CULTS: GROWING AND LEARNING
FROM OTHERS

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

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"CULTS--GROWING AND LEARNING FROM OTHERS"

CHAPTER I

Today we often are encouraged to do our own thing, to find our own method of self-expression. This idea is often accepted and even expected of one, providing that his/her method of expression does not fall too far to the left of what societal mores dictate as being creative and acceptable.

In examining the populations who turn to cults one cannot help but ask the question, why? There are obvious facts about why one would not want to join a cult. The inherent dangers involved in joining a cult are frequently advertised and the mass suicide of Jonestown still lurks in the back of many minds.

We do, however, owe it to ourselves to explore, and to attempt to understand the drawing powers of cults today, and why people do join them as an alternative to other forms of "accepted" religious expression.

This paper shall examine the concept of religion and the human need for a "religious experience." The concepts of evangelism within different realms of Christian denominations will be examined. The cult phenomenon will also be examined from both a sociological and religious perspective. The genres of cults will be examined, details of who joins cults will be given, and the basic characteristics of the cults will be outlined. Following this, a comparison of denominations and their evangelism will be with cults and their methods of proselytizing. Finally, conclusions about what we can hope to learn from cults and their members will be made.

First, however, let us begin by defining terms crucial to this paper.
It should be noted that any of these terms are subject to a number of definitions; these are the definitions herein.

Religion--In order to define religion one must examine several aspects of what religion is to various persons and arrive at a definition from that point. It is perhaps through attempting to define religion that we can begin to fully realize just how personal religion is.

In general, we can begin by understanding that "religion as one of man's social institutions refers to ideas, aims, activities, and experiences which have become stabilized from generation to generation. Religion as recorded in literature is the most ancient of the storehouses of human lore and learning. From prehistory to the present, man has faced crises of life and death which have turned him periodically to religion. Religion has long been taught as history, literature, and philosophy, or simply as the revealed word of God which needs no intellectual justification for its acceptance." 1

However, in order to define religion we need to attempt to intellectually understand. We can then attempt to seek the elements composing a definition of religion. Winston King, in his book, *Introduction to Religion*, formulates what he calls a descriptive definition of religion. Within the definition there are four areas. These are stated as:

1. Religion is belief. In our culture, some will always define religion in terms of a relationship with God.

2. Religion is feeling. This looks at how man feels about his relationship with God.

John McTaggart concerning religion as feeling states that,

"Religion is clearly a state of mind. It is also clear that it is not exclusively the acceptance of certain propositions as true. It seems to me that it may best be described as an emotion resting on a conviction of harmony between ourselves and the universe at large." 2
This statement can be held as true, especially for anyone who has observed or experienced religion firsthand. It is with this definition though that we logically pursue the next point presented by King.

3. Religion is an act of will. It is perhaps because of the emotional response to religion that our actions are altered. This definition states for us that religion is whatever a man or woman wills to do. The will of a man or woman is a part of each man or women. The man or woman who sets his/her goals, and then sets about to accomplish them is acting out of his/her own will to succeed. It is the man or woman who sees religion as an act of will who begins to seek God's will rather than his or her own will. This person determines to become another kind of person, with the help of God, and attempt to take on a different attitude about his/her fellow man or woman. The German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, suggested that religion was essentially, "the recognition of all our duties as divine commands."  

In accordance with the idea that Kant presents, we must take the definition of religion one step further. As we begin to recognize our religious duties as divine commands, we must also begin to realize that within those divine commands lie certain social ramifications, and we must realize by taking King's divisions to completion that:

4. Religion is loyalty to social values. By realizing this, our definition has come fully circle. In the initial area, religion as belief, as an individually focused aspect of self expression about God. We must realize that it is a vital necessity that religion be social, in both scope and concern, and that it cannot merely be individual. Those who have studied, examined, and formulated various schools of thought concerning
religion have realized that both the individual and the social aspects of
religion must go hand in hand. Each aspect grows and nurtures itself from
the other.

