

The Transformation of a Recent Japanese New Religion Ōkawa Ryūhō and Kōfuku no Kagaku

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Over the last five years Kōfuku no Kagaku has been one of the most prominent among the newer Japanese religious movements. Its leader, Ōkawa Ryūhō, proclaims himself to be the rebirth of the Buddha, citing as proof the astonishing number of books he has written. This paper traces the organizational development of Kōfuku no Kagaku, the evolution of its teachings, and its shift to active involvement in sociopolitical issues.

THE YEAR 1991 SAW the sudden rise to prominence of a hitherto obscure new religious group known as Kōfuku no Kagaku 幸福の科学 (lit., “the science of happiness,” but also known in English as “The Institute for Research in Human Happiness” [IRH]).¹ Founded in October 1986 by Ōkawa Ryūhō 大川隆法, a self-proclaimed reincarnation of the Buddha, Kōfuku no Kagaku reported a phenomenal increase in membership, saw enormous sales of its publications, and enjoyed extensive media coverage of its activities. At the same time, however, it began attracting increasingly harsh criticism from scholars, the popular press, and other religious groups. Such controversy (hardly unusual for such a rapidly expanding New Religion), coupled with the polemical views and distinctive oratory style of the leader, insured that few people in Japan remained ignorant of the group.

Kōfuku no Kagaku has remained in the news, most recently because of its fierce criticism of Asahara Shōkō and Aum Shīrīkyō,

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¹ Kōfuku no Kagaku transcribes its name as “Kōfuku-no-Kagaku” in its English-language literature. For the sake of editorial consistency, “Kōfuku no Kagaku” has been used in this article.

dating back to 1990. Despite the attention paid to the group in Japan, however, there has been very little information in English apart from a number of newspaper and magazine articles.² The present paper is an attempt to redress this imbalance by providing a basic framework with which to understand the development of Kōfuku no Kagaku during its first decade. To this end I shall, first, offer an outline of the leader, the organization, and the membership, and, second, trace the development of the group, looking at the transformations that have taken place in its organizational structure, teachings, and participation in society at large.

The Founder

Ōkawa Ryūhō³ was born Nakagawa Takashi 中川 隆⁴ on 7 July 1956 in Kawashima-chō, Tokushima Prefecture on the island of Shikoku, the second son of Nakagawa Tadayoshi 中川忠義 and Kimiko 君子. From an early age he was pushed by his ambitious father to “aim for the top,” but his career at elementary school did not bode well, especially when compared with that of his brother, Tsutomu 力, four years his elder.

² Most reports in the English-language press in Japan have concerned the litigation between the group and the publisher Kōdansha (an issue we will deal with below). A typical general treatment is Mari Yamaguchi’s “Rise of Ultranationalist Religion Alarms Japan,” *Asahi Evening News*, 24 October 1991. Articles in the foreign press include Robert Thomson’s “Japan Bows to a New God,” *Financial Times*, 7/8 December 1991; Ella Tennan’s “Prophet Motive,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 March 1995, pp. 34–35; and Maggie Farley’s “Japan Sects Offer Personal Path in Rudderless Society,” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 March 1995, pp. A10, A13. Academically, Mark MULLINS wrote briefly on the group in the context of the Neo-New Religions and the New Age (1992, pp. 239–40); Ian READER mentions Ōkawa Ryūhō in a discussion of the New New Religions (1991, p. 234); and Jeffrey SOMERS outlines Kōfuku no Kagaku in the context of Japanese New Religions in Britain (1994, pp. 69–73).

³ Accounts of the life of Ōkawa Ryūhō and the early development of Kōfuku no Kagaku can be found in NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, ARITA 1991, YONEMOTO 1991, SHIMADA 1991 (pp. 11–40), SHIMADA 1992b (pp. 4–93), and YAKUSHI’IN 1991. Since much of the basic information is the same, I have tended to rely on NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, a text Kōfuku no Kagaku identifies as a reliable, “neutral” work. SHIMADA 1992b (pp. 4–62) presents three articles that first appeared in the September, October, and November issues of the journal *Shūkan gendai*, plus an interview concerning Shimada’s relationship with Kōfuku no Kagaku. The rather bizarre, yet fascinating, book by YAKUSHI’IN has a useful chronological table (1991, pp. 235–38) as well as reviews of some 110 of Ōkawa’s books, with publication dates (pp. 184–222). Hayakawa Kazuhiro 早川和廣, a journalist responsible for three rather problematic articles in the scandal magazine *Friday*, has also published three booklets in the popular “Chase” series: *Ōkawa Ryūhō no shōtai* 大川隆法の正体, no. 75, October 1991; *Ōkawa Ryūhō no abunai hanashi* 大川隆法の危ない話, no. 79, January 1992; and *Kōfuku no Kagaku ga kieru hi* 幸福の科学が消える日, no. 89, February 1992.

⁴ His adopted name, now referred to as his holy name (*hōmyō* 法名), was arrived at by replacing the character for *naka* 中 (middle) with *ō* 大 (great) to get Ōkawa 大川 (great river), and by adding *hō* 法 (Dharma) to the Sino-Japanese reading of his given name to get Ryūhō 隆法.

While still at elementary school he and his brother were lectured by their father on topics as diverse as the Bible, and the Zen kōan collection *Mumonkan*, and Marxist thought. His dream was to become a scholar or a diplomat; realizing his mediocrity, he would study until late at night, using an unheated outbuilding during the winter. By dint of such effort he reached the top of his class.

He had a prodigious appetite and soon became quite obese, weighing 60 kilograms when still only 143 cm. tall (some suggested that he become a sumo wrestler, but he later failed the physical examination). Hopeless at sports, he would pray for rain the night before swimming classes so that he would not have to endure the embarrassment of having others (especially girls) see his body.

In March 1975 Ōkawa left for Tokyo to take the entrance exam for Tokyo University, armed with thirty kilograms of books. He tells of arriving at Tokyo Station and standing there at a loss, not knowing how to get from there to the university. He failed the exam on his first try (something that tormented him into his early twenties), but after a year of hard study managed to “slip in” to the Liberal Arts Division. Social adjustment during the first year was not easy—he tells, among other things, of writing parcel loads of love letters to a girl, only to have his advances rejected in a single message of reply.

His daily routine as a second-year student, a time he refers to as “the first stage in the ‘awakening of wisdom’,” was modeled after that of Kant, whom he held in great respect. At 3:00 PM he would take an hour’s walk, composing poetry. At about 5:00 he would visit the local bathhouse, where he would spend an hour reflecting on his day. On the way home he would stop for a cheap meal, then buy two books at a local bookstore. From 8:30 until 9:00 he would read, then have a drink of Japanese tea before starting on a book of philosophy.

After two years in the Liberal Arts Division he chose to major in politics and entered the Faculty of Law in April 1978. After his third year he took a year off, at the end of which he took and failed the judicial examination and the examination for higher-level civil servants. Now in his fourth and final year he had to decide on his future. Since his marks were not good enough for him to enter graduate school, he decided to accept the offer from the trading company Tōmen. He duly entered the company after graduating in spring 1981 and was assigned to the foreign exchange department at the head office in Tokyo, as was customary with the elite among the new employees. Already, though, his life had started to take a new direction.

On 23 March 1981, prior to entering Tōmen, Ōkawa had the experience that was later to be described as his “Buddha Enlightenment”:

I was suddenly struck by the feeling that somebody was trying to speak to me. I hurried to get a card and a pencil. My hand, which held the pencil, started to move as if it had its own life, and wrote “*ii shirase, ii shirase*” (good news, good news) on one card after another. When I asked who was speaking, my pencil signed “Nikkō” 日興; it was [Nichiren Shonin’s disciple] Saint Nikkō. (NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, p. 65)

Communication from Nikkō ceased by the 30th, a week later, when the first message from Nichiren himself was communicated: “Love others, nurture others, forgive others” (ŌKAWA 1991a, p. 254). These three ideas would later form the basis of Ōkawa’s teachings on love (see p. 366 below).

One night in June, Ōkawa writes, the spirit of Takahashi Shinji 高橋信次, the founder of the New Religion GLA, informed him of his vocation to found a new religion. At this news, Ōkawa continues, a friend from his hometown, Yoshikawa Saburō 善川三郎, rushed to Tokyo. Yoshikawa subsequently became one of Ōkawa’s most important followers and aides. From the following month the spirits, which had hitherto communicated via automatic writing, started to speak through Ōkawa. An impressive array of famous spirits spoke, from Kūkai, Shinran, and Confucius to Jesus Christ, Moses, and Nostradamus. Yoshikawa Saburō and another friend, Tomiyama Makoto 富山誠 (who acted as interviewer to the spirits), taped the proceedings. Later such recordings would be transcribed and reworked into publishable format.

In August 1982, shortly after he had turned twenty-six, Ōkawa was transferred to New York for training. He successfully completed an English course at Berlitz Language School and went on to New York University for study in international finance. He gave up, though, his inferiority complex apparently intensified by the presence of a Taiwanese woman in the class who, though Asian like him, spoke fluent English.

What Ōkawa describes as the “second stage in the ‘awakening of wisdom’” took place around this time. His intellectual inferiority complex dissipated as he reflected on the knowledge he had amassed from the more than three thousand books he had consumed one after another, “like a silkworm devouring mulberry leaves.” He returned to Tokyo after a year in New York and was put in charge of negotiations with some twenty banks. The following March he was transferred to Nagoya.

His book-reading continued unabated, and by the summer of 1985 he had passed the four thousand mark. Thoughts of all kinds “spewed

forth like water from a spring.” His inferiority complex transformed itself into a smug sense of superiority. On 15 August he published his first book, *Nichiren Shōnin no reigen* 日蓮聖人の靈言,⁵ using Yoshikawa Saburō’s name to avoid problems with his employers. Between then and the following June, when he finally decided to quit his job, Ōkawa published a further four collections of spiritual messages, from Kūkai, Jesus Christ, Amaterasu-ō-mikami, and Socrates.

At work he was gaining something of a reputation, and various rumors began to circulate. Former colleagues report that he would claim to see spirits that were possessing others, and even offer to exorcise them. In June 1986 various high spirits advised him to retire from the company, and he made up his mind to devote his life to God’s truth. On 15 July 1986, shortly after his thirtieth birthday, he left Tōmen, and in October established Kōfuku no Kagaku to help fulfill his divine mission to secure “salvation for all humankind.” He was now free to concentrate on relaying the messages from the spirit world, which were coming with increasing frequency. Over the next four years he published an enormous number of these spiritual messages, held seminars and lectures on his teachings, and gathered a nucleus of followers around him. In addition to his channeled messages Ōkawa was putting out an increasing number of works on religious, philosophical, and moral issues in an attempt to consolidate the doctrinal basis of what was to become his religion.

The Organization

On 7 March 1991, some four and a half years after its establishment, Kōfuku no Kagaku was granted legal recognition. Organizationally, it is fashioned on the pattern of a regular Japanese corporation. Under Ōkawa is a board of directors (*rijikai* 理事会), followed by a number of divisions (*kyoku* 局) containing, in turn, various departments (*bu* 部) and, below them, sections (*ka* 課). Interestingly, Ōkawa is referred to as the president (*shusai* 主宰) of Kōfuku no Kagaku, reflecting the early view of the group as a research institute; he is not called “founder” (*kyōso* 教祖) or anything else indicative of his religious status, as one would normally expect of the leader of a Japanese religious group.

In addition to this vertical ordering of the organization, there are also vital lateral links provided by groups like the Senior Division,

⁵ Later renamed *Nichiren no reigen*. Many of the books were “compilations of spiritual messages,” known as *reigenshū* 靈言集 in Japanese.

Middle Division, Women's Division, the Youth Division, and the Students' Division.⁶ The various divisions are organized at regional level and regular events are held, providing a forum for the members to come together as part of a community and grow together in their faith.⁷ For a movement that was initially based on propagation through books, it has become a quite tight-knit community.

During 1990, as part of its application for legal status, the group had bought land and buildings in Tokyo and also built a hall in Tokushima Prefecture.⁸ Its operations seem always to be in a constant state of transformation, as was the case in the latter half of 1991 when I was carrying out fieldwork on the group. Regional headquarters (*chihō honbu* 地方本部) and branch offices (*shibu* 支部) were being established throughout Japan at the time: the forty branch offices they had in the summer of 1990, for instance, had already grown to some three hundred (though there has been a subsequent decline due to restructuring and the effects of negative publicity).⁹ In terms of personnel, too, the dynamism of the group was very much in evidence, with employees constantly receiving new responsibilities within the organization as it expanded or rationalized.¹⁰

Not surprisingly, given its organizational structure and wealth, the group is widely regarded as a mere business venture. The income generated through its publishing concerns alone is phenomenal, and membership, lecture, and seminar fees, along with donations, add to the group's considerable wealth.¹¹ This wealth allowed them to move at the end of 1989 into sumptuous quarters in the heart of Kioi-chō, Tokyo (where in mid-1991 the monthly rent was a reported 25 million yen) and to employ in 1991 about three hundred people (TBS 1991a). By choosing the most expensive location in Tokyo the group was displaying its economic strength, a symbol of its newly acquired status and "manifest proof" of Ōkawa Ryūhō's identity as the Buddha incarnate. It seems almost *de rigeur* for ambitious Japanese new religious groups to construct an ostentatious and expensive building;

⁶ The English translations for the divisions, namely the *Sōnenbu* 壮年部, *Chūkenbu* 中堅部, *Fujinbu* 婦人部, *Seinenbu* 青年部, and *Gakuseibu* 学生部, respectively, are my own.

⁷ Compare the organizational structure of *Sōka Gakkai* (MURATA 1969, pp. 142-43).

⁸ The *Seichi Kenshū Dōjō* 聖地研修道場 (Holy Ground Training Hall) was built in order to meet the requirement of having "worship facilities" in accordance with the Religious Corporations Law. The ceremony of completion was held on 16 December 1990.

⁹ Down to around one-hundred-plus in 1992-1993, according to *Kōfuku no Kagaku* (Interview with Mr. Yaita, London Branch, 17 October 1995).

¹⁰ See the diagram of the organizational structure of *Kōfuku no Kagaku* as of 1 June 1991 in ARITA 1991 (p. 47).

¹¹ In fiscal 1991 Ōkawa was one of Japan's top one hundred taxpayers, with a tax payment of over 243 million yen (*Daily Yomiuri*, 2 May 1992, p. 2).

indeed, in 1991 Kōfuku no Kagaku had plans for a seventy-seven-story headquarters in central Tokyo, which would have been the highest building in Japan, at a projected cost of 300 billion yen.¹² The plan has since been shelved, with the current goal being to set up a number of practice centers across Japan to provide a regionalized focal point for members' training.

Overseas there have of course been several years of “unofficial” propagation by members taking up temporary or long-term residence abroad to work or study, but the “real” organized campaign is only just getting under way. In 1991 the plan was for the group to consolidate its base in Japan during 1992 and 1993, while laying the foundation for a concerted effort of propagation from 1994 on. The whole schedule suffered a setback owing to the difficulties of the early 1990s (although the group may now deny this); now “Project Big Bang” aims to establish the group as the number one religious organization in Japan during the period 1994–96, then build the international base required for its push to become number one in the world.¹³ Kōfuku no Kagaku already has the personnel, facilities, and basic organizational structure in place overseas now. Kofuku-no-Kagaku USA is headquartered in New York and has branches in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Hawaii; Kofuku-no-Kagaku Korea is centered in Seoul, *Ciencia da Felicidade do Brazil* (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Brazil) in São Paulo, and the Australian branch in Melbourne. Kofuku-no-Kagaku Europe is based in London, where it also supports a Japanese New Religions project at a research center since September 1994. Arrangements with a UK-based publisher mean that Kōfuku no Kagaku will soon also have an outlet for their main means of propagation. Major changes notwithstanding, the overseas drive can be expected to gain momentum during 1996, to be accompanied no doubt by a mushrooming of overseas branches.

The Publishing Link

In common with many other religious organizations in Japan, Kōfuku no Kagaku set up its own publishing arm, Kōfuku no Kagaku Shuppan

¹² The figure itself is not so significant, apparently having been arrived at by multiplying their membership goal, i.e., five million, by the ¥60,000 figure that each member was expected to donate (*Nihon keizai shinbun*, 7 September 1991, p. 36). The plan was outlined in the June 1991 issue of *Kōfuku no Kagaku* (Nijū Issaikyū 1991, p. 96). See also the interview with Ozawa Toshio 小沢利男, then head of the general headquarters (TBS 1991a).

¹³ Interview with Mr. Yaita, London Branch, 17 October 1995.

(known in English as IRH Press Co., Ltd.).¹⁴ Not only does publishing provide a religious organization with a primary means of propagation, but in the case of a legally recognized group it can also provide a substantial source of revenue owing to the generous tax concessions granted religions under the Religious Corporations Law (*shūkyō-hōjin-hō* 宗教法人法). As shall become apparent, Kōfuku no Kagaku's strategy of propagation through publishing has been particularly successful in both regards.

Kōfuku no Kagaku's emergence on the national scene in 1991 was largely the result of its massive and well-coordinated advertising campaign for two of its books and its subsequent clever exploitation of the mass media. The two books that were the backbone of this campaign, *Arā no dai-keikoku* アラーの大警告 [The great warnings of Allah] and *Nosutoradamusu senritsu no keiji* ノストラダムス戦慄の啓示 [The terrifying revelations of Nostradamus], came out in quick succession in January and February. Each capitalized on the interest in prophecy and "the coming apocalypse," fueled by the onset of the Gulf War and the attendant questions concerning Japan's role in world security. The nationwide advertising campaign utilized national television, national newspapers and magazines, and even mobile billboards, while the slogan "Jidai wa ima, Kōfuku no Kagaku" 時代は今, 幸福の科学 [Now is the age of Kōfuku no Kagaku] seemed to be everywhere (especially in Tokyo, where it could be seen on small stickers in taxi windows, on dirigibles, and on fans and other Kōfuku no Kagaku paraphernalia). There was even a "Thank-you campaign" advertising the passing of the five million mark for combined sales of "Ōkawa Ryūhō's double best-sellers" within a half-year of publication. The books occupied the top two places in the nonfiction best-seller list for the first half of 1991, according to Nippan figures.¹⁵ The advertising budget for the year was several million dollars.¹⁶

Many major bookshops started setting aside an "Ōkawa Ryūhō Corner" for the display of some of his one hundred and fifty titles, and of the group's video and audio cassettes as well. Ōkawa's earlier works were, by and large, the aforementioned "spiritual messages" of

¹⁴ Although internally it was treated as a division (*kyoku*), Kōfuku no Kagaku Shuppan has been legally separate since its establishment on 24 December 1987, when it was registered as a corporation. Some sources suggest that this separation only occurred after Kōfuku no Kagaku's assumption of religious corporation status.

¹⁵ Nippan is one of the main distributors in the publishing world.

¹⁶ Reports vary: estimates by advertising industry spokespeople for the 28 May–15 July advertising campaign are in the region of two billion yen (*Asahi shinbun*, 30 July 1991, p. 29). Others report the same figure, but for the half-year to July (e.g., *Nihon keizai shinbun*, 7 September 1991, p. 36).

such spirits as Kūkai, Socrates, and Jesus Christ. Later works sought more to set out the teachings of the group and were frequently compilations of lectures on a given theme. More recently, a number of his lectures at major events have been transcribed and published as single volumes, usually within just a few weeks of the event.

Both audio and video tapes were already abundant by 1992, by which time CDs of Kōfuku no Kagaku music had also appeared. The audio tapes date back to the very beginning of the organization, recordings of main events having been made since the first public talk in November 1986.

According to group sources, the total number of Kōfuku no Kagaku publications now stands in the region of three hundred, a figure that includes tapes and the small but growing number of books by various Kōfuku no Kagaku devotees. About a hundred of the books were written by Ōkawa himself, although it should be noted that this figure excludes a number of the earlier works, many of which (about fifty) were produced by outside publishers, and many of which are going out of print. The total number of books actually written by Ōkawa probably comes to more than two hundred at present. A large number of his more recent works (i.e., post-1990) have hit the nonfiction best-seller lists, and some of these have topped the million sales mark. Besides the above-mentioned prophetic works, most notable among these is *Shin taiyō no hō* 新・太陽の法 [The “new” laws of the sun], published in June 1994, which boasted sales of over 2.15 million copies in little over a year and took just six weeks to go into its twentieth printing. The 1993 *Furankurū supūkingu* [Frankly speaking] was the third-best seller of the year in the nonfiction section according to Nippan, and has currently sold over 1.5 million copies. This was translated into English and published in February 1995 under the title *Buddha Speaks*.

Kōfuku no Kagaku at present claims sales of a staggering sixty million works altogether. Although a significant proportion of this is no doubt accounted for by Ōkawa’s more dedicated followers (who are likely to have extensive collections of his works as well as extra copies to pass on to friends as part of their propagation activities), the figure does suggest the large number of people in Japan who have come into contact with his work. In addition to the books and tapes there is the monthly magazine *Kōfuku no Kagaku*, which dates back to April 1987, and the glossy general interest monthly *Za ribatū* ザ・リバティー [The liberty], first published on 31 March 1995. In September 1994 the organization released the full-length feature film *Nosutoradamusu senritsu no keiji*, based on the book of the same title and directed by Ōkawa

himself. An English version with subtitles has already been shown publicly in Los Angeles and New York. Some videos of Ōkawa's lectures are also subtitled in English, and there is an English-language journal entitled the *Monthly Message*. The contents are quite different to those of the Japanese-language monthly, reflecting the differing concerns of overseas propagation.

Membership Figures

Kōfuku no Kagaku's beginnings were modest, with a mere four members at its start in 1986. At the end of the year the number had reached 100. By December 1987 the membership was 1,700, and by December 1988, over 4,000.

The year 1991, as mentioned above, marked Kōfuku no Kagaku's emergence as a mass movement. Earlier Ōkawa had set a target of 50,000 "producers of happiness" for 1990; on 8 July of that year Ōkawa, noting that the organization had achieved its goal six months ahead of schedule and now had 70,000 members, issued the Victory Declaration (*shōri sengen* 勝利宣言) announcing Project Miracle. The three-year project targeted one million members by the end of Miracle '91, three million during Miracle '92, and over ten million during Miracle '93.

Kōfuku no Kagaku's first major event was the Birthday Festival, held on 15 July 1991 at Tokyo Dome, one of Japan's largest arenas and best known as a baseball venue. There it was announced that as of 7 July 1991 Kōfuku no Kagaku had surpassed its prophesized target, with 1,527,278 members. Ōkawa went on to call for a membership of over five million by the time of the Lord El Cantare Festival on 26 December. He set further targets: ten million members by July 1992, the entire Japanese population by the century's end, and the whole of humanity by some as yet unspecified date. When the Lord El Cantare Festival arrived it was announced that the goal had been achieved, with a membership of over 5.6 million.¹⁷

Official figures remained at the 5.6 million level for some time—Kōfuku no Kagaku seems to have withheld figures from the end of 1991 until December 1994, when they released a figure of around 9 million. In April this had risen to 9.6 million, and in July 1995 to an estimated 10 million (a figure approaching ten percent of the population of Japan).

¹⁷ It is interesting to see how, increasingly from this time on, "targets" were treated as "prophecies" when they were met. When not met, however, they were either glossed over or ignored. Nowadays Ōkawa does not commit himself publicly to prophecies.

It is perhaps appropriate at this stage to put these figures into perspective. First, as a general observation, it is only natural that a dynamic and ambitious new religious group would want to project an image of constant and rapid growth, and it is certainly not uncommon for such groups to doctor their membership figures so that they appear to be growing even when membership is constant or in decline.

Second, it is important to remember that in the case of Kōfuku no Kagaku an important distinction is to be made between “full members” (*sei-kaiin* 正会員) and “friendship members” (*shiyū-kaiin* 誌友会員, lit., “friends-of-the-magazine members”), the latter being no more than subscribers to the monthly magazine. It is also possible that circulation figures for the general interest magazine *Za ribatī* are taken into account, and that book sales also figure in somehow; as a breakdown of the figures is not available it remains a rather grey area.¹⁸ To illustrate how unreliable a guide official figures are, let us recall that in late 1991 Kōfuku no Kagaku was struggling to meet the target of five million members by the Lord El Cantare Festival on 26 December. In an interview on 17 December I was told that although membership figures were at that point around the two million mark, the method of calculating membership was to be revised in order to reflect more accurately the size of the movement. A few days later the two million figure was mentioned again during a televised interview with Ōkawa’s wife, Kyōko; the script for the narration had even been endorsed by the group (TBS 1991b). Then a week later at the Festival the figure of 5.6 million members was announced, thus meeting the “prophecy” of Ōkawa. One suspects that the continued use of the 5.6 million figure indicates a subsequent decline, or stagnation, in real membership around the turn of the year, 1991–92, and that this figure provided the base membership for the recent calculations.¹⁹

One further point that must be taken into account when assessing membership figures is that we are talking about “members” and not “believers” or “followers.” In keeping with the organization’s claim to be an open society for the study of “God’s Truth”²⁰ through the scientific investigation into the meaning of happiness, membership can have rather a broad and flexible meaning. So in a sense one can perhaps claim that those who have “pursued the study of God’s Truth” through Ōkawa’s books, lectures, or videos are indeed “members.”

¹⁸ See ARITA 1991, pp. 135–39, for interesting information on methods employed in gaining new members.

¹⁹ According to ARITA, of the 1.52 million members announced July 1991, only some 200,000 were full members (1991, p. 68).

²⁰ Kōfuku no Kagaku’s translation of *shinri* 神理.

Judging by the level of participation in Kōfuku no Kagaku religious and social events, however, I think a more conservative estimate, in the region of 100,000–300,000 active members, is somewhat nearer the mark, with possibly up to ten times this figure if one includes less active members and those sympathetic with the group's views. This does, nevertheless, represent a phenomenal rate of growth for a group that started with only four members in 1986.

Membership Composition

Little hard data is available on Kōfuku no Kagaku's membership. This is regrettable, especially since details of new members are stored on computer at the organization. It would be interesting to know, for example, the respective percentages of full members and friendship members, as well as details like the occupations, previous religious affiliations, and educational background of members. Despite the lack of accurate figures I would like to briefly consider some of these matters, since they provide vital clues to understanding the dynamics behind this new religious movement. In the not-too-distant future other researchers may be able to provide us with an in-depth study of this aspect of the group.

According to the Kōfuku no Kagaku representatives I interviewed, membership roughly reflects the composition of Japanese society. In terms of gender this is certainly so, with a fairly even male-female split. In terms of age, however, membership probably tends towards the younger end of the spectrum, though not so overwhelmingly as some commentators would suggest. The educational background and the socioeconomic status of the members show a marked tendency towards the upper end of the scale—there are a large number of professionals, employees of top companies, and graduates from the top universities, reflecting the appeal of the group as a whole and of Ōkawa (himself a graduate of Tokyo University) in particular. This aspect was even more pronounced in the earlier stages when Ōkawa enjoyed a closer relationship with members.

In terms of religious affiliation, there is an estimated 70:30 split between those with no previous affiliation and those with. Such a division is probably not too far off the actual composition of Japanese society, notwithstanding the very misleading national statistics published annually by the Ministry of Education.²¹ Of the 30 percent or so

²¹ READER discusses official statistics in light of the various surveys and also questions the nature of religious behavior in Japan (1991, pp. 5–12).

who do profess to previous religious affiliation, a majority (perhaps 70 to 80 percent) are from other New Religions. Most are former members of Sōka Gakkai and Risshō Kōseikai, while the remainder are from Seichō-no-Ie, Agonshū, Reiyūkai, GLA, etc. Those small numbers not from the New Religions generally came from the traditional Buddhist sects, or to an even lesser degree from Christian and Christian-related groups (including the Unification Church, which one may wish in any case to include with the New Religions).

The suggestion is, then, that the majority of Kōfuku no Kagaku members previously had little, if anything, to do with religion, and that those who did tended to belong to other new religious groups. As an interesting example of Kōfuku no Kagaku's perception of its relations with the other New Religions, a rumor arose in February 1992 that either Risshō Kōseikai would move over to Kōfuku no Kagaku en masse or some of its leaders would leave, bringing their own followers with them. Although this did not transpire, Kōfuku no Kagaku claims that a number of higher members of Risshō Kōseikai did indeed make the move. Kōfuku no Kagaku also claims that Ōkawa's works are widely read among Risshō Kōseikai members, and that at least one instructor, upon reading *Chinmoku no budda* 沈黙の仏陀 [The silent Buddha], was so impressed that he recommended it to his students.

As indicated, the above information is based on the educated estimates of Kōfuku no Kagaku headquarters, and as such may not be entirely accurate. From my own observations, however, the assessment seems as faithful a representation as possible at the present moment. Moreover, it strikes me that it is probably no less accurate than published figures might be, and it does at least tell us how the group perceives its own membership, an interesting fact in itself. Finally I would suggest that the assessment is probably more applicable to the active membership, although it should be noted that both full and friendship members fill in a common membership application form.

Studying and Practicing "God's Truth"

The pursuit of happiness in Kōfuku no Kagaku is carried out through the study of God's Truth as embodied in the written and spoken word of Ōkawa and the practice of the means he prescribes to this end. His books cover not only discussions of cosmic truth and correct religious practice, but also moral and ethical issues as well as more mundane matters like how to succeed in life. Particularly in the earlier phase up to 1991, the books acted as the "gateway" to Kōfuku no Kagaku and then subsequently as the "pathway" to God's Truth. Though the writ-

ten word still retains a central role, Okawa's teachings are now widely accessible through other media: his lectures and messages have been on video since at least 1991, and more recently the major events are transmitted live across Japan via satellite.

In the following three sections I would like to examine several aspects of Kōfuku no Kagaku's doctrinal development over the past decade. The first section will show the transformation of Kōfuku no Kagaku from a study group to a religious organization by tracing the development of the entry requirements and study system. The second section takes up the accompanying shift in Kōfuku no Kagaku's teachings and depiction of Ōkawa's spiritual status, providing insight into the nature of the group's cosmology and religious practices. The third section discusses Kōfuku no Kagaku's increasing involvement in social and political issues, indicative of a shift from an inwardly directed to an outwardly motivated social-action group.

From Study Group to Religious Organization

At present, becoming a full member of Kōfuku no Kagaku involves an initiation ceremony at one of the branches. One takes "The Pledge of Devotion to the Three Treasures" (*sanki-seigan-shiki* 三歸誓願式), which is a vow of devotion to the Buddha (Ōkawa), the Dharma (Ōkawa's word), and the Sangha (Kōfuku no Kagaku) recited in front of the object of worship (*honzon* 本尊): a picture of Ōkawa flanked to the right and left by the inscriptions "Shaka Dainyorai" 釈迦大如来 and "Kōfuku no Kagaku," respectively. The new devotees then receive the three basic sutras that are exclusive to full members: *Bussatsu shōshin-hōgo* 仏説正心法語, *Kiganmon* 祈願文 I, and *Kiganmon* II. To qualify for this ceremony, only two conditions need to be fulfilled. Prospective candidates must have been deemed suitable for full membership on the basis of their impressions of *Shin taiyō no hō*, which they may write in a small space provided on the application form. Or, having attended one of the group's events, they may be recommended for membership by an initiated full member. New members undertake the "sacred obligations" to revere the three jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha; to seek daily one's "correct mind"; and to cooperate in the "construction of Utopia."

The initiation ceremony, which is replete with Buddhist undertones, is a relatively new innovation, and is a perfect example of how the group has developed over the years from a "study group" to an ostensibly Japanese Buddhist religious organization. Until it gained legal status in March 1991, Kōfuku no Kagaku did not refer to itself as a religious organization, but rather as a "graduate school of life" (*jinsei*

no daigakuin 人生の大学院), seeing its role as that of a high-powered study group to investigate the principle of happiness through the exhaustive study of Ōkawa's exposition of God's Truth.

In contrast to the relative ease with which membership is now obtained, in its early days Kōfuku no Kagaku restricted entry to those who had the desire and capacity to study. In October 1986 a system of membership by examination was introduced. Those seeking entry were required first to read at least ten of Ōkawa's books. They then had to write their impressions in a rather large space on the application form, along with such data as name, address, reasons for joining, and previous religious affiliation. The answers were then studied by Ōkawa and, presumably, other officials, who decided whether to let the applicant join. Those who failed could be reexamined only after a waiting period of three to six months (NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, p. 47). With entry so difficult, the members tended to be highly motivated and receptive to the group's ideas.

In these beginning stages the interest of most prospective members was aroused by the spiritual messages, then deepened by the lectures, which became the focal point for group activities.²² The first public talk (*zadankai* 座談会) took place on 13 November 1986 at Nippori Kaikan before about 100 people, with Ōkawa under the guidance of Takahashi Shinji's spirit. The first public lecture meeting (*kōenkai* 講演会)²³ was held on 8 March 1987 at Ushigome Public Hall with an audience of about 400 people under the guidance of Ama-no-minakanushi-no-kami 天御中主神, the guiding deity of Taniguchi Masaharu 谷口雅春, founder of Seichō-no-Ie. Not surprisingly, GLA and Seichō-no-Ie members are said to have shown particular interest (NIJŪ ISSEIKI, p. 56). At the lecture meeting, during which Yoshikawa Saburō also gave a talk, members of the audience are said to have witnessed a number of spiritual happenings while Ōkawa was addressing them.²⁴

At the end of 1987 interest was such that the halls that had been used, with capacities of around 1,000, could no longer accommodate everyone. Although the lecture meetings were in principle open to the general public, the membership system allowed the group to give priority to the committed once demand exceeded supply. A non-

²² One outstanding feature of this period was the level of "outside" activity, with discussion groups of interested members often retiring to coffee shops after scheduled events (NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, p. 48). The coffee-shop discussion group culture was undoubtedly instrumental in creating a basis for later social networking.

²³ Kōfuku no Kagaku uses the term "lecture session."

²⁴ In the April 1987 issue of *Kōfuku no Kagaku* Ōkawa mentions others' reports of having witnessed golden rays of light surrounding his body, of having seen ten fingers on one hand, and so on (NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, p. 57).

member who wished to get in needed a recommendation from a member; those who subsequently wanted to join would then, of course, have to study Ōkawa's books (NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, p. 58).

In 1987 a system of training was set up for an elite group of members, who had to pass a special test in order to qualify. At the end of these residential training courses (*kenshūkai* 研修会) there was an official exam on a set theme that required the writing of an essay; this was marked extremely harshly by Ōkawa himself, thus maintaining the high standards.²⁵ This naturally ensured the fervent absorption of Ōkawa's thought through books and lectures. The first of these courses was held in May near Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture. The fact that they were residential meant that a strong sense of identity and common direction developed. The group outgrew the courses by 1991, although training courses as such still form an important part of its activities.

To pave the group's transition from a study group to a large-scale organization, a program of graded qualification seminars (*shikaku-seminā* 資格セミナー) was established, allowing for the attainment of elementary, intermediate, then advanced qualification. Thereafter it was possible to attain the status of instructor, with examinations to be passed at each stage.

During the group's early period no overt program of propagation was undertaken; the emphasis was on the study of God's truth, and growth occurred principally through the influence of the books, lectures, and study program. In 1989, however, *Kōfuku no Kagaku* underwent a big change. On the day of the Shōwa Emperor's death, 7 January 1989, during the first of a four-lecture series aimed at intermediate and advanced members, Ōkawa made an announcement that would determine the subsequent direction of the movement: the "Unification of Thought and Religion Declaration," which, Ōkawa said, had been passed down to him from the God of the Earth, Lord Antonius.

By the time these lectures had been published as *Shinsetsu hasshōdō* 真説・八正道 [The genuine eightfold path] on 25 April 1989, Ōkawa had received permission from the high spirits to commence propagation. It was at this time that the group introduced its friendship membership system, which allowed it to maintain the elitist element while preparing for rapid expansion: people could join simply by subscribing to the magazine, while existing members were elevated to the newly-established "full member" status with its privileges of participation in

²⁵ A high standard, that is, in terms of their knowledge of Ōkawa's works and thought. One also suspects that educational and professional background may have played a role as well.

restricted group activities.²⁶ The lectures also increased in frequency and were held around the country, marking a new departure, since they had previously been largely limited to Tokyo.

On 11 November 1989 Ōkawa announced the Start Sunrise Campaign, which gave rise to Project Sunrise '90. It was as part of this campaign that Ōkawa announced his above-mentioned goal of 50,000 “producers of happiness” by the end of 1990. Project Sunrise was to have a significant impact on the group’s study program as well as its membership system (*Kōfuku no Kagaku*, February 1990, quoted in NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, pp. 82–83).

On 26 November the first National Unified Examination in the Study of God’s Truth (*zenkoku tōitsu shinrigaku kentei-shiken* 全国統一神理学検定試験) was held, with multiple choice replacing essays as the mode of examination, confirming the move towards a mass-oriented system. Incentives were even introduced: those who did well could win cash prizes, qualify for the advanced seminar, and have their names appear in the magazine (NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, p. 85). This examination is now held across the country every February. Further, the lecture meetings, which had been essentially by invitation only, were now more open to the public. A lecture held on 17 December 1989 at the Ryōgoku Kokugikan Hall attracted an audience of 8,000. Information about events was publicized in the entertainment magazine *Pia*, and tickets were on open sale through commercial ticket agencies.

It was also during Project Sunrise '90 that the membership system changed to allow people to enter through the recommendation of a full member. Even after a single lecture meeting one could apply for membership by filling out a form then and there. Further innovations like the Wake-up Campaign (in which members presented Ōkawa’s books to friends as part of the propagation strategy) also played a role in laying the foundation for the rapid growth to come during Miracle '91. Similarly, at the Birthday Festival in July 1991 a change in membership fees was announced: previously new members had been required to pay an entrance fee of ¥3,500 and monthly dues of ¥2,000, but now the entrance fee was discarded and the dues lowered to just ¥1,000.²⁷

The overhaul of the system was completed when the qualification

²⁶ This dual structure is said to resemble that of Seichō-no-Ie (ARITA 1991, p. 68).

²⁷ Although there is no longer any compulsory entrance fee, a ¥6,000 offering known in *Kōfuku no Kagaku* as “nurturing happiness” (*shokufuku* 補福) is encouraged; similarly, members are at liberty to offer more than the obligatory ¥1,000 in dues. One must also remember that since new full members receive the basic sutras upon entry it is only natural that a generous offering be made.

seminars were replaced by the School of Angels (*tenshi no gakkō* 天使の学校) in August 1991. The school was centered in the local branches, with classes being given by the instructors. More recently the group reports that the scale of the operation has outgrown the facilities of the local branches; the respective classes are now held in large public halls to accommodate the hundreds or even thousands of participants.

Accompanying this gradual transformation from a small-scale study-group setup to a large-scale organization was a similar transformation in the content and emphasis of the teachings, not to mention in the spiritual claims of Ōkawa himself. I would now like to turn my attention to this crucial aspect of Kōfuku no Kagaku's development.

Transformation from Spiritual Medium to the Buddha

Before an audience of over 40,000 at the July 1991 Birthday Festival, Ōkawa declared his status to the massed assembly:

The one who stands before you is Ōkawa Ryūhō, yet it is not Ōkawa Ryūhō. The one who stands before you and speaks the eternal God's Truth is El Cantare. It is I who possess the highest authority on earth. It is I who have all authority from the beginning of the earth until the end. For I am not human, but am the Law itself. (ŌKAWA 1994, pp. 16-17)

He later beseeched all to have faith, leaving no one in any doubt as to his identity:

Believe! Believe! Believe!
Believe in me!
Believe in the Eternal Buddha! (ŌKAWA 1994, p. 41)

Thus he confirmed that he was now the incarnation of El Cantare, the highest being in the ninth dimension (the highest spiritual realm that governs this planet). El Cantare is, according to Kōfuku no Kagaku cosmology, the "supreme grand spirit of the terrestrial spirit group." Part of this El Cantare consciousness had previously incarnated on this earth as Śākyamuni Buddha and as Hermes.²⁸ We shall take up these matters in greater detail later in this section.

Declarations like the above have long played a crucial role in Kōfuku no Kagaku's development, lending a dramatic effect to

²⁸ Kōfuku no Kagaku holds that Ōkawa incarnated from the core consciousness of El Cantare, whereas Hermes and Śākyamuni incarnated from other, lesser parts of this consciousness, thus accounting for Ōkawa's superior innate knowledge of the universe beyond the ninth-dimensional world.

Okawa's public appearances, creating a sense of awe, and engendering excited anticipation regarding his spiritual authority. They also serve to demarcate the phases in his spiritual development as well as in the strategy of the organization. Six months after the Birthday Festival, at the Lord El Cantare Festival, he was to declare:

Believe! Believe! Believe!
 Believe in the rebirth of the Nyorai!
 Believe in the rebirth of the Buddha!
 Believe in the appearance of the Eternal Buddha!
 Believe in the one who expounds to you the Law of the remote
 past!
 Everything begins with believing.
 El Cantare is the wish of mankind.
 You have the divine mission to shape this wish!
 Fight, Angels of Light!
 Fight, Warriors of Light!²⁹
 Gather here, my disciples through karma!
 The Savior's command starts here.
 Henceforth,
 For the salvation of the whole of mankind,
 or the construction of the new world,
 We will have to make the utmost effort, will we not!

(ŌKAWA 1994, pp. 295–97)

The Lord El Cantare Festival was in many ways a pivotal event. Whereas the July event had been more a self-congratulatory and flamboyant celebration of the movement's success, this one started with a triumphant march around the floor of the arena by the *shishi-funjin-bosatsu* 獅子奮迅菩薩 (Lion-like bodhisattvas), members—more than 700 in all—who had each brought over 100 people to Kōfuku no Kagaku. The proceedings were conducted by the actress and Kōfuku no Kagaku member Ogawa Tomoko 小川知子, who also performed a song. Behind the podium center stage was a large white staircase in front of a massive photograph of Ōkawa. Here Ōkawa himself later made his entry to a dramatic light and sound show in his familiar businessman suit to give his address.

At the December event the focus was directed more on Ōkawa himself and the religious aspect of the group. Even Ogawa Tomoko's

²⁹ The Warriors of Light (*hikari no senshi* 光の戦士) are those who engage in the fight to overcome darkness through the propagation of God's Truth—in other words, Kōfuku no Kagaku members. The idea of Warriors of Light, or of warriors in general, is a fascinating one, fashioned in science fiction, computer games, cartoons, and so on. For an account of such warriors see NIYAMA 1991.

scheduled appearance to sing an ancient Greek song was hastily dropped shortly before the event. In the first part of the program, after the obligatory fanfare for passing the five-million-member mark, the various divisions in turn took to the stage. The Women's Division, representing love or family harmony, appeared first along with children dressed as angels and figures dressed as Disneyesque characters, to the accompaniment of nursery-rhyme music and clouds of bubbles. Next the Senior Division, representing Shinto and indigenous culture, appeared with the Seven Gods of Fortune to stylized Japanese music. Finally the Youth Division appeared, symbolizing vigour and strength, and perhaps the purity of youth in their clean-cut attire. These Warriors of Light performed a rousing song titled *Tsudoe, hikari no tenshi* 集え, 光の天使 [Gather, angels of light!] to the accompaniment of what I would loosely describe as military music, punching the air with gold, then—dramatically at the climax of the song—red, blue, and white handkerchiefs.³⁰

After the chanting en masse of the *Shōshinhōgo*, the second part of the program was devoted to Ōkawa. To the great surprise and delight of the assembly (not to mention of the mass media, who had often commented on the secular feel of Kōfuku no Kagaku events and the leader's "ordinary" appearance), Ōkawa appeared in completely new guise, backed by bright light and melodramatic music, from behind the white veil across the stage. The assembled masses watched in awe as he took to the podium, clad in a designer-created gold robe. His head was adorned with a large golden crown, the distinct instability of which was a cause for great concern (it was replaced by a steadier version by the time of the next public event, on 2 February 1992). In his hand he held a golden sceptre, marked, like the crown, with the ubiquitous "OR" symbol.

This symbolism, and its implied confirmation of Ōkawa's status as the incarnation of the highest spiritual entity, can be viewed as an attempt by the group to assert its identity as a religious movement and to reaffirm the universality of its belief system. Although much of Kōfuku no Kagaku's recent "theology" is informed by Buddhism, or at least by Buddhist concepts and vocabulary, the group claims consistency with the teachings of "all religious traditions," of spiritualism, and of science and philosophy. Let us here briefly examine the cosmology and basic teachings of Kōfuku no Kagaku.³¹

³⁰ This is reminiscent of certain Sōka Gakkai events. See also the description of a similar scene in DAVIS 1991, pp. 782–83.

³¹ Although many might consider Kōfuku no Kagaku's cosmology to be pure fantasy, further investigation would be of value, especially if it contrasted the attitudes of Kōfuku no Kagaku believers towards religion and science with those of the Japanese public at large.

The three books that set out the basis of Kōfuku no Kagaku's teachings are *Taiyō no hō* 太陽の法 (translated as *The Laws of the Sun* [1991a]), *Ōgon no hō* 黄金の法 (*The Laws of Gold* [1991b]) and *Eien no hō* 永遠の法 (*The Laws of Eternity* [1991c]). *The Laws of the Sun* explains the group's cosmological worldview (which is understood in terms of a multidimensional universe), its view of the origin and nature of life, and its view of history. *The Laws of Eternity* details the precise nature of the multidimensional universe, and *The Laws of Gold* seeks to reconcile Western and Eastern thought and religion.

The opening chapter of *The Laws of the Sun* tells us that the universe is governed by God's Truth, which "represents God's Mind, God's Law and the ever-transforming Life of God," and which no human being had hitherto mastered "as thoroughly as Moses, Śākyamuni, or Jesus Christ." We learn further that the brilliant sun of God's Truth has unceasingly provided "unlimited light energy to humankind," but on occasion this light is prevented from reaching us by dark clouds, causing confusion in the human mind. It is at such times that a golden ray—the light of salvation—emerges from "behind the thick clouds" to deliver people from "the age of darkness." Thus, after an "interval of some two thousand years," Ōkawa has set out "with words of truth" to reveal the "rising of the Sun of God's Truth" in the contemporary age:

As the Sun of God's Truth gradually rises, a great light will glow from a corner of the earth. That very corner is the chosen land, Japan. Therefore, many people will hereafter see the Sun of God's Truth rising in full radiance and grandeur with Japan as the focal point. (ŌKAWA 1991a, pp. 9–10)

The "phenomenal world" inhabited by the human race is the three-dimensional world of length, width, and height. Beyond this is the "real world," however, a hierarchically arranged multidimensional universe, the next step up in the hierarchy being the fourth dimension of time. Spirituality is then added to give the fifth dimension. Spirituality is assessed in terms of "goodness," and it is in the fifth-dimensional world that "good people" come together. The sixth dimension adds knowledge of God; inhabitants of this dimension not only embody goodness but also possess a knowledge of "Divinity" (ŌKAWA 1991a, pp. 22–25).

Beyond the six dimensions are the higher levels of spiritual existence. The seventh dimension is that of altruism; inhabitants of this dimension no longer live self-centeredly, but practice "love" in heart and "service" in action. The eighth dimension adds mercy, the "willingness of a higher graded person to give without reserve or discrimination" (ŌKAWA 1991a, pp. 26–27).

The ninth dimension, which embodies the eight lower dimensions, allows its inhabitants to go beyond the multidimensional world that is bound by the magnetic field in the Earth's stratosphere. This dimension is therefore not restricted to the "terrestrial system," but is "connected to the spiritual worlds of other systems beyond our solar system." It is the task of the inhabitants of this dimension to "guide the terrestrial spirit group in the evolution process of the Grand Cosmos."

It is from this ninth-dimensional world that the "personal gods" and "fundamental divinities" of the world religions have incarnated on earth. The "origin of Law" is entrusted to the spirits here (ŌKAWA 1991a, p. 28). This one Law of God is divided into seven colors of spiritual, not physical, essence, representing the differing natures of the ninth-dimensional inhabitants. These colors are: Gold, representing the Law and Mercy, and the color of the Buddha (Śākyamuni in the former age and Ōkawa in the present age); White, representing Love, and the color of Jesus Christ; Red, representing Righteousness or Miracles, and the color of Moses; Blue, representing Philosophy and Thought, and the color of Zeus; Green, representing Nature and Harmony, and the color of Manu (the first man in Indian mythology and author of "The Code of Manu"); Purple, representing Order and Propriety, and the color of Confucius; and Silver, representing Science, and the color of Isaac Newton (ŌKAWA 1991c, pp. 182-85; NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, pp. 106-107).

The tenth dimension, which adds creation and evolution, is the highest realm of the terrestrial spirit group. It consists of Grand Sun Consciousness, Moon Consciousness, and Earth Consciousness, which are collectively responsible for the "4.5 billion years" of Earth's history. There are further dimensions above this tenth dimension, up to an existence known as the Macrocosmic Grand Divine Spirit, which is said to encompass as many as twenty dimensions (ŌKAWA 1991a, pp. 29-30). No spirit from the tenth dimension or beyond has incarnated on earth, although Ōkawa claims to have attained knowledge of the fourteenth dimension and limited knowledge of dimensions above this. Lord Antonius (who, as mentioned above, entrusted Ōkawa with the task of unifying all thought and religion) is part of the tenth-dimensional Grand Sun Consciousness and imparts his will through the ninth-dimensional El Cantare.³²

³² This is apparently because only El Cantare is qualified among the five bodies of the ninth dimension to communicate with Lord Antonius. The explanation is somewhat convoluted and is probably the reason why this particular being no longer receives mention in *Kōfuku no Kagaku cosmology* (ŌKAWA 1989, pp. 128-31; NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, pp. 70-72, 119-20).

The first ninth-dimensional Divine Spirit, El Miore, was created to bring advanced animal life forms on earth, there having been formed a nine-dimensional spiritual realm there.³³ Other ninth-dimensional spirits, such as Amor, Moria, and Therabim, also cooperated, and at this juncture El Miore changed his name to El Cantare, “the Beautiful Land of Light, the Earth.” This El Cantare was to incarnate as Hermes in Greece 4,300 years ago and as Śākyamuni in India 2,600 years ago (ŌKAWA 1994, p. 44),³⁴ while Amor came to earth in the form of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago, Moria as Moses over 3,000 years ago, and Therabim as Confucius over 2,000 years ago. These were the “initial four ninth-dimensional Divine Spirits” that inhabited the earth. The fifth ninth-dimensional Divine Spirit was El Ranty, or Aal El Ranty, from which the name Allah was later derived. Under his guidance, a group of sixty million inhabitants of the planet Beta “traveled to the Earth in a big fleet of space crafts,” landing by the Nile where the first Utopia was established—giving us the later legend of the Garden of Eden (ŌKAWA 1991a, pp. 34–47). El Ranty subsequently removed himself to heaven where he joined the other four ninth-dimensional Divine Spirits. It is also worth mentioning that El Ranty and Amor were the principal guiding spirits of La Mu, “the great king of the light of Mu,” the civilization that thrived in the Pacific some 17,000 years ago before it finally sank into the Ocean 15,300 years ago. Some of the survivors of Mu are said to have escaped to the Atlantic continent of Atlantis. La Mu, incidentally, was also to reincarnate later as Śākyamuni in India (ŌKAWA 1991a, pp. 199–202).

Here I will forego the task of further elucidating the cosmology of Kōfuku no Kagaku. Suffice it to say that there are various “realms” that parallel these dimensions, some equaling, or being contained within, a given dimension, others overlapping two dimensions.³⁵ The purpose of incarnation on Earth is for “soul training,” through which a being gains promotion or suffers demotion between the different levels. With his innate superior knowledge of all dimensions above and beyond the terrestrial spirit group, Ōkawa is able to perceive the nature and level of each spiritual entity; his placing of historical (and mythological) figures within this multidimensional structure is a source of great interest among Kōfuku no Kagaku members and

³³ El Miore had already dabbled in a bit of creating in the three-dimensional world of Venus, but his cross between plant and animal, resembling a “lily flower on two legs,” was unable to communicate effectively with the nine-dimensional world.

³⁴ Ōkawa’s dating of Śākyamuni varies between 2,600 and 2,500 years ago; he remains inconclusive on the issue in the recently revised *Shin ōgon no hō* 新・黄金の法, 1995 (pp. 141–42).

³⁵ See Table of Dimensional Structures (ŌKAWA 1991a, p. 293).

media alike. For instance, in the Nyorai Realm (eighth dimension) he places the various Archangels like Michael and Gabriel, as well as Solomon, Aristotle, Einstein, Dainichi-nyorai (Mahāvairocana-tathāgata), and Ame-no-minakanushi-no-kami. In the Bonten Realm, which straddles the eighth and seventh dimensions, we find Chopin, Mencius, Amaterasu-ō-Mikami, and the Biblical figures Matthew, Peter, and Mark (who has reincarnated in the present age as Yoshikawa Saburō, and formerly as Nichirō 日朗, one of Nichiren's senior disciples). The Bosatsu Realm (seventh dimension) contains Mozart, Henry Ford, and the apostles Paul and Luke, one step down from their partners from the New Testament.³⁶ Ōkawa also gives past life readings in his lectures, books, and the magazine; the Kōfuku no Kagaku's piece on Asahara Shōkō's past life as the famous thief Ishikawa Goemon is an excellent illustration of this aspect of the group's worldview (see KISALA 1995).³⁷

The teachings of Kōfuku no Kagaku seek to be universal, and are treated as the direct revelation of God's Truth handed down from the higher spirits of the ninth dimension. Underpinning these teachings are the four Principles of Happiness (*Kōfuku no genri* 幸福の原理), which Ōkawa also refers to as the contemporary Fourfold Path (*shishōdō* 四正道). The principles are Love (*ai* 愛), Wisdom (*chi* 知), Reflection (*hansei* 反省), and Development (*hatten* 発展) (NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, pp. 132–40). These teachings date back to the beginning of Kōfuku no Kagaku, with Ōkawa introducing the principles as basic concepts in the very first lecture meeting on 8 March 1987 and expanding on them in subsequent meetings over the following twelve months. These lectures, together with others on the principles of enlightenment, Utopia, the mind, and the savior, were published in 1990 as the “Principles” trilogy: *Kōfuku no genri* [The principles of happiness], *Satori no genri* 悟りの原理 [The principles of enlightenment] and *Yūtopia no genri* ユートピアの原理 [The principles of Utopia].³⁸

The Principle of Love posits six levels of love, espoused in the Theory of Staged Development of Love: love of instinct, love that loves, love that nurtures, love that forgives, love as existence, and, finally, love of God, which is beyond the scope of the human mind (ŌKAWA 1991a, pp. 111–19). The Principle of Wisdom is knowledge of

³⁶ See tables compiled from *The Laws of Gold* and NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, pp. 112–18.

³⁷ KISALA comments that “while offered as a response to the Aum Affair, this piece in fact ends up giving us an interesting look at the beliefs of Kōfuku no Kagaku itself” (1995, p. 28). The original piece is in the Kōfuku no Kagaku edited magazine *Oumu shinrikyō boku-metsu sakusen* [Aum Shinrikyō, destruction strategy], pp. 50–59.

³⁸ The lectures on the four principles of happiness are spread across the trilogy.

God's Truth, as seen in Moses' Ten Commandments, Jesus Christ's teaching of love, and Śākyamuni Buddha's Eightfold Path. Ōkawa teaches a fourfold Staged Development of Wisdom. The Principle of Reflection is merely the act of reflecting upon oneself and examining one's own life. It forms, however, the most essential and fundamental part of Kōfuku no Kagaku's daily practice, through which love and wisdom can be realized. The Principle of Development is eternal self-improvement, and is the total of the other three principles. Development is the attaining of higher levels of love and wisdom through self-reflection, and is achieved by following the Middle Way: abandoning extremes of emotions through the practice of the Eightfold Path.

In addition to the daily practice of reflection and the Eightfold Path, praxis in Kōfuku no Kagaku revolves around the reading of the basic sutras (the aforementioned *Shōshinhōgo* and *Kiganmon*) and attending training courses, seminars, and the annual observances (*nenchū-gyōji* 年中行事). The latter include Ōkawa Ryūhō's Birthday Festival in July, the Lord El Cantare Festival in December, and two further major events at the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, which are all invariably transmitted live by satellite across Japan. These are nowadays the only times when Ōkawa makes public appearances, and the precise dates of the two main events depend, no less, on the baseball fixtures at the venue, Tokyo Dome. It is necessary to observe here that the group is constantly developing, and thus constantly introducing new practice and ritual, a process that has been gathering pace since the change in emphasis and direction at the end of 1991 following the Lord El Cantare Festival.

The source of all these teachings is, of course, the spiritual experience of Ōkawa. As we have seen, this came to him at first in the form of automatic writing, and later, after three or four months, in the form of automatic speech. By this stage Yoshikawa Saburō had appeared on the scene, followed by Tomiyama Makoto. These two would participate in the channeling sessions as interrogators while Ōkawa would act as the spiritual medium (NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, p. 33). The question of how the spirits of non-Japanese communicated with him is explained in rather interesting fashion. Ninth-dimensional spirits such as Moses, Jesus Christ, and Confucius spoke in their native tongues until they gradually adjusted to contemporary Japanese (although Ōkawa reported a noticeable foreign lilt in the accent whenever these foreign spirits addressed him [TBS 1991a]). During the period of adjustment the thoughts themselves were transmitted. The Angels of Light of the Nyorai and Bosatsu Realms have a spiritual

device called a Powertron “shining on their chests,” which absorbs and amplifies the Light of God (ŌKAWA 1991a, p. 57). This device also allows them to perform the feat of simultaneous language translation.

As mentioned briefly above, a great variety of spirits communicated through Ōkawa during this initial channeling phase. The universality of God’s Truth was demonstrated by messages from representatives of classical Western philosophy, Judaism, Chinese philosophy, Buddhism, the Shinto pantheon, Western science, other Japanese New Religions, and what is loosely termed the “New Age.” To name but a few: Nichiren, Shinran, and Kūkai; Moses, Jesus Christ, Zeus, and Socrates; Amaterasu-ō-mikami, Uchimura Kanzō, Deguchi Onisaburō, Takahashi Shinji, and Taniguchi Masaharu;³⁹ and Nostradamus, Isaac Newton, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Edgar Cayce.

Although Ōkawa had resolved to pass the messages of the more than five hundred higher spirits, he actually communicated those of only some sixty spirits before the *reigenshū* series came to an abrupt end during 1989 (NIJŪ ISSEIKI 1991, pp. 74–75). This coincided with the Unification of Thought and Religion Declaration of January 1989, when he was given the order from the higher authority of Lord Antonius to carry out the more important task of uniting the world’s religions and thought. This meant the systematizing of his teachings, as reflected in the publishing of works on the essentials of Kōfuku no Kagaku teachings. These works no longer took the form of spirits speaking through Ōkawa—now he himself was speaking, and was free with his newly granted authority to take on the task unimpeded.

The next significant development occurred in 1991, a time when Kōfuku no Kagaku started coming under some of the most damning criticism of a Japanese religious group in recent years. Before describing this development let us take a brief look at some of this criticism. It is significant that the attacks came not only from the media and from rival religious groups, but particularly from academia. It was at this time that Shimada Hiromi of Nihon Joshi Daigaku became embroiled in a bitter conflict with Kōfuku no Kagaku and (significantly, in view of recent events) appeared to take sides with their great rivals, Aum Shinrikyō.⁴⁰ Asahara Shōkō gained the respect of Shimada and others because he, unlike Ōkawa Ryūhō, had not only undergone

³⁹ According to SHIMADA the spirit of Takahashi descended nearly seventy times, giving rise to sixteen volumes of spiritual messages, while Taniguchi’s spirit descended more than twenty-seven times, resulting in five volumes of messages (1992a, pp. 211–19).

⁴⁰ Shimada was actually sued by Kōfuku no Kagaku for an article critical of Kōfuku no Kagaku published 5 September in the October issue of *Shūkan gendai* (SHIMADA 1992b, pp. 4–25). Shimada gives details of Kōfuku no Kagaku’s reaction in SHIMADA 1992b (pp. 63–93).

ascetic training but was actually familiar with the Buddhist scriptures and doctrine.

The essence of the criticism was that Ōkawa had little knowledge, let alone understanding, of the teachings he espoused, and that the “spiritual messages” were faked. He was challenged to give evidence of his purported spiritual powers. ASAHARA brought out a book belittling his understanding of Buddhism, and of the Eightfold Path in particular (1991). Not surprisingly, when Kōfuku no Kagaku and Aum were invited to a live television debate shortly after publication of the book Ōkawa declined to make an appearance. Of a number of critical books to appear towards the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992, the two most cutting were what I can only describe as works of satire. One was penned by a certain YAKUSHI’IN Tadashi (1991) and the other was co-authored by YONEMOTO Kazuhiro and SHIMADA Hiromi (1992), and effectively endorsed by a number of prominent scholars by virtue of their inclusion in a list of “technical advisors.”⁴¹

Perhaps the most serious blow to Kōfuku no Kagaku, however, was the so-called Friday Affair, named after the weekly scandal magazine *Friday*, put out by the major publishing house Kōdansha. Kōdansha came down particularly harshly on the group, publishing a number of what Kōfuku no Kagaku considered libelous articles over the course of several weeks. On 9 August an article appeared in the 23/30 August combined issue of *Friday* giving details of Ōkawa Ryūhō’s alleged visit to a counselor from whom he was supposed to be seeking advice on a mental condition. It was a case of mistaken identity, however—in fact Ōkawa had had nothing whatsoever to do with said counsellor; the journalist in question, Hayakawa Kazuhiro, seemed to have been intent on concocting a sensationalist story. Kōfuku no Kagaku took unprecedented action, the effects of which we shall discuss in greater detail in the following section. Suffice it to say here that as a result of this criticism and the fallout from the Friday Affair, Kōfuku no Kagaku was forced to enter a period of consolidation not only of its organization, but also of its teachings.

The effect on the teachings has been an increased incorporation of religious practices from late 1991 combined with a marked move toward Buddhistic thought and vocabulary. Ōkawa’s process of transformation from “spiritual medium” to “unifier of religion and thought” to “the Buddha” seems to have reached its fulcrum with the announcement in April 1994 that the age of true teachings has arrived, everything hitherto having been means (*hōben* 方便) in prepa-

⁴¹ *Ōkawa Ryūhō no reigen* is in fact a parody on Ōkawa’s alleged communications with the spirit world (YONEMOTO and SHIMADA 1992).

ration for this highest stage. A rash of books based on the Buddhist teachings has appeared, and the organization's basic works are undergoing revision in an attempt to eradicate the errors that gave rise to the criticism of four years ago. Even the essential "Laws Trilogy" has been revamped. Stopping publication of the spiritual-message series is another obvious move in this direction.

Confident of its revised teachings, Kōfuku no Kagaku has over the last year become more prominent again, attempting to take up where it left off four years ago before external events forced its hand. Increasingly from mid-1994 on, consonant with its mantle as the purveyor of the true teachings, Kōfuku no Kagaku has actively condemned what it sees as heretical teaching in a self-proclaimed attempt to lead adherents of false views to the truth as embodied in Ōkawa's words. This most recent phase has also been accompanied by ever greater involvement in social, moral, and political issues.

At this point I would like to consider the nature of this social and political action, which we can view as an extension of Kōfuku no Kagaku's general strategy of gradually moving from the inside to the outside (*uchi kara soto e* 内から外へ) through a process of transformation. This will show, I believe, that the current attempt to raise its profile in the social and political arenas does not represent a new departure for the group, as they are trying to suggest, but is simply a continuation of a strategy temporarily suspended in the wake of the Friday Affair.

The Move towards Social and Political Action

As discussed above, Kōfuku no Kagaku embarked on a high-profile propagation campaign at the beginning of 1991 and made extremely skillful use of the mass media in advertising their name and events. It was after the July event, with the massive publicity that accompanied it, that criticism in the media—primarily the press—started to gather pace. As we have seen, the publisher Kōdansha was one of the leaders in this effort. Following the publication of the article on Ōkawa in *Friday*, Kōfuku no Kagaku took unprecedented action, with irate members faxing and telephoning complaints to Kōdansha. The offices of the company were in chaos for several days, with the fax machines spewing forth message after message and the telephone lines constantly blocked.⁴² According to Kōdansha, business was inter-

⁴² For Kōfuku no Kagaku's view of the affair in the larger context of their conflict with the media, see KAGEYAMA and OGAWA 1993. Rather perversely, the authors of chapter 2 argue that Kōdansha's claim that it was prevented from conducting business by the 55,000 or so

rupted for five days; Kōfuku no Kagaku was accused of having monopolized the company's 295 telephone lines and 94 facsimile lines from 2 September to 6 September. High-profile members Ogawa Tomoko and Kageyama Tamio 景山民夫 were among those to set up the National Association of Kōdansha *Friday* Victims (Kōdansha Furaidē Zenkoku Higaisha no Kai 講談社フライデー全国被害者の会),⁴³ and day in, day out from 2 September for several weeks the association demonstrated outside Kōdansha. It also held rallies around the city calling for the banning of *Friday* and the resignation of Kōdansha's president. These actions, which marked a radical departure for the group, were widely perceived as signaling an alarming shift in Kōfuku no Kagaku from study to aggressive activism.

Kōfuku no Kagaku also took legal action, filing suits in September 1991 against Kōdansha with the Tokyo District Court for defamation of character on several counts. Kōdansha filed a countersuit, claiming compensation for disruption of business. The proceedings have been long and drawn out and are still continuing, although the verdict is expected in the near future. One might also mention that Kōfuku no Kagaku has filed separate suits against other parties for defamation of character.

Suits were also filed against Kōdansha by some 3,000 individual Kōfuku no Kagaku members on the grounds of "mental anguish" (*seishin-teki kōgai soshō* 精神的公害訴訟), the argument being that the defamatory misrepresentations in the various articles constituted an injury to their faith. It is the first time that the courts have been tested in a case where members claim that their religious faith has been impinged upon by defamatory remarks in the press. These cases, when resolved, will have important ramifications for the rest of Japanese society, particularly the media, and also serve as an indication of what kind of society Kōfuku no Kagaku is aiming for as its Utopia. Proceedings at the regional court level have already been completed and the case now rests with the Tokyo High Court, which is due to pass verdict in October 1995. Should the verdict go against the litigators, they intend to take the case to the Supreme Court.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, at the end of 1991 Kōfuku no Kagaku remained highly newsworthy material as far as the broadcast media were concerned.

faxes over five days is but a "trick," since this works out to barely five faxes an hour per machine, hardly enough to disrupt business (pp. 50–51). For Ōkawa's attitude on the issue, see the interview with him in *Shūkan bunshun*, 10 October 1991, pp. 34–39.

⁴³ Kageyama was the chair of the association, Ogawa the vice-chair.

⁴⁴ The Kōfuku no Kagaku side is explained in the 1995 manga *Kibō no hakumei* 希望の革命 [The revolution of hope], KODANSHA FURAIDE ZENKOKU HIGAISHA NO KAI, ed.

Programs included the first live television interview with Okawa Ryūhō, by the well-known commentator Tahara Sōichirō (ASAHI 1991b);⁴⁵ a live five-hour television debate on contemporary religion with academics, commentators, and representatives from Kōfuku no Kagaku and Aum (ASAHI 1991a); and documentaries and reports on Kōfuku no Kagaku's latest activities.⁴⁶ Interestingly, though, just a few days after nearly all the commercial stations had reported at length on the Lord El Cantare Festival, the plug was pulled on coverage of the group. It transpired that the media had decided en masse to cut Kōfuku no Kagaku from its agenda and stop acting as if it was an extension of the group's public relations arm. From the beginning of 1992 there was comparatively little media treatment of Kōfuku no Kagaku, apart from periodical updates in the press on progress in the court proceedings with Kōdansha. This has started to change only recently.

In its latest stage, in which the true teachings have been revealed, Kōfuku no Kagaku has engaged itself in what it terms "educational action" (*keimō-undō* 啓蒙運動), believing it to be its mission to teach ethical behavior and distinguish true from heretical religion. Below I shall outline the measures recently undertaken by Kōfuku no Kagaku in terms of an active campaign of educating the public and setting up action groups for carrying out this task.

One charge Kōfuku no Kagaku has consistently made in their struggle against Kōdansha is that the Japanese press lacks the ethical standards that should be guaranteed in a decent society. Though most people were probably critical of Kōfuku no Kagaku's actions against Kōdansha,⁴⁷ there can be no doubt that there was a certain groundswell of sympathy for the ideal it stood for. No doubt, too, the group's unwavering stance found sympathy in a society known more for apathy than strength when it comes to public-minded action. In this light it is not overly surprising that in November 1994 the Media Ethics Research Group (Masukomi Rinri Kenkyūkai マスコミ倫理研究会) was set up to tackle the problem of loose ethics in the mass media, nor that it seems to have attracted wide support.

The catalyst for setting up this group was Kōfuku no Kagaku's disgust with the disregard of the law forbidding display of pubic hair in the media. Ever since an "artistic" collection of full-nude portraits of Miyazawa Rie in 1991 demonstrated the fine line between art and pornography and fueled a debate over what the Japanese call "hair

⁴⁵ The interview appeared in the December 1991 issue of *Samsara*. Kōfuku no Kagaku says it is slightly different in content from the original. I have yet to compare the two.

⁴⁶ Especially on the Kōdansha Affair, with Ogawa Tomoko receiving much attention on the chat shows.

nudes” (*hea nūdo* ヘアヌード), the weekly magazines had taken it upon themselves to be the arbiters of good taste. A perusal of any recent copy of, say, *Shūkan gendai* is ample demonstration of the present situation. Thus during the autumn of 1994 Kōfuku no Kagaku instigated a *han-hea nūdo* (anti-“hair nudes”) campaign to stop publishers from violating this law. Demonstrations were held in Osaka and Tokyo, with a reported 70,000 participants.⁴⁸

Kōfuku no Kagaku has reserved its greatest energy, however, for its fight against Aum. This started even before 1991, when Ōkawa branded Asahara a frog in reference to the latter’s aquatic yogic feats, while Asahara in turn criticized his rival for not having done any ascetic practice or real doctrinal study. The fact that Aum stands accused of preparing to assassinate Ōkawa Ryūhō (along with Ikeda Daisaku and Ozawa Ichirō, leader of the Shinshintō) shows the depth of animosity between the two groups.⁴⁹

One aspect of the recent Aum Affair that is not so widely known is the role that Kōfuku no Kagaku claims in the buildup to the sarin gas attack. Apparently the witness to the 28 February kidnapping of Kariya Kiyoshi was a Kōfuku no Kagaku member who was able to identify the kidnappers as members of Aum Shinrikyō. Using its information on Aum, Kōfuku no Kagaku lobbied both politicians and the police to investigate Aum. At the same time they mobilized their rank-and-file and formed the Rescue Kariya Kiyoshi from Aum Shinrikyō Group, which held a demonstration in Tokyo on Saturday 18 March, just two days before the 20 March gas attack on the Tokyo subway system. Two mass meetings, each reportedly attracting 5,000 participants, were held simultaneously in Kameido Central Park (near Aum’s Tokyo training center) and Hibiya Park under the banner of “Emergency Meeting in Pursuit of the Aum Shinrikyō Problem.” After speeches calling for both the release of Kariya and the investigation of Aum, the assembled masses marched through the streets of Kameido and central Tokyo respectively. Later, just over a week after the gas attack, Kōfuku no Kagaku published a special-issue magazine on Aum.⁵⁰ To

⁴⁷ The actions were not only uncalled for, but they highlighted the contradictions inherent in the group’s objectives (see EGAWA 1991b).

⁴⁸ In January 1995 Kōfuku no Kagaku published a special-issue magazine, *Sutoppu za hea nūdo* ストップザヘアヌード [Stop the “hair nudes”]. See also the English-language handout *The Media Ethics Research Group Guide Book*.

⁴⁹ *Mainichi Daily News*, 24 June 1995, p. 2; *Asahi shinbun*, 19 June 1995, evening edition, p. 1; *Asahi shinbun*, 4 July 1995, p. 27; *Asahi shinbun*, 10 September 1995, evening edition, p. 15.

⁵⁰ *Oumu Shinrikyō bokumetsu sakusen*. Details of the demonstration are given in an article here (pp. 4–13). Prior to the sarin gas attack, Kōfuku no Kagaku was involved in the City Residents Association to Solve the Aum Problem, and was active in Tokyo, Osaka, and else-

what extent the group's actions played a part in the events surrounding Aum's downfall one cannot precisely say, but they do indicate its ability to gather intelligence and mobilize action.

Here it is pertinent to mention Kōfuku no Kagaku's involvement in Japanese politics, as it was through their links with a prominent politician (Mitsuzuka Hiroshi 三塚 詠, currently the leader of the largest faction in the LDP and a Kōfuku no Kagaku member for three years) that they claim they were able to influence the Aum investigation. The roots of the group's political activities may be traced back to at least 1993, when the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lost its majority after nearly forty years in power. A new government, formed in coalition with the Kōmeitō, ruled for almost a year, until the prime minister, Hata Tsutomu, was replaced by Murayama Tomiichi in June 1994 with the backing of the LDP, the Social Democrats, and Sakigake.

The involvement of the Kōmeitō (and consequently of Sōka Gakkai and Ikeda Daisaku) in government had prompted debate on the issue of the separation of religion and state, as embodied in Article 20 of the Constitution. This ultimately led to the founding in May 1994 of the Shigatsukai 四月会, a group dedicated to reexamining the role of religious belief in contemporary Japan.⁵¹

In December 1994 the Kōmeitō joined with the Shinseitō to form the Shinshintō. The Kōmeitō's prominent presence in this party continues to concern many Japanese. The concern is shared by Kōfuku no Kagaku, whose position is further influenced by its view of Sōka Gakkai as a heretical religion (*jakyō* 邪教). Claiming that the country is being "infected" by the Gakkai, Kōfuku no Kagaku set up The Association for the Protection of the Nation from Heretical Religions (*Jakyō Kara Kokusei o Mamoru Kai* 邪教から国政を守る会), which has been in operation since early 1995. Posters have been put up outside railway stations and other prominent places throughout the country and leaflets handed out warning of the danger of allowing a Sōka

where handing out leaflets and making public announcements over loudspeakers condemning Aum for the Kariya kidnapping and other misdeeds. See the *Daily Yomiuri*, 19 March 1995, p. 2; *Mainichi Daily News*, 12 April 1995, p. 7.

⁵¹ More than sixty Diet members, including Murayama, attended the founding conference of the Shigatsukai in Tokyo on 23 June. Thereafter meetings were also held in Osaka and Fukuoka. In October the Sōka Gakkai held their first protest assemblies in Tokyo, Osaka, and Niigata. At a meeting in November, at Tokyo Dome, they registered their opposition to the activities of the Shigatsukai (which many Gakkai members understand as meaning "death to the Gakkai" [*shi-gatsukai*]), claiming religious oppression. For a summary of events see "Sōka Gakkai o meguru ugoki" in the 1995 edition of *Asahi nenkan*, p. 339. For an outline of political events of 1993-94, see TAKABATAKE 1994. See nos. 4, 7, 8, 10 and 12 (1994) of *Jiyū* for discussions of religion and the state, including the Sōka Gakkai problem, and for more extensive treatment of the Sōka Gakkai problem refer to the *Bukkyō taimusu*.

Gakkai-backed Shinshintō to assume political power.

Ōkawa has actually targeted the Gakkai for some time, with momentum gathering after July 1994 and particularly after 18 December 1994, when Ōkawa gave a lecture at the Tokyo Dome spelling out his criticism of the Gakkai. The lecture, entitled *Eien no chōsen* 永遠の挑戦 [The eternal challenge] was brought out as a book of the same name on 25 February 1995. Published the same day was *Sōka Gakkai bōkoku ron* 創価学会亡国論 [Sōka Gakkai, the ruin of the nation], followed in June by *Sōka Gakkai make-inu ron* 創価学会負け犬論 [Sōka Gakkai, the loser], both of which were informed by former Gakkai members.

When I visited Kioi-chō, Kōfuku no Kagaku had guards on watch and were reluctant to release certain information for fear of their sworn enemies stealing a march on them. This fear may be misplaced. While their criticism of the Gakkai in the sociopolitical spheres could, arguably, be of concern to the Gakkai, Kōfuku no Kagaku's broader religious attacks are unlikely to have any impact. For some time Ōkawa has classified all Nichiren groups, Sōka Gakkai included, as heretical, based on the premise that Nichiren was mistaken in his claim that chanting *Namu myōhō renge kyō* alone will bring happiness and secure Buddhahood. The Gakkai seems to feel that these criticisms are not worthy of reply, given its recent attempts to come closer to other religions through the advocacy of *shōju* 摂受 rather than *shakubuku* 折伏, and its doctrinal stress on the Three Great Mystic Laws (*sandaihihō* 三大秘法).⁵²

Another interesting product of Kōfuku no Kagaku's "anti-heresy" campaign is the manual *Machigaidarake no shūkyō-erabi* まちがいだらけの宗教選び [Sorting out mistake-ridden religions], produced by the Hikaku Shūkyō Kenkyūkai 比較宗教研究会 at the beginning of the year. This "manual for criticizing heretical religions" (*jakyō hihan manyuaru* 邪教批判マニュアル) takes up Aum Shinrikyō, the Unification Church, Cosmo Mate, GLA, and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Essentially it picks out the main defects of each religion, and as such is very reminiscent of the Sōka Gakkai's *Shakubuku kyōten* 折伏教典 [The *shakubuku* manual] of thirty years ago.⁵³ Although Kōfuku no Kagaku may present this offensive against other religions as a new departure, part of the age of true teachings in which mistaken religions must be purged, this is far from the case. Already in 1991 criticism of other religions was quite evident.⁵⁴

⁵² See, for example, the section "Odaimoku sae tonaereba sore de yoi" お題目さえ唱えればそれでよい [It's alright if you just chant the *daimoku*] in SOKA GAKKAI KYŌGAKUBU 1968.

⁵³ See chapters 7 and 8, pp. 121–225 in the 1968 edition.

⁵⁴ See the article "Tadashii shūkyō, machigatta shūkyō" 正しい宗教・間違った宗教 [Right religions, wrong religions] in the January 1992 issue of *Kōfuku no Kagaku* (pp. 42–49). It is

Kōfuku no Kagaku connections with the aforementioned LDP politician Mitsuzuka Hiroshi are also worthy of note here. Last summer Kōfuku no Kagaku published the book *Mitsuzuka Hiroshi sōridaijin taibōron* 三塚訴総理大臣待望論 [Mitsuzuka Hiroshi for prime minister!], holding a festival on 8 August in Hibiya Park to celebrate the occasion. The idea was to support the LDP, but only on the condition that Kōfuku no Kagaku member Mitsuzuka be made prime minister (their intention was not, they made clear, to support the LDP or any other political party per se).⁵⁵ Since in the meantime Mitsuzuka's chances of becoming Prime Minister have evaporated with the appointment of Hashimoto Ryūtarō to the position of party leader, it will be interesting to observe how events unfurl in the near future, especially should the Gakkai-backed Shinshintō gain power, as it has every chance of doing in the not too distant future.

Epilogue

In the present paper I have attempted to provide a basic framework in which to place Kōfuku no Kagaku and its leader. The group presents us with a quite striking transformation, in a quite short period of time, from what was essentially a study group concentrating on the pursuit of an all-embracing (and very eclectic) truth, to a large-scale religious organization showing increasingly activist and exclusivist tendencies. Transformation is, of course, a natural part of the development of any group, but the nature of that transition may differ greatly. Given Kōfuku no Kagaku's constant reshaping of its own history and doctrine (to a large degree in response to external forces), the task of evaluating the dynamics of this new religious movement can be effectively undertaken only on the basis of a thorough understanding of these changes. This, I believe, requires a thorough investigation of the motives, worldview, and authority of Ōkawa Ryūhō in light of his thought and his personal development (issues which I have only been able to touch upon briefly in the present paper).

Such an investigation might turn up some extremely telling clues for unraveling the phenomenon of Kōfuku no Kagaku, clarifying not only the role of other new religious movements (GLA, Seichō-no-Ie, Sōka Gakkai, Agonshū, etc.) in the group's development but also the nature and structure of Ōkawa's spiritual messages (which form the

also interesting to note at this stage the use of the Three Proofs (*sanshō* 三証) as the means of assessing a religion. See also YONEMOTO 1992, especially pp. 131-33.

⁵⁵ This was even reported in the UK press: "Japan's politicians vie for sect votes," *Independent*, 22 September 1995, p. 13.

ultimate source of his authority). Such matters have already been addressed extensively (though not academically) in some of the Japanese sources used in writing this paper, and some of the information that has turned up is quite intriguing indeed. For example, investigation into Ōkawa's background revealed in 1991 what until then had been a closely guarded secret: that Yoshikawa Saburō, Ōkawa's "friend" and his assistant since the earliest days of Kōfuku no Kagaku, was in fact none other than his father, Nakagawa Tadayoshi, whose earlier career had taken in Christianity, Seichō-no-Ie, and the Japanese Communist Party. Ōkawa's other accomplice in the channeling sessions, Tomiyama Makoto, turned out to be his elder brother, Tsutomu.

Similarly, study of his prophetic utterances in *Nosutoradamus senritsu no keiji* and elsewhere reveals very little original interpretation of Nostradamus. Examination of his alleged communications with higher spirits suggests plagiarism on a grand scale, with the spirit of Nostradamus managing even to repeat a mistranslation from a popular Japanese rendering of the *Centuries*. It is little wonder, then, that Ōkawa is anxious to keep his prophecies from the eyes of the rest of the world:

This history of the future of which I speak must on no account be broadcast to foreign countries until the time is ripe. You must not let foreigners read it. You must not translate it. We Japanese must keep it to ourselves. You must not translate this, or its contents, into English, Chinese, or Korean. If you were to do so, it would surely only heighten the fear.

(SHIMADA 1991, p. 19; SHIMADA 1992b, p. 14)

Given Kōfuku no Kagaku's declared intention to expand overseas in furtherance of its mission to secure salvation for all humankind, such revelations should receive careful attention, hopefully motivating a more thorough investigation in the near future.

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1991 Taimu 3 タイム 3. 16 July, 15:00-16:00.

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「幸福の科学」急成長の裏側. 11 August, 18:00-19:00.

1991b Mōningu ai モーニング EYE. 20 December, 09:00-09:25.

TV ASAHI

1991a Asa made nama terebi 朝まで生テレビ. 28 September, 01:10-06:00.

1991b Sandē purojekuto サンデープロジェクト. 27 October, 10:00-11:45.