (shamanically) during the workshop. That means she went to both upper and lower realms without much problem.

### ***Tessa***

Tessa experiences nonordinary reality in many ways - some of which include colors, energy, images of light and people, and the presence of spiritual helpers. She did not describe a distinction between upper and lower worlds, though that may occur for her.

## **6.6 Shamanic Soul Flight/Journeying**

Shamanic soul flight, or journeying, refers to the ecstatic experience of traveling into the nonordinary realms of the spirit world and then returning to ordinary reality. The one journeying generally ascends or descends, though middle world journeys involve travel into the spiritual dimensions of what appears to be ordinary reality. On these focused and interactive journeys, one meets and works with spiritual allies who function as partners with the journeyer in the provision of healing and/or information. Below are accounts of how those interviewed experience this process.

### ***Franco***

Franco journeys to all the realms he describes in his cosmology of the Sacred Cone, and in

this process, he works with a variety of spiritual allies. Though he talks about the journey and teaches people about the importance of holding a clear intention prior to and throughout the journey, his best description of the method itself in his book, *Astroshamanism, Book 1* (Santoro, 2003a: 66-78). There he not only discusses intention, but also draws upon the work of Michael Harner, who suggests lying down; covering one's eyes; visualising an opening down into the earth or up through the sky; traveling into the downward opening through a passageway that eventually takes the journeyer into the lower world or nonordinary reality, or traveling upwards until the journeyer sees and passes through an opening in the sky that reveals the upper world of nonordinary reality; reversing the process by returning along the route taken; and ending the journey at the original starting point in ordinary reality.

### **Stephen**

During his shamanic journeys, Stephen said he meets with spiritual allies who offer him advice, loving support, and healing, in addition to partnering with him in healing others.

### **Cláudia**

Cláudia's journeys are less visual or 'geographically' oriented than they are kinesthetic experiences she feels in her body. She certainly gathers information and feels the presence of spiritual allies, but her journeys are more connected to her feelings and to her intuitive way of 'knowing'.

### **Mark**

Journeys for Mark are visual, though he, too, experiences many feelings and thoughts. Some of what he learns on journeys occurs as he unites with spiritual allies, sings, or dances to rhythmic drumming.

### **Alistair**

Visual experiences are part of Alistair's shamanic journeys. In them he sees spiritual allies and occasionally undergoes significant rituals that enhance his spiritual development and understanding.

### ***Preben***

Preben feels the presence of and often sees spiritual allies in animal and human forms when he journeys and sometimes unexpectedly when he is not journeying. In these moments he said he feels immense strength, support, and guidance personally and as he does his healing work with others.

### ***Collette***

Collette said she often works with her spiritual helpers through inner, intuitive ways. However, she also uses shamanic journeys, which she learned about from Cláudia, to help build up her relationships with spirit guides.

### ***Heleen***

So far on shamanic journeys or experiences she had not 'seen' anything in animal form, but instead, she experienced something like a hand on her shoulder. It was very familiar, and she wondered if maybe it was God helping her explore this new dimension. She'd been asking God if this is OK, and she thinks it must be OK. Heleen said she would like to continue shamanic work, because she is curious. For example, in one journey, she experienced a hand pulling her back to age three, when her father was being held unfairly in prison. The face of the man who should have been in prison, instead of her father, appeared before her, and she felt the hate she had felt at that young age. However, Heleen says that scene must have been a memory, because she now feels healed from that experience.

### ***Jonathan***

For Jonathan, journeying was not much different from meditation. As one who does not visualize, but senses, his experiences did not easily fit into the classic shamanic journey format.

### ***Susan***

Susan's journeys involved meeting with spiritual guides who provided information and insights that were painful, but filled with healing.

### ***Nanna***

Though Nanna did not describe how she journeys, she said that when she followed the instructions given by Franco regarding the type of journey to take, she was able to accomplish what she had set out to do - receiving important messages in the process.

### ***Tessa***

Tessa said that in her journeys, she works with spiritual allies who guide and protect her in her own life and who partner with her in the healing work she does for other people.

## **6.7 Shamanic Consciousness**

Rhythmic music, drumming, rattling, chanting, and dancing are typical ways of achieving a shamanic state of consciousness that facilitates the shamanic journey into nonordinary reality. Other ways of assisting this process include use of costumes and fasting. Practitioners, workshops participants, and our one volunteer describe what helps them.

### ***Franco***

Though familiar with methods such as fasting, sweat lodge, and use of hallucinogenic plants, Franco primarily uses drumming, other rhythmic instruments, music, song or chant, dance, trance dance, drawing, meditation, silence, gibberish, the elements of nature (i.e. earth, air, fire, water), ceremonial clothing, ritual, ritual drama, invocations, ritual objects, incense, bodily postures, walking, and other physical movements as ways to enter and maintain a shamanic state of consciousness for himself and those with whom he works. He says these help him and others shift their awareness beyond the physical senses and functions of the ordinary mind into an ecstatic perception of being energy fields that are part of an interconnected web of life.

### ***Stephen***

Activities such as dancing, drumming, rattling, whistling, conducting rituals, and being in nature help Stephen enter a state of consciousness that facilitates shamanic journeying.

### ***Cláudia***

Cláudia achieves a shamanic state of consciousness in a number of ways that include

invoking the spirits, smelling sage, wearing her spirit beads, which represent her spirit guides, and drumming or rattling.

### ***Mark***

According to Mark, what helps him enter a state of shamanic consciousness are methods such as stilling his mind; breathing; calling the spirits; using rattles, bells, drums, and other percussion instruments; singing and dancing; and trusting the imagery that comes to him.

### ***Alistair***

For Alistair, drumming, rattling, and listening to certain CDs, including drumming CDs, help him enter a state of consciousness conducive to shamanic journeying.

### ***Preben***

What helps Preben enter a shamanic state of consciousness are methods such as calling in the Spirits of the Directions, drumming, rattling, centering, doing energy work, connecting with his animal allies, and using sacred objects that assist in sharpening his focus. He then strives to hold a space for healing - standing out of the way in order for his animal allies to do the actual healing.

### ***Collette***

Collette uses sage and drumming to access a shamanic state of consciousness. However, her journeys are also successful when she just states an intention prior to journeying.

### ***Heleen***

She did not specify what helped her access a shamanic state of consciousness, but the experiences she described elsewhere in her interview occurred while Franco was drumming or playing other rhythmic instruments.

### ***Jonathan***

Accessing deeper states of consciousness is something familiar to Jonathan. Years ago he learned and started practicing transcendental meditation. He has also done breath work and says that drumming sometimes helps. For him, achieving an 'energetic peace' is one way these states of consciousness have affected him.

### ***Susan***

Breathing, music, drumming, and sometimes rattling are ways in which Susan accesses a shamanic state of consciousness. She said taking a bath with candles lighting the room also helps move her into a trance state.

### ***Nanna***

Certain types of music, drumming, dancing, and rattling help Nanna enter a shamanic state of consciousness. Likewise, the water and air that are present at a seaside also help her access a deeper consciousness.

### ***Tessa***

Some of the things that help Tessa move into a shamanic state of consciousness are meditation, drumming, massage, aromatherapy, dancing, using a rattle, and working with colors. She also said that any enhanced rhythmic sound helps her journey.

## **6.8 Shamanic Spiritual Allies**

Spiritual allies in a shamanic context are experienced in a number of ways by humans who work with them. These allies form protective and supportive partnerships - becoming sources of power and guides to information and healing. They generally appear in human, animal, and plant form; and in some cases, they unite with their human partners in a type of spiritual marriage. Descriptions of spiritual allies who work with the people I interviewed are found below.

### ***Franco***

Though he can easily access his Spirit Guide, specific animal guides, and spiritual helpers who appear in human form, Franco tends to draw upon the spiritual energy of the Sacred Cone - the overall cosmology that connects the nonordinary reality worlds - when he works shamanically. For him, that includes all spiritual guides, which are interconnected and part of the whole anyway. When he works with groups, he calls upon whatever images make sense, are relevant, and help people access their spiritual support. Because of his own Christian background, he sometimes uses saints, especially the Madonna. Due to his

understanding of astrology, he calls upon the planets, the sun, and the moon. Furthermore, his experience with the *Epic of the Sacred Cone* prompts him to call upon the Bhi Jinah, beings who populate the empty spaces and help keep whatever exists together.

### **Stephen**

Stephen's spiritual helpers have come to him in various ways. Some initially appeared in his early dreams as the teachers. During his fire initiation, he met a goddess on the hill. At one point he felt the Wind as an ally rocking him back and forth on the mountain. In his shamanic dreams, he met the spirit of tiger, who also shifted shapes between tiger and Jim Morrison, one of Stephen's teen-age idols who had seen himself as a shaman. During his near death experience, Stephen said he sat with the circle of teachers who loved and advised him in his decision about life and death. With these nonordinary reality spiritual allies, Stephen not only receives healing and guidance for his own life, but he partners with them in healing service to others. Stephen also calls upon teachers in ordinary reality. Not only does he value Peggy Dylan's teaching gifts, but also he has worked with various other shamans, especially from South America. Last year Peruvian shaman Dr. Pio Vucetich Nunez del Prado asked Stephen if he wanted to be an apprentice and study with him - something Stephen joyfully agreed to do.

### **Cláudia**

Cláudia's week-long shamanic experience in Scotland was particularly powerful, because at that time her great-great grandmother, a native Brazilian medicine woman who could not practice her medicine while she was married to an orthodox Catholic white man, came to her in the 'Sweat Lodge Ceremony'. Cláudia said her grandmother had come 'to remind me of whom I am, where I come from, my gifts, my roots, my medicine' (Gonçalves: 13). In addition to the nonordinary reality support of that grandmother, Cláudia acknowledged the ordinary reality spiritual guidance and support of Morning Star, a Native Mexican/Apache Ceremonial Leader and medicine pipe carrier who was conducting the ceremony and the work during that week. She says now that she must have needed the twenty years that transpired between age thirteen and the present, in order to be ready for the shamanic path.

Cláudia works with her spiritual helpers, or guides, in part by calling on them for help. She said she feels their presence in her body, and they speak to her through her feelings, which are central in her way of working intuitively and shamanically. In addition to several power animals who help her, Cláudia works with Yemanjá, a traditional Brazilian Queen and Goddess of the Sea, and with the Black Madonna, known in Brazil as the Black Goddess. The nature of the problem or issue determines which guide(s) will come to help. As she learns to embody these spiritual allies, Cláudia says she makes different sounds and chants, which are incorporated into her work. These are the sounds and chants of her spiritual allies.

### ***Mark***

From the time Mark was small, he started seeing auras, lights, and spirit forms, and he began hearing spirit voices, who brought important messages to him. As evident from an earlier description of his relationship with the spirit of Wolf, Mark unites with the spirit of an ally in order to more fully access the qualities it possesses to help him. Other spiritual allies Mark said he works with include angelic beings of light; a Native American 'brother', who helps him with healing; a Chinese man, who helps him with physical and emotional health and well-being; god and goddess energies, who promote a unified integration of both male and female gifts; Hopi guides; angelic helpers, who help him clarify his path; and two shamans - one Aboriginal and one Peruvian, who help him with his own spiritual development.

### ***Alistair***

Alistair experiences connections with spiritual allies in various forms that include elements, trees, plants, animals, ancestors, deities, guides, and fairies. These guides work with him in close relationship to grow in his own spiritual life and to provide divination and healing for others.

### ***Preben***

Preben talked about working with spiritual allies of many forms. However, beings from the Star Nations seemed to figure prominently among those who help, guide, and protect him.

### ***Collette***

Her first awareness of Spirit was as the Wind, which she said talked to her and comforted her like a soul mate. Though not quite tangible, Collette said she has felt Spirit in her self and in creation. She also described what she called a 'guide system' of deep feelings that often manifest as a quiet voice within or as her intuition. She said she longed to understand this inner awareness, learn to work with it more fully, and see its connection to shamanism.

### ***Heleen***

Heleen's primary sense of a spiritual ally is a presence she thinks might be God. In one of her journeys, once she acknowledged her intent, she began to see graphic images of Romans, prisons, and burned building - as if she had come back to a place where she had lived. She saw a small lantern, some food, and people who were going to tell her what had happened. However, before they could do that, she was off to the future. She thinks God must be supporting these experiences.

### ***Jonathan***

Regarding spiritual allies, Jonathan said he experiences only a sense of guidance - a sense of being. His insights are more direct and don't seem to come from individual beings.

### ***Susan***

Susan described how for a few years she felt the support and love of a female spiritual guide who told her that she didn't have to struggle. When she would ask the guide a question, the guide would paraphrase the question, and Susan instantly knew the answer. Eventually, the guide left, and Susan felt abandoned. However, she also sensed that this guide left because Susan had been relying on her too much and needed to move on. Susan also knew there would be other guides to help her. Though she didn't call that an initiation experience, it was an experience that propelled her into the next phase of her spiritual growth. Susan described experiencing the essence, not form, of an Ancestor Spirit named Agnes, a rabbit, and a female gorilla who have revealed themselves as spiritual allies for her. She also said a divine presence guides her own spirit and functions as a protective presence in her life.

### ***Nanna***

One of Nanna's primary spiritual allies is her grandmother, with whom she communicates naturally on a regular basis. She also has discovered the help of Owl. One way they help is by giving her messages about how she should proceed in her life. For example, once after her grandmother had died, when Nanna started working on a major project back in Italy, her grandmother urged her to 'be patient and focused - you'll get it.' Not only that, but on this same trip, which Nanna undertook alone, several different people whom she'd never known before ended up helping her in ways that can only be described as a series of extraordinary events and circumstances. These 'messages' and experiences of support come to her through vibration, her senses, and synchronicities.

### ***Tessa***

Tessa feels supported, guided, and protected by many, including Wolf, the Angelic Presence who helped her on the stairs, Kwan Yin, who helps in Tessa's healing practice, a Native American Grandmother who came to her during a healing session, and a High Star Being.

## **6.9 Shamanic Soul Healing**

As soul doctors, shamanic practitioners work on the soul level to help people in their healing process. Some of the classic methods of soul healing include: divining for important information; power animal retrieval; soul retrieval; extraction; helping people prepare for death; and performing psychopomp work for those who have died. Below are examples of soul healing experiences the people in this study described as having received personally or having provided, in partnership with spiritual allies, to other people who had sought their help.

### ***Franco***

Franco has experienced spiritual healing himself and has helped others in that process. For him, the most important thing in healing is to create a relationship with what the illness represents - as in the Pythagorean tradition. He strives for luminosity out of darkness and

refers to the temples of Apollo and to underground caves where those seeking healing would go through a stage of darkness, then face the difficult reality that their illness had helped them deny, and finally experience the authentic light of integrating those first two steps of darkness and facing reality. Though Franco can use the shamanic method of extraction, he does not consider that as part of his tradition, because it perpetuates the illusion of separation and fragmentation. Related to that, he said he thought the concept of demons developed as a way of fitting in with a culture that sought to eliminate unpleasant disturbances. For him, conflict is the result of not seeing the empty spaces that connect us.

### ***Stephen***

Stephen's major experiences of shamanic healing have often occurred during his periods of initiation. However, healing also continues to occur as he continues his personal development and shamanic practice.

### ***Cláudia***

The process of facing and releasing her fears, opening up to the shamanic path, and beginning her more focused shamanic training three years ago has brought Cláudia a great deal of personal healing. She has experienced her own soul retrieval and now teaches others to do soul retrievals. She said the teachings come from her guides/spirit allies and that most of the time she herself first goes through the healing or experience before she feels ready to teach others. She has also experienced healing during shamanic journeys when someone else has drummed. In Brazil, when extractions were done, the spirits talked through the practitioner about behaviors the one receiving the healing needed to address.

### ***Mark***

In terms of receiving shamanic healing through the help of an ordinary reality shaman, Mark told me he experienced healing sessions with Cláudia, his partner at The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre, as part of his shamanic training with Franco. In addition, his dreams and meditations have brought many soul healing experiences that were aided by his nonordinary reality spiritual allies; some of these have been described in earlier sections of this chapter.

### ***Alistair***

Though he did not go into great detail, Alistair said he had personally received healing during sessions he had had with Preben, John Matthews, and a wiccan goddess/shaman. He also told me he has done extraction healing for others. All of this has involved the shamanic practitioner working with spiritual allies to determine what healing was called for and to conduct the healing session itself.

### ***Preben***

Not only has Preben received shamanic healing from other healers, medicine people, teachers, and the spirits themselves, but he has spent years offering his own healing gifts in service to others.

### ***Collette***

At various points Collette has struggled with depression. As a result, prior to the Edinburgh Shamanic Centre opening, she had gone to Cláudia for shamanic healing. In the midst of this work, Cláudia co-founded the Centre, and Collette recognized that volunteering at the Centre would give her access to even more of the shamanic experiences she had been seeking. She said she was so drawn to work there that she began volunteering, even though she retained her paying job at a residential home for people with schizophrenia.

### ***Heleen***

Heleen said it would be healing to re-live the Roman experience from one of her shamanic journeys, but next time, do something with it - turn it upside down and transform the negativity into something positive.

### ***Jonathan***

He described shamanic healing occurring for him from when he first visited Findhorn four or five weeks ago until the present. Since that visit he had spent time in the woods - connecting with the life of the woods and sitting on the forest floor. That had given him a feeling of peace and led him to say, 'Little by little I'm becoming attuned to nature.' However, he said it is a slow process.

### ***Susan***

Some of the journeys Susan had during the workshop were difficult, but ultimately quite healing, because they provided information and insights into puzzling and painful experiences that had occurred during her life. In addition, these journeys enabled parts of her life and self to be integrated in powerful and helpful ways that healed what had formerly felt fragmented.

### ***Nanna***

When asked about experiencing shamanic healing, Nanna referred to a situation that had occurred in Italy and was described in the last section on spiritual allies. To her, the guidance and protection her spiritual allies provided her, combined with the physical assistance, support, and caring that human people offered her then, all came together as a very healing spiritual experience.

### ***Tessa***

Tessa experienced a shamanic soul retrieval earlier in 2003, and she regularly exchanges distance healing with a male shamanic practitioner near her home in Lancashire. The soul retrieval also brought her the Native American Grandmother who now helps her.

## **6.10 Community Support**

Included in the concept of community support are aspects of a shamanic system in which members of the community somehow acknowledge the call they recognize has come to a potential shamanic practitioner; support the work of that person by encouraging continued training and seeking spiritual assistance from the identified person; and monitor the effectiveness of the shamanic services that are provided. This may happen in different ways, depending upon the nature, size, and location of the community. What follows are responses gathered from those interviewed about the role of community in shamanic work.

### ***Franco***

Community for Franco reflects the interrelatedness and interdependence of all life. His worldview is that all is one, which by definition draws people to each other in mutual support

for their individual work of releasing any sense of separation and discovering connections with each other.

### ***Stephen***

Community for Stephen allows people to share the spiritual path - supporting and teaching each other, acknowledging and affirming diverse gifts, and collaborating with love and care. At the healing centre, all who work there are caretakers who contribute different skills, yet together 'hold the baby' that must be cared for and nurtured in order to survive and grow. Within the various group experiences, community members support and encourage each other in doing their individual personal and spiritual development work. Furthermore, the presence of mentors, or teachers, brings into focus a lineage of passing on the traditions that have existed for many centuries.

### ***Cláudia***

Community for Cláudia has become a gathering point for those who heal and for those who seek healing. She said she has been opening to the importance of 'embracing' people with a kind of group energy that is healing. Now she hopes a sense of community will increase as the Centre provides an ongoing gathering place for people.

### ***Mark***

Community is important to Mark, because he says we're all part of a family that needs and wants to function as a healthy society - as a network of kindred spirits. When we have forgotten that and feel separated, a variety of ordeals and initiations can help us awaken to the reality of our unity. He said part of his role is to bring that awareness of unity to the community, though paradoxically, people like him must often detach from the community in order to be able to serve it by reflecting what is not seen or understood. A community can support the role of healer and acknowledge its own need for healing.

### ***Alistair***

Community within a contemporary shamanic tradition is still developing for Alistair. He worked primarily with individual clients until joining the Edinburgh Shamanic Centre in autumn of 2003. Now he not only forms part of the shamanic practitioner staff at the Centre,

but he offers classes for groups, and he sees opportunities for creating a growing sense of community there. His spiritual history reflects an on-going desire for and affiliation with spiritual communities. From communal worship services as a conventional Anglican in Ireland, to life in a contemplative Anglican Benedictine order in England, to living in a Shaker community in the USA, to training and membership within the Druid Order, to serving as a lay leader of a Unitarian Church in Glasgow, Alistair has attempted to balance individual spiritual practice with spiritual service and relationships within a larger community.

### ***Preben***

For Preben community is central, because it reminds us of how important it is to know who we are, to connect with the land, and to help each other learn how we can be record-keepers for the earth in passing on the wisdom we both inherit and discover ourselves. True community to him embodies the whole circle of life in the universe and reflects the Yggdrasil, the Norse World Tree, with all its diversity.

### ***Collette***

Community did not figure much in Collette's initial exploration of shamanism, though that has been changing since she joined the Centre. Engaging with others in interactive reflection and learning has brought about a quickening in the process of sorting herself out. It has also opened her heart and increased her sense of trust.

### ***Heleen***

The role of community did not figure directly in our conversation - in part due to this being the first time Heleen explored shamanism experientially. Learning shamanic ways within a community seemed to be positive for her, but community was not something she had thought about.

### ***Jonathan***

He said that community is important when it can support and help its members who are searching.

### ***Susan***

Regarding the role of community within shamanism, Susan talked more about the important

role of community support for all kinds of personal and spiritual growth. She said that solitary growth is OK, but growth can occur faster with others who also want to grow.

***Nanna***

The importance of community did not seem to be particularly prominent for Nanna, though many of her meaningful spiritual experiences appear to have occurred in the context of being with others who formed part of a support system that spanned both ordinary and nonordinary reality.

***Tessa***

Community has been an important part of her other healing work and practice, but her exposure to shamanism is new enough that she is not yet sure how community fits into that picture.

**6.11 Overall Observations and Themes**

All of the participants worked with spiritual allies of one form or another, used various methods to achieve a shamanic state of consciousness, and had experienced at least one form of shamanic journeying. Most of the community members were beginning to learn about a shamanic cosmology and different types of shamanic healing, but many of them were unsure about whether they had experienced a shamanic initiation. All the practitioners described their initiation experiences and discussed healing both as recipient and in the role of healer.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: FIELD RESEARCH ON RELIGION AS A CHAIN OF MEMORY**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Following the presentation in Chapter Six of the field research directed toward determining a possible correlation with cross-cultural shamanic elements, this chapter contains fieldwork addressing the third purpose in this multi-faceted research project - namely, to discover whether the shamanic practice described in this thesis fits the analytical model of 'religion as a chain of memory' as put forth by Hervieu-Léger. Like the previous chapter, this one begins with an overview of the key components in Hervieu-Léger's model and a listing of the questions asked during the interviews. By way of setting a slightly different context for this line of inquiry, what comes next are the responses participants gave to the first three questions, which explored their perspectives on religion and spirituality and identified any religious or spiritual heritage dating back to earlier in their lives. This is followed by a presentation of the remaining interview information - organized not as answers to each question, but as categories under the five key headings in the Hervieu-Léger model. As in Chapter Six, this chapter ends with a brief statement of overall observations and themes, which are incorporated into part of the analysis found in Chapter Eight.

### **7.2 Overview of Hervieu-Léger Model**

One way to capture the essence of what Hervieu-Léger spent an entire book describing is to say that 'religion as a chain of memory' refers to a community of people, who by invoking a tradition, or parts of a tradition, and by consciously joining with others who have gone before them in that invocation, experience that entire process as the legitimizing authority for the way they believe. Though many factors contributed to the development of her definition, several of which will be addressed in the analysis, I have chosen five components that form the core of her model. Those components are: forming community; understanding tradition; invoking a tradition; determining legitimate authority; and believing.

### 7.2.1 Interview Questions

The questions listed below were designed to facilitate a discussion about key components in Hervieu-Léger's model of religion as a chain of memory. They begin with an introductory look at perceptions about religion and spirituality and then proceed to a more focused look at issues within the model. To encourage a relaxed and fruitful discussion, the 'chain of memory' segment of each interview began with introductory questions that enabled interviewees to present their opinions about religious issues that many of them perceived to be important. Below are the interview questions related to 'religion as a chain of memory':

1. How do you define religion?
2. How are religion and spirituality related, or not related, for you?  
Please describe.
3. Do you have a spiritual or religious heritage, or tradition, from your childhood or earlier adult life? If so, please describe.
4. If you do, how does that background affect and/or interact with your spiritual, or religious, life today?
5. How does community fit, or not fit, into your experience of religion and/or spirituality?
6. In your shamanic practice, who or what do you invoke, or call upon, when you work shamanically?
7. How do you determine that what you are learning or practicing, from a spiritual or religious perspective, is legitimate and authoritative?
8. Please describe how the way you believe today is alike or different from how you believed in the past.
9. Do you call upon traditions other than shamanic ones? If so, which ones and why?

What follows is the field research related to these issues. It begins with responses to the questions about religion and spirituality and then moves into each of the five categories that represent the key components selected from Hervieu-Léger's analytical model. Though it seemed appropriate for the shamanism fieldwork presented in Chapter Six, responses to these questions do not require separating the shamanic practitioners from the community

members when providing this field data.

### **7.3 Religion and Spirituality as Defined by Interviewees**

#### ***Franco***

For Franco, religion is an agreement among people about the nature of reality, the desire to share that reality, and a decision to also explore other realities. It allows for entrance and utilizes rituals as containers for moving from one reality to another.

Though Franco did not formally define spirituality, the descriptions he has used for his work reflect an understanding of spirituality as the process of awakening to the unity, or oneness, of all life. He said religion and spirituality initially worked together, but sometimes when people changed their beliefs or understandings of reality, caretakers of the original agreements (religion) did not allow for changes in those agreements. That kind of dilemma has often prompted those whose beliefs and perceptions have shifted to create among themselves new agreements about what rules, guides, and beliefs to employ, though the new agreements have not always been perceived as carrying legitimate religious authority. In effect, they have often been excluded from being considered religions. Franco considers the shamanic tradition a 'public performance' of a shamanic worldview, not an expression of a binding agreement with rules, guides, and beliefs. For him, shamanic traditions can respond to whatever is relevant and makes sense to those present.

#### ***Stephen***

Stephen said that religion started with love, but developed a hierarchy to teach people. However, in the process, documenting religious experience took precedence, and religion became mechanical. Spirituality for him is an internal gift in which one connects with the Beloved Essence of Life, with the Life Force. In that sense, spirituality remains alive and vibrant, while religion easily loses its vitality.

#### ***Cláudia***

Cláudia said religion was a structure in which people had to follow rules. To the question

about whether religion and spirituality were related, she emphatically said, 'No!' This remark was quickly followed by a statement about how often it was important to break the rules of religion for the sake of spirituality, especially when one is following the shamanic path.

### ***Mark***

Mark defined religion as beliefs. He said it not only connotes an 'ordered system of beliefs which promote a moral structure to explore the universe', but it implies a supernatural, or higher power. Spirituality to Mark is an 'experiential moment of self-realization where one achieves a self-actualized peak that may or may not relate to a god. Based on that, it appears as if spirituality for Mark does not require specific beliefs or the existence of a particular supernatural being, but allows experiences of moving beyond the self into something more. He said religion is didactic, while spirituality is the experiential component; however, he urges others to find out for themselves the relationship between the two concepts.

### ***Alistair***

Religion to Alistair should be spirituality as expressed in faith and beliefs. The essence of this spirituality for him is spiritual practice, which he sees as expressed only through religion. In effect, religion and spirituality are intimately related, with religion being the outward expression of an inner experience fostered primarily through spiritual practice.

### ***Preben***

Religion to Preben is knowledge passed down about something that at one point reflected 'present' spiritual experience, but over time has become dusty tradition reflecting second-hand communication. It is too political and dogmatic in that it holds on to ideas that don't flow with nature. Spirituality, however, is in-the-moment guidance that emerges from direct individual experience of Spirit. For him it provides more space than religion does to roam and be real.

### ***Collette***

Religion for Collette is a cultural construct that is organized as a set of beliefs in a structured

environment. Spirituality to her is much the same as religion. Religion and spirituality share boundaries that can be crossed.

### ***Heleen***

Heleen said religion was tradition, though there are different traditions. To her religion can be everything - 'what you are used to, so different for everyone'. Spirituality for Heleen has to do with feeling. Actually, she thinks religion and spirituality belong together; otherwise, religion would be very dry. It would be like taking a book, reading it, and 'that's it' - no thinking, reflecting, or incorporating ideas in a meaningful way.

### ***Jonathan***

To Jonathan, religion is oneness with God, though he did further distinguish organized religion as a structure that manifested that oneness. Christianity, Buddhism, and other religions join together for Jonathan as examples of how 'All Paths Lead to the One'.

He did not distinguish between religion and spirituality.

### ***Susan***

Susan said that religion is a 'set of rules' that is tight, judgmental, focused on sin, and designed to tell people how to get to God without thinking for themselves. She described it as a trap and said that organized religion is not on her horizon anymore - in great part because church hierarchy tends to say 'you're less than', rather than 'more than'; it displays an attitude that they know best; and their expectation is for people to follow blindly and do what they're told to do. For Susan, spirituality is her connection with the Divine, with the Universe, with God. It is that personal relationship with God that she thinks religious authorities discourage, because if people developed their relationship with God on their own, religious authorities would be out of a job and not in control.

### ***Nanna***

Nanna said religion must have started out as something natural, but it became adoration - something separate from what is natural. Spirituality for her is a feeling; it is the purest interpretation of being free to use and be with your intuition. She said religion and

spirituality used to be together, the same, but over time they separated from each other. To her, spirituality is a higher thing - something felt with all senses. She also said she does not want to give it a three-dimensional form; that is not the way she wants to look at it.

### ***Tessa***

Though she did not formally define religion, for Tessa, it seems to be a somewhat formal 'way' of helping people relate to the Divine. However, for her, religion is too narrow to contain enough ways to access God or the Divine. It is 'OK' for some people, but she needs more and is still searching. From what Tessa said, her understanding of spirituality appears to refer more to the actual relationship with the Divine Essence, or Universal Love. As such, religion could play a part in supporting someone's spirituality.

What now follows are participant responses to questions related to specific components in the model of religion as a chain of memory.

## **7.4 Community**

As a critical contextual component in the Hervieu-Léger's model, it is important to determine the role, function, and importance of community in the lives of those who participate in shamanic work. Their responses are listed below.

### ***Franco***

The role of community for Franco is to facilitate individual growth and development within the Sacred Circle. It does so by supporting personal spiritual work, but also by sharing in community ritual dramas that stimulate spiritual awareness and growth.

### ***Stephen***

Stephen said that community allows people of different backgrounds with diverse gifts to affirm each other, nurture and encourage individual and personal development work, and by incorporating various mentors and teachers, tap into a lineage of traditions that have existed for many centuries.

### ***Cláudia***

For Cláudia, community is increasingly becoming a gathering point for many who seek healing and for those who heal. She senses a growing importance in the ability of group energy to heal and hopes the Centre can provide more of that kind of experience.

### ***Mark***

A community of kindred spirits who share different roles and help each other recognize the unity of all life is important to Mark. Though a degree of detachment is sometimes needed, its function is to clarify perspective and serve the whole, not to foster alienation.

### ***Alistair***

Community is important to Alistair, because for him it offers support and encouragement for a spiritual or religious path. In his search for community, Alistair has not always found all he was seeking, but that disappointment has often propelled him to help create communities that foster spiritual growth both individually and collectively.

### ***Preben***

Preben places great importance on community as a central way to help people remain connected to all life and in the universe.

### ***Collette***

The place of community is growing in importance for Collette. In a follow-up conversation a year later, she said community was 'imperative'.

### ***Heleen***

Based on her understanding that the term 'sacred' describes a way to 'feel together' in relationship to God, community does a play a part in Heleen's experience of religion and/or spirituality; it (community) is now what she has started to call 'the sacred'.

### ***Jonathan***

Jonathan described community as a valuable support for one's spiritual search.

### ***Susan***

As an alternative to attending church, as she used to do, Susan said she discovered friends

who had experienced similar processes with the church and decided to join together in supporting each other as they explored educational and meditation options at a local centre. Eventually, they started meeting regularly in a space owned by one of her friends. There they began conducting rituals of protection or healing and celebrating seasonal festivals, birthdays, or other life passages. They also went out in nature for meditation, weekends of renewal, and times around a central fire. For Susan, her circle-of-friends are now her spiritual community.

### ***Nanna***

Though community has not seemed particularly important up until now, Nanna said she has come to realize that many of her meaningful spiritual experiences have occurred in a context with others from both ordinary and nonordinary reality - a different, but important, perspective on community.

### ***Tessa***

Community remains important in her healing practice and spiritual training and growth. Time will help her understanding its role in shamanic practice.

## **7.5 Understanding Tradition**

The role of religious tradition, with its ability to remain consistent, yet adapt to the cultural and spiritual needs of a given generation or era, is something of great relevance in contemporary society. What follows provides insight into how many traditions are being adapted by those who were interviewed.

### ***Franco***

Franco grew up with a Christian heritage, but he also learned about yoga, shamanism, and astrology. Though he does not let himself be confined by self-imposed limitations in each of these traditions, he draws upon them freely, because he sees how they all eventually lead to ultimate unity. What has helped him connect with this unity is the central energy of the Sacred Cone, which for him provides a model or structure that gathers chaotic, fragmented

energy into a matrix with neutral containers and a common language that together facilitate understanding and the wisdom of unity. He sees how the Sacred Cone allows individuals to map where they are in their lives and then create changes that help them more clearly take a road of inner experience toward the centre of unity. Franco said he also sees core shamanism as being this same kind of matrix with empty spaces that allow and support a spiritual process toward unity.

### ***Stephen***

Stephen's religious heritage from childhood is Catholic, which he says offered no power to people and lacked joy and laughter. In contrast to that kind of fairly rigid attempt to control life experiences, his parents allowed him opportunities for failure, freedom, and trust - something he said he appreciates. His spiritual life today includes empowerment of himself and others, and it is filled with joy and laughter. As a result, today he takes responsibility for making decisions about his spiritual growth and development. Furthermore, he helps others do the same.

### ***Cláudia***

Although her religious upbringing was Catholic, Cláudia considers the indigenous spiritual cultures of Brazil and Africa, which provided important dimensions in her spiritual formation, to be her real spiritual heritage. She said she went through a time of rebellion against the dogmas and rules promoted by the Catholic Church. However, today she finds herself befriending Jesus as a figure outside the Church 'box' - as an avatar, a shaman, a guide. For example, Jesus has come to her as a spiritual guide, and they are becoming friends. She said she also feels close to the Black Madonna and to Nossa Senhora Aparecida, the patron of Brazil, who is also known as the goddess of miracles, and who is as important in the Catholic Church in Brazil as she is in spiritual centres all over Brazil. Cláudia's spiritual experience with Power Plant is through the Santo Daime Community in the Amazon in Brazil. She said Santo Daime is also known as the Spirit of Ayuasca, or the Blood of Christ. According to Claudia, in Brazilian culture, many of the Catholic saints have parallels in the

indigenous cultures. She said wants to embrace the whole of humankind and help any people she can help - regardless of their background or heritage.

### **Mark**

Mark grew up as a member of the Church of Scotland, but as a teen explored Taoist philosophy, including Zen, and the I-Ching. Later he also studied Native American, Peruvian, and Aboriginal spiritualities and traditions, including shamanism. As an adult, Mark has integrated many dimensions of his religious and spiritual heritage. He said he draws upon the help of Jesus and Mary from his Christian background; Native American, Aboriginal, and Peruvian guides from his shamanic training; and Eastern philosophy and meditative practice from his Taoist study. In addition, he honors the intuitive healing abilities he discovered he possessed as a child.

### **Alistair**

When Alistair was about eleven, he remembers feeling a strong closeness to ancestors, especially when standing near two dolmens in his hometown. That same year his grandfather died, and Alistair spontaneously did a druid-style memorial service for him in the woods. At age thirteen, Alistair was 'born again' and began having ecstatic experiences that remained constant for him over the next five years. During those years he participated in Pentecostal, charismatic, evangelical, and High Church Anglican services that supported and nurtured his mystical experiences. At age eighteen he went to England, where he became a Church of England youth worker and then lived in an Anglican Benedictine community from age twenty to twenty-two. Because Alistair found monastic life there more strict and contemplative than focused on community, he then left.

Though he did not cut his links with the Anglican Church, he began to move more toward the Spiritualists and the Quakers. At one point he developed as a Spiritualist medium. During this period he also remembers participating with others in a pagan ceremony at Stonehenge. Eventually, he moved to the USA, where he lived for two and a half years as a Shaker Brother in a community of eight people who retained a spiritualist,

ecstatic, charismatic orientation that incorporated a natural closeness to the spirit world, especially with spirits of the departed. There they lived in the natural woodland and made black ash baskets as part of fulfilling what they called 'hands to work and hearts to God'. Because Alistair wanted more intellectual stimulation and learning, he left that community and moved to Edinburgh in October of 1998, where he began an MA in Divinity and was part of the Anglican Chaplaincy at the University of Edinburgh. His study of Christian theology led him to discover that the gospels were not historical and that a feminist theology was lacking. As a result, he wrote his dissertation on the Divine Feminine in Shaker Theology.

At the same time, he realized he had had enough of conventional religion and felt propelled toward paganism. While working on his MA, Alistair began his druidic training through correspondence course. In addition, because he remembered how much he had enjoyed participating in Unitarian services during his stay in the USA, after graduation he enrolled in Manchester Unitarian College, which was part of their theological seminary. However, that was not a good experience, and in a shamanic journey Epona told him she would take him out of there. He returned to Edinburgh, because he felt the call of the city. Since that return, Alistair has continued his druidic training and practice, worked at Golden and provided readings for people there, joined other shamanic practitioners at The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre, continued his shamanic training with John Matthews, and functioned as minister at a Unitarian Church in Glasgow. Involvement in these activities has helped Alistair integrate many of the threads that have come to form his own spiritual tapestry. They may change somewhat over time, but today they reflect his current expression of spirituality.

### ***Preben***

Baptized and confirmed as a Christian in Denmark, Preben's religious heritage was connected more to Protestant Christianity in general than to a specific church. His parents were open, but Preben found Christianity annoying and wanted to learn more about Native

people. His early intuitive connections to animals, other people and their thoughts, and to the spirit beings who started visiting him as early as age four led him to determine that life held more wonder and breadth than what was taught in Christianity. Furthermore, his developing healing abilities exposed him to healers who possessed a spiritual worldview that seemed different from a Christian one. Because Preben started exploring other spiritual perspectives at an early age, his spiritual life today seems to be a natural outgrowth of his life's development so far.

### ***Collette***

Though she does not claim a specific religious heritage, because of her parents' healing work, she participated a couple of times in functions at the Foundation of Spiritual Healers. Collette said her religious, or spiritual, heritage is quite compatible with her spiritual life today.

### ***Heleen***

As a child Heleen was exposed to what she called a kind of 'global Christianity', in which there was no priest, and men and women were separated, though together in church. They had singing, and most people were baptized as adults. However, Heleen said she rebelled against it, especially the church's plea for money from younger kids. There was also another Christian church, though she decided not to marry there, but in the Town Hall, with a theologian as the 'minister'. Later her son and daughter were baptized, but church was not part of their lives. When asked how this background interacted with her spiritual or religious life today, Heleen talked about the term sacred. Determining what is sacred for Heleen depends on the occasion, the environment, and the people. Her various experiences have brought about her current understanding that the sacred can be a way of having fun - a way to 'feel together' in relationship to God.

### ***Jonathan***

As a child Jonathan was exposed more to Christianity than to other religious or spiritual paths. He sees no conflict between the Christian path and what he understands as

shamanism.

### ***Susan***

The Free Church in Scotland and the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand were her religious homes for thirty-five years. She took her children to church, read the Bible, and taught Sunday School for most of that time. However, she eventually realized she felt used and abused by the church's attitudes, especially toward the Maori and homosexuals. She also felt betrayed by the church when her father was ill. Susan said her faith in God has never been stronger than now, but she's on a different road - one that gives her more freedom and support for her spiritual growth. She said she still values the energy of church buildings and music, but she no longer tolerates church communities of people who don't think, want to be told what to do, and then hypocritically do what they're told, not what they believe, because 'It's the thing to do'.

### ***Nanna***

Nanna started out as a Roman Catholic in Italy, but said she lost her spirituality, as a feeling, when she went to school at age four. Though her grandmother prepared her for her First Communion at age seven, her grandmother never went to church, but stayed at home to work. Likewise, her grandfather went outside, not to church. Nanna thinks Jesus was a shaman and that the Bible has some good guidelines - perhaps some truth and wisdom, but most of it was invented by human beings. In her current spiritual practice, she incorporates elements such as ritual, candles, flowers, water, and statues, from her Catholic heritage. However, she uses them with flexibility and in ways that have evolved and seem natural to her. Otherwise, she does not seem concerned about potential conflicts between her current spiritual practice and her Catholic background.

### ***Tessa***

Though raised Irish Catholic, Tessa is not active in the church structure - in part due to her experiences related to being divorced and remarried, a condition not allowed by the church. In spite of this, she loves some of the rituals, candles, and incense, and she occasionally

partakes of a service. Currently she sees herself as being 'all or none' regarding religion, because for her, each religion, or 'way', may have some thing of value when connecting with the Divine. She carries her mother's warning that seeing what others don't see - as in shamanic practice - is a sin, yet she possesses this gift of 'sight' from her Celtic father, who also 'saw'. Tessa herself sees no conflict between her spiritual healing practice - much like shamanic healing - and her Catholic heritage.

## **7.6 Invoking Tradition**

The process of invoking a tradition or parts of a tradition is central to Hervieu-Léger's model of 'religion as a chain of memory'. Descriptions of how those interviewed incorporate this process are listed below.

### ***Franco***

When he works shamanically, Franco invokes the central energy of the Sacred Cone and all the spiritual guides who facilitate movement, learning, and healing within the levels, worlds, directions, and sectors of the Sacred Cone. He calls upon numerous traditions other than shamanism, especially astrology and Christianity, because they are part of his heritage and learning. They also 'work' and make sense to him. Additionally, he has incorporated into his astroshamanic work aspects of ancient pre-Christian mystery religions, paganism, and Gnostic and Christian shamanism.

### ***Stephen***

Stephen invokes the presence, guidance, and support of various spiritual allies when he works shamanically. He also invokes a lineage of knowledge that has been passed down through various shamanic teachers he works with in ordinary reality. Some of these masters and teachers include Peggy Dylan, Peruvian shaman Dr. Pio, New Mexican shaman Emaho, South American shaman Don Alexandro, North American shaman Sandra Ingerman, and other mentors and elders. In addition, Stephen calls upon traditions from Buddhism, fire walking, and star gazing, which he integrates into his shamanic work.

## **Cláudia**

When Cláudia works shamanically, she invokes her spiritual allies. Some allies come for protection, while others assist depending upon the need. Cláudia allows them to speak to her through her body, particularly in the way she feels when she's asking for their guidance and help. She invokes traditions other than shamanic, including some from her childhood. Growing up and even now, many people have attended the Catholic Church on Sundays. However, on Fridays and other time during the weeks, a variety of spiritual traditions have been honored and practiced at the neighborhood spiritual centres. One is *umbanda*, which came from Africa, and another is *Allan Kardec*, which arose from the French. *Mesablanca*, meaning 'white table seance', is also available as a way of channeling the spirits of light. Another practice is *candomble*, which originated in Africa. Cláudia said that the practice of Afro-Brazilian Capoeira is very common in Brazil; although similar to martial arts, it has deep African spiritual roots. As a result of both Cláudia and Mark's backgrounds, the Shamanic Centre has started offering Afro-Brazilian Capoeira, West African drumming, guided meditations, healing circles, art and creativity experiences, Celtic Druidic traditions, Native American teachings and practices, and working the angels. To them, these traditions offer a variety of ways for expressing a fundamental shamanic perspective of looking at life in relationship to the world and to the spirits of nonordinary reality.

## **Mark**

Regarding who or what he invokes when he works shamanically, Mark said he is not comfortable with labeling or defining exactly what should be done. He supports each person's right to identify what feels right and call on whatever ally may be needed to help - in part because that is how he himself works. The process of invoking spiritual help may be a constant, but the ways in which that is done or the identity of the allies called upon may differ according to the circumstance. Mark has discovered that certain spiritual allies help with specific issues. He calls upon the angelic realms, personal guides, Great Spirit, and animal guides and says he 'isn't attached to the traditions from which they come.' He 'feels

Spirit communicates in ways that we can all understand: a line from a song, poetry, movies, nature, thoughts, and above all, experience.'

### ***Alistair***

In his shamanic practice Alistair invokes many of his spiritual allies. One of the ways he determines which allies to invoke or which issues to explore when he does his weekly shamanic journey is to use the Celtic Shaman's Pack, which was created by John Matthews. Working with those cards helps him discern guidance and understand direction that is offered to him. Alistair often does divinations and extractions for people who ask him for shamanic help. Regarding other traditions, Alistair calls upon and integrates many that have been part of his life over the years. For him, each tradition has something to offer, especially when it can help with his current work.

### ***Preben***

In his shamanic practice, Preben tunes into what is going on with the person who has come to him in an attempt to clarify any presenting issues, discern any natural cycles, and arrive at an intuitive sense of where the person is spiritually in relationship to the healing request. He then asks Spirit for guidance and works with whichever spiritual allies present themselves to help with healing - calling upon a variety of traditions. However, they all seem to have a shamanic dimension in that they involve relationships with spiritual beings who help with information and healing that bring about an increased sense of kinship and oneness.

### ***Collette***

When Collette does shamanic practice, she invokes spirits that will help and trusts that the appropriate one(s) will assist her in her own life or in helping others - regardless of what tradition(s) they may represent.

### ***Heleen***

Regarding traditions or memories, Heleen said she does not consciously call upon them. Ritual for her is present and 'goes along with all the things you do'. In reference to

shamanism's compatibility with other spiritual traditions, she said that since all God created is good, all ways of developing spiritually are good. Furthermore, she thinks we have a duty to use our brains. When her husband died six years ago, saying just before he died, 'That's my loving wife,' it strengthened her. She says she is on a learning path, 'so why change'.

### ***Jonathan***

Jonathan invokes guidance, but hasn't necessarily experienced that guidance as coming from an ally in a specific form. His actions have demonstrated that he calls upon those spiritual traditions that both his faith and his instinct guide him to explore and to utilize as tools along his spiritual path.

### ***Susan***

When Susan works shamanically, she calls upon spiritual allies, or guides, and traditions that speak to her life and support individual discernment and choice in growing a relationship with God.

### ***Nanna***

In her spiritual practice, Nanna invokes the Universe, not one person. She referred to the Buddha in saying that the universe is there - with no tradition, no building, and no donations expected. Regarding access to traditions other than shamanism, Nanna calls on what works, but finds particular support in Buddhism, which to her, represents places she has been where there is good energy.

### ***Tessa***

When she works shamanically, or in her healing practice, she invokes many of her spiritual allies, or guides and calls upon various spiritual traditions that help in her spiritual growth and development. Though numerous, some are energy balancing, magnified healing essence, light work, and the invocation of specific spiritual allies.

## **7.7 Determining Legitimate Authority**

A critical factor in societal decisions about what is credible and acceptable is the perception

of what confers legitimate authority - of who has it and why. Below are the responses that describe what those who were interviewed consider the legitimizing authority for their spiritual worldview.

### ***Franco***

For Franco, legitimacy and authority derive from his worldview that all is one and that we can learn something positive and life giving from all experiences. The need for a legitimizing authority outside one's own experience would be for Franco an expression of the fragmented energy he strives to heal and bring into wholeness.

### ***Stephen***

Love and Blessing form the legitimizing authority for Stephen when determining what is authentic on his path of spiritual growth. Furthermore, he said he knows intuitively when he is practicing the internal spiritual discipline necessary for surrendering to that Life Force of Love and Blessing. He trusts and believes that the Universe will nurture and take care of him when he presents a pure intention. As he learned from Sandra Ingerman, intention and trust are key.

### ***Cláudia***

Cláudia said her legitimizing authority comes from Spirit. She feels the spiritual presence(s) in her body and knows when her ego is working for control and when she is tapping into spiritual guidance. That spiritual authority is new, different, free, and refrains from judging others harshly. Though in the beginning, she needed to rely more on what others told her was legitimate, now she continues learning to know and trust her Self and the spirits for that legitimacy.

### ***Mark***

When asked how he knows his guidance is legitimate and authoritative, Mark said he feels several sensations. They include a feeling of enthusiasm, a tingling in his body, an inner shift of emotions, and the appearance of spiritual colors. He also experiences a peaceful assurance that his work is appropriate and will not hurt anybody. He said his intention is

always love, which he considers the energy that heals.

### ***Alistair***

Alistair said he knows something is authoritative when it contains truth, if it works to help himself or others, and when he discovers supporting evidence emerging through synchronicity.

### ***Preben***

Preben determines whether what he is learning and doing spiritually is legitimate and authoritative by letting go of ego, continuing to learn from Spirit, and not allowing others to dictate what he believes must come from Spirit. He attempts to step away from trying to control a situation and let Spirit work. Experience has helped him know what brings truth (i.e. his vision, reflections, and traveling dreams), because they have a quality he recognizes as valuable. In them he can sense and feel a strange confidence and a security that comes from being held by Spirit. He 'knows' when he's letting words flow, because they are beyond regular consciousness, and they reflect his having learned to be a 'hollow bone' for Spirit.

### ***Collette***

Collette looks inside, accepts herself as she is, and trusts her own intuitive guidance, truth, and experience when determining what is legitimate and authoritative in her shamanic practice.

### ***Heleen***

When asked how she knows her spiritual practice is legitimate and authoritative, she said she experiences a lot of miracles, and that when she is open to recognize the signs, it makes her happy. In her words, 'It makes you strong in difficult situations. God, take me in your hands'.

### ***Jonathan***

Jonathan said his legitimizing authority was his strong belief in utilizing both his faith and his instinct - also his feelings or emotions and his intellect. As an example, he described how

drawing upon that combination of personal resources and experience has allowed him to disagree with those who say that Christianity is the only true religion or with a vicar friend of his who has criticized transcendental meditation.

### ***Susan***

Susan said that the core of her, which connects with the Divine, is her legitimate authority. Furthermore, she surrounds herself with people she trusts - those who help her discern her path, but know the final choices are hers. She said she tries to be sensible, practical, and grounded, and she is careful about those with whom she shares her 'precious experiences' or 'spiritual treasures'.

### ***Nanna***

Nanna herself is the legitimizing authority for the way she believes. When asked how she knows she is aligned with the Universe, she said that when she communicates with other human beings and experiences a feeling that something good comes out, the 'ball starts rolling'; she then feels good and gives out good energy. That's how she knows whether or not she's in alignment with the Universe.

### ***Tessa***

Tessa's legitimizing authority for her spiritual perspectives and choices is her own experience. She 'just knows' and nurtures her relationship with that Divine Essence, or God. Not only does she incorporate a number of classic spiritual exercises into her daily spiritual practice, but she also remains in communication with other spiritual healers and teachers who help and support her discerning process.

## **7.8 Believing**

How one believes and what it means to believe are challenging questions that relate directly to Hervieu-Léger's definition. Below are descriptions of how those interviewed think they have changed or grown in relation to their way of believing.

### ***Franco***

Growing up, Franco learned to believe that he was living in a fantasy world, but everyone else was grounded in reality. This was so, because that reality was spelled out in rules and maxims that had been externalized and believed to be objectively true. However, his own experiences, along with his lifelong passion for learning and inner growing, led him to understand beliefs as strategies that can change if they are based on experience and they 'work' or make sense. He described beliefs as agreements about the way the world is, though they can and do change as our perceptions and experiences interact with and influence the continued validity of those agreements. In effect, believing has become for him a process of growing, expanding, and transforming his worldview as that worldview is regularly informed by his life experiences.

### ***Stephen***

Today Stephen believes in ways that are both similar and different from his past. His legitimizing authority is something he determines internally, rather than accepting an external authority. At the same time, he invokes the lineages of knowledge passed on to him by various honored teachers, and he calls upon his spiritual allies for guidance and protection. As a younger person, he was not as confident about how to work with what he experienced spiritually.

### ***Cláudia***

How Cláudia believes today is more of an attention to the process of relationship, rather than to an acceptance or rejection of religious rules. She now has more confidence and support for finding ways of integrating and incorporating the varied spiritual dimensions of her background. In effect, she 'believes' in the beneficial help of spiritual allies to help her 'know' through her own intuition and body; in contrast, she does not 'believe' in a set of constructs, or rules, that outline and dictate what she should think spiritually.

### ***Mark***

Mark's way of believing today is different from earlier in his life in that he does not doubt himself as much. He told me he realizes he is not alone and that the love of people and life

is the basis of who he is. He said, 'We're all manifestations of the Divine.' His way of believing is the same in that he remains 'irreverent and humorous' - laughing a lot and not being too serious in the face of adversity.

### ***Alistair***

The way Alistair believes today is somewhat different from before in that he is now more practical. What counts for him is healing, wholeness, good health, and happiness. Today he feels freer to be himself, in part because he feels more fully affirmed as a worthwhile human being.

### ***Preben***

One of the ways Preben believes differently today is in his shift from looking at 'past lives' to looking at 'parallel lives'. Another is recognizing the difference between what needs to be built, using the element of fire to create and nurture, and what needs to be learned, using the heart energy of unconditional oneness - mostly found in wise elders.

### ***Collette***

Collette's way of believing today is different from the past in that she trusts herself more and honors her own path, rather than placing her total trust in something external. Feedback from a trusted community helps, but she believes she alone has ultimate accountability for her own life.

### ***Heleen***

Heleen said that the word 'believe' is not certain and can be applied in different ways. For example, one can say, 'I believe it will rain today.' However, she equates believing more to feeling an inner power and to knowing something from deep within. She thinks 'you have to feel it' and should not judge other people and their religions or try to pressure another into believing something you believe.

### ***Jonathan***

Though he did not explain how his way of believing is different today from when he was younger, Jonathan's exploration of transcendental meditation and shamanism as an adult

seems to reflect an openness to new learning and to processes, or tools, that help people reach points of spiritual growth. It is also consistent with his earlier statement about all paths leading to the one.

### ***Susan***

A key way in which Susan believes differently today than she did in the past is her sense of self-trust and self-confidence regarding her own personal and spiritual growth, her acceptance of a growth and change process that includes exploring doubt, and her realization that she is blessed. She said she no longer believes churches, or anybody else for that matter, have the only right interpretations of the Bible, since the Bible contains passages that support almost anything a person want to claim - no matter how contradictory. Regarding evil, she thinks evil is created and materialized only when someone gives it energy and life. Furthermore, people are still able to shine light on that kind of darkness.

### ***Nanna***

The way Nanna believes today is different from how she believed in the past primarily in her growing confidence she has in her own relationship with the Universe.

### ***Tessa***

Tessa currently has a view of religious expression that has expanded from that of her youth. She now believes and does access whatever she discovers from different religious traditions that help or support her relationship with the Divine.

## **7.9 Overall Observations and Themes**

Participants in this study have very clearly stated that the legitimizing authority for they way they belief is their own inner knowing – based especially on their relationship with what they often call Spirit, or Guidance. They also see little or no conflict between their early religious background and the ways they believe today. In addition, they appear to find great support and encouragement from the variety of multi-cultural and multi-spiritual traditions they access on their path of spiritual growth. They do invoke various traditions and feel

connected to many who are not physically present. However, that core lineage does not seem to focus on sets of beliefs as much as ways of believing and living. Finally, community is something growing in importance for them, but they are still exploring what that means and how to make that happen over time.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: ANALYSIS OF FIELD RESEARCH

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter is the culmination of a carefully constructed process that began by articulating the fundamental research questions in Chapter One; building the necessary theoretical foundations in Chapters Two, Three, and Four; responding to the first research question about a limited number of shamanic practitioners and their communities in Scotland by providing in Chapter Five the context for the field research and an introduction to the participants who formed the basis of this study; and presenting in Chapter Six the field research data relevant to the Model of Core Shamanism, followed in Chapter Seven by field data relevant to Hervieu-Léger's Model of Religion.

Chapter Eight responds to the subsequent research questions, which build upon each other. The first of these questions calls for determining a possible correlation between the shamanic work of those in this study and the elements of core shamanism contained in the shamanic model presented in Chapter Two. The second question requires discovering whether the shamanic practice described in this study corresponds to the analytical model of religion as a chain of memory, which is described in Chapter Four. The final research question, for which the groundwork was laid in Chapter Three, searches the field data and prior analyses for evidence of key characteristics present in the transformation of religion. At each level of analysis, there is a statement addressing the significance of the findings and showing how those results weave together to advance a scholarly understanding of how religion in Western society is transforming itself in our midst.

Determining the presence of shamanic elements comes in the first section and is followed by analyzing the field research to discover possible correlations with the Hervieu-Léger model of religion. Once these are complete, overlaying the critical factors effecting the transformation of religion and culture provides the final analysis of all the field data for the presence and/or influence of those factors. The chapter ends with an overall statement of the key research findings and their significance. As in Chapters Six and Seven,

throughout this chapter there will be periodic distinctions between the shamanic practitioners and those who functioned as their community members. All are considered participants.

## **8.2 Evidence of Elements from the Model of Cross-Cultural Shamanism**

### **8.2.1 Overview**

The Model of Cross-Cultural Shamanism contains the following elements, which are analyzed in the sections presented below: vocation and initiation; cosmology; soul flight/journeying; consciousness; spiritual allies; soul healing; and community support.

### **8.2.2 Shamanic Vocation and Initiation**

All of the practitioners described experiences they realized at some point were initiations that eventually led them to accept some type of shamanic vocation. These initiations varied from occurring during sleep, a near-death experience as part of an illness, shamanic journeys, or other visionary activities, to spontaneously taking place in particular locations or at specific events, such as while fire walking, during a sweat lodge, or in a healing session. Several talked about the alienation they felt when they knew they could see what others could not see, yet knew no human person who could help or guide them. Some had to unlearn destructive behaviors and release memories and/or fears that had become blocks to accepting a shamanic calling. The one female practitioner specifically described that kind of fear. Most of them spontaneously met spiritual allies who gave them support and comfort.

All but one from the shamanic communities described life experiences that were spiritually powerful, but not necessarily initiatory. The one exception felt very clearly that her experiences had been spiritual initiations; though spiritual, the question remains as to whether those initiations were leading her into a shamanic vocation.

These findings provide evidence that for the practitioners, the cross-cultural element of shamanic vocation and initiation is present in their lives and work. Their initiations and

vocational callings took place within the cultural contexts of a contemporary Western culture that has tended to marginalize or discredit shamans and others who move beyond reason and sensory data into the intuitive and nonphysical realms. Though several practitioners talked about an older family member or friend who nurtured and guided them for a while, that primarily occurred over a limited period of time during their youth, and it was prior to their actual initiations. The community supports for identifying, assisting, and guiding shamanic 'initiates' in Scotland have been fragmented, but appear to be coalescing as networks of other shamanic and spiritual practitioners.

### **8.2.3 Shamanic Cosmology**

Though all of the practitioners described being in nonordinary reality, which they said contained upper, lower, and middle worlds, they also had some divergence in the ways they experienced it. That was due in part to the fact that people who can visualize are able to depict scenes they see, while those who are auditory or kinesthetic take in and describe their 'environment' through sound, touch, and other senses. Accounts of the nonordinary realms ranged from being similar to ordinary reality environments, to geometric shapes, an expansive universe, and a parallel existence. The practitioners talked about an earthly, ordinary reality starting point for their journeys, but they did not elaborate.

Those in the shamanic community also reflected these kinds of similarities and differences in their experience of the nonordinary realms. They all had some kind of experience, and they were learning about a shamanic cosmology from the practitioners who were teaching them. Because of that, they knew cognitively that there were three general 'areas' within nonordinary realms and that when the drumming began, they were traveling to the one which had been suggested by their teacher. Two talked about upper and lower realms, while another two could not distinguish between the worlds. One saw light, color, and energy, and another only felt the experience.

Based on these reports, there is evidence of a shamanic cosmology being present

in this field research - especially among the practitioners, who were teaching that cosmology to their community members. Just as the Yup'ik Eskimos have a unique spatial orientation for their shamanic cosmology, described more fully in Chapter Two, findings in this study reflect diverse experiences, yet all involved described having moved into another place or realm that is compatible with cross-cultural descriptions. Furthermore, the research shows how some people described their experiences visually, while others processed them in a more kinesthetic or auditory way. The practitioner who traveled to what he called parallel existences points out the possibility that the shamanic cosmology may not be directional only, but may perhaps be accessed through a kind of parallel travel.

#### **8.2.4 Shamanic Soul Flight/Journeying**

All who were interviewed in this study talked about taking a shamanic journey from ordinary reality to nonordinary reality and back again. In addition, when in nonordinary reality, they met and worked with spiritual allies in a very interactive way. For many, that experience brought peace, insight, information, or feelings that positively impacted their lives. This was due in part to the fact that they began their journeys with clear intentions for the help, healing, or information they were seeking.

The fact that each person actually experienced a shamanic journey that involves what is classically called a soul flight provides evidence that shamanic journeys are present in this field research. Sometimes the methods for teaching the shamanic community how to journey did not always appear to be clear, but that did not seem to hinder the learners. Nobody asked the difference between a shamanic journey and other types of meditation or prayer, and that issue was not discussed. Those who were learning did ask questions about how to distinguish between what is real and what is a product of one's ego or desires when journeying. In response, Franco encouraged people in his workshops to go with what happens initially - reserving judgment, analysis, and interpretation for later. He also suggested that the experience could be considered authentic if it worked and brought a

sense of ecstasy and goodness. Those concerns about trusting one's experiences and discerning their authenticity seemed to be a natural part of the learning process.

### **8.2.5 Shamanic Consciousness**

Practitioners and community members alike said that drumming, rattling, or some form of rhythmic beat helped them achieve a consciousness that facilitated shamanic experiences. Some practitioners also used dance, music, and breath work, meditation, ritual, ceremony, artwork, special costumes and sacred objects, incense, ritual drama, and body postures as effective ways help themselves and others achieve a shamanic state of consciousness. In a few cases, people described reaching a shamanic consciousness primarily by setting an intention.

This element of cross-cultural shamanism is also evident in the field research. It is an important part of how people access meaningful shamanic experiences and tap into their sense of the sacred. Though understanding meaning and recognizing the sacred still require personal discernment, these methods facilitate that process.

### **8.2.6 Shamanic Spiritual Allies**

Both practitioners and community members said they have worked with spiritual allies in animal and human form, and some went on to describe auras, lights, angelic beings, deities, fairies, elements, trees, and plants that have helped, protected, and partnered with them. For many, these allies have provided guidance, healing, and personal power. Several of the practitioners described uniting with their spiritual allies in order to do healing work for others.

The fact that all involved said they have worked with spiritual allies who guide, protect, and partner with them provides evidence that this element is also present in the field research. Some indicated they still needed to discover which allies were helpful and also to learn to work with those allies. However, accessing them was something all were able to do.

### **8.2.7 Shamanic Soul Healing**

The practitioners described experiences of shamanic soul healing not only for themselves, but also as something they offer others. Personal soul healing for several of these practitioners came through their initiations. Some of the healing they said they have received and have offered others include soul retrievals, extractions, and the release of unhelpful memories. For several people their shamanic healing experiences occurred in dreams, meditations, workshops, and shamanic training sessions. Soul healing for several of the women involved releasing memories and re-patterning core beliefs that had proved to be damaging. To some degree, that is not surprising, because exploring memories is a significant part of Franco's work during a training workshop. Both Cláudia and Mark had attended Franco's workshop at Lendrick Lodge, and Cláudia had explained how much the healing of memories had helped her. At the Findhorn workshop included in this study, Franco directed participants on specific journeys to hold as their intentions the purpose of identifying, healing, and/or releasing memories that had become for them sources of alienation and separateness or blocks to personal and spiritual growth. This form of healing memories appeared to be a variation of the traditional soul retrieval, because when a shamanic practitioner brings back a soul part, the memory of why it left also returns. Central in that healing process is making peace with the trauma that had prompted the soul loss in the first place, addressing any unfinished business related to that trauma, and reuniting with the soul energy that has been recovered and returned at last.

Soul healing was a very powerful dimension in the shamanic experiences described by those who were interviewed, and as such, is convincing evidence that this element exists in the field research. This kind of healing takes both the traditional forms of soul retrieval, extractions, and divination, but it also involves contemporary variations that appear tied to cultural shifts in the way healing is perceived and understood. They are not abstract concepts that just sound appealing; they are healing methods directly related to the daily lives of those seeking the healing. The purpose of both traditional and contemporary forms

of shamanic healing is to re-connect the person to self, others, and the whole of life. One of the challenges facing those who are called to do shamanic healing work is to find adequate teachers of shamanic healing methods. Another is to assure that those who come for healing work have appropriate follow-up support for integration of the healing process in their lives.

### **8.2.8 Community**

Community has emerged as an important factor for the practitioners, though the ways in which that happens are still unfolding. Each practitioner agreed that community provides a safe and supportive place for healers and for those seeking healing to meet, do their work, and support each other in growing personally and spiritually. They said it also reflects a sense of oneness and interrelatedness - a network of kindred spirits who help each other remember their unity. This perspective reflects a shift in thinking for some, because until recently, many of them worked as solitary practitioners, rather than as members of a shamanic community.

Members of the shamanic communities in this study have varying understanding of the importance of community. A couple of them clearly acknowledged how community had been contributing to their spiritual growth process; others said they had not thought much about it, but could see its value. In relationship to shamanism, the idea of community was relatively new to several people.

Though the weakest shamanic element found in this field research appears to be 'community', there is still evidence that it is present throughout in several different forms. Whether the Findhorn Foundation Community, which supports Franco in his extensive astroshamanic work, The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre, or Lendrick Lodge, each of these communities offers a safe space for practitioners to do healing work; provision for teaching, learning, and training regarding shamanic practice; and an atmosphere of holism. It is this holistic paradigm of oneness, or kinship, within each individual, between people, with all life

forms, and across time and space that unites these practitioners and their communities - regardless of the ways in which they come together externally.

However, several challenges remain. One is understanding the meaning and importance of intentional shamanic communities that are external expressions of a common world view. Another is knowing how to form, maintain, and support various types of intentional spiritual communities that are shamanic in nature and scope. Finally, after years of solitary work, some practitioners will be helped by assuring they have the skills necessary to handle groups and to help clients integrate their shamanic healing experiences.

### **8.2.9 Significance of the Results**

The field research presented in this thesis provides evidence that all seven elements in the Model of Cross-Cultural Shamanism are present, but what does that tell us, and what difference does it make? First of all, the model of core shamanism presented in Chapter Two arose primarily from scholarly research into traditional, indigenous shamanism, not from an extensive study of neo-shamanisms. Also, 'core shamanism' as a concept came from Michael Harner, the anthropologist who coined that term after living and working with indigenous shamanic cultures. Chapter Two briefly addressed contemporary forms of shamanism, but scholar Robert Wallis noted that academic research into that area has been minimal. The fact that the core elements found cross-culturally in traditional, indigenous shamanic cultures are also present in the shamanic work of the contemporary practitioners in this study tells us that there is a fundamental similarity between traditional shamanism and these particular expressions of neo-shamanisms in Scotland. That similarity comes initially in a shamanic worldview that embodies ways of perceiving reality and of interacting with this perceived reality that can be found underlying diverse and unique cultural expressions throughout the world. Essential in that worldview is the perception of a kinship system of interrelatedness that exists now, has done so 'from the beginning', and it often represented by the symbol of the World Tree or the Tree of Life (Drury: 38-39).

Furthermore, those who perceive this kinship system as real actually maintain and hold the memory of a 'wholeness paradigm' - of how on both micro and macro levels, all life forms are intrinsically valued, relate to each other, and can work in harmony. They understand illness as being separation, alienation, and fragmentation; and they work on a soul level to heal those divisions by remembering and releasing barriers of alienation and by restoring connections with the self, society, other life forms in the environment, and all life in the universe. That is why shamanic initiations have often involved the initiate in experiences of feeling separate from their communities due to seeing life differently; wrestling with their nonordinary reality visions and demands; and coming to terms with how they can relate to their new spiritual allies as they re-join their communities and offer themselves and their gifts in service to a fragmented society that at best, only partially understands and appreciates them.

Those interviewed in this study came to their shamanic calling through experiences that prompted them to learn more in order to understand what had happened to them. Though some of them eventually read accounts of shamans and shamanic ways, the reading came later. During the interviews and participant observation sessions, none of the practitioners referred to core shamanism. In other words, learning about traditional shamanism was what helped them understand their experiences, and core shamanism as a concept was not something they articulated or talked about wanting to integrate. Though Cláudia is currently (2005) offering a class on 'core shamanism', when I vaguely mentioned the idea of core shamanic elements to her during one of our initial discussions in 2003, she responded by explicitly stating she did not want to exclude people by setting up rigid parameters declaring who was 'in' and who was 'out' as a shamanic practitioner. The point being made is that the elements in the model of core shamanism were present among the contemporary practitioners as common features - without their having made conscious attempts to assure they reflected a particular model. They did not even know I had a model or that one existed. At the same time, individual shamanic elements, such as working with

spiritual allies or practicing soul healing, may well have been learned from other practitioners and/or from books that together helped these participants conceptualize and understand their experiences. Indeed, they have been influenced, helped, and taught by others throughout their training, but that training did not entail learning the configuration of elements presented in the model provided in Chapter Two.

These results also affirm a growing recognition among researchers, described more fully in Chapter Three, that traditions reflecting a world view with fundamental values and principles able to survive the 'test of time' are ones that can change their external forms to meet cultural needs - without compromising their underlying sense of integrity in purpose and vision. In fact, that is exactly how they survive. As cultures change, these traditions adapt to human needs by creating new expressions of coherence and meaning out of an emerging cultural context (Halbwachs, 1992: 40)(Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 87). Another way this happens is by looking beyond historical reality of a tradition to discover the symbolic reality and recover the memory that it sustained (Nora, 1996: xvii).

Many of the elements represented in this shamanism model are also found in various parts of Western society. Using music, drumming, or dance (trance or other types) to achieve a state of consciousness that facilitates praying and/or accessing other ways of knowing is characteristic, but not exclusive, to shamanism. Likewise, communicating with spiritual allies for help, support, protection, and information is not limited to shamanism. People from various religious traditions for millennia have called upon saints, angels, prophets, goddesses, gods, and mythic figures - all spiritual beings perceived to be in the nonordinary realms. Many of the 'alternative spiritualities' contain elements that could be labeled shamanic. However, just as certain processes can have therapeutic results without being a system of therapy, having a few elements that are shamanic does not make something a system of shamanism. What distinguishes shamanic practice in this study is the way in which all of the shamanic elements from the model come together to form a unique system of that can only be called shamanism, not something else.

The difficult issue of 'community' in contemporary shamanic circles tells us as much about the overarching paradigm of Western society as it does about the shamanic practitioners and those who work with them. As discussed in Chapter Two, over several centuries many traditional shamanic communities within the Western world have been attacked, oppressed, and marginalized almost to the point of extinction. Many of them have survived by quietly holding on to fragments of tradition and to memories of a worldview that had sustained them and their ancestors over time. One example of that is the Oglala Sioux holy man Black Elk, who prophesied about a day that the 'sacred hoop' of oneness would be restored around the Tree of Life (Black Elk, 1961). Throughout Europe during the Inquisition, many of the people executed as witches were women and men who 'saw' what others could not see, worked with spiritual allies, and healed on a soul level (Ankarloo, 1993)(Briggs, 1998)(Ginzburg, 1991). Their way of life was not understood or sanctioned by those in authority, and they paid for that with their lives. Though the Reformation brought needed changes in some areas, it prompted both Protestant and Catholic church leaders to narrowly define, and thus dictate, what was acceptable thinking, belief, and behavior; and that did not include a shamanic world view.

In Scotland and other parts of Europe, 'those claiming to heal outside the context of the Church must have got their powers from the Devil'; as a result, they were often severely punished or killed as witches (Larner: 9). Though shamanic healing and witchcraft may have had similarities, research to date does not substantiate their being the same. The Enlightenment focus on reason, combined with an intense suspicion of intuition, or of anything that could not be empirically validated by the acknowledged five senses, only intensified that mind set. Belonging to a 'public' shamanic community of any kind was dangerous. Though there is no documented evidence to date of a seamless historical thread of shamanic practice in Scotland, Trevarthen, who was cited in Chapter Two, has provided some evidence of shamanism playing a role in Celtic religion from around 500 BCE to 500 CE and of a shamanic worldview being present in certain aspects of early Celtic

culture (Trevarthen, 2003). Building upon that, some of the tales gathered by ethnologists and stored in the archives of the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh have been shown to contain shamanic elements listed in the model of shamanism used in this study (Burgess, 2002). The 'tradition bearers' who told those tales may have made no conscious connection to shamanism. However, Bowman has addressed the issue of how vernacular religion, with its 'belief stories', has often provided informal modes of transmitting and maintaining the unofficial belief traditions of a given community (Bowman, 2000: 84-85).

The power of traditional religions and governments to exclude and marginalize those with a shamanic type of worldview has direct relevance to the fragmented state of shamanic communities today. Contemporary shamanic practitioners have often had to face their 'different' way of seeing without the guidance of traditional shamans or the benefit of living in shamanic communities. At the same time, the emergence of alternative spiritualities within the last thirty years has also opened up new ways of finding teachers and of forming other types of community support for their work. What we see in this study is a network of practitioners that are both learning shamanic ways from each other and also seeking training from other shamans in various cultures. This type of small group networking among contemporary 'spiritual seekers' is very well described throughout Sutcliffe's book *Children of the New Age* (Sutcliffe, 2003).

On a very practical level, they are also facing the challenge of finding spaces where they can do their healing work and gather as a shamanic community - in whatever form. As a result, those who have invested financially in the creation of centres where shamanic work occurs have the added challenge of handling the business end of their work. By not living in a traditional indigenous society that has developed ways of supporting their shamans and by not being affiliated with an institutional religion that understands or supports their work, they must either have some kind of independent income or earn enough money to pay for both business and personal living expenses. As with most other people, they also face decisions related to setting boundaries that balance work and personal life, developing

shamanic and business skills, and facilitating the human relations dimensions of working with groups and co-workers.

Though all of the traditional shamanic elements are present in the work of the practitioners in this study, they also reflect some of the contemporary forms of shamanism briefly addressed in Chapter Two and more fully studied in Wallis's book on neo-shamanisms (Wallis, 2003). As noted in both places, the position of neo-shamans in the eyes of certain indigenous shamanic societies has come under growing scrutiny. As a result, most neo-shamanic practitioners very likely will be faced at some time with having to address the question of appropriation. However, one of the practitioners in this study was born and raised in Brazil, where she grew up learning various aspects of indigenous Brazilian shamanism, along with other types of spirituality that were a natural part of her living environment. Some of the other practitioners have been studying with traditional shamans who have taken them in as apprentices in one way or another. Because a number of these practitioners draw upon their own native shamanic traditions and/or continue to learn from indigenous shamans in the ways just described, the issue of appropriation may not figure as prominently in the challenges they ultimately face.

Finally, from a global perspective, the diverse cultural backgrounds of those in this study reflect a variety of spiritual practices that are grounded in the core elements of traditional shamanism, which claims an existence over centuries, if not longer. This cross-cultural nature of shamanism and its history of longevity reflect continuity across cultures and from the past into the present. Furthermore, practitioners in this study see themselves as serving not just individuals and local communities, but all life on the planet and in the universe. Their commitment to a kinship system is all-inclusive. Because of this, the very presence of shamanic communities like those in this study brings the larger society face to face with another example of the need to address effectively the diversity and plurality of religious perspectives that exist outside the institutional faith traditions and religions, but reflect a growing spirituality that is emerging as part of a global consciousness.

## **8.3 Evidence of Components from Hervieu-Léger's Model of Religion as a Chain of Memory**

### **8.3.1 Overview**

The key components from Hervieu-Léger's Model that are used in this analysis include: community; understanding tradition; invoking tradition; determining legitimate authority; and believing.

### **8.3.2 Community**

'Community' is the only component that is represented both in the Model of Cross-Cultural Shamanism and in Hervieu-Léger's Model of Religion. Because most of the community data was analyzed in the last section, the focus here is on a more detailed look at the three shamanic communities. Franco, the most experienced of the practitioners, actually lives in an established intentional spiritual community that retains a few similarities to the neo-rural communities Hervieu-Léger was studying when she discovered the 'chain of memory' aspects now incorporated into her definition of religion. Stephen and his family also live in an established intentional spiritual community, though Lendrick Lodge is much younger and smaller than Findhorn. Like Findhorn, Lendrick Lodge accommodates the few who live there regularly, those who come to stay as residents for short periods of time, and others who come for day visits. The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre is home to people who come for shamanic activities or events at specified times, though it is not designed for residential living. All three centres maintain a sense of intentional community with those who learn about their programs through e-mail, web, post, or telephone, and with those who participate in their offerings. Along with occasional and temporary participants and/or clients who do not live at these centres, those in the communication loop regarding centre or program offerings are all treated as important community members.

The characteristics described above and in the analysis of the community element in the previous shamanic model provide evidence that 'community' is present in this field

research. As stated in the shamanic analysis of community, some of the challenges facing the practitioners in this research project centre around understanding the relevance of community; exploring the feasibility of various forms of community that best support their work; dialoguing with indigenous shamans, as appropriate; and developing the skills needed to handle and relate to groups of all kinds - whether within the centres or in the larger society. The complex nature of defining community will be addressed briefly in the subsequent section that presents the significance of the Model of Religion findings.

### **8.3.3 Understanding Tradition**

Practitioners and community members all described at least a part of their religious background as being Christian - with the represented Christian traditions including Church of Scotland, Dutch Protestantism, Catholic, Anglican, and what one called a kind of 'global Christianity' with no specific priest or minister. Furthermore, their perceptions and experiences within those traditions often varied, prompting several to rebel against elements they considered unhelpful or even harmful, and others to retain what worked, while ignoring what seemed superficial or irrelevant. Several chose to expand beyond what they thought were limitations in the Christian worldview as they had learned it. One easily focused on the spiritual healing tradition practiced by her father. Astrology, mysticism, the Tao, Zen, indigenous spiritualities of North and South America, Africa, and Australia, druidry, yoga, and shamanism are among the traditions and practices that participants in this study said they had found not only helpful, but also complimentary with their own spiritual heritages. The perspective prevalent among all of them was that of encompassing a plurality of spiritual or religious ways. A few said they rely upon spirits like Jesus, the saints, and the Black Madonna; and another couple people talked about accessing their intuitive abilities. Most found meaningful aspects of various traditions and applied them to daily life. Articulated most extensively by Franco throughout his workshops and in his books, but respected and held as a worldview by the practitioners in particular, is the tradition of the

ultimate unity and interrelatedness of all life. The kinship of 'all our relations' was central for them, and other cultural traditions were accessed when they were experienced as resonating with and supporting that kinship system perspective.

The above provides evidence that Hervieu-Léger's component of 'understanding tradition' is present in this field research, but perhaps only partially, and certainly with subtle distinctions. Though Hervieu-Léger solidly acknowledges the need for traditions to change as they are passed on to others, she appears to view a tradition as a unit unto itself with a set of core beliefs - a chain of beliefs. With that in mind, shamanic practitioners in this study have tended to draw upon parts of various traditions, or chains, rather than any particular one. In that case, their understanding would not correspond to this component in her model of religion. At the same time, the shamanic 'tradition' could be said to exist as the kinship system, or paradigm, of interrelatedness with all life. Under that umbrella, practitioners have accessed not only that kinship paradigm, but also a diverse array of additional traditions with characteristics that have stood the test of time and have retained their fundamental value throughout changes in external appearances and practices.

However, an important challenge in this perspective remains - namely, that while a paradigm is indeed a set of beliefs about the way the world is, it differs subtly from a set of beliefs about ideas, values, or perspectives within a tradition that one cognitively accepts or rejects in theory. The former names and describes what one experiences as real, while the latter reflects concepts one consciously thinks about and decides makes sense or not - regardless of whether those concepts express one's own personal experience. Each 'set of beliefs' contains elements of the other; the question calls for determining where the emphasis, or primary importance, lies. Both ways of understanding tradition demonstrate Hervieu-Léger's contention that 'the distinctive mark of tradition is to actualize the past in the present, to restore to human lives as they are lived the living memory of an essential core which gives it existence in the present' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 88). They also exemplify what Halbwachs described as both the changing nature of tradition throughout history and the

prophetic role that mystics have played in redefining traditions when those traditions have lost contact with the 'realities from which they arose' and have 'become impoverished and congealed' (Halbwachs, 1992: 106). As mystics, it is not surprising to find shamans among those assuming that role, though a later look at Hervieu-Léger's 'belief component' is needed before determining definitively whether a match exists with this 'understanding tradition' component.

Also of value is to look at a further distinction between mystics and shamans. As used by Halbwachs and Weber, the responsibilities inherent in the prophetic role of mystics and prophets in redefining tradition are directly related to a specific tradition, not to a variety of traditions. The shamanic practitioners in this study are also mystics, but ones who consciously operate out of an overarching kinship paradigm that embraces parts of many traditions. As such, their redefinition attempts stem from a commitment to a 'set of beliefs' much broader than individual traditions. In that way, their 'results' may differ from those of the mystics who have invested in maintaining the 'authenticity' of a specific tradition or chain of belief.

#### **8.3.4 Invoking Tradition**

Invoking Spirit - also called Guidance or the Universe - for guidance was a consistent occurrence throughout the interviews and participant observation sessions. Each person also invoked specific spiritual allies, often from specific traditions, but all allies were understood as reflections, or parts, of a greater, more general, source of spiritual 'energy'. In practice, the invocation of specific spiritual allies appeared to exist within an overall consciousness of recognizing and invoking life within the larger kinship system - whether human, animal, plant, or any part of the entire universe. Many of the participants talked about invoking and integrating into their spiritual practice and/or shamanic work aspects of various traditions described earlier, in addition to traditions from pre-Christian mystery schools, Gnostic shamanism, and angels. Stephen said he also invoked the lineages of his

ordinary reality shamanic teachers and mentors. Franco explicitly understood his invocation as calling upon the Sacred Cone Tradition, which for him is the kinship system described above.

Demonstrating the presence of the 'invocation' component in Hervieu-Léger's model depends in part upon the nature and intention of the invocation. In her book, Hervieu-Léger describes 'invoking tradition' as calling upon a cloud of witnesses who join with those who have invoked them, and so doing, validate their experience. According to her, these witnesses confer upon the invokers a core lineage from which they are 'begotten' in order to pass on the chain of belief inherent in the tradition being invoked. The very act of uniting with this larger spiritual community that exists outside of time actually brings the past into the present, affirms a commitment to the chain of belief presented by the tradition, and in doing that, establishes a religious dimension to the entire process (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 80-81).

While some of the community members in this study may have called upon their allies as witnesses to their own life's path, most of them were just learning about shamanic traditions and were not shamanic adherents invoking their core lineage. That was different for the practitioners, who had already felt called to and had chosen a shamanic path. For them, invoking tradition had already become a way to unite with those who had gone before and were now helping them pass on that lineage through healing, teaching, and sharing shamanic perspectives. This appears to be evidence that the practitioners do correspond to Hervieu-Léger's 'invoking tradition' component. However, that conclusion may not be completely accurate.

Franco received the Sacred Cone Tradition and would consider himself 'begotten' from it and united with 'a cloud of witnesses' in that 'core lineage'; but for him that tradition describes his own comprehensive and growing understanding of the unity and interrelatedness of all life (i.e. kinship paradigm), not necessarily a circumscribed set of beliefs to which he adheres and is committed to pass on. It has affirmed and expanded his

perception of how to live in alignment with that kinship system, and in that sense, has validated his experience and has motivated him to share that lineage with others. Stephen's variation of this has been to invoke not only his spiritual allies in nonordinary reality, but also the 'lineages' of his current ordinary reality teachers. The other practitioners did not use the word 'lineage', but they would have no objections to the notion that they join with a 'cloud of witnesses' when they invoke their spiritual allies. At the same time, several issues remain challenging. One, which was mentioned in the last section, is whether the kinship paradigm can be considered a set of beliefs in the way Hervieu-Léger intended. Related to that is whether in Hervieu-Léger's perspective, one can use the kinship paradigm to invoke parts of other traditions, or whether one must maintain as essentially intact the chains of belief inherent in individual traditions - understanding all the while that those traditions are subject to internal transformations over time. Finally, each specific tradition being invoked emerges out of a cultural construct familiar to those holding the tradition in its entirety. The shamanic practitioners in this study have shifted into a global consciousness that explores the larger issue of how different cultures with different perspectives can find ways to live peacefully with their commonalities and differences. That global, cross-cultural way of perceiving reality is not exactly what Hervieu-Léger was addressing in her model.

### **8.3.5 Determining Legitimate Authority**

Determining legitimate authority for the way they believe was something all those interviewed readily identified as their own experience of what is real and authentic spirituality. The value they placed on oneness with all life, trust in Spirit, the importance of relationship and communication with that Divine Source, and honoring their own faith, instincts, emotions, and intelligence has shaped the way they now decide what is legitimate. That worldview, or paradigm, had made connecting with inner guidance something natural and wholesome - whether experienced as Spirit, intuitive guidance, a spiritual Presence, specific spiritual allies, or a sense of truth. Indeed, partnering with inner guidance has been

an important reason for claiming their own experience as the legitimizing authority for how they believe; in effect, that claim has served as an affirmation of the relationship of trust they feel with their spiritual source of guidance.

Furthermore, their clear acknowledgment of an inner locus of control when determining legitimate authority coincides with the struggle Halbwachs described as occurring between mystics and dogmatics over who has the authoritative version of a religious memory. According to Halbwachs, the mystics base their claims of legitimacy on the internal direct experiences they have of the spiritual tradition(s) they embrace; and the dogmatics base their claims of legitimacy on the external set of doctrines, or rules, that have evolved as a way of explaining and passing on those same tradition(s). Expanding on the mystics' claim of legitimacy, Halbwachs said that when mystics resume direct contact with some of the sacred writings that had been forgotten or lost by the dogmatics, who usually claim the authoritative version of a tradition, they tap into 'religious aspirations that existed within the mystics even before they focused on the texts'; in so doing, they bring forth a 'lived remembrance', rather than a tradition 'reduced to formulas' (Halbwachs, 1992: 107). In effect, they 'know' the tradition both from their inside experience and from the outside articulation (i.e. texts) that describe the original experience that preceded the tradition's beginning. One question related to this is whether a mystic from within the shamanic kinship paradigm is able to fully understand and appreciate the fullness of a given tradition's 'lived remembrance', when the 'mystic' shaman's motivation is to embrace from the specific tradition only what compliments and enhances a shamanic paradigm.

Regarding the locus of control issue, how does having an internal locus of control for determining what or how one believes relate to Hervieu-Léger's understanding of determining legitimate authority? For her, what matters is the link with the cloud of witnesses, which across time establishes cohesion among community members and binds them in a commitment to a chain of belief that is all-absorbing to them. It is the community itself that legitimizes its chain of belief in order to assure its own continuity (Hervieu-Léger,

2000: 81). If the people within that community have an inner locus of control, that means they must have chosen freely to join the community; in other words, the core lineage and its way of believing must have resonated with their own perspectives. The legitimizing authority comes from them not as solitary individuals, but as like-minded people who have voluntarily formed a community committed to a chain of belief they have chosen, not to a belief system externally imposed. This would not be unlike Durkheim's concept of religion reflecting society.

An important issue in determining the presence of this component in the field research is discerning the extent to which a collective sense of invoking a common tradition, with its implied core lineage and its commitment to a chain of belief, exists. As with the last component, most community members in this study were in the beginning stages of learning about shamanism and what a shamanic chain of belief might entail. For that reason, their affirmation of self as their legitimizing authority had more to do with trusting their own choices than with deciding to join a shamanic heritage. Most of them were responding to a personal history of having denied their own abilities and intuitive understandings in favor of allowing an 'external authority' to decide important issues in their lives.

The practitioners, however, provide a more complex situation. They, too, have verbally claimed self, Spirit, or an intuitive inner knowing, rather than a core lineage with a chain of belief, as their legitimate authority - usually for very similar reasons as those given by community members. However, the initiation experiences for these practitioners effectively shifted them into aligning with an overarching shamanic paradigm of kinship and interrelatedness that is implied in their invocation. That paradigm includes all the individual ways they have described as determining legitimate authority, but those ways specifically involve relationships with spiritual allies and forebears whom they describe as guiding and partnering with them when they claim the legitimate authority of their own experience. In other words, they have tapped into a shamanic core lineage that they could say has begotten them and now supports them in their work. Furthermore, that lineage reflects

ways of believing and of perceiving the world that they have committed to live by and to pass on. That is why they work with others in a shamanic way and teach shamanic practices to those who want to learn about shamanism.

However, that does not guarantee that this commitment to a shamanic core lineage happens in the same way that it does for those in chains of belief central to other traditions. For these shamanic practitioners, joining a 'cloud of witnesses' as one 'begotten' into a lineage that can be shared and passed on is not their legitimizing authority. It affirms, enhances, and deepens what they 'know' to be real, but it does not give them an external validation that they seem to need or that Hervieu-Léger's description implies is required for consideration in her model of religion. At the same time, these practitioners do seek some form of legitimacy, but that legitimacy is intimately related to their relationship with what they call Spirit and to the guidance that they perceive as coming from Spirit and the various manifestations of that Spirit - often experienced as individual spiritual allies.

Another concern regarding this component in this model of religion is identifying and articulating, from an ordinary reality standpoint, the communal nature of the legitimizing process. These practitioners work in a variety of community settings that are in differing stages of development, stability, and commitment to a shamanic path. When primarily working with people who are exploring a number of spiritual practices, the shamanic practitioners must consciously call to mind their extended community of other practitioners and community members who have chosen this way of living in the world - whether those people are physically present or not. When they are physically gathered together, the collective legitimizing authority for the way they believe is more apparent. That, however, is true in most intentional communities, because all members are not always able to be physically together at the same time.

There are several additional challenges facing practitioners regarding the issue of legitimizing authority. Invoking spiritual allies who are part of core lineage does not automatically mean someone has embraced fully a shamanic path, yet those practitioners

who have accepted their shamanic calling must find ways to help themselves and their shamanic communities explore and articulate the values, beliefs, and spiritual practices that are integral to their core lineage. Related to this, it is also important for practitioners to determine how the 'inner knowing' of numerous individuals can be shared in such a way as to facilitate a type of community consciousness that incorporates diverse sources of wisdom, yet identifies a common thread all can share. Finally, the chain of memory that these practitioners invoke may not be a chain of beliefs, but instead, a paradigm that incorporates beliefs about values and principles that serve as parameters for their perceptions about the interrelatedness of life.

### **8.3.6 Believing**

When compared to earlier in their lives, those in this study talked about how they now have more self-trust and self-confidence when pursuing their own spiritual path and their relationships with Spirit or the Universe. Within that, they have also increased belief in themselves and their inner processes of determining what comes from Spirit and what comes from ego. That does not mean they do not accept feedback or information from external sources. However, all have moved to a place of assuming responsibility and accountability for their own life choices, rather than remaining in a situation that allows external rules, constructs, or expectations to take priority over their own inner voices of guidance. Their way of believing leans more toward process than content - a reflection of learning to survive in a postmodern condition of relativism. In effect, they have found what is stable in the midst of change, and that stability is their own inner knowing, which is formed and informed by a relationship with Spirit, or the Divine, and the various spiritual allies who are experienced as aspects of that Divine Source. Left behind is the need to externally verify their individual and collective convictions in the same ways they were expected to do as part of their earlier religious upbringing.

This shift in perspective reflects the mutating structures of belief, but according to

Hervieu-Léger, from a religious perspective, this external verification is replaced by a collective determination to give meaning and coherence to the subjective experiences of those in the community. She has approached this phenomenon from a religious perspective by stating that 'the normativity of collective religious memory is reinforced by the fact of the group's defining itself, objectively and subjectively, as a *lineage* of belief' (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 125). In other words, the community itself determines what it believes and becomes its own source of verification.

That collective memory contains fragmented lineages of belief is understood and accepted across many academic disciplines, and we have seen in earlier sections how participants in this study have called upon many of these fragments that exist cross-culturally. Furthermore, many participants have described how they have integrated those cross-cultural fragments into their own de-constructed and re-constituted religious traditions. They have also begun to define their own religious memory and claim one or more spiritual lineages, which they often reinforce through private and small group rites and rituals. What is not clear is whether shamanism provides all, or just some, of them with a collective sense of shared meaning and coherence that goes beyond self-trust and an individual relationship with Spirit. Indeed, a shamanic chain of memory itself may include a variety of memories.

One important question related to this issue is whether a shamanic worldview is the chain of belief consciously invoked by the shamanic communities in this study. Hervieu-Léger says that the core of religious power is the ability to articulate the 'true' memory of a group; and that involves a dialectical interaction between the content of belief and the ritual process of expressing that content - an interaction she calls 'the central dynamic of all religion'. It may also involve the dialectic between lived mystical memory and the unifying effort of dogma to describe an authorized version of the memory, but that is peripheral to her model (Hervieu-Léger, 2000: 127). Though this point will be addressed later, for now the topic of belief prompts us to ask if there is sufficient agreement about the nature of a shamanic chain of memory among participants in this study.

For this research project the shamanic community members were beginning to learn from their teachers about the nature of a shamanic worldview (content). They were also participating in community rites and rituals as part of that learning (process). However, these two facts did not necessarily result in their understanding or invoking a shamanic core of beliefs. In addition, though an overall shamanic paradigm can include the many traditions espoused and invoked by all the participants, the individual traditions themselves may not include the entire shamanic paradigm or provide an overall sense of meaning and coherence. Community members at the time of this study were learners, not adherents to any one chain of belief, including a shamanic one. As a result, they do not reflect the component of 'believing'.

The practitioners, however, have provoked another challenging analysis. Each practitioner has been initiated and has joined the core lineage of belief about a shamanic way of life. Each one invokes spiritual allies who are seen as expressions of Spirit. All of them organize their lives in ways that allow them to pass on their shamanic knowledge and lineage. Individually they reflect their own dimensions of shamanic belief, though they would agree also that an overarching kinship system of interrelatedness with all life binds them together. They believe in a way much like what was described in Chapter Three as 'holding dear' or 'cherishing' the experiences and relationships that initiated them into the shamanic path. In fact, one of the characteristics they all share is that they sought out shamanic learning as a response to powerful mystical experiences that fell outside the scope and explanatory capacity of those around them in their families and/or churches. Discovering shamanism was a way of finding an explanation that resonated with what they had experienced and already knew intuitively, but could not articulate adequately. It also put them in contact with others who had had similar experiences, understood how meaningful those experiences had been, and helped them start to learn about what had happened to them. In that way, the shamanic path came to them, and they responded; they did not search for it prior to having had shamanic types of experiences.

What must be asked is whether their individual experiences of very similar facets of a shamanic path have coalesced enough to form a collective chain of belief that they can articulate and pass on as members of a core shamanic lineage. Both Franco and Stephen do have their own shamanic training programs designed to continue their shamanic lineage in very specific ways (Santoro, 2004)(Lendrick, 2004c). Cláudia and Mark also have a variety of shamanic offerings, including healing, workshops, and special shamanic events, that form part of the lineage they are passing on to their community members (EdinburghShamanic, 2004b); yet, they are in the beginning stages of that and do not have the extensive training programs that Franco and Stephen have developed. Alistair and Preben no longer work out of the Edinburgh Shamanic Centre, which means they are faced again with discovering ways of creating community and sharing their lineage on a more collective level. In all cases, those who participate in their shamanic offerings or training programs vary in their ability to share fully in either the chain of belief or in the rituals that express it. That leaves their relationships with each other and/or with other shamanic practitioners, mentors, and teachers who comprise various shamanic networks existing in Scotland, the UK, and throughout the world as primary members in the ordinary reality collective needed by this model of religion to validate their shamanic way of believing.

Most of the practitioners interviewed in this project know each other, have worked with and learned from each other, and in some cases, refer to each other and the work they do. Though certainly not carbon copies of each other in their shamanic expressions, they do share a commonality that incorporates all the elements of shamanism presented in the core shamanism model. They also hold as central to their shamanic core lineage an understanding of universal kinship and interrelatedness that for them is of critical importance in today's world. Not only have they made significant sacrifices to create spaces and places where they can share their shamanic lineage, but also they have initiated and maintain relationships with shamanic practitioners in other parts of the world. Their networks stretch beyond Britain to other countries and continents. The various ways in which they form small

groups and/or larger networks of like-minded people reflects the struggle for community that is common in contemporary society. For these reasons, they appear to correspond to the 'belief' component in this model of religion.

However, certain questions emerge once again to be addressed before bringing this issue to a conclusion. Does a shamanic worldview - a kinship system paradigm - constitute a chain of belief that matches Hervieu-Léger's intention? Is the shamanic paradigm possibly a chain of memory about something other than belief, yet one that incorporates a way of believing which draws upon what a person knows through relationship and experience, rather than through the concepts or sets of ideas one theoretically chooses to accept or reject? Finally, does a 'lived remembrance' about any tradition, which the shaman and the mystic are seen to be able to access, necessarily correspond to the external memories embodied in Hervieu-Léger's understanding of a chain of belief? These questions place doubt in an assertion that results of this fieldwork correspond to the 'belief' component in our model of religion.

### **8.3.7 Significance of the Results**

The research data related to the Hervieu-Léger definition of religion provides evidence that while the shamanic practitioners may possibly fit most of the components in this model, they invoke a chain of memory and embrace a way of believing that together more accurately reflect a parallel core lineage of spirituality, not religion. There is a paradigm of experience and relationship with all life, which they see interrelated with Spirit, and their interactions with various chains of belief from specific traditions occur in order to support and develop those kinship relationships. It is a lineage that does not involve passing on a set of beliefs from a tradition, or even a mixture of traditions, that can be evaluated, accepted, and handed down - even if the community itself has claimed legitimate authority over the tradition(s). This lineage of spirituality complements the lineage of belief contained in this model of religion, but its priority is to keep alive the relationships and experiences that

prompted the formation of religion and religious beliefs in the first place. Indeed, it sees religion and spirituality as ideally intertwined, though the role of religion is seen as supporting, guiding, and serving the relationships inherent in spirituality, rather than as controlling or stifling them.

The fact that this research data tended to match both religion and spirituality, resulting in some degree of confusion, points to the perceived tension that currently exists between the two concepts as realities in peoples' lives. It also highlights the dual role of a shaman as one whose vocation is to bridge ordinary and nonordinary reality. Unlike a pure mystic who can remain 'lost' in a personal experience of mystical oneness, the shaman is called to bring together what is perceived to be the physical and nonphysical worlds - all for the benefit, ultimate well-being, and healing of the people and other life forms the shaman serves. That perceived call to a dual role and the shamanic experience of an overarching kinship paradigm provide insights into why the field data found considerable correspondence with both the model of religion and the lineage of spirituality.

Regarding the model itself, this study has shown that Hervieu-Léger provided a quality analytical tool that has supported a rich and credible investigation of contemporary shamanic practice existing in three parts of Scotland. Her desire for a working definition of religion that could move scholarship out of the trap of tying religion exclusively to institutional forms has proved to be quite valuable. A carefully chosen component in that process was to exclude 'the sacred' as a part of her model. By doing that, she created a contained, yet open, way to study a group of people involved in a system of shamanism functioning outside the parameters of institutional religion, but intimately related to what its practitioners perceive to be 'the sacred'.

Some aspects of her model that caused confusion in this analysis and might benefit from further clarification include the nature of belief, believing, and a chain of belief - especially when compared to a paradigm; the relationship between belief and tradition; and a fuller explanation about why an appeal to a cloud of witnesses adhering to a chain of

belief is needed as a legitimizing authority. Also, the significant insights Hervieu-Léger gained about her model occurred when she was studying a neo-rural intentional spiritual community. It would be helpful to know what those community members thought gave them a legitimizing authority. Was it due to the external validation, or did that validation only increase their existing commitment?

Beyond testing Hervieu-Léger's model of religion, the significance of these results lies in a number of other areas. First, the overwhelming need for participants to reclaim their voices and choices related to what most of them called their spirituality points to a newly-found freedom and societal support to think as adults in an area that for centuries has been powerfully controlled by the Christian church in Western society. In its early emergence, the need to explore options and to develop trust and confidence in one's own way of intuiting and perceiving 'truth' - initially without having to commit to any one tradition - reflects the urgency of this development and its participation in the relativism of postmodern thought. However, as witnessed especially with the practitioners in this study, once the freedom of choice was fully experienced, and exposure to new spiritual practices brought what they experienced as a 'resonance of the heart', they began to coalesce around a paradigm, or set of beliefs about the world, that reflected their own inner spiritual experiences. In the process, they met others of like mind and affiliated with networks of 'kindred spirits' who shared similar perspectives.

Related to that are the issues of distinguishing between belief and believing and between a set of beliefs that form a 'chain of belief' and set of beliefs that form a paradigm. Regarding the former, when the content of belief emerges out of the experience of a person or people, it becomes something the believer 'holds dear' and tries to share with others who might understand. When that is possible, the sharing, reinforcing, and 'holding dear' together through stories, rituals, questioning, and exploring form an interactive process of believing that takes place in an environment of collective support for continuing to seek a commonly perceived truth about the meaning and coherence of life. In this way, 'dearly

held' belief systems are internalized and serve to inform, guide, and occasionally modify attitude and behavior, rather than to externally and arbitrarily control, stifle, or eliminate motivation for holding the beliefs or for collectively supporting each other in the believing process. The beliefs of participants in this study prompted them to incorporate spiritual practices that required discipline and helped them live what they hoped would be better lives personally and as contributors to society-at-large. Their freedom to address religious or spiritual issues as capable adults who seek guidance, but retain personal responsibility for their choices, was what mattered to them. The latter issue about sets of beliefs related to tradition and sets of belief that form a paradigm has already been addressed in earlier sections. It is mentioned here, because detecting the subtle difference between the two is important. Also, Hervieu-Léger specifically said her focus was on chains of belief, not worldviews.

Another area of significance is that of how to define community. During this postmodern time when 'traditional' communities have fragmented or changed, and many people have started recognizing the relativity of what they had been taught was stable or unchangeable in their religion, they also have begun experimenting with various forms of community - whether groups, colonies, networks, or collectives (Sutcliffe, 2003). In the process they have also attempted to retrieve what they have considered to be lost fragments of traditions that had been destroyed or hidden from them for a variety of reasons. The search for these traditions, coupled with the explorations of community, provide important aspects of learning how religion and religious forms change and transform. To restrict our definitions of community by using inflexible, rather than flexible, parameters in ways that exclude marginalized people from our study would be a grave loss. In her Occasional Paper on the role of scholars of religion when addressing the issue of 'community', scholar Kim Knott warned those who study the religious not to become 'trapped into an acceptance of the pre-given categories of "community" and "religion" and thus into their reification and manipulation' (Knott, 2003: 80-81). Also concerned about a wider vision

of community is sociologist John Urry, whose article on 'Mobility and Proximity' explores the 'socialities involved in occasional co-presence, imagined co-presence and virtual co-presence' (Urry: 256) and the importance of 'intermittent co-presence' (Urry: 264).

An additional issue worthy of attention is one discussed by Hervieu-Léger and other scholars about the self-focus of those in 'alternative spiritualities'. Participants in this study, particularly those learning to do shamanic journeys, regularly raised the question of how to know the difference between when their experiences were mere creations of what they wanted for themselves and when those experiences were sources of learning how to consider the greater good of self and others. What became clear was that most participants, especially the practitioners, spoke about wanting to heal and grow personally as part of becoming better able to help and serve others. This desire to distinguish between spiritual guidance and self-focused 'wish fulfillment' parallels some the findings in The Kendal Project, described more fully in Chapter Three. In that, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead wrote that 'those active in subjective well-being culture are by no means unfamiliar with "the we of me"' (Heelas, 2005: 100). In other words, the concern about self is often part of developing the capacity to help others appropriately.

Finally, the pluralism and diversity discussed in the shamanic analysis and present in this one, too, are indications of a shift society is in the process of making into a global consciousness similar to the kinship paradigm invoked by the shamanic practitioners in this study. Recognizing the interconnected nature of this multi-faceted planet and discovering ways to identify common values while addressing the differences are large-scale challenges facing society. In this small study, we have had a glimpse of how a small network of people in Scotland have attempted to address that issue.

#### **8.4 Evidence of Critical Factors Effecting the Transformation of Religion and Culture**

Chapter Three identifies and briefly examines a number of critical factors that have emerged

as major influences effecting the transformation of religion and culture. Three of those factors - tradition, determining legitimate authority, and believing – have been analyzed in some detail as part of the last section addressing the Hervieu-Léger model of religion. The remaining nine factors, brought forward as part of a 'transformation of religion' analytical lens used in this section of Chapter Eight to overlay the field research results, are: social and cultural change; secularization; changing religious forms; personal and collective memory; consciousness; spirituality; faith and belief; developmental theory; and the patriarchal paradigm. They are presented below in a format that identifies the key aspects of each factor, describes their influence on the findings of this study, and points out the significance of that influence.

#### **8.4.1 Social and Cultural Change**

Key aspects of social and cultural change include the three general sociological theories of change, which have in common the presence of cultural and symbolic factors during times of change; the effects of modernity and postmodernity; and the emergence of a world system with levels of identity that reflect global interdependence. Those who participated in this study have reflected several aspects of this factor. Regarding the theories of change itself, the practitioners, in particular, have been striving to establish themselves as shamanic practitioners with the 'legitimacy' of owning businesses and earning an income from doing shamanic work in a society that does not necessarily understand what they are doing or why. In that way, they have exhibited elements of the structural functionalists, who focus on the need for survival, and of the conflict theorists, who look see the struggle for power and control over resources. However, all of the participants have best fit the symbolic interactionist approach in their attention to meanings that are in turmoil and conflict within the larger society. Examples of those meanings include valuing a global kinship system with all life, working with their perceived spiritual allies in providing healing to others, and charging money for spiritual services in order to pay their expenses.

In terms of modernity, the fragmentation of belief systems for participants in this project has actually paralleled sociological findings, in that it has been a catalyst for their own shamanic initiations and/or shifts into a religiosity that embraces different ways of perceiving spirituality and religion. Religion has not disappeared, but for them, it has assumed a role of service, not of primary authority or control. Furthermore, they use the term 'spirituality', rather than 'religiosity'. In addition, their experience of postmodernity, with its environment of relativity and questioning, has tended to provide a freedom of growth not perceived as available through many religions.

Not surprising, the kinship system paradigm held by these participants mirrors other sociological findings about a perception of global interdependence that reflects an emerging world system of identity on several levels. They recognize a need for personal growth and identity, but it is nested within a layered identity as members of families, local communities, larger societies, humankind, and all life forms in the universe. Furthermore, this kind of shamanic worldview is evident in indigenous cultures cross-culturally.

The significance of these findings is that participants in this study have exemplified a response to the social and cultural changes of modernity and postmodernity that matches the theories of change discussed earlier. They have described many of their experiences as having propelled them into an awareness of global interdependence with all life and a multi-layered identity that is inclusive - from self through all life in the universe. Furthermore, their forms of neoshamanism have revealed a cross-cultural underpinning of elements that have also been identified in indigenous shamanic societies. Though many spoke about challenges that at times have thwarted them, they also described how they have survived and prospered through these experiences by discovering and focusing on the possibilities for growth and new learning.

#### **8.4.2 Secularization**

The issue of secularization focuses on the decline of religion in the West, which in most

cases means Christianity in its institutional forms; the relationship between relativism, diversity, and pluralism; and the tension between individualism and community. What these aspects have in common is recognition that the loss of power and control on the part of Christianity in the West has been the primary catalyst for secularization theories. Where theorists differ is in the meaning and significance they assign to these changes.

Bruce thinks the relativism, diversity, and pluralism of contemporary society will not allow sufficient maintenance or formation of communities that can sustain religion, and he may be right. If religions perceive their roles to be holding strict boundaries with little or no room for questioning or exploration, they probably will disappear, though not in the near future. For similar reasons, Brown, too, may be accurate in his assessment that Christianity in Britain is dying - especially if Christianity is perceived to be valid only when mediated through specific institutions that each cling to their unique claims as 'legitimizing authorities' for the Christian memory. Sutcliffe appears to recognize that the presence of Christianity in Britain for almost two millennia more than likely means that major elements of Christianity remain, but in forms that are changing and could possibly be called 'post Christian'.

Bruce contends that individualism is one of the roots of secularization. This postmodern time of relativity does allow more opportunities for individuals to assume a personal locus of control - in general or when faced with institutional religions' demands that counter what they may perceive to be true. Time will tell whether individuals will seek new community forms or become more alienated and/or whether religious leaders will create and allow more flexible and diverse forms of community or entrench themselves in familiar and closed boundaries. Just as contemporary shamanism is expressed in a variety of forms that Wallis calls neoshamanisms, spirituality and/or religiosity is emerging and taking forms that do not necessarily match expected structures of 'community'.

How do these aspects of secularization relate to the research findings of this thesis? Most participants have indicated they value many of the underlying tenets, rituals, stories, and figures from various religious and spiritual traditions, but they are not willing to constrict

their own spiritual growth when those traditions create inflexible parameters or display intolerance for questioning or for diverse personal experience. Regarding Sutcliffe's claim that secularization is really about the existence of a 'post Christian' environment, the attitudes of people in this study tend to support his contention. Participants have drawn upon a number of elements from their Christian backgrounds for their spiritual practice, but they have not assumed those elements must be expressed only in ways designated by the institutions. However, rather than creating parallel institutions, they have opted for a variety of community forms to help them come together in ways which meet their needs for connection with others who share a similar commitment and interest in spiritual growth. What remains to be seen is if and how they will maintain and sustain those new forms. Because these shamanic practitioners have a commitment to serve others through their work, they are likely to seek creative ways of sustaining shamanic communities. At the same time, a long-term commitment of that nature is difficult to hold during times of intense change.

The significance of these findings lies in the perspective, or worldview, assumed by these participants. For most of them, the decline of religion and the associated relativism, diversity, and pluralism have together created a perceived freedom to embark on a path of personal and spiritual growth that is enhanced and deepened by those very factors. Whatever crises may have accompanied - and may still accompany - the breakdown of familiar religious forms, coping with that process for these people has been part of an ongoing initiation into a new spiritual consciousness, a development of self-confidence, and the discovery of new ways to form community. In fact, the de-construction of religious power structures has allowed them to focus on some of the inherent and underlying meanings that originally had given rise to those religious forms.

#### **8.4.3 Changing Religious Forms**

Building on the above discussion is the next critical factor, which addresses the fact that

religion has been moving from its place of primacy as a holder of universal cosmology toward a kind of psychological support for individuals in relative isolation. This globalization of religion, which Luckmann described in Chapter Three as resulting in privatized religion, also reminds us that historically during periods of major religious change, spirituality has emerged and sought new forms - in part by re-focusing on the initial experiences that gave rise to the religion in the first place. Many of the new forms are described by Barker, who also was cited in Chapter Three for her pioneering work on new religious movements.

This research project highlights a number of ways in which shamanism has found contemporary forms of expression. Not only have participants in this study come from eight different countries - bringing their own cultural traditions and perspectives, but also they have shared rituals and ceremonies created by combining many of these multi-cultural perspectives to do their shamanic work. The significance of this lies in the ways these participants have demonstrated how a system of shamanism can itself change and adapt many of its forms - both cross-culturally and across large periods of time - without essentially altering its core components as a system. Furthermore, it has done so without creating institutions that must be maintained by in-built structures of power and control - the apparent norm in organized Western religions. Their willingness to work with flexible parameters and guidelines, rather than rigid definitions, may be another component in their 'success'. If those concerned with the perceived demise of religion in the West would analyze the history of neoshamanic growth, they may gain some helpful insights into coping with this kind of change.

#### **8.4.4 Personal and Collective Memory**

Memory is critically important to the process of transmitting cultural and religious traditions, along with their underlying codes of meaning. Unfortunately, modernity has hastened the fragmentation, and in some cases, the repression, of many of those memories, which are our primary sources for linking the past with the present. The fast pace of contemporary life,

the ways disputes over heresy and orthodoxy have been addressed historically, and the ongoing resolutions of conflicts between dogmatic tradition and lived mystical remembrance have all contributed to the existence of missing, mutating, and metaphorical memories. Some fragmented memories have found 'homes' in folklore and in attempts to revise personal and collective genealogies in order to maintain symbolic meanings of place, historical events, and cultural myths. However, the question of power or control over the 'legitimacy' of memory remains a contested issue in many religious arenas.

People participating in this research project are inheritors of these situations, and they, too, have struggled to remember and to access traditions that support and enhance their spiritual growth. Their comments about religion and spirituality show how they have had to face discrepancies that have periodically arisen when their own personal experiences have been at odds with religious teachings, doctrines, or practices. They represent the mystical line of 'lived remembrance' - those who challenge the pure legitimate authority of the dogmatic traditions, though most of them also have continued to draw upon spiritual, or religious, practices from these various religious traditions. One of the shamanic memories they have retained is the process of partnering with spiritual allies for protection, guidance, and assistance in healing.

In some cases, participants have accessed memories and traditions in a manner that resembles Nora's description of metaphorical memory. In other words, they have recovered a symbolic meaning of underlying cultural myths that allows them to be living representations of the past in the present. For example, their approaches to soul healing still centre around restoring wholeness to individuals, communities, and the environment, but the causes of fragmentation or alienation are understood somewhat differently in today's society; as such, some of their contemporary healing practices also tend to vary. Likewise, the sense of kinship with all life - part of a shamanic world view over time - takes on a new dimension when enhanced by current knowledge of global inter-cultural connections and by recent scientific information about life in the universe. All of the shamanic practitioners and

most of the community members have incorporated into their conscious personal identity the roles they play as citizens and stewards of the planet and the universe.

The significance of these findings is that participants, especially the practitioners, have learned ways of remembering that form special links between the past and the present. Regardless of the fragmentation, they have been able to tap into a core of shamanic elements that are also shared cross-culturally with indigenous societies, even though their expressions of those elements are often different. Overall, they have kept alive the worldview of kinship and relationship with all life - not letting that memory or viewpoint fragment or slip from consciousness. In the midst of widespread alienation throughout contemporary society, knowing and learning from people who retain the memory of oneness in their daily lives appears to be a rather worthwhile endeavour.

#### **8.4.5 Consciousness**

A major aspect of consciousness is the growing awareness of a bigger picture - of an expanded perception about the nature of reality. That perception can be based on empirical observables; body-mind-spirit relationships; nonordinary, contemplative endeavours; or ideally, according to Wilbur, who is cited in Chapter Three, on the integration of all of these approaches to consciousness. Furthermore, a number of scholars contend that certain approaches - especially the subtler and higher levels of consciousness - require the researcher's personal involvement in the studies in order for the results to be successful. In a number of consciousness studies, results have pointed to the primacy of inner awareness, where one can access the implicate order of the universe and explore new paradigms, system theory, and unified science and philosophy. In other related studies researchers have found that 'experience' is emerging as a critical focus in a cultural shift toward conscious participation in reconnecting to the universal. Not only that, but some researchers contend that this 'awakening to consciousness', which is further described in Chapter Three, has some of its identifiable roots in the Renaissance.

Participants in this study have demonstrated that their shamanic work is best done when they shift their consciousness into the nonordinary realms. They use various tools to help them in that shift as they open themselves up to new insights and information that they perceive to be available in those realms. However, those specific shifts, which are enabled by drumming or other rhythmic sounds, are separate, though related, to a larger shift into an overall consciousness, in which they experience being part of a global community and of a kinship system that extends throughout the universe. That wholeness paradigm sets a context for all the other elements in the shamanic model - regardless of consciousness 'tools' used.

Of significance in these findings is identifying ways in which people 'awaken' to a sense of being part of something larger. One of the major challenges facing contemporary societies is understanding how to shift into a global framework without losing their identities as individuals or as members of specific cultures. Those in this study show us how they maintain identity on several levels that are complimentary, not antagonistic. That does not mean they have not had challenges, differences, or conflicts that have required attention and resolution. However, the shifts in consciousness that have led them to work with spiritual allies for personal healing have also brought many of them an expanded sense of how they can contribute to healing on larger social and global scales. In a world filled with dualism and polarities that at times seem insurmountable, many of these participants have described ways in which they have come to see the world holistically, and in the process, have discovered a sense of peace.

#### **8.4.6 Spirituality**

The Kendal Project in Britain, described more fully in Chapter Three, has shown that a spiritual revolution is underway. In that revolution, spirituality, which is perceived as a way of subjectively experiencing the sacred and marking that experience with significance and authority, appears to be increasing, while religion, perceived as an external authority

mediating how one must live life in relationship to the sacred, is showing signs of decline. In addition, Heelas and Woodhead found that while the 'subjective life' spirituality focused on individual spiritual growth, it tended to emphasize the 'we of me', or the ways in which one could be of service to another. They also discovered the growing role of women in this type of spirituality and the qualitative difference between religion and spirituality when approaching issues of power and control. Focusing on the future of religion and spirituality are other scholars, who have claimed that a global society requires a global spirituality that is integrative and recognizes spirituality as a core dimension of the human.

Resembling much of the above, the results of this research project have shown that participants are part of a spiritual lineage that claims global interrelationships with all life. That lineage focuses on relationships and experience, rather than on external traditions or sets of beliefs, though various traditions or parts of traditions are often accessed in ritual, music, or story. Participants also match the Kendal findings in their desire to serve and help in the healing of others, not just attend only to self. Their spiritualities are integral in that they incorporate dimensions from a variety of multi-cultural traditions and practices. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, they gather in various types of communities in order to support each other in their spiritual growth.

It is significant to note that these findings portray participants who claim spirituality as their primary commitment, but who easily access religious traditions that support and enhance that spirituality. In a way this is not new, because religions came into being based on experiences and relationships that profoundly influenced those who wanted to remember, celebrate, and pass on what had meant so much to them. However, contemporary religions have tended to focus on externals at the expense of inner meaning and experience - often forgetting why the externals were created, and instead, becoming caught up in issues of power and control related to 'legitimate authority' over the 'sacred memories' that in the process have been drained of their meaning and relevance. Most of these participants have backed off from religion when they have perceived it as forgetting its

original role as servant to spirituality.

#### **8.4.7 Faith and Belief**

This factor points out the original meanings of faith and belief and how they related to each other. It also distinguishes between belief and the process of believing. Finally, it looks at the difference between finding legitimate authority from a relationship or from an external tradition - particularly when one is forced to choose between the two. Though Cantwell Smith has provided a distinction between faith and belief, he has also shown how they both had earlier meanings of 'cherishing' and 'holding dear' in a deeply personal way. Finally, he has described how belief, believing, and faith have all come to be associated with objects of perceived truth, rather than with their original meanings of commitment to an honored relationship. Other scholars, too, have described ways in which concepts of the divine - much like those of faith and belief - have moved from being personal and experiential to being outside and separate from human life.

Findings in this study show how participants quite clearly have focused on the importance of relationships with what they call Spirit and with their perceived spiritual allies. Reflecting the earlier meanings of belief and faith, they have incorporated spiritual practices designed to help nurture and grow relationships with these spiritual helpers. If asked to choose between an external set of codes or concepts and what they experience as real in their relationship with Spirit, the answer is clear: the relationship takes priority. In addition, that commitment to relationship extends to other people and life forms. However, they seemed quite realistic in their descriptions of the time and attention required to maintain relationships with spiritual allies and to live in a way that reflects a worldview of interrelatedness. Several spoke about the importance of striving to live according to those intentions, even though at times they have felt unable to do that adequately.

The significance of this finding is in its alignment with many of the above factors already presented and with the notion that relationship is at the core of participants'

experiences with the spiritual realms and with other beings. In addition, this is not a new development in the history of religion and spirituality. It is rooted in earlier ways of maintaining a relational commitment to fundamental values that support and surround the experiences being cherished and remembered.

#### **8.4.8 Developmental Theory**

Inherent in this factor are the issues of culture, identity, and gender within lifespan theories, cognitive development, moral decision-making, faith development, the dynamics of moving and growing through the various stages contained in these theories, and where one positions the locus of control or authority. Relevant to this research project is how these theories can provide psychological insight into the ways people move through and cope with cultural change, especially the turbulent challenges of religious change in contemporary society.

By virtue of their global paradigm and their attention to the values and principles underlying various religious traditions, participants in this field study appear to reflect Piaget's 'dialectic and synthetic' functions at the formal operational level; Kohlberg's 'principled understanding of fairness' and in some cases, 'loyalty to being' levels of moral decision-making for males; Gilligan's 'standard of relationship and care' in moral decision-making for women; Fowler's 'conjunctive' and in some cases, 'universalizing' stages in faith development; and Slee's additional pattern of 'alienation', 'awakening', and 'relationality' in the faith development of women. At least in the areas of shamanism and spirituality, all seem to have basically moved beyond the early formal operational, law and order, individuated-reflective, and alienation stages in which life and its challenges are to be handled in a black and white manner with fixed rules, rigid boundaries, and clear statements of good and bad, right and wrong.

Most of these participants have been protective of their efforts to establish and maintain quality relationships with all life, and many spoke of a freedom they have felt in

finding their own voices through their shamanic work. For the practitioners in particular, their work as ones who create bridges between the ordinary and nonordinary worlds through their teaching and healing has found resonance with the ways people are known, within these developmental theories, to move from one stage to another. The fear generally prompted by the relativism accompanying stage changes is best addressed by meeting with those who have already moved through the turmoil of change and have reached the next stage of understanding and insight. In that way, these shamanic practitioners regularly help people work through the fears of growth and its associated changes.

Of what significance is this information? First of all, these research participants appear to have successfully moved through some difficult periods of relativism and have emerged with considerable clarity about values and principles that underlie religious rules, laws, and sets of beliefs. Second, it also appears as if many in the world today, including religious leaders, may be abstract thinkers, but the paradigms that guide their moral decision-making processes often reflect early operational thinking and an attachment to laws and dualisms that make little or no room for diversity and pluralism. From the standpoint of developmental theory, their fears about the relativity of postmodernity are part of the turmoil inherent in having the opportunity to move to a principled-centred and/or relational way of making moral decisions. However, without communities of 'kindred spirits' who have already moved to the principled-centred, relational perspective and are willing or able to offer support and encouragement for the necessary 'surrender', those experiencing the stress of relativism may allow themselves to be propelled with great force back into their law and order comfort zone - often with a fundamentalist zeal for concrete, rigid boundaries that are perceived to provide a sense of security and protection. Finally, the presence of these research participants, who have followed various paths in moving to a principled-centred, relational perspective, is a sign of hope and encouragement that the transition is possible. Indeed, in a world that requires a global perspective for its survival, societies with their religious and governmental leaders will be ill-equipped to function effectively if they do

not internalize a more global, principled-centred and relational way of dealing with difference, value, and meaning.

#### **8.4.9 The Patriarchal Paradigm**

Related to the struggle of learning to grow through change and diversity with values and principles as guides and signposts, which can potentially lead to new expressions of religious laws and rules, is an overall paradigm of patriarchy that has been present in Western society for millennia. Though presented more fully in Chapter Three, this paradigm has several important aspects. Ignoring the fact that there is one humanity with two genders, it recognizes that 'socially assigned' male qualities have typically been considered the norm, and therefore, superior. Out of the paradigm's four interlocking principles of dualism, hierarchy, domination, and essential inequality have come polarities that do not promote balance, but competition, and therefore, domination by a 'winner'. The result has been to confine both genders to only half their potential, providing severe consequences to those not conforming to expectations, and giving humans a rationale for environmental arrogance and destruction. Furthermore, the unconscious internalization of this paradigm by both men and women has often prevented development of a new paradigm that better serves all of humanity.

Of particular importance for contemporary society is recognizing that this internalized and institutionalized patriarchal paradigm feeds and maintains a mind set that does not understand difference without assuming inherent inequality and requiring that one perspective be 'the best'. Its inherent judgments about the inferiority of collaboration, dialogue, feeling, empowerment, networks and circles, inclusion, experience, nonviolence, spirituality, and nature have thwarted efforts to shift into a global perspective and develop the skills to successfully address the issues of pluralism, diversity, and relativism. On a societal scale, this paradigm parallels the cognitive and psychological stages of concrete, dualistic thinking and moral decision-making. These stages assume an external locus of

control that prompts fearful adherence to law and order and a vision of relativism as something evil, rather than as a potential source of growth into a new way of thinking and viewing the world. It also frames efforts that involve the other 'inferior' functions named above as insufficient and unworkable, because the 'either/or' perspective prevents seeing the option of drawing upon a variety of functions. Of note is that in a patriarchal paradigm, the experience of women, who approach moral decision-making and faith from the perspective of relationality and the common good, is not considered of value.

Results of this research project reveal that most of the participants had moved beyond many of the elements present in a patriarchal paradigm, though certain features continued to reflect the larger society. From a gender perspective, five of the six practitioners were male, and five of the six participants were female. During the participant observation sessions, several men were present, but most of the participants were women. Practitioners were primarily in their thirties, and the ages of participants spanned several decades. Based on these facts, one might initially wonder if the predominance of males as practitioners and of females as participants actually represents an internalized patriarchal perspective. Practically speaking, those who are drawn to this work come from cultures with patriarchal dimensions. However, the ways in which these shamanic practitioners and their community members have perceived the world and have worked together have fallen more in line with a model different from patriarchy.

All have been supported in assuming an inner locus of control for determining steps for personal growth, though 'listening to Spirit' and/or guidance from spiritual allies has been considered part of the shamanic process. Following on that, the legitimizing authority for all participants has been either self or their relationship with their own spiritual guidance. That relationship has been part of a larger kinship system of relationships with all life, which in turn, has called for collaboration, empowerment, inclusion, honouring experience and feeling, respecting nature, attending to spirituality, peacefully resolving conflict, and creating supportive networks of people with similar perspectives. In these ways they have clearly

reflected a way of functioning that is not patriarchal.

Of particular significance in these findings is discovering people who have been learning how to move beyond a patriarchal paradigm in the ways they perceive the world, strive to live their personal lives, and work together. Holding a kinship paradigm requires a shift in consciousness toward seeing oneself as part of a global family - a kind of awakening to being part of something that is larger and different, but does not detract from self. Just as the four interlocking principles in patriarchy create a natural outpouring of polarities that conflict with each other, the principles of kinship and interdependence create another set of variables that are more inclusive, flexible, and possibly more suitable for meeting the challenges of contemporary cultural transformation in all areas of life.

#### **8.4.10 Significance of the Findings**

One of the consistent themes in the literature describing the contemporary transformation of religion has been the gradual shift in consciousness toward a global perspective and a global spirituality. Worldwide communication systems provide regular reminders that the earth can no longer function as if all societies were separate and totally independent of each other. At the same time, cultural differences that were previously unknown or not discussed now must be addressed and resolved. Though many other societies also may operate in a patriarchal paradigm, the West certainly has done so for millennia. Because of that, the relativism, pluralism, and diversity that have ushered in the deconstruction of institutions and ways of living that were familiar have caused extreme anxiety, concern, and fear about whether anything can rise from the remnants of what seems to be dissolving in our midst. Add to that the fragmentation of memory and tradition, the fast pace of modern life in the West, and the fact that increasing numbers of people are becoming better educated, embracing an inner locus of control that prompts them to 'think for themselves', rather than just assume the legitimizing authority of patriarchal institutions, and it is easy to see how many wonder how all of this will be resolved successfully.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

This study shows how three sets of contemporary shamanic practitioners and their communities in Scotland have somehow shifted their consciousness into a global awareness of interrelatedness; tapped into traditions and memories that contain what they perceive to be fundamental values and principles that had been original catalysts for the development of those traditions; embraced a system of shamanism that actually reflects core elements found cross-culturally in many indigenous shamanic societies, but recognizes the validity of diverse expressions of those elements; developmentally grown into a place of relationality and principled-centred decision-making that can see and access global spirituality; claimed a global spirituality that does not exclude religion, but appreciates its role as guide and servant; and learned to move out of a patriarchal paradigm of dualism and hierarchy. It also exemplifies a type of serial seekership – one in which people follow a plurality of paths that may include shamanism, but not to the exclusion of all else. In this way, these participants appear to diverge from 'traditional' shamanism.

## CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

### 9.1 Answering the Research Questions

This thesis set out to learn about a limited number of shamanic practitioners and their communities in Scotland; to explore a possible correlation between their shamanic work and the elements of cross-cultural core shamanism presented in Chapter Two; to determine whether that shamanic way of functioning might correspond to Danièle Hervieu-Léger's model of religion as a chain of memory; and finally, to relate those findings to a series of critical factors that are actively influencing the transformation of religion and culture in contemporary society. The preceding chapter has provided analyses of these questions, and so doing, has led to several conclusions.

First, the contemporary shamanic practice of those in this research study does contain the same elements found in the model of cross-cultural shamanism, which was presented in Chapter Two and designed from research into indigenous shamanic cultures. As is true with indigenous peoples, the expressions of these basic elements may differ according to cultural paradigm, expectation, and need, but the underlying elements remain the same. Second, though this type of shamanic practice closely resembles Hervieu-Léger's model of religion, presented in Chapter Four, it actually forms a parallel lineage of spirituality, not religion. The differences are subtle, but the correspondence with spirituality is much clearer. Finally, these findings reflect all of the critical factors identified in Chapter Three as major contributors in the massive transformation of religion and culture currently underway. During a time of whole-systems change, other factors may also be present, but those addressed here have still provided a comprehensive and holistic look at how these shamanic practitioners and their communities reflect and have been coping with those aspects of change.

### 9.2 Overall Themes

Four overall themes have emerged from this research. Consistently present in the fieldwork

and in related literature has been evidence that a global consciousness is emerging not only among the research participants, who remember and reverence a shamanic kinship system of oneness, but also among growing number of people. In ways not previously experienced, many are claiming an identity that begins with self and extends to include self within family, local community, nation, hemisphere, and the entire globe. Personal identities are nested in expanding circles of connection, much like an individual musician can be a soloist, part of small section within an orchestra, and a member of a full orchestra all at the same time. The person is the same, but the identity subtly shifts and adjusts as the circles widen - without detracting from the musician's fundamental ability or need to be a fine performer in all those circles.

Awareness of various global cultures and their interdependencies has prompted the emergence of global spiritualities, which often try to address essential values and meanings that can form common ground, yet provide room for diverse expressions. By doing that, they have become catalysts for re-defining the relationship between spirituality and religion. As a result, religious traditions have often had to face their sometimes inflexible boundaries and address various questions about why they exist and what they represent. Separate from the particular spiritualities of specific religious traditions, the relational and experiential nature of global spiritualities, neoshamanisms, and various new religious movements is showing itself to have more flexibility than many religions. As seen in the lives of participants in this study, religion often is perceived as having forgotten that its original function was to guide and serve spirituality.

A third theme, which follows and relates to the change and relativism of this postmodern era, is that of challenging the patriarchal paradigm in the West. Because that paradigm embodies a mind set that requires 'the best' at the top, with those who are different being assigned to 'inferior' status lower down in the hierarchy, people who have internalized that paradigm perceive pluralism and diversity as virtual enemies to 'traditional values'. For them, 'traditional values' usually refer to rules, laws, and assumed 'truths',

rather than to the values and principles underlying those more concrete expressions. Another challenge to the patriarchal paradigm is the growing presence and voice of women, especially those who have felt marginalized by religion, in spiritual arenas beyond religion. Closely related to that is the gradual shift toward valuing some of the qualities typically considered by Western societies as inherent in women, and therefore, below the 'male norm'. One of those is a perception on the part of both women and men, including those in this study, that pluralism and diversity actually offer more opportunities for spiritual growth and development than can be offered by narrowly-defined, single-focused parameters. Another is giving credence and value to personal experience and ways of knowing that are intuitive. Of course, a key part of addressing the patriarchal paradigm is looking at power and control. Though perhaps not always consciously done, religions have tended to vie for recognition as the true voice of the 'legitimate' religious memories. People in this study have moved beyond that to an internal legitimacy based on relationship and experience as primary.

Related to the above is a final theme, which centres around 'growing up' spiritually. As apparent in the developmental theories presented in Chapters Three and Eight, this postmodern era matches the time of relativism and deconstruction typical of, and necessary for, transitions from one developmental stage to another, though there are no guarantees that individuals will choose to move into the next stage. Just as teenagers or young adults are faced with trusting they have the qualities and skills they need to survive in the world when they have left home, these theories highlight how morally and spiritually human beings face the prospect of trusting that they can access the underlying values and principles they need when faced with new and unexpected circumstances. Part of that for all people, but especially for women, is knowing that they can address issues of inclusivity, relationality, and the 'greater good' when making moral decisions. This requires an inner locus of control, but it could also be supported and encouraged by religious leaders who create opportunities for people to safely question, doubt, search, and explore within parameters

that help them access those values, principles, and relationships that can serve as guides for them on the spiritual journey. Related to that is the importance of forming various types of community in order to support these processes and help people learn the skills necessary for working through differences and conflicts. Participants in this study have been addressing many of these issues, and the practitioners, in particular, have recognized their shamanic role as bridge builder in the spiritual growth process.

### **9.3 Significance of the Analytical Tools Used**

The cross-cultural model of shamanism used in this thesis has supported the existence of seven cross-cultural elements of shamanism found in most indigenous shamanic cultures worldwide. In addition, using this model has helped demonstrate that these elements in indigenous shamanism are also present in the neoshamanic work presented in this project. Finally, it has shown that core elements, values, and principles can still be reflected in culturally diverse expressions of shamanism. In doing that, it points to the possibility of being able to explore unity in diversity within other spiritual, or religious, traditions.

Regarding the model of religion as a chain of memory, Hervieu-Léger has identified particularly useful and critical components that enabled a thorough and useful analysis of contemporary shamanism in Scotland. Her model allowed movement beyond institutional religions' boundaries by creating a flexible working definition of religion. Because of that, its use actually gave a voice to those who often are marginalized, provided clear information about how traditions actually change over time, and showed the dialectic between lived remembrance and dogma when passing on religious memories. All of that was extremely helpful in ultimately determining that practitioners in this study were participants in a core lineage of spirituality, rather than religion. It also assisted in bringing role clarity in the relationship between religion and spirituality, and it provided markers to explore the issues of secularization and modernity. Her descriptions of legitimizing authority and belief could have been further clarified, but they still provided enough guidance to determine the

existence of a parallel lineage.

The critical factors in the transformation of culture and religion are significant because of the way in which their holistic combination has revealed and helped describe the existence of a global consciousness. That, in turn, has prompted the emergence of a global spirituality, or spiritualities, which appear to be providing meaning and coherence for many during this era of pluralism and diversity. Related to that phenomenon is the information gathered about how identity forms and grows over time - whether through developmental stages of moral decision-making and faith or through encounters with various challenges, such as the pervasive patriarchal paradigm in Western society. Building upon the shamanic and Hervieu-Léger models, these factors have provided a holistic, multifaceted picture of religious change and transformation - as seen through the experiences of participants in this study.

#### **9.4 Future Trends and Research Directions**

Results of this project have revealed trends that point to future directions for research. One area is identifying approaches to further research into global spiritualities. Another is exploring further the relationship between consciousness and spirituality. A third is studying a variety of intentional spiritual communities and the roles they may play in spiritual and religious learning and development. Next, it would be valuable to understand more fully the relevance of developmental theory when addressing the issues of change and their implications for academics and church leaders. A fifth area is recognizing and promoting the leadership requirements needed to facilitate spiritual and religious growth through times of relativism and change. Finally, it would be helpful to explore and acknowledge the influence and interactive roles played by academic researchers, the popular media, and esoteric 'mystery school' groups in the development and learning process of people involved in alternative spiritualities, including those in shamanic practice.

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## APPENDIX I.

## List of Interviewees

### Shamanic Practitioners

Franco Santoro  
Stephen Mulhearn  
Cláudia Gonçalves  
Mark Halliday  
Alistair Bate  
Preben Eagle Heart Olsen

### Community Members

Collette  
Heleen  
Jonathan  
Susan  
Nanna  
Tessa

## APPENDIX II. Participant Observation Experiences

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Event</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>
February 28, 2003	Trance Dance With Cláudia	The Salisbury Centre Edinburgh
April 18-19, 2003	Astroshamanism Weekend Workshop with Franco	The Salisbury Centre Edinburgh
June 21-28, 2003	Astroshamanism Weeklong Workshop with Franco	Findhorn Foundation Community, Forres
January 21, 2004	Shamanic Drumming Group With Preben	The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre, Edinburgh
October 2, 2004	Shamanic Retreat Day	Lendrick Lodge Brig O'Turk, Callander
December 11, 2004	AGM for Shamanic Centre	The Edinburgh Shamanic Centre, Edinburgh

## APPENDIX III. Examples of Fieldwork Interview Process

### A. Example One: Stephen Mulhearn, Shamanic Practitioner

#### 1. Author's Initial Draft of Interview

**LENDRICK LODGE  
Brig O'Turk  
Callander FK17 8HR  
Scotland, UK  
[www.lendricklodge.com](http://www.lendricklodge.com)**

**Interview with Stephen Mulhearn, Age 38  
June 7, 2004**

#### **Regarding Shamanism**

Stephen has created a comprehensive program of shamanic training, called *The Spirit of Shamanism*, in which he has identified key elements that 'have assisted the shaman throughout history'. Those elements include: journeying and facilitating healing; connecting with the Spirit of Nature; transmitting the information; working with the Spirit of Fire; and doing the work on yourself (Mulhearn, 1). However, when I asked his understanding of shamanism, he laughed and said shamans are 'glorified donkeys with (spiritual) allies' - people whose intention is to have 'Spirit working with us' in service. His humorous response actually reflects a deep commitment to the personal development he perceives is necessary for anyone following a shamanic path of partnership with Spirit in healing service to others.

Born near Glasgow, Stephen started having pre-cognitive dreams as a teen, though he was not trained well enough to know how to work with them. Lacking the necessary tools for understanding, Stephen indulged in an excessive use of drugs and alcohol. However, he did not stop seeking opportunities that helped him learn to honor his inner intuitive callings and eventually to establish contact with indigenous people from various cultures - a foreshadowing of future experiences for him. One program Stephen attended was by Anthony Robbins. It was very helpful to him at the time, but it did not provide the next level of depth he sought, and Stephen did not continue with it. During this time,

Stephen also explored Buddhism and researched various forms of meditation. At some point he met a man named Mo, who without knowing Stephen well, told him to find 'the mother of fire'. Though Stephen did not understand what that met, it was not long afterwards that he met Peggy Dylan, who founded the fire walking movement in the West. Many of these experiences exposed him to elements of shamanism.

Stephen went to where Peggy Dylan was living and working in France and there experienced what he described as a fire initiation. Having been faced with illness, relationship problems, and general hard times prior to meeting Peggy, he found the initiation, along with the accompanying sweat lodge experience, most helpful and insightful. Afterwards, when his work in Glasgow was growing in a good way, Stephen periodically called Peggy to talk and reflect on his life. He continued his spiritual work with her, and then at her invitation, trained as a teacher with her. During this time frame, which also coincided with a series of shamanic dreams he had, Stephen began learning about shamanism in a very conscious and personal way. A number of years later, it also led him to buy Lendrick Lodge in January of 2001, and with his wife Victoria, establish it as a residential holistic centre offering personal growth, healing, empowerment, and retreat opportunities. Included in these offerings is the program of shamanic training mentioned earlier. Stephen designed this shamanic program of healing and personal development with input from shamans all over the world, focusing especially on people who see their shamanic work as a lifelong path. As part of a long-term case study, he does follow-up work with those he trains by asking for reports about what they do in their shamanic practice. He said he tries to help these people develop the gifts they already have, but some of them do not have the particular gift to become shamanic practitioners.

Initiation experiences for Stephen began as a teen with the recurring dreams mentioned earlier. In these he would see a large fire burning in the forest and then stand back peeking at people who were dancing ecstatically around the fire. While watching, some of them would call him to come forward and join them. He also started to see teachers. At some point after he was awake and looking through a book, he recognized

some of the photos in the book as being people from his dreams. Another initiation occurred at his fire initiation with Peggy Dylan. During that sweat lodge and fire walk, he felt as if love was both a space and a container for life. The shamanic dreams he later had not only revealed spiritual allies who came to help and warn him about fierce energy that potentially could kill him, but in one he actually experienced what he called the 'bardo of death' (from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*). In that dream he traveled through a tunnel of darkness into a circle of teachers who were surrounded by love and light. During this near death experience, Stephen realized he could die, but his teacher Peggy was there and urged him to go back. He chose to return, but after the dream, discovered he needed immediate medical attention for a stomach ulcer that had burst. Finally, another initiation occurred with a bankruptcy and the ending of a romantic relationship. The bankruptcy left him feeling judged by others, and the end of the relationship instilled grief and loss.

Stephen's spiritual helpers have come to him in various ways. Some appeared initially in his early dreams as the teachers mentioned earlier. During his fire initiation, he met a goddess on the hill. At one point he felt the Wind as an ally rocking him back and forth on the mountain. In his shamanic dreams, he met the spirit of tiger, who also shifted shapes between tiger and Jim Morrison, one of Stephen's idols who had seen himself as a shaman. During the dream of his near death experience, Stephen sat with the circle of teachers who loved and advised him in his decision about life and death. With these nonordinary reality spiritual allies, Stephen not only receives healing and guidance for his own life, but he partners with them in healing service to others. Sometimes that involves shape shifting into the energy of a specific ally. As implied earlier, Stephen also calls upon teachers in ordinary reality. Not only does he value Peggy Dylan's teaching gifts, but he works with various other shamans, especially from South America. Last year Peruvian shaman Dr. Pio Vucetich Nunez del Prado asked Stephen if he wanted to be an apprentice and study with him. This is something Stephen joyfully agreed to do.

Stephen's major experiences of shamanic healing have often occurred during his periods of initiation. However, healing also continues to occur as he continues his personal

development and shamanic practice.

What helps Stephen enter a state of consciousness that facilitates shamanic journeying or work are activities such as dancing, drumming, rattling, whistling, conducting rituals, and being in nature.

Community for Stephen allows people to share the spiritual path - supporting and teaching each other, acknowledging and affirming diverse gifts, and collaborating with love and care. At the healing centre, all who work there are caretakers who contribute different skills, yet together 'hold the baby' that must be cared for and nurtured in order to survive and grow. Within the various group experiences, community members support and encourage each other in doing their individual personal and spiritual development work. Furthermore, the presence of mentors, or teachers, brings into focus a lineage of passing on the traditions that have existed for many centuries.

Nonordinary reality for Stephen contains lower, upper, and middle worlds, though he finds himself doing much work in the lower world, where he primarily finds animals and nature. He does some work in the upper world, and there he often works with the goddess. Prior to any movement to these worlds, he generally attunes to the spiritual allies who will be working with him.

#### **Regarding Religion as a Chain of Memory**

Stephen said that religion started with love, but developed a hierarchy to teach people. However, in the process, documenting religious experience took precedence, and religion became mechanical.

Spirituality for Stephen is an internal gift in which one connects with the Beloved Essence of Life, with the Life Force. In that sense, spirituality remains alive and vibrant, while religion easily loses its vitality.

Stephen's religious heritage from childhood is Catholic, which he says offered no power to people and lacked joy and laughter. In contrast, his parents allowed him opportunities for failure, freedom, and trust.

His spiritual life today includes empowerment of himself and others, and it is filled

with joy and laughter. As a result, today he takes responsibility for making decisions about his spiritual growth and development. Furthermore, he helps others do the same.

The importance of community in Stephen's experience of religion and/or spirituality is described in the section on shamanism.

Stephen invokes the presence, guidance, and support of various spiritual allies when he works shamanically. Those power animals and teachers, including the goddess, are described in the shamanic section. He also invokes a lineage of knowledge that has been passed down through various shamanic teachers he works with in ordinary reality. Some of these masters and teachers include Peggy Dylan, Peruvian shaman Dr. Pio, New Mexican shaman Emaho, South American shaman Don Alexandro, North American shaman Sandra Ingerman, and other mentors and elders.

Love and Blessing form the legitimizing authority for Stephen when determining what is authentic on his path of spiritual growth. Furthermore, he knows intuitively when he is practicing the internal spiritual discipline necessary for surrendering to that Life Force of Love and Blessing. He trusts and believes that the Universe will nurture and take care of him when he presents a pure intention. As he learned from Sandra Ingerman, intention and trust are key elements.

Today Stephen believes in ways that are both similar and different from his past. His legitimizing authority is something he determines internally, rather than accepting an external authority. At the same time, he invokes the lineages of knowledge passed on to him by various honored teachers, and he calls upon his spiritual allies for guidance and protection. As a younger person, he was not as confident about how to work with what he experienced spiritually.

As mentioned earlier, Stephen also calls upon traditions from Buddhism, fire walking, and star gazing, which he integrates into his shamanic work.

## **2. Communication Between Author and Stephen Mulhearn**

### **a. E-mail Exchanges**

Date: Tue, 9 Nov 2004 04:03:14 – 0800 (PST)  
From: "MaryCatherine Burgess"  
Subject: Your Review of Our Interview in June  
To: "Stephen Mulhearn"

Dear Stephen,

I trust you and your family (in several senses of the word) are doing well. As information, our group from the University of Edinburgh thoroughly enjoyed our time at Lendrick Lodge. Your welcoming atmosphere and hospitality were very evident. Thank you!

When we talked in June, I told you I would send you a copy of what I had written as a summary of our interview. That write-up is attached. If you could review it and correct any misperceptions or inaccuracies in how I've understood your responses, that would be most helpful. To assist, I've also attached a copy of the questions I was generally using when we actually had the interview.

If you have time to tell me if/how any of your original responses (once you've clarified their accuracy) may have changed since then, that would also be great. If you don't have time, I understand and will appreciate whatever you can do.

I don't yet know if the body of the thesis will contain only parts of the interview or all of it. If only parts are contained in the body, more than likely the entire interview will be included in an appendix. Is it OK with you if the entire interview is included in either place? Also, may I use your first name, or would you prefer I use a fictitious name? I think I know your answer, but I must make sure.

I look forward to hearing from you. It will also be nice when I am in a position to come back to Lendrick Lodge and participate in some of the learning opportunities you offer. At the moment I am focused on completing my writing and working 20 hours a week as a chaplain at the university. It's going well, but I'm often challenged with how to balance

my time.

Thank you again for everything.

Many blessings,

MaryCatherine

From: "Lendrick Lodge"  
To: "MaryCatherine Burgess"  
Subject: Re: Your Review of Our Interview in June  
Date: Tue, 30 Nov 2004 19:02:53 -0000

Hi MaryCatherine

I just got a chance to read your interview. We had a real long chat, which I very much enjoyed. Could you give me a call on 07774 263 44 Thu/Fri, so that I could expand on a few points and make a few minor corrections/adjustments. That way it would be really clear and of maximum use if read by people. What's your tel. number also?

Lots of love - Look forward to chatting.

Stephen

Lendrick Lodge, Brig O'Turk, Callander FK17 8HR

tel/fax: 01877 376263

[www.lendricklodge.com](http://www.lendricklodge.com)

**b. Telephone Conversation on April 19, 2005**

After numerous scheduling challenges following the e-mail exchanges in November, 2004, Stephen and the author finally discussed the needed updates via telephone on April 19, 2005. For the shamanic questions, Stephen first told me that his comment about shamans as 'glorified donkeys' referred to an Apache ceremonial shaman describing how he would go over the mountain to bring back healing for the people. Stephen further explained that he had had input from shamans in North and South America, not all over the

world and that his description of the 'bardo of death' was not a dream, but a near-death experience he had had while in the hospital. He also clarified that Jim Morrison had been an idol of his while he was a teen-ager, and he asked me to remove the sentence about shape shifting into the energy of a specific ally.

Regarding the 'religion as a chain of memory' section, he added that he thought religion was the essence of love translated into words – that it was metaphorical. However, he thought that essence sometimes became lost in the transmission, resulting in the dilemma of how to keep the essence pure. He told me the written word is difficult, because it can often miss the essence without a teacher to help explain. He also said he had not actually worked with the American shaman Don Alexandro. He added (to the end of the second-to-the-last paragraph) a comment about how it had been through years of experience and of being honed and finely tuned by his own teachers and masters that he had developed the confidence to pass on his own teachings to others. Finally, he asked me to remove 'star gazing' as one of the traditions he incorporates into his work.

### **3. Final Draft of Interview**

**Interview with Stephen Mulhearn, Age 38  
June 7, 2004**

**Updated based on Telephone Conversation with Stephen on April 19, 2005**

#### **Regarding Shamanism**

Stephen has created a comprehensive program of shamanic training, called *The Spirit of Shamanism*, in which he has identified key elements that 'have assisted the shaman throughout history'. Those elements include: journeying and facilitating healing; connecting with the Spirit of Nature; transmitting the information; working with the Spirit of Fire; and doing the work on yourself (Mulhearn, 1). However, when I asked his understanding of shamanism, he laughed and said shamans are 'glorified donkeys with (spiritual) allies' - people whose intention is to have 'Spirit working with us' in service. His humorous response actually reflects a deep commitment to the personal development he perceives is necessary for anyone following a shamanic path of partnership with Spirit in healing service to others. Furthermore, it reflects the way an Apache shaman talked about his work – that

he went 'over the mountain to bring back healing for people'.

Born near Glasgow, Stephen started having pre-cognitive dreams as a teen, though he was not trained well enough to know how to work with them. Lacking the necessary tools for understanding, Stephen indulged in an excessive use of drugs and alcohol. However, he did not stop seeking opportunities that helped him learn to honor his inner intuitive callings and eventually to establish contact with indigenous people from various cultures - a foreshadowing of future experiences for him. One program Stephen attended was by Anthony Robbins. It was very helpful to him at the time, but it did not provide the next level of depth he sought, and Stephen did not continue with it. During this time, Stephen also explored Buddhism and researched various forms of meditation. At some point he met a man named Mo, who without knowing Stephen well, told him to find 'the mother of fire'. Though Stephen did not understand what that met, it wasn't long afterwards that he met Peggy Dylan, who founded the fire walking movement in the West. Many of these experiences exposed him to elements of shamanism.

Stephen went to where Peggy Dylan was living and working in France and there experienced what he described as a fire initiation. Having been faced with illness, relationship problems, and general hard times prior to meeting Peggy, he found the initiation, along with the accompanying sweat lodge experience, most helpful and insightful. Afterwards, when his work in Glasgow was growing in a good way, Stephen periodically called Peggy to talk and reflect on his life. He continued his spiritual work with her, and then at her invitation, trained as a teacher with her. During this time frame, which also coincided with a series of shamanic dreams he had, Stephen began learning about shamanism in a very conscious and personal way. A number of years later, it also led him to buy Lendrick Lodge in January of 2001, and with his wife Victoria, establish it as a residential holistic centre offering personal growth, healing, empowerment, and retreat opportunities. Included in these offerings is the program of shamanic training mentioned earlier. Stephen designed this shamanic program of healing and personal development with input from shamans in North and South America, focusing especially on people who see their shamanic work as a

lifelong path. As part of a long-term case study, he does follow-up work with those he trains by asking for reports about what they do in their shamanic practice. He said he tries to help these people develop the gifts they already have, but some of them do not have the particular gift to become shamanic practitioners.

Initiation experiences for Stephen began as a teen with the recurring dreams mentioned earlier. In these he would see a large fire burning in the forest and then stand back peeking at people who were dancing ecstatically around the fire. While watching, some of them would call him to come forward and join them. He also started to see teachers. At some point after he was awake and looking through a book, he recognized some of the photos in the book as being people from his dreams. Another initiation occurred at his fire initiation with Peggy Dylan. During that sweat lodge and fire walk, he felt as if love was both a space and a container for life. Shamanic dreams he later had revealed spiritual allies who came to help and warn him about fierce energy that potentially could kill him. He also described what he called the 'bardo of death' (from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*) as something that actually happened to him as part of a near-death experience he once had while he was in the hospital. At that time he said he traveled through a tunnel of darkness into a circle of teachers who were surrounded by love and light. During this experience, Stephen realized he could die, but his teacher Peggy was there and urged him to go back. He chose to return, but after the experience, discovered he needed immediate medical attention for a stomach ulcer that had burst. Finally, another initiation occurred with a bankruptcy and the ending of a romantic relationship. The bankruptcy left him feeling judged by others, and the end of the relationship instilled grief and loss.

Stephen's spiritual helpers have come to him in various ways. Some appeared initially in his early dreams - as the teachers mentioned earlier. During his fire initiation, he met a goddess on the hill. At one point he felt the Wind as an ally rocking him back and forth on the mountain. In his shamanic dreams, he met the spirit of tiger, who also shifted shapes between tiger and Jim Morrison, one of Stephen's teen-age idols - a man who had seen himself as a shaman. During Stephen's near death experience, he sat with the circle

of teachers who loved and advised him in his decision about life and death. With these nonordinary reality spiritual allies, Stephen not only receives healing and guidance for his own life, but he partners with them in healing service to others. As implied earlier, Stephen also calls upon teachers in ordinary reality. Not only does he value Peggy Dylan's teaching gifts, but also he works with various other shamans, especially from South America. Last year Peruvian shaman Dr. Pio Vucetich Nunez del Prado asked Stephen if he wanted to be an apprentice and study with him. This is something Stephen joyfully agreed to do.

Stephen's major experiences of shamanic healing have often occurred during his periods of initiation. However, healing also continues to occur as he continues his personal development and shamanic practice.

What helps Stephen enter a state of consciousness that facilitates shamanic journeying or work are activities such as dancing, drumming, rattling, whistling, conducting rituals, and being in nature.

Community for Stephen allows people to share the spiritual path - supporting and teaching each other, acknowledging and affirming diverse gifts, and collaborating with love and care. At the healing centre, all who work there are caretakers who contribute different skills, yet together 'hold the baby' that must be cared for and nurtured in order to survive and grow. Within the various group experiences, community members support and encourage each other in doing their individual personal and spiritual development work. Furthermore, the presence of mentors, or teachers, brings into focus a lineage of passing on the traditions that have existed for many centuries.

Nonordinary reality for Stephen contains lower, upper, and middle worlds, though he finds himself doing much work in the lower world, where he primarily finds animals and nature. He does some work in the upper world, and there he often works with the goddess. Prior to any movement to these worlds, he generally attunes to the spiritual allies who will be working with him.

### **Regarding Religion as a Chain of Memory**

Stephen said that religion started with love, but developed a hierarchy to teach people.

However, in the process, documenting religious experience took precedence, and religion became mechanical. He described religion as the essence of love translated into words, and in that way, it was metaphorical. At the same time, that essence sometimes has become lost in the transmission, resulting in the dilemma of determining how to keep the essence pure. Stephen told me the written word is difficult, because it can often miss the essence without a teacher to help explain and/or explore it.

Spirituality for Stephen is an internal gift in which one connects with the Beloved Essence of Life, with the Life Force. In that sense, spirituality remains alive and vibrant, while religion easily loses its vitality.

Stephen's religious heritage from childhood is Catholic, which he says offered no power to people and lacked joy and laughter. In contrast, his parents allowed him opportunities for failure, freedom, and trust.

His spiritual life today includes empowerment of himself and others, and it is filled with joy and laughter. As a result, today he takes responsibility for making decisions about his spiritual growth and development. Furthermore, he helps others do the same.

The importance of community in Stephen's experience of religion and/or spirituality is described in the section on shamanism.

Stephen invokes the presence, guidance, and support of various spiritual allies when he works shamanically. Those power animals and teachers, including the goddess, are described in the shamanic section. He also invokes a lineage of knowledge that has been passed down through various shamanic teachers he works with in ordinary reality. Some of these masters and teachers include Peggy Dylan, Peruvian shaman Dr. Pio, New Mexican shaman Emaho, North American shaman Sandra Ingerman, and other mentors and elders.

Love and Blessing form the legitimizing authority for Stephen when determining what is authentic on his path of spiritual growth. Furthermore, he knows intuitively when he is practicing the internal spiritual discipline necessary for surrendering to that Life Force of Love and Blessing. He trusts and believes that the Universe will nurture and take care of

him when he presents a pure intention. As he learned from Sandra Ingerman, intention and trust are key elements.

Today Stephen believes in ways that are both similar and different from his past. His legitimizing authority is something he determines internally, rather than accepting an external authority. At the same time, he invokes the lineages of knowledge passed on to him by various honored teachers, and he calls upon his spiritual allies for guidance and protection. As a younger person, he was not as confident about how to work with what he experienced spiritually. However, through years of experience and of being honed and fine-tuned by his own teachers and masters, he has developed the confidence to pass on his own teachings to others.

As mentioned earlier, Stephen also calls upon traditions from Buddhism, and fire walking, which he integrates into his shamanic work.

## **B. Example Two: Heleen, Shamanic Participant**

### **1. Author's Initial Draft of Interview**

**ASTROSHAMANISM WORKSHOP WITH FRANCO SANTORO**  
**Findhorn Foundation Community at Cluny Hill**  
**Forres, Scotland, UK**  
**June 21-28, 2003**

**Interview with Heleen, age 60, from Holland**  
**June 25, 2003**

#### **Regarding Shamanism**

When I asked Heleen what she understood shamanism was, she said it was the connection between fire, water, earth, and the heavens - something that brightens your brain and allows you to look at life in a different way. To Heleen, that 'different way' involves moving from an objective view to *feeling* - to something more behind what the physical eyes see.

Heleen said she first heard about shamanism about two or three years earlier, when her daughter had a friend who worked as a shaman with stones, purification, and intuitive choices. When she recently checked the Findhorn web site and saw this workshop, she knew she needed to come and 'let it happen'.

This workshop has been her first experiential exposure to shamanism. She came with an openness to learn, and within the workshop has begun asking for guidance from spiritual allies. So far on shamanic journeys or experiences she has not 'seen' anything in animal form, but instead, she experiences something like a hand on her shoulder. It is very familiar, and she wonders if maybe it is God helping her explore this new dimension. She has been asking God if this is OK, and she thinks it must be OK.

As her first exposure to shamanic journeys and practices, Heleen described some of her experiences as meaningful and at times powerful. Perhaps because they are so new, she has not necessarily called them 'initiation experiences', though hindsight may lead her to view them in that way. She said the consciousness she brought involved a longing for experience. In one of her first journeys, that consciousness helped her see concentrated color (i.e. blue or red within a whole picture) and feel the urge to travel. In another journey, once she acknowledged her intent, she began to see graphic images of Romans, prisons, and burned building - as if she had come back to a place where she had lived. She saw a small lantern, some food, and people who were going to tell her what had happened. However, before they could do that, she was off to the future.

In response to my question about shamanic healing, Heleen said it would be healing to re-live that Roman experience (just described) again, but this time, do something with it - turn it upside down and transform the negativity into something positive.

When asked what nonordinary reality looks like to her, Heleen described one journey in which there were buildings, and then she was behind a gate, where she saw a scene filled with a bright green color. Suddenly a kind of tunnel appeared under the gate, and a Lady was there. The next day Heleen went back to this place and flew over the gate. As she did that, she realized SHE was the lady. She also noted that the architecture was rococo, which is not her style. It was a very sensory experience for her.

Heleen said she would like to continue shamanic work, because she is curious. For example, in one journey, she experienced a hand pulling her back to age three, when her father was unfairly being held in prison. The face of the man who should have been in

prison (instead of her father) appeared before her, and she felt the hate she had felt at that young age. However, Heleen says that scene must have been a memory, because she now feels healed from that experience. In the shamanic journeys she described, Heleen did not distinguish between the upper and lower worlds of nonordinary reality.

The role of community did not figure directly in our conversation - in part due to this being the first time Heleen explored shamanism experientially. Learning shamanic ways within a community seemed to be positive for her, but community wasn't something she had thought about.

### **Regarding Religion as a Chain of Memory**

When asked about religion, Heleen said religion was Tradition, though there are different traditions. As a child she was exposed to a kind of global Christianity, in which there was no priest, and men and women were separated, though together in church. They had singing, and most people were baptized as adults. However, Heleen rebelled against it, especially the church's plea for money from younger kids. There was also another Christian church, though she decided not to marry there, but in the Town Hall, with a theologian as the preacher. Later her son and daughter were baptized, but church was not part of their lives. Heleen says religion can be everything - what you are used to, so different for everyone.

Spirituality for Heleen has to do with feeling. Actually, she thinks religion and spirituality belong together; otherwise, religion would be very dry. It would be like taking a book, reading it, and 'that's it' - no thinking, reflecting, or incorporating ideas in a meaningful way. Determining what is sacred for her depends on the occasion, the environment, and the people. To Heleen, the sacred can be a way of having fun - a way to 'feel together' in relationship to God. In that sense, community does play a part in her experience of the sacred.

In response to my asking about her sense of belief, Heleen said that the word 'believe' is not certain and can be applied in different ways. For example, one can say, 'I believe it will rain today'. However, she equates believing more to feeling an inner power and to knowing something from deep within. She thinks 'you have to feel it' and should not

judge other people and their religions or try to pressure another into believing something you believe.

When asked about shamanism's compatibility with other spiritual traditions, she said that since all God created is good, then all ways of developing spiritually are good. Furthermore, she thinks we have a duty to use our brains.

In response to my question about how she knows that her spiritual practice is legitimate and authoritative, she said she experiences a lot of miracles, and that when she is open to recognize the signs, it makes her happy. In her words, 'It makes you strong in difficult situations. God, take me in your hands.' Regarding traditions or memories, she said she does not consciously call upon them. Ritual for her is present and 'goes along with all the things you do'.

Heleen ended by saying that it is important for everybody to be aware of things that happen, because that makes life rich. When her husband died six years ago, saying just before he died, 'That's my loving wife', it strengthened her. She says she is on a learning path, so why change?

## **2. E-mail Communication Between Author and Heleen**

Date: Wed, 28 Jul 2004 07:51:47 -0700 (PDT)  
From: "MaryCatherine Burgess"  
Subject: How Are You? Thesis Information  
To: Heleen

Dear Heleen,

Please forgive me for not writing to you last year after your very thoughtful and kind note for my birthday. I have thought often about you and our time at Findhorn/Cluny for the astroshamanism workshop, but the past year has been soooooo full! I do apologize for waiting so long to write.

I also hope this e-mail finds you well and enjoying life. From your message last August, it looked as if you were going to go to Franco's Tuscany workshop. Did you do

that? Have you gone to any more? How is all that going for you?

As you can tell, I have attached a file for you to review. It is my summary of our talk/interview last year. I am sending it for three reasons. First, I had told you last year that I would let you see it before incorporating it into the thesis. Second, I would appreciate your letting me know if I have accurately reflected what you remember saying to me - what you thought and how you felt. If I have misunderstood or misinterpreted something, please feel free to make adjustments or corrections. Finally, if you have time to let me know what you have been doing shamanically during the last year, that would be great. Also, if your thoughts about the issues we discussed have actually CHANGED over the last year, I would love to know that.

Now that I am writing to you, I am realizing it might be helpful for you to know what questions I had in my mind as I talked with you last year. Looking at a list of questions may help stimulate your memory and help you respond.

Please know that I appreciate your being there and your willingness to be participating in the work I am doing about shamanism in Scotland. It is turning into a look at how contemporary shamanic practice is actually a doorway into understanding how religion is transforming itself in our midst. That is exciting.

Take care. I look forward to hearing from you.

MaryCatherine

Date: Tue, 3 Aug 2004 08:36:51 -0700 (PDT)

From: "MaryCatherine Burgess"

Subject: Clarification

To: Heleen

Dear Heleen,

I realized after I wrote to you last week that several things need to be clarified.

First of all, the interview I sent you is for my files and not designed to be published in its entirety in my thesis. My purpose in sending it to you is to assure that I captured your thoughts, feelings, and ideas accurately. As I write about the astroshamanism workshop and the people I interviewed there, I will draw upon the interview summaries, but I am not planning to insert them into the body of the thesis.

Second, even though I will not use the complete interviews in the body of the thesis, I do have to keep my records to prove that the interviews actually took place. It is possible, though not likely, that I could be asked to include the interviews in an appendix. If that is requested, I would only do that if you gave me permission. I do not think I will be asked to do that, but please let me know how you would want me to handle that.

Third, for confidentiality purposes, originally I had not planned to use real names in the thesis. However, many of you said using your names would be fine. If it is OK with you, I will use your first name as I refer to what you said. However, if you would rather I use fictitious name, please let me know.

OK. Thanks again. I appreciate your time and effort. Take care. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

MaryCatherine

Date: Thu, Aug 2004 16:50:11 +0200

To: "MaryCatherine"

From: Heleen

Subject: Answer

Dear MaryCatherine,

Very nice to hear from you again. Thanks for your e-mails, and I will try to give you the right answers after this weekend because I'm very much occupied by my work at the moment.

With love from Heleen.

Date: Tue, Aug 2004 14:10:47 -0200

To: "MaryCatherine Burgess"

From: Heleen

Subject: Answer Astroshamanism

Dear MaryCatherine,

Finally a bit time to answer my e-mails.

I did read the interview again and still agree with the answers I gave last year, and you can use my real name if you like. If you have to include the interviews I give you herewith my permission.

In the meantime I'm rather busy with Astroshamanism. After the workshop in Italy I did attend workshops in Astroshamanism in December, March and April and a retreat in Tuscany last June. I'm following a real study in Astroshamanism with Franco and that is really great. It feels like living my life for the second time and that is rather intensive but enriches my life. In the meantime I'm surprised that I'm slowly finding out who I really am, and it becomes also clear what is important to me. Therefore, I did take steps to change my life. One of the things was that I did not want to be in business anymore, because it totally absorbed me. I did take decisions step by step, and the result is that I sold my company end of last month to get time to do what I enjoy, and that also includes Astroshamanism.

I'm busy organizing the first 2-day Seminar with Franco in Holland on the 9th and 10th October and also started two weeks ago with a study of the Italian language just for fun. Next month I'm for the second time attending a workshop with Franco and Katharina

with Astroshamanic Trance and Circle Dances. With Franco, even if the title is the same, every workshop is different, because he is very flexible and anticipates on questions out of the group, and therefore, every time you learn new things. Every time it is overwhelming the amount of information you get, and sometimes you can't even understand it clearly, but the longer you work with Astroshamanism, the more answers you get.

I hope you will make progress with your PhD. Then it must be satisfactory to see that you are almost able to finish it. My daughter is also busy with her PhD and hopes to finish it by the end of this year. Some parts of her researches were already useable, and so they gave her only 8 month to finish it with further researches.

I hope we will meet again some day and herewith.

Love from Heleen.

Date: Tue, 24 May 2005 06:17:39 -0700 (PDT)

From: "MaryCatherine Burgess"

Subject: Hello & One More Question

To: Heleen

Dear Heleen,

I hope you have had a good year and are enjoying life! Have you continued to do the shamanic work with Franco? Last year when you wrote to me, you were planning for him to do a workshop in Holland. Did that take place?

My year has been very full - particularly because I have been working part-time as a university chaplain AND trying to complete my thesis. At the moment I am writing the conclusion and will be doing all the final preparations in order to submit it around June 1. Yes! From June 10 until July 13, I will be in the USA for a visit, and my oral exam, or viva, is scheduled for July 19 here in Edinburgh. In September I will resume working as a university chaplain (still part-time) and enjoying some time for other explorations.

My reason for writing you now is to ask for clarification about one of your

responses to my question about your religious background. If I understood you correctly, you said you were Christian, but that you were part of a 'global' Christianity that had no priest or minister - even though people were baptized as adults. Who did the baptizing? Did people take turns with planning the services, including the singing? You had said you were irritated about the church's plea for money. Who handled the money? Later, when you married at the Town Hall, you said a theologian was the 'preacher'. Did that mean he was the 'official church representative' who officiated at your wedding? At other times, did he preach?

Those are my questions, but I know it is time-consuming to try to write out any answers. I did just try calling you, but nobody answered. If you do not mind, I would like to call you sometime in the next several days in order to ask those questions and eliminate your having to respond by e-mail. Would that be OK?

Please let me know by e-mail what the correct phone number is AND when might be a good time for me to call you. Thank you so much.

If you are unable to talk with me, I will understand, and that will not be a problem. However, if you can spare some time, I would certainly appreciate it. I look forward to hearing from you. Thanks again.

Love,

MaryCatherine

Date: Tue, 31 May 2005 15:31:18 +0200

From: Heleen

Subject: Answer

To: "MaryCatherine Burgess"

Dear MaryCatherine,

Thanks for your e-mail, but I was in South-Africa when it did arrive, and that is the cause of

my late reply. I will send you an answer very soon, but first have to become organized again. Then a lot of urgent things are waiting.

With love from Heleen

Date: Sat, 04 Jun 2005 19:04:02 +0200

From: Heleen

Subject: Answer

To: "MaryCatherine Burgess"

Dear MaryCatherine,

I have done much this week, but today I have made a list of all the things that still have to be done. Yours is the most urgent of them, and so here are my answers.

I had also a very good year and have been busy with shamanic work for an important part of my spare time. In March I finished the first year training with Franco, and I'm going to do the second part of the training. Many times I was in Scotland for the workshops, but also in Italy for the retreats for the advanced people.

During the New Years retreat in Italy we also started a Healing Circle and we all had to express two Intents connected with this HC. One of my Intents was to get in touch with a different kind of spirituality, and therefore, I went end of March to Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Belize. It was a group trip, and we went along the Maya trail and visited several excavations and also many churches and Native American villages. It was a great experience, and I was able to see how the Native Americans stayed to their old traditions just covered with a varnish of Catholicism, this intense devotion. I also discovered among the Maya guides at the excavations some shamans and that went so natural. It was reading between the lines in what they told us, but they felt that I got messages just by looking in one another's eyes. In one occasion, one was talking to me his eyes directed at heart level.

So I found what I was looking for, and it is an addition on my path of shamanic growth. This year I won't go to other shamanic workshops, but maybe only the retreats,

because I also want to get in touch with different possibilities to use as development of my spiritual shamanic path. Anyhow, shamanism has totally changed my life. I feel liberated and full of energy. It is unbelievable how totally unexpected spiritual people suddenly appear in my life, and most of them with a message. The workshop last October in Holland was a success and the second one will be in October this year.

About my Christianity: The religion was grounded in the 19th century by John Nelson Darby, and therefore, the followers are called Darbysts. Darby became a lawyer, then an Anglican clergymen, but then left the Church, because after him the true Church is invisible. Then he committed himself to the Plymouth Brethren, which broke with all the clerical parties and afterwards were called Darbysts. Afterwards several groups were developing, mainly in the U.S., Canada, England and Europe. They reject all the rules of the Church and have, therefore, the baptizing as grownups and every Sunday the Last Supper to be ready for the end of time. Everything during a ceremony or the divine service is done by the ones who have received the Holy Ghost.

The theologian at my wedding was a docent in theology at High School.

I hope the answers are still on time, but feel free to call me. My phone number is correct.

With love and blessings from

Heleen.