So, how do we begin to combine all of these ideas into one definition?
We know that definition of religion must include the aspects of thought,
emotion, willed action, and a sense of group life. A definition which is
adequate for this paper is one given by Erich Fromm:

"Religion is any system of thought and action shared
by a group which gives the individual a frame of
orientation and an object of devotion." 4

Mainline Denomination--for the purposes of this paper, mainline denomina-
tions shall be seen as any church within the continental United States
which is recognized by the Yearbook of United States and Canadian Religious
Denomination, and has a membership of over 500 members.

Liberal Church--any denomination that holds the Bible to be sacred, but
believes it is inspired by God to man and that it contains some of the word
of God. It is not believed to be the infallible word of God, rather the
lessons of God as they are to be taught to man.

Cult--this word must be defined in two manners, both religiously and
sociologically. Religiously, "a cult is a perversion, a distortion of
Biblical Christianity and, as such, rejects the historic teachings of the
Christian Church." 5 Sociologically, "cults are groups of people who share
a common vision and who see themselves as separate from the rest of the
world--some withdrawing literally from society, others merely withdrawing
psychologically." 6
Evangelism--the overall general terms used to group all methods of "sharing one's faith" with the world. This includes witnessing, testimonies, and assorted other methods of sharing one's beliefs in Jesus Christ and the Christian doctrine.

Witnessing--a classification within evangelism itself. This entails the telling of the gospel of Jesus Christ to others via various methods such as home visits, Bible studies, prayer meetings, or often through spontaneous conversations.

Brainwashing--the term used in association with cults and their recruitment techniques. It is felt that cult recruiters deluge a prospective member with so much information that it is impossible for them to psychologically register everything they are experiencing and to make good, solid, rational decisions concerning the group.

Deprogramming--the process by which a cult member is removed from the group, often by force, and placed in seclusion so that he/she is given no contact with the deprogramming team and their own family until they "snap" and they are able gradually to rationally make choices and decisions for themselves.
CHAPTER II

Since the beginning of mankind and the beginning of recorded history, man has had a need to fulfill a part of himself with answers concerned with spirituality. We must realize, of course, in our psychological studies of man that we are dealing with what man has discerned as being sacred as well as what man has deemed to be religious and/or spiritual. We must realize that our experience/perception/understanding of the sacred is always conditioned by our historical-cultural setting, but that does not make it less true and understood. We must realize its limitedness and conditionality and resist the pretensions of claiming universality for our particular viewpoint. We must realize that religion deals with what man labels to be the sacred and parallel to that, we must realize we can never truly experience what is sacred. The sacred must pass through the lens of individual perception and because of our own human limitedness we cannot begin to completely explain nor understand what is sacred. We must also realize that human nature is unique in at least three ways: 1) human beings are rational, 2) human beings have religion and symbols, and 3) human beings seek meaning.

The study of human nature is the cornerstone of psychological study; therefore, the psychology of religion should be of a primary interest to theologians to help us understand God, our relationship with Him, and most importantly, psychology helps us to realize and understand the importance of why we might seek a relationship with God.
In the past few decades a new sense of respect has developed between theologians and psychologists. They no longer revere one another as "the enemy," but respect one another as scholars of their respective fields and realize that each profession can contribute insight to the other. However, "war" upon religion began with Freud's The Future of an Illusion. Freud fervently argued that religious belief is an illusion that man clings to because of his emotional immaturity. Once he has achieved emotional maturity, religion is fated to disappear. \(^8\) With bold statements such as these, it is no wonder that a war erupted amongst theologians and psychologists.

