

PROSPECTUS

OXFORD HANDBOOK OF MILLENNIALISM

Catherine Wessinger, editor

Millennialism is a pervasive and common pattern of human religiosity, which is often misunderstood. While many religions aim at achieving salvation (a condition of permanent well-being) for individuals, millennialism is the audacious human hope for a “collective salvation” (Norman Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*), which may be either heavenly or earthly. In other words, millennialism involves the expectation that salvation will be accomplished for a group of people by a superhuman agent, with or without human collaboration.

Millennialism is a category that has been used to study religious expressions in diverse cultures, religious traditions, and historical periods. While the term “millennialism” is drawn from Christianity (the New Testament book of Revelation) and applied to diverse religious traditions, the related categories of “pre-millennialism” (Christ is expected to return BEFORE the collective salvation is established) and “post-millennialism” (Christ is expected to return AFTER God’s kingdom on Earth is created) are inextricably tied to Christian theology, Catherine Wessinger’s work has aimed to provide descriptive categories, which are not so closely tied to Christian theology, to promote the cross-cultural and comparative study of millennialism.

The category that scholars have come to term “millennialism” actually involves several distinctive religious patterns that can be discerned cross-culturally and cross-historically. “*Catastrophic millennialism*” expects a catastrophic destruction of the old order so that the collective salvation may be accomplished either in heaven or on Earth. “*Progressive millennialism*” expects the collective salvation to be accomplished by humans working in cooperation with a divine or superhuman plan. “*Avertive apocalypticism*” warns of possible catastrophic destruction, but calls people to true faith and spiritual practice in order to avert the catastrophe and create the collective salvation. “*Nativist millennial movements*” express the hope of oppressed and colonized peoples for a collective salvation, and they may be either catastrophic or progressive in orientation. Nativist millennialists expect a restoration of an idealized past way of life. There is no doubt that these categories will be refined and expanded with more in-depth comparative study of millennialism.

A range of behaviors is associated with millennialism. At the benign end of the spectrum, millennialists either wait for divine intervention to destroy the old world, or perform social and spiritual work to try to bring in the new order. Further in on the spectrum, millennialists of all types may arm themselves for protection, and resort to violence if they feel attacked. On the violent end of the spectrum, revolutionary millennialists, with catastrophic, progressive, and/or nativist orientations, will carry out revolutionary violence to destroy the old order and create the new one. Revolutionary millennialists believe their actions are mandated by a divine or superhuman plan; even ostensibly secular revolutionary millennialists, such as the German Nazis and the Khmer Rouge, appealed to a higher superhuman power.

Although millennialism is not necessarily tied to specific dates, some anticipated dates such as the transition from the year 1999 to 2000 appear to have the power to excite the millennial imagination. Therefore, the 1990s was a decade rich in millennial expressions, and scholars responded by exploring the varieties of millennialism, particularly the connections between millennialism and violence. In our new temporal millennium, there are plenty of millennial expressions to study and considerable evidence that many believers in diverse religious traditions continue to see the new temporal millennium as the period in which the collective salvation will be accomplished. Millennial religious expressions have been around for at least 3,000 years, and the human hope for a collective salvation that ends suffering once and for all will not go away.

The *Oxford Handbook of Millennialism* will provide cutting edge articles by noted scholars to elucidate the diverse expressions of millennial religious patterns throughout history and in different religious traditions. Each article will survey and analyze an area of millennialism studies. The *Handbook* will introduce categories to facilitate understanding of religious patterns that scholars term “millennialism,” address key theoretical issues relating to millennialism, and provide comprehensive overviews of millennial movements in different time periods and locations.

The names of scholars who have agreed to contribute to this volume are given in bold below.

Section I containing the **Introduction** by **Catherine Wessinger, Loyola University New Orleans**, will discuss the basic categories and features of millennialism and draw comparative conclusions from the articles in the book.

The types of millennialism will be elucidated further with appropriate historical treatments, in **Section II, “Millennialism: Primary Categories and Histories.” Eugene V. Gallagher, Connecticut College**, will write the initial essay on “Catastrophic Millennialism: Expecting Cataclysmic Transition to a Collective Salvation.” Gallagher will discuss the historical origins for this religious pattern, and give examples of its many manifestations in history. Chapter 2, “Avertive Apocalypticism: Using Spiritual Techniques to Avert the Catastrophe,” by **Daniel Wojcik, University of Oregon**, will introduce a newly identified, but old, expression of millennialism. Chapter 3, “Nativist Millennialism: Responses to Colonialism,” by **Jean E. Rosenfeld, University of California, Los Angeles**, will discuss a very common form of millennialism found in “culture clash” and imperialist situations in which a dominant culture with advanced technology is conquering an indigenous group, disrupting their traditional religion and way of life, dispossessing them of their land, and often killing many of the indigenous peoples, either directly or indirectly. Nativist millennial movements may be peaceful or violent, catastrophic or progressive, and expect divine intervention or advocate divinely sanctioned revolutionary actions. **William Michael Ashcraft, Truman State University**, will write chapter 4, “Progressive Millennialism: Belief That Progress Will Effect the Collective Salvation.” Progressive millennialism may be peaceful or violent. Usually we think of progressive millennialists, such as the Shakers, Protestants participating in the Social Gospel movement, or people influenced by the New Age movement, as being completely peaceful. However, recent

scholarship has indicated that the German Nazis, and Communists such as the Khmer Rouge and Mao Zedong were progressive millennialists; they used any means, including violent means, to speed progress up to an apocalyptic rate. The chapter on “progressive millennialism” will be an important introduction to this religious pattern, which has not received the same amount of scholarly study as catastrophic millennialism.

Section III, “Issues Relating to Millennialism,” will address key theoretical, historical, and sociological issues. Chapter 5, “Charisma and Other Types of Leadership,” by **Lorne Dawson, University of Waterloo**, will discuss the “charismatic leader” who is important in so many millennial movements. “Charisma” is understood here as referring to belief that an individual has access to an unseen source of authority, such as God, angels, ancestors, spirits, even extraterrestrials. Charisma is socially constructed, and followers can withdraw the attribution of charisma to a leader at any time. Furthermore, after one individual claims charisma, others will also, so that competing charismatic leaders emerge. Charismatic leaders must find ways to contain the claimed charisma. The secondary leaders surrounding a charismatic leader are crucial for promoting the movement, administration, and maintaining the leader’s charisma. Some of them may also prove to be challengers for charisma. Naturally, leaders’ interactions and interrelations with followers are crucial factors for this chapter to discuss. Lastly, this chapter will address millennial movements that do not have a prominent charismatic leader. Chapter 6 on millennialism and scriptures, written by **Eugene V. Gallagher, Connecticut College**, will discuss the significance of scriptures—old ones and the formation of new ones—in relation to many millennial movements. Chapter 7 by **Lorne Dawson, University of Waterloo**, will present scholarly conclusions about the different ways that millennial movements deal with the failure of prophecy concerning the collective salvation and related supernatural/superhuman events. Chapter 8 on gender roles, sexuality and children in millennial movements by **Melissa M. Wilcox, Whitman College**, will survey experimental arrangements between woman and men in millennial movements as they attempt to live out the anticipated millennial kingdom, and the roles of children in these groups. These experiments run the gamut from celibacy to free love to patriarchal nuclear families to polygamy. Many groups are oriented to heterosexuality, while others are accepting of gay, lesbian, and transgendered persons. Gender roles may be patriarchal, egalitarian, or female dominated. Millennial movements have provided important arenas for women to become religious leaders, or reinforce subordination of women. Chapter 9 by **Douglas E. Cowan, University of Missouri-Kansas City** will explore contemporary expressions of millennialism in media and popular culture. Chapter 10 by **John Walliss, Liverpool Hope University College**, will discuss the complex dynamics that link a number of millennial movements to violent episodes. It will be noted that millennialists are not always the ones who initiate the violence. Sometimes millennialists are assaulted, sometimes they initiate violence because they are revolutionary, sometimes millennialists commit violence because their group is fragile and they conclude that drastic means are needed to preserve their ultimate concern.

Section IV, “Millennialism in Cross-Historical and Cross-Cultural Perspective,” will provide comprehensive treatments of millennial movements historically and in different parts of the world.

The first several chapters in this section will focus on *millennialism in the developing monotheistic traditions*. Chapter 11 on “Ancient Near Eastern Millennialism,” by **Robert Gnuse, Loyola University New Orleans**, will address Persian Zoroastrian, Israelite, and Egyptian expressions of millennialism. Chapter 12 on “Apocalyptic Judaism and Early Christianity” by **James Tabor, University of North Carolina, Charlotte**, will discuss the Jewish apocalyptic and messianic movements including the Essenes at Qumran, the Jesus movement, Early Christianity, and Rabbinic Judaism. Chapter 13 on “Early Islam and Classical Sunni and Shi‘ite Millennialisms” by **David Cook, Rice University**, will discuss the apocalypticism found in the Qur’an, and the development of messianism in later Sunni and Shi‘ite formulations of Islam. Chapter 14 on “Medieval and Renaissance Movements in Europe,” by **Rebecca Moore, San Diego State University**, will discuss the Muslim expansion, Saladin, the Crusades, medieval Christian movements, Reformation Christian and Jewish movements and events, such as the siege and massacre of Anabaptists at Münster, and Shabbatai Zvi’s messianic movement.

The next group of chapters will focus on *Asian millennial movements*. Chapter 15 on “Chinese Movements,” by **Scott Lowe, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**, will present the numerous Chinese movements, drawing on Daoist, Buddhist, and even Christian expectations. Many Chinese movements have been revolutionary, including the Communist movement, and represent reactions to oppression from the ruling class. Chapter 16 on “Korean Movements,” by **Robert Flaherty, Kyungbuk National University, Daegu, Republic of Korea**, will present the distinctive Korean movements that likewise draw on Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist, indigenous, and, later, Christian, expectations, such as the revolutionary Donghak movement in 1894, which transmuted into the peaceful JeungSanDo movement, and also Reverend Sun Myung Moon’s Unification movement. Chapter 17 on “Japanese Movements” by **Robert Kisala, Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture**, will discuss the involvement of Buddhist and Shinto expressions of millennialism in the effort at imperialist expansion that contributed to World War II, and the later pacifist forms of millennialism that developed after the defeat of Japan, as well as the millennialism in Japanese new religious movements, including Aum Shinrikyô, the group that released sarin gas on the Tokyo subway in 1995. Chapter 18 on “Hindu Movements” by **Hugh Urban, Ohio State University**, will discuss the millennialism found in contemporary Hindu movements such as Transcendental Meditation and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness as well as in the Hindu nationalist ideology manifested in the Bharatiya Janata Party and related political organizations.

The following chapters will address *millennialism in Africa, Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific*. Chapter 19 by **Rosalind I. J. Hackett, University of Tennessee, Knoxville**, will discuss the numerous “African Movements” with millennial themes drawing on Islam, Christianity, and indigenous traditions. Chapter 20 on “Afro-Caribbean Movements” by **Barry Chevannes, University of the West Indies**, will discuss Rastafari as a diverse international movement as well other Afro-Caribbean millennial movements. Chapter 21 on “Latin American Movements” by **Miguel Leatham, Texas Christian University**, will present the numerous millennial movements, based primarily in Catholicism and indigenous resistance to colonialism and oppression, in Latin American countries. Chapter 22 on “Pacific Movements” by **Garry W. Trompf, University of Sydney**, will discuss the “cargo cults” in Melanesia, and other millennial movements in Australia and New Zealand, such as the Pai Marire movement among the Maori in New Zealand.

The next chapters will focus on important *nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first century millennial movements*. Chapter 23 on “Native American Movements,” by **Michelene Pesantubbee, University of Iowa**, will discuss the nineteenth-century Ghost Dance movement among Plains Native Americans, as well as the significance of Native American millennial prophecies for late twentieth and early twenty-first century Native American and Native American-based spiritualities. This discussion will include a discussion of Mayan millennial prophecies and their significance for the year 2012. Chapter 24 on “Babi and Baha’i Millennialism” by **Peter Smith, Mahidol University, Bangkok, and William Collins, Library of Congress**, will discuss the importance of Shi‘ite expectations of the Mahdi in the early Bab movement, which subsequently developed into Baha’i under the leadership of Baha’u’llah. It will be seen that the Bab/Baha’i movement, due to persecution in the early days and its historical context in Shi‘ite Iran, tended toward revolutionary catastrophic millennialism, but that subsequently Baha’u’llah emphasized progressive and peaceful themes. Chapter 25 by **Jon R. Stone, California State University, Long Beach**, on “Nineteenth and Twentieth-century American Millennialisms” will discuss the Social Gospel movement, the Mormons, the Millerite movement, the Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Nation of Islam among others. The United States has produced important millennial movements and groups that remain highly influential on the world scene today. Chapter 26 on “Christian Dispensationalism” by **Glenn W. Shuck, Williams College**, will discuss the origins of this movement in the nineteenth century and its manifestations in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in apocalyptic media such as the *Left Behind* series, and its influence in politics on Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush and American policy relating to Israel. Chapter 27 by **Karla Poewe, University of Calgary**, will examine National Socialism as an example of political millennialism. Chapter 28 on “Modern Catholic Millennialism,” by **Massimo Introvigne, Center for the Study of New Religions, Torino, Italy**, will describe Marian apparition movements, the millennialism of Pope John Paul II, and the violent Marian apocalyptic movement in Uganda, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, which caused the deaths of more than 800 people in 2000. Chapter 29 on the “New Age Movement” by **Phillip Charles Lucas, Stetson University**, will present the varieties and permutations of millennialism in the diverse New Age movement, demonstrating the catastrophic and progressive themes found in this movement. Chapter 30 on “UFO Millennialism” by **John Saliba, University of Detroit Mercy**, will present the millennial and messianic expectations concerning extraterrestrials cast as the superhuman agents, who will either destroy the world as we know it or save the world by moving it progressively into a collective salvation. Chapter 31 on “Alternative Christian Movements” by **David G. Bromley, Virginia Commonwealth University and Catherine Wessinger, Loyola University New Orleans**, will discuss distinctive and international expressions of contemporary Christian millennialism that have received considerable social opposition—the Family, the Twelve Tribes, and the Branch Davidians. Chapter 32 on “Environmental Millennialism” by **Bron Taylor, University of Florida**, will examine the diverse expressions of millennial expectations and actions in peaceful and violent environmental movements.

The remaining essays will address the important topic of *millennialism and contemporary conflicts*. Chapter 33 on “Radical Islamist Movements,” by **Jeff Kenney, Depauw University**, will describe the historical development of the apocalyptic and millennial milieu that produced Osama bin Laden, al-Qaida, and related individuals and movements seeking to overthrow

Muslim governments viewed as apostate and eliminate American cultural and political influence to establish their vision of the collective salvation, a “true” Islamic state in which Islamic law is enforced. This chapter will also discuss the millennial themes in the 1979 Islamic revolution in Shi‘ite Iran. Chapter 34 on “Radical Jewish Movements” by **Yaakov Ariel, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill**, will discuss the corresponding radical visions and efforts of Jews who resort to violence to establish their vision of a collective salvation for Jews in an expanded state of Israel. Chapter 35 on “Radical Christian and Secular Movements” in America” by **Michael Barkun, Syracuse University**, will illuminate the diverse elements of the diffuse Euro-American nativist millennial movement—a white supremacist millennial movement that includes “Christian Patriots,” Neo-Nazis, racist Neopagans, members of a religion called Christian Identity, and disaffected members with a secular, but apocalyptic, outlook. This movement has produced a number of terrorists, including Timothy McVeigh, the perpetrator of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, and will undoubtedly produce more terrorists in the future.

Each article will be 8,000 words including text, notes, and bibliography. Citations will be in author-date format. The editor will write short introductions for each of the major sections. An index of religious groups treated in the different chapters will be provided at the beginning of the book, in addition to the usual subject index at the end of the book. A glossary of commonly used millennial terms will be placed at the beginning of the book.

First drafts of papers will be due at the end of August 2006.