Religion and War During the 21st Century

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It is a fundamental principle of futures studies as I understand it that everything that exists now at one time did not exist, and at some point in the future will not exist [1]. Two things that are very much part of the present are religion and war. As I will show, both of them arose at about the same time several thousand years ago as differing but related responses to similar evolutionary processes. It would be foolish for me to suggest they are about to vanish any time soon, but one might well imagine--and, more importantly, work for--a transformation of both within the foreseeable future.

My presentation will briefly remind us of the origins and evolution of religion and war, and, within an alternative futures perspective, discuss some possible and preferable futures of each.

The way it used to be.
While what might be called "spiritual beliefs and behaviors" on the one hand and "acts of violence against other humans" on the other have always been among the capabilities and features of humanity, "religion" and "war" as organized and major activities are quite new.

Let's assume that *homosapiens* have been on Earth for roughly 200,000-150,000 years, and *homosapiens sapiens* for between 30,000 and 50,000 years. There is good evidence that these our forebears often cared for each other while they were alive as well as for at least some of their dead. There is also good evidence that some of the very ancient human remains that have been found recently are those of humans put to death by other humans, but for reasons unknown. Both caring and killing are clearly within the behavioral repertoire of human beings [2].

It is less clear, but it is also highly likely (on the basis of very ancient human artifacts) that early humans entertained ideas about the meaning and purpose of life and of death [3], though here we must be careful. Because we now are so influenced by relatively new religious ideas, we may be attributing spiritual significance to objects that in fact had no spiritual significance at all to their makers or users. They could have been merely functional or decorative objects made by people who had good imaginations and a lot of

spare time. And we do know that until relatively recently, humans did in fact have a lot of spare time, living, as they did in environments so richly endowed with food and other necessities of life that "work" in any modern sense was both unnecessary and inconceivable [4].

But this leisurely and I believe peaceful and equitable life of "subsistence abundance" came to an end for many people several thousand years ago with the rise of "civilizations." Whether out of necessity (too many humans for their environment freely to provide) or greed (the rise of polities based on organized fighting, capturing, and killing), in several different parts of the world, and apparently independently of each other, the old nomadic, small, peaceful, and equalitarian hunting and gathering societies were destroyed, and their people captured, enslaved, or killed by certain groups of humans who, having invented reading and writing, were able to use that skill to dominate other peoples' minds and behaviors across space and time [5]. At the end of an extensive historical survey, Leonard Shalain asked, "If there had been a time in the historical past when people did not kill each other over religion, then why did they start? What factor…could have exerted such a powerful influence upon culture?" His answer is the same as mine: "literacy" [6].

Writing, Religion and War.
Literacy made empire possible. So, with literacy also came the emergence of organized religions, usually, though not always, featuring jealous and vengeful solitary male gods (whereas manifold fertility goddesses and other spirits had coexisted peacefully before) and the systematic, organized use of killing to gain, control, and extend property (whereas property, whether land or goods, was a useless impediment to the life of hunting and gathering societies, though it became the basis of power and dominance for civilized empires) [7]. Writing ended the free floating though perhaps deeply and personally held spirituality of earlier times as well. While spirituality apparently flourished for millennia before the invention of writing, once writing emerged, god--or his prophets--insisted on writing things down to see that beliefs and practices became fixed and unchanging forever. Fluid personal and tribal spirituality gave way to rigid organized religion with revealed holy texts that only carefully trained persons could read or interpret properly. So while in fact in the beginning was *not* the Word, from about 5000 or so years ago onward, The Word--the Written Word properly recited and interpreted--reigned supreme over transitory personal and oral spirituality. When one Word clashed with another Word, the matter was typically resolved by fighting, killing, and burning the books that contained the evil Words [8] .

Andreas Feldtkeller comments:

> "The act of writing down a religion makes a difference: metaphorically speaking, to write down a religion means to draw a line through the field of religious practice between what is to be preserved and what is to be rejected.
> "To convert something into a written code is to preserve it: an important motive for religious writing, therefore, is to safeguard a certain form of religious

practice from the everlasting stream of change, and to take care that this form will be known and practiced, if possible, forever.

"On the other hand, the same act of writing is also an act of rejection: other forms of religious practice will not be chosen for preservation; they may even be explicitly excluded from what the written form recommends as practice" [9]

Of course (and until very recently), even after the invention of writing, most humans could not write or read. That was knowledge possessed by only a handful of persons in any civilized society. Even many rulers and military commanders--and certainly common folks--could not read or write, and had to rely on the professional scribes--often religious priests--who could. The effect of this was to make the Word even more mysterious and the influence of those who could read and explain the Word almost magically powerful. Books were scarce--often unique--because they were each laboriously handwritten. The most important books had to be copied over and over in order that the Truth could be passed down to later generations. As a consequence, mistakes, omissions, and new material often found their way into the copies. But that fact was generally unknown since texts located in different places were seldom brought together to be compared.

This all changed with the invention and diffusion of the printing press a few hundred years ago [10]. One of the first books to be reproduced via the printing press, in Europe, was the Christian Bible. The results were electrifying and revolutionary. Differences in the Word that had not known to exist were suddenly revealed, and had to be reconciled somehow. But more importantly, the Bible, which had been available only in Latin, was now translated into local languages. Thus for the first time the Word of God was available to ordinary people to make out of it whatever ever they wanted to make of it--or however they believed God told them personally to interpret it. The millennium and a half-long monopoly on religious thought of the Holy Catholic Church was forever broken. The political unity of the Holy Roman Empire was broken as well, as nationalistic feelings, fueled by the emergence of national languages, rose, ending the dominance over thought and expression of the powerful universal language, Latin. Each locality now could and did have its own language and its own notions of God and governance.

While the examples given so far come from Europe and Christianity, similar examples could also be given in Japan where the writing of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* ended the dominance of the tribal beliefs of earlier people and imposed those of the ruling clan as supreme. Fujii Sadakazu has discussed the role of Fieda no Are as an intermediary figure between the time that orality and chanters who memorized oral tradition flourished in Japan and the time that they were marginalized and eventually destroyed by the power of the written word (though written words often were memorized and recited aloud as though they were still oral chants). [11]

Writing similarly led to the spread of various Buddhist sects and Confucianism in medieval Japan [12]. The printing press clearly contributed to the rise of new religions,

including Tenrikyo itself, more recently during a period that was once rather irreverently referred to as "the rush hour of the gods". [13]

One of the most important features of writing compared to orality is that it can be a silent mode of communication--perfect for having private thoughts and for spreading secrets. While scarce handwritten documents typically were read aloud by the few literate scribes so that their power could be invoked over the illiterate masses, as the printing press made written material both plentiful and cheap, and as more and more people began to learn to read and write in order to acquire and share new ideas more widely, revolutionary and unpopular thoughts were formed in fertile minds and quietly spread to other fertile minds provoking even more revolutionary and unpopular thoughts [14].

Revolutions occurred in religion, scholarship, commerce, governance and war. Eventually new nations emerged, based on the new ideas of science and technology, as well as on the newly-imagined and created social inventions called "representative government" and "capitalism." Classes of people who had been excluded from power for thousands of years suddenly wanted to have a greater say over their lives and created new social institutions that enabled them to have more influence than they had had since the end of hunting and gathering societies. But, though some wanted to do so, they were not able to return to the egalitarian and just world they had lost with the emergence of empires. Instead, printed words were used to create something new, called "nations" with written constitutions and an increasing flood of written laws, rules and regulations [15]. The main task of rulers became "nation-building"--creating new, religious-like loyalty to an abstract concept called the "nation" and developing a new sentiment called "patriotism"--love of one's nation. Public schools were set up to teach reading, writing, arithmetic and unswerving patriotism. New symbols, like the national flag, the national anthem, and the national "pledge of allegiance" were invented and widely taught and promulgated.

Indeed, properly supported by other institutions, printed words were used to control at least as effectively as they were used to liberate, as George Orwell pointed out very dramatically in his famous book which once was a metaphor for the future, *1984* [16]. As a consequence, while the printing press did enable the spread of ideas of self-governance and overall self-sufficiency, it was also used even more effectively to write rules, laws and orders to control the lives of people even more tightly than ever before. Nationalism, religion and war became entwined into a kind of Holy Trinity, facilitated by print-based educational systems and mass media that inculcated "citizens" into such faith in God and Country that they were willing--nay, eager--to send their young sons (and eventually daughters) off to fight and die for both. Truly an amazing development!

Electronic Communications.
But we are now in the fourth communication revolution, with a fifth possibly ahead. Electronic communication technologies are being used to spread ideas that the controllers of cultures based on printing find threatening and repulsive. And because many of these new electronic communication technologies (starting with the telephone and currently best manifested by the internet) are interactive, "dangerously" self-empowering ideas are

flowing around the globe at the speed of light, and alliances are being created among people thousands of miles apart who have never met personally before and probably never will. Ideas your mother, your priest, your teacher, your boss, and your government don't want you do know are everywhere in the electronic surround. Marriages are breaking apart and new partnerships being formed online. Scientific experiments are conducted, new technologies developed, business plans hatched, and products bought and sold in cyberspace before many of the controllers of print technology are even aware of any of it [17].

Experts who once were effective gatekeepers to knowledge are being bypassed as people go online to ask one another for ideas and information. No one with easy access to the internet goes to a library if she can help it unless she needs a safe, quiet place to sleep. People with ailments go online for cures before they consult a live doctor, if they consult one at all [18]. So also with lawyers and scores of other erstwhile "authorities"--most certainly priests and politicians who no longer command the respect nor power they once did as people form their own ideas about god and the purpose of life and form friendships and loyalties that stretch well beyond their parish, neighborhood or nation [19]. Indeed, more and more people--most notably in Korea--use electronic communication technologies to energize if they cannot yet thwart the utterly obsolete political institutions that still strangle self-government everywhere [20].

Some time ago, Kevin Kelly showed that self-organization (rather than hierarchal command and control) was at the base of all viable systems, natural and human-made. He explored that fact in a book he titled, *Out of Control*, pointing out that being "out of control" is a *good* thing while attempts at top-down control will surely fail [21]. Organisms are made of up many interacting parts, some vital for survival, some expendable, and some difficult but not impossible to do without. Yet these parts all work and coordinate with each other without there being any God organ giving orders to a Pope organ who gives orders to Cardinal organs who give orders to Bishop organs who give orders to Priest organs who tell the parishioners what to do--with no feedback to the top allowed.

Instead, cells each send numerous messages among themselves continuously, and coordinate themselves with amazing efficiency and effectiveness. If each of the legs of a cockroach did not have important measures of autonomy, the brain would be incapable of telling each leg how to run, jump ,or stop quickly enough. On the other hand, the legs do have to coordinate with many other cockroach parts for the beast to scurry and thrive, which cockroaches have done very successfully for a very long time [22].

Artificial systems--such as religions and nations--also operate best, Kelly shows, if they work from the bottom up rather than the top down. The internet is demonstrating how that is possible

eBay--a hugely popular electronic fleamarket--is commandeering commerce, and the *Wikipedia*--an entirely leaderless and participant-driven global source of increasingly reliable and evolving information--is challenging the *Britannica Encyclopedia,* and is

threatening libraries, librarians and eventually most universities as interactive syllabi are also finding their way online for access and learning worldwide [23].

Currently, Blogs Rule! At the last count, there were 27.2 million blogs, growing at the rate of one every second, or 75,000 new blogs created each day [24].

Of course along with all of these great and free ideas flowing through the electronic ether, there also are lies, spoofs, spams, and urban legends. Sorting truth from fiction and valid email from spam is a tricky, time-consuming, and costly business. But Thomas Jefferson's famous position on freedom of speech turns out to be accurate in cyberspace--truth does eventually triumph over error when left free to combat it, and so far truth on the internet is about as free as it can be in this naughty world.

I agree with those who say that a global brain may be emerging [25]. We may be participating in creating the "noosphere" that the French Roman Catholic priest and philosopher, Theilhard de Chardin, prophesized more than half a century ago [26].

And this is all utterly leaderless. No one is in charge. It is a superb example of successful leadership without leaders. Of course at the same time many old political, religious, and economic forces are doing their best to censor content or charge for access to it, and then to kill what they cannot control and profit from. It is entirely possible that the forces of dominance and power may win out [27]. After all, they are currently the leaders, and they wish to keep their privileges. Politics is always an eternal struggle between freedom and order. And order usually wins out [28].

There certainly is plenty of evidence that organized war and religion remain immensely popular among the citizens of most nation-states. The unprovoked US invasion of Iraq at first was wildly supported by most Americans, and while the war is unpopular now (because the US is not winning) there is no mass defection from the military that one might expect. Young men and women voluntarily continue to join in order to fight and die. And Bush recently reiterated the fact that the US would engage in aggressive war anywhere and anytime it wanted to [29], thus continuing to pull America away from a policy of using the military for defense or retaliation that it has followed for the most part since its founding over 200 years ago.

Similarly, in the US, religion seems very far from dead. Almost all Americans say they believe in God, while few believe in Darwinian evolution. Many say that the Sun goes around the Earth (which accords with both Biblical revelation and everyone's common observation) and not that the Earth goes around the Sun, as some atheistic scientists insist [30]. At the same time, although membership in long-established "mainline" Christian churches is continuing to decline, all sorts of televangelism, skillfully-produced "megachurch" spectaculars, and comforting, easy-going, Sunday meetings that have much more in common with a Starbucks café than with traditional church ceremonies and substances thrive and spread. "The Reformation" is very much alive in the US as new forms and varieties of religious belief and practice emerge everywhere. Indeed,

conversions to Islam were very strong before 9/11 and have only slowed somewhat since then. America seems to be experiencing a true "rush hour of the gods" [31].

And even though poor and/or hyper-loyal young Americans still volunteer for military service (though in barely-sufficient numbers for the military's aggressive needs), it is not clear what would happen if the government were suddenly to reinstate the military draft, especially if it were one which really did give each person an equal opportunity of being drafted. Many young Americans are "only-children" who have lived entirely spoiled and pampered lives because they are the "only child" a couple will ever have. Neither parent nor child is eager to see this precious life go off to fight and die just because the government tells them they must [32]. American government is so feeble and debt-bound (and the anti-government rhetoric promulgated from Reagan, to Bush, to even Clinton, and now by the younger Bush is so powerful and persuasive) that some people are beginning to wonder why they should be "loyal" to the "nation" if the accompanying "state" is so despicable, weak, and ineffectual.

The situation in Japan has both differences and similarities. There does not appear to be an upwelling of religious sentiment here while anti-government feelings are widespread [33]. But war? Ah, that might be something else. In Japan, in contrast to the US, it appears that patriotic sentiment for the "nation" might be growing while support for the "state" weakens [34]. Even young Japanese seem to remain profoundly "Japanese", so if it is necessary for Japan to have a substantial military presence with significant offensive potential in order to demonstrate Japan's power to the world, then so be it.

But enough of the past and the present. What of the futures?

Alternative Futures of War and Religion.

Futurists have come to understand that there is not one, single future waiting "before" us that can somehow be predicted. Rather, there are many possible futures emerging from the roots of the past and the present. The task of futurists and futures-oriented people everywhere is not to "predict" the future as it "will be", but rather to envision, invent, and achieve the future we prefer [35].

Here are some of the alternative futures for war and religion that seem especially important for us to consider before we move on to envision, invent and strive to achieve the future we want:

1. A Clash of Fundamentalisms.

The attention of much of the world has been drawn to the rhetoric and reality of Islamic fundamentalism that appears to be drowning out the many voices for peace and cooperation that are also very much a part of the Islamic tradition and present. But much less attention has been focused on the fact that fundamentalism has always been at the heart of American religion and culture as well, and that the grip of religious and cultural

fundamentalism, so strong now in the US, is in fact growing rapidly with no end in sight [36].

One of the many examples of this is the emergence under the current federal administration of funding for "faith based initiatives." These began with giving equal money to religious groups that carried out secular social services, such as feeding the poor [37]. But it now is extending to other aspects of government, including advocating the research and teaching of "intelligent design" (a faith-based idea created to combat Darwinian theories of evolution) [38], and attempting to forbid mention on a NASA website of the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe that is currently favored by most physicists [39]. Government policies for family planning have often supported the views of certain religious groups over what most health professionals favor, and funding for research into certain human (especially sexual) behavior has also been prevented because of religious opposition. At the very time that America is said to need more scientists and engineers to compete with China, India, Japan, Korea, Europe, and elsewhere [40], US federal funding is increasing the number of people who adhere to certain religious beliefs about the way the world works, and decreasing the number who understand and can manipulate the world according to scientific principles and methods.

Even my home of Hawaii has been infected by this shift. Hawaii is known as a place where many different cultures and creeds live together in relative harmony and peace that goes beyond mere "tolerance" to the active appreciation of varying beliefs and customs. Not only are there a wide variety of Christian faiths present, but also many Buddhist denominations as well, along with growing appreciation of the spiritual beliefs and practices of the indigenous Hawaiians. Mormons, Christian Scientists, Unitarians, Baha'i, Jews, Muslims, and members of Nichiren Shoshu as well as Tenrikyo happily and peacefully coexist in Hawaii.

This may becoming to an end. In December 2004, the Republican Lt. Governor of Hawaii, James "Duke" Aiona (a part Hawaiian), led believers in what was called a "canopy of prayer," declaring that "Hawai'i belongs to Jesus." "Our schools will become God's schools; our community will become God's community; our city will become God's city; our Islands will become God's Islands; our state will become God's state; and our Hawai'i will become God's Hawai'i" [41].

Again, I need to emphasize that fundamentalism in the US, as in the Middle East and elsewhere, is much more than a matter of religion alone. It is also fully expressed in politics and governance. Not only does the current American president privilege his particular religious beliefs and practices in ways no former American president ever has but he clearly appoints people to public office who share these beliefs, and shuns those with other beliefs, or none, if at all possible [42].

But there is more. The United States Supreme Court has far more public policy making power within the US political system than the Japanese Supreme Court has here. The US Court is now stacked with people who believe that the words of the US Constitution (which is largely viewed in the US as a divinely-inspired document anyway) should be

interpreted, not as the Court has progressively interpreted it as a "living document" over the past 200+ years, but rather according to what those words meant to the Founding Fathers--or, more radically, what the words mean in pure essence, independently of what they meant when and by whom they were originally written, as Justice Scalia prefers [43]. That is stunning political fundamentalism, not directly related to religious fundamentalism at all but deriving from a similar impulse.

Moreover the worship shown by neoconservatives of "the magic of the market" and other aspects of an economic system first theoretically articulated by Adam Smith in 1776 (the same date the US declared its independence from Britain) illustrates aspects of a fundamentalism that has captured economic theory and practice in the US as well [44].

Finally, the insistence of the US of the right to resort to aggressive war as a first response (rather than a last response) to perceived threats also relies on a belief about human nature that derives in part from the Old Testament (and certainly not from Jesus!) but derives mainly from the often-recited writings of the 18th Century English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, who argued that without strongly repressive government based on killing-force, people will resort to "the state of nature" where life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" and "a war of all against all" [45]. Believing in and expecting the worst from others justifies the US attacking first anyone it feels might eventually attack it. This is philosophical fundamentalism that lauds waging war as the only sure way to peace.

2. The emerging "Dream Society".

It has been the burden of the argument in this presentation that an earlier era of tens of thousands of years without religion and war ended about 3000 years ago by the emergence of writing. Writing transformed fluid spirituality into rigid religion, and spontaneous and limited human conflicts into organized war between hierarchal governments with formal militaries. I have also suggested that the recent emergence of interactive audiovisual communication technologies, such as the internet, cell phones, and interactive electronic games, are once again individualizing, networking, interpersonalizing, and making fluid and mobile all beliefs and behaviors, making possible a "world without leaders" and thus without governmental, military, religious, scientific or any other kinds of "experts" and "authorities." A colleague and myself at the University of Hawaii recently suggested that the world may be moving beyond both an "industrial" and an "information" society (based so heavily upon the printed word) into what we call "a dream society of icons and aesthetic experience" [46]. While both Japan and the US have many elements of the potential dream society of the future, it is our contention that Korea is pre-eminently moving towards that future as a consequence of specific government policy that understands that popular culture (movies, popular music, soap operas, and especially interactive electronic games) represent major driving forces and bases of economies and societies of the future.

In such a world, governance, war and religion disappear as major elements as individuals spend more and more time in virtual interaction with people (and, increasingly, also with artificial intelligences) of their own choosing without regard to physical, geographic proximity or to the conventions of "real time" compared to free-flowing "dream time" [47]. This actually is my preferred future.

3. Enhancing the "Faith Gene"

A third alternative future derives from the fact that biologists and neurologists are finding out more and more about the biological basis of human beliefs and behaviors [48]. The discovery of the "gene" for some behavior or belief is announced almost every day. Understanding the biological basis of aggression and cooperation is an object of intense study, and scientists are indeed learning more and more about both--most excitingly about the likelihood that altruism and cooperation may be more common than suspicion, aggression, and killing. Many scientists, religions, and cultures have long considered aggression to be the "natural" and dominant human predisposition while altruism was a strange anomaly [49].

Some scientists recently announced the discovery of a "faith gene" whose presence predisposes some people to spiritual experiences and a willingness to adhere to religious beliefs [50]. Other scientists say they may have located the place(s) in the brain where "religious experiences" occur [51].

Science typically progresses from (1) the discovery of the biological basis of a behavior (whatever that behavior might be) to (2) attempts to "correct" any "defects" that derive from biologically-based "errors", and (3) ultimately to enhancing and redesigning the "natural" biology and physiology in order to experience (or not experience) the behavior at will [52].

There is every reason to believe that the future of war and religion will also be subject to that same sequence. The biological basis of conflict and faith will first be suspected, and then confirmed. Then attempts will be made to "correct" what are held to be "defects". That will then encourage others to attempt to manipulate the behavior in one's self or others at will so that one can chose (or be made to) become more (or less) faithful and more (or less) aggressive. This could then lead to a world very substantially different from ours now with many individuals (or groups) exhibiting a wide variety of spiritual beliefs and behaviors that are either nonexistent now, or rare. "Normal" or "average" behavior (upon which most laws and mores are based today) is likely to disappear as a more "chaotic" and yet also largely "designed" world emerges.

4. A new Dark Ages

So far, I have presented rather optimistic images of the futures, some less so than others, perhaps. But in truth, the future is grim. Humanity is in the midst of a profound

environmental transformation from a largely "natural" world long ago in which humans played only a small part to a largely and increasingly "artificial world" which humans must envision, design, and manage. Because of human actions that emerged along with the emergence of *homosapiens sapiens* itself, but that exacerbated with the rise of agriculture (and especially methane-producing rice cultures), and then became infinitely worse with the rise of industrialism, humans have progressively changed what was once a "wilderness" into a "garden", then into a "greenhouse" and soon, perhaps, into an "iron lung"--which then may revert back to a wilderness again without the presence of any, or at least many, humans [53].

I am profoundly concerned about the ability of humans to survive the environmental terrors of the 21st Century as global climate warms, sea levels rise, storms increase in frequency and power, species die out entirely, new and old diseases spread, and oil--our only convenient and now cheap energy source--vanishes before any new, equally convenient and cheap nonpolluting energy source can replace it. Japan is especially, but by no means uniquely, challenged by all of this. And yet no nation, and certainly neither the US nor Japan, are ready to face the realities of global change, much less the even more daunting task of "governing evolution" which Walter Truett Anderson 25 years ago identified as humanity's most urgent task and responsibility [54], and a responsibility humanity has steadfastly refused to consider, much less assume.

It is easy to imagine all advanced economic and political systems failing and the world reverting to the Hobbesian "state of nature" with a "war of all against all". At the very least, it is possible there will be massive population decline worldwide, the loss of scientific and technological knowledge and energy sources, the sudden end of "globalization" and a return to many decentralized and "self-sufficient" communities among the traumatized human survivors spread around the world [55].

In such a world, "war" may vanish though human conflicts may increase, while "religion" reverts to the earlier practices that linked the role of government to tracking and guiding the changes of the seasons to assure good harvests--where the "*sei"* in *"seiji"* (the Japanese word for "government"), becomes "*matsurigoto*" once again, and religion and governance are the same.

5. Tenrikyo goes to Mars

I have steadfastly avoided commenting much about Tenrikyo in this talk since I do not want to offend my very good friend Inoue Akiyo, or any of you. I know one of the best ways to offend someone is to make a comment about their religion--even if (perhaps especially if) the intention is to say something positive about it, which I do.

But I will muster up my courage and say some things about the future of Tenrikyo here at the very end of my talk.

Though I am not a member of Tenrikyo, or of any other religious group, I have had the opportunity of interacting with members of the Tenrikyo community for a long time, beginning in 1983. Thus I will foolishly make several comments about Tenrikyo in relation to the position taken in this paper about the past and futures of religion and war.

1. As the first of the so-called "New Religions" in the Japanese context, Tenrikyo reflects the technology and cosmology of the place and time where it originated, namely, a modernizing and militarizing prewar Japan. This distinguishes Tenrikyo from many other religions of the world which were founded in agricultural societies with pre-modern technologies and cosmologies, but is in common with some other "new religions" which arose arguably in response to similar modern, alienating, and urbanizing environments [56].

2. The Foundress of Tenrikyo is a woman. While women played extremely important roles in pre-religious spirituality [57], female founders of religious organizations are extremely rare. I believe this is Tenryikyo's most important positive feature. I have frequently asked what the government of the United States (and all other nations) would be like if they had "Founding Mothers" instead of "Founding Fathers". The experience and consciousness of women is different in important ways from that of men. I don't think there is any doubt that Tenrikyo is a more peace-oriented, humane, and empathetic religion than those based on male figures in male roles--even though the male founders may often be depicted as rather androgynous persons, or even though women often come to assume important theological and political positions (such as the Virgin Mary, on the one hand, and Mary Magdalene, on the other, in Roman Catholicism) [58]. Tenrikyo is thus perhaps predisposed more than most religions to make the transition into a high tech/high touch stateless, networked, warless, and leaderless world far more easily and gracefully than can most religions that are still so tightly bound to the nation-state, political power, war, and the fears and fantasies of dominating male leaders.

3. Tenrikyo is well known in Japan and throughout the world for taking an affirmative position in many social, health, educational and other human services (especially but not only related to the welfare of women and children, but also to the "handicapped" and indeed all humans) that is well ahead of that of the Japanese state itself or of most religious groups in Japan or elsewhere [59]. This also should enable Tenrikyo to play a positive, nurturing role in the chaotic or conflicted worlds of the future.

4. I hope I am not appearing to trivialize much less insult Tenrikyo believers when I add that the fact that Tenrikyo focuses on "dust" and the removal of "dust" is also a mark of a very forward-thinking yet practical Foundress. And here I am referring to Tenrikyo as a pioneer among religious organizations in affirmative interest in space exploration and settlement, where dust will most certainly be a major challenge in both a spiritual and physical sense.

I was first drawn to Tenrikyo because of its interest in space exploration which will be, by its very nature, a very high tech enterprise, involving, among other things, the interrelationship of humans with increasingly intelligent and autonomous artificial

entities, variously called "robots", "artificial intelligence", "cyborgs" or "artilects" [60]. Here again, Tenrikyo has demonstrated a willingness to think about the emotional and spiritual implications of this interrelationship in ways most religious organizations have not [61]. Indeed most religious groups, in common with most humans generally, have tended to deny that such artificially-intelligent and autonomous entities will actually emerge, declaring that if they do, they will be vastly inferior to humans, and thus not worthy of human respect or spiritual concern. I believe Tenrikyo knows better, or at least is willing to contemplate the spiritual needs and responses of artilects, both on their own terms and in response to humans [62].

Tenrikyo considers the entire universe to be the body of God. From that basis, and with the leadership of Akio Inoue, Tenrikyo has held several international conferences on space exploration and settlement [63], and has created JISCON, the Japan International Space Culture Congress. A statement of the fundamental concepts underlying JISCON are summarized as follows:

> "Our attitude toward space development must be comprehensive, and our research must be balanced. Our cosmological views need to be based on the natural sciences; our view of humanity needs to be based on humanistic values; our economic pursuits need to be based on the social sciences; and our eschatological views must be based on religious studies" [64].

Thus I see a bright future for Tenrikyo as humanity and artilects prepare to go into space--back to the Moon and on to Mars and beyond--over the 21st Century; a true "Dream Society" indeed. I just wish I could be there with you.

And if fundamentalism and environmental challenges overwhelm us, and we are forced back into stubborn reality and bare survival once again, the nurturing skills of Tenrikyo will become even more valuable than they are now. I hope you are preparing to meet that opportunity as well.

Yet my basic message is that while the futures cannot be predicted, they can be invented, and so I urge you to imagine and create worlds without war where spirituality again inspires us towards peaceful and meaningful lives. Humanity lived in comparative peace, harmony, and identity before. We can do so again. The components necessary for such a world lie everywhere around us. It is time for us to mold them together into a body worthy of our Cosmos.

Footnotes:

1. For an overview of futures studies see Bell, Dator (2002)

2. Sponsel and Gregor

3. Dickson, Lerro

4. Sahlins

5. Goody (1977 and 1986), Havelock

6. Shalain

7. Eisler

8. Goody (2000)

9. Feldtkeller

10. Eisenstein

11. Drake

12. LaFluer

13. McFarland

14. McLuhan (1962)

15. Katsh

16. Orwell

17. "How the internet has changed our lives,"

18. "Virtual visits to the doctor"

19. "Faith on the Internet," Larsen, Thumma, "Religious surfers"

20. Kwon and Lee, Thacker (2004, 2006)

21. Kelly (1995)

22. See also Spinney, Andrus

23. Giles. See also "Wikiversity"

24. "Welcome to the Blogsphere". See also Ranie, Scoble and Israel, Johnson

25. Kelly (2005)

26. Teilhard de Chardin (1959, 1964)

27. Margolis and Resnick

28. Heimann

29. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,*

30. National Science Foundation (US). See also Holden

31. Lester, Lucas and Robbins

32. Strauss

33. According to a worldwide poll by Pew Associates, only 12%of the Japanese "find religion very important in their daily lives," the lowest in Asia and roughly the same as in France, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic. "Poll finds US high on religion," *The Honolulu Advertiser*, December 21, 2002, p. B3

34. Fouse

35. Dator in Dator (2002)

36. Ahari, Ali, Brown, Domke

37. Ryden and Polet, Wuthnow

38. Young. See also "Bush remarks roil," Specter, Meckler

39. George Deutsch of NASA's public affairs office sent an email to Flint Wild, web designer for NASA, on October 17, 2005 instructing Wild that if he was going to refer to the "Big Bang" explanation of the origin of the universe on the official NASA website that he should state it is "a theory. It is not proven fact; it is opinion. Yes, the scientific community by and large may share this opinion, but that doesn't make it correct." See "Space auditing" for the entire email. Deutsch was later fired from his job, but not because of the views expressed in his email. Rather it turned out that he had lied about his academic credentials in his application for the job at NASA. See also Revkin, Kennedy.

40. "US is losing its dominance in the sciences"

41. Shapiro

42. Micklethwait and Wooldridge

43. Jaffa, Lev, Whittington, Scalia

44. Hopkins, Kelsey, Nelson

45. Stoner

46. Dator and Seo

47. This perspective is based largely on Jensen, Pine and Gilmore, Pink, Postel, and Sternberg.

48. Snedden, Shanks, Grimm

49. Heinrich, Kosfeld, et al.

50. Hamer

51. Bloom, Boyer, d'Aquili and Newberg (1999,2001), Dennett

52. "Artificial experiences of God," Bainbridge (2004, 2006a, 2006b),

53. Dator (2004), Flannery, Graham-Rowe, Ruddiman,

54. Anderson

55. Diamond, Rees

56. Dator (1968)

57. Eisler, Shalain

58. Chilton, Greeley

59.Kaneko

60. Garreau, Gary, Hughes, Joy, Kurzweil (2005), Meyer and Davis, Perkowitz, Stock, Ward

61. Dator (1989)

62. On robot ethics, rights and rites, see Kurzweil (1999), McNally and Inayatullah, Pollack, Sudia, Transhuman

63. Anon

64. Inoue

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