Although Freud shook the basic grounds of religious belief, he did not make his statements without some basic understandings of human needs. He fully realized that for people to reach maturity they must experience various stages of growth. Freud does remind us for example that when working with the young child, those under the age of six, that these children think only in concrete and literal terms, they possess little capacity for abstraction, and have little grasp of symbolic meanings. \(^9\)

For the school aged child, God becomes the one from whom it is not possible to hide one's wrong-doings. At this time, parent and God are more or less literally equated. Often, the type of relationship the child has with his/her parents, and the values instilled by them, will determine the child's concept and value of God and the quality of his/her conscience. \(^10\)

Freud, who for some time was labeled as the greatest "anti-Christ," realizes that religion does play an important part and is of significant value to people. He states,
In the present case, religion achieved all the aims for the sake of which it is included in the education of the individual. It put a restraint on his sexual impulses by affording them a sublimation and a safe mooring; it lowered the importance of his family relationships, and thus protected him from the threat of isolation by giving him access to the great community of mankind. The untamed and fear-ridden child became social, well-behaved and amenable to education."

It is also Freud who states that, "Only religion is able to answer the question of the purpose of life. One can hardly go wrong in concluding that the idea of a purpose in life stands and falls with the religion system." 

Freud was not the only psychologist to make bold statements concerning religion and make outstanding contributions in the area of religious research. Due to the work of Freud and that of his colleagues, two major views of religion and its significance have emerged. The first is the view formulated by C. G. Jung and Otto Rank. These two men reject some of the Freudian principles and set about to establish their own schools of thought. They do not merely attempt to explain religion away as being a crutch for the less mature individual. Jung and Otto made religious symbols and ideas the core of their psychology. They focused on the idea of the belief rather than behavior. In Jung's Modern Man in Search of a Soul, God is a symbol of the energy in the human psyche, the archetype of conscious life emerging from the unconscious. In Rank's book Beyond Psychology, man lives and ultimately dies beyond psychology and ideology. This occurs via conversion, relevation, and rebirth.
The second view is developed by Erich Fromm. He states that, "the psychoanalyst is concerned with the same problems as theology and philosophy." In his book *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, Fromm uses terms such as the "physician of the soul" and "the All." In essence, Fromm believes that, "organized religion has violated the spirit and practice of its humane ideals by an over concentration on dogma, and that in setting up an omnipotent God, it is responsible for the creation of a passive, dependent, submissive type of individual." In his opinion humanistic religion represents the reality which psychoanalysis is to be engaged in studying.

If one takes the basic ideas presented by Freud, Otto, Jung, Rank, and Fromm one can perhaps begin to see from whence the cult movements have evolved. A simple dream or fantasy about God, perfection, or the end of the world, can, and has motivated people to put aside all of their own personal hopes, goals, and relationships (even their personal relationship with God) to be a part of a perceived "greater whole."

This idea is quite similar to that of a fairy tale. Bruno Bettelheim states, "Fairy tales are invaluable to the psychological growth of children. They are a kind of symbolic language that gives external form to inner experience. They (fairy tales) are hedged by an unchanging formula that begins 'Once upon a time . . . ' and ends ' . . . happily ever after.'" We can therefore begin to perhaps understand the cult appeal. We can first see that fairy tales accept and acknowledge the helplessness of the child and that the most unlikely person will serve as the hero or heroine of the tale. By understanding this concept, we can also begin to understand the allure of
cults. These groups recruit among those persons experiencing low periods in their lives. Things seem to be bigger than they are and they cannot fight them alone, thus the need for a hero or heroine. We as Christians, however, must be careful not to point our finger and shake our heads at these recruitment techniques. Consider the savior we call Jesus Christ. Is not he too an unlikely savior? He was a son of a carpenter with little education and never traveled far from his home--hardly the one one would expect to be a savior. He carried no weapons, except his love, and who would have considered that a mighty sword? He loved the meek, the gentle, the children, hardly a man one would imagine to conquer the world, and yet he did in his own way. Therefore, it is easy to understand why people turn to other forms of religious expression, via cults. The heads of these cults are charismatic, yet not huge domineering men. They win their converts via love, or "love bombing," not by force or harassment. As Willa Appel states in Cults in America: Programmed for Paradise, "Cult followers are people whose expectations have been thwarted. They feel cheated and resentful but are either too disoriented to cope with the situation or are excluded from the legitimate avenues of redress." 18

Thus, by examining the fairy tale appeal involved in cult recruitment as well as the psychological need man has for religious expression in his life we can begin perhaps to fathom the increased popularity of the cults in our society today.
CHAPTER III

We have thus far defined cult by means of religious terms as well as in a sociological context (see Chapter I). We have also explored mankind's need for participation in religion from a psychological point of view. But exactly why does a person join a cult? Are there different kinds of cults?

Cults can be classified into two basic genres:

1. Religious—Those groups dealing with worship of God, or someone they hold in holy esteem. Examples of these would be the Unification Church or The International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

2. Therapy—Those groups dealing with improving oneself by means of meditation, or via courses made to focus one's thoughts on other parameters of life. Examples of this would be Scientology or Transcendental Meditation.

Not every cult will comfortably conform to the characteristics of one of these two genres presented. The genres presented are meant to clarify groupings and to make examination of the various cults easier. It is by no means meant to be a total, concrete basis for categorizing cults. To begin, let us look at the groups we classified as being religious in orientation. What is confusing for many about these groups is that they call themselves Christians, speaking of Jesus Christ, and often use the Bible as a means of legitimizing their cause by using select scriptures that are frequently used out of context. The fact though remains that these groups are not Christian groups at all. If one examines the historical background of
Christian orthodoxy, one can see that these "Christian" cults fall short of what has been stated in the Bible and believed by the church's founding mothers and fathers. Take for example the Unification Church. One thing that makes the Unification Church unique is that the church is based on an interpretation of the Christian Bible by a non-westerner, Reverend Sun Myung Moon of Korea. Moon was born in Korea in 1920. At the age of sixteen, he believed that Jesus appeared to him on Easter day and told him to complete the mission that was begun nearly 2,000 years ago. The membership of the church believe that Moon has divine authority over them since he was selected to complete Christ's mission.

The Unification Church believes the following about basic Christian doctrines:

God--The trinity is the Perfect Man, Perfect Woman, and the Father. Mr. and Mrs. Moon are the "perfect" couple.

Christ--Jesus is not God; "Jesus attained deity as a man who fulfills the purpose of creation but by no means can be considered God Himself." Jesus failed in his mission: "Jesus didn't come to be persecuted and die on the cross." "Jesus died before he had a chance to marry and have children." Denial of resurrection: "Jesus wasn't resurrected from the dead in a new body but as a spirit man."

Holy Spirit--Representative of the "Perfect Mother."

Sin--God had intended Adam and Eve to marry and have perfect children, thereby establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth."

The Fall: The fruit is sexual knowledge; the sin is the seduction of
Eve by Satan.

The Bible—"The Bible is not truth itself but a textbook which teaches truth."²⁰

The Unification Church has various names and businesses, political, and cultural affiliations. Among the seven names for the church are:

A.) Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity.
B.) Unification Church
C.) Tong II
D.) The Unified Family
E.) International One World Crusade
F.) Day of Hope Campaign
G.) Judaism: In Service to the World.²¹

As of just 1979, the Moon Organization had over thirty-nine political groups, cultural foundations, performing groups, educational endeavors, scientific research groups, and various business and economic ventures.²²

Looking at a representative of the group devoted to therapy, let us examine Scientology. Scientology was founded 29 years ago by L. Ron Hubbard, author, to "promulgate Dianetics, the 'science' of mental health Hubbard developed in the 1940's."²³ Basically, this therapy consists of the use of a crude, lie-detector-type device called an "E-Meter" to diagnose an individual's emotional state, followed by lengthy and expensive Dianetics counseling sessions to deal with problems the meter detects.²⁴ The group has no definable theology beyond an adherence to Hubbard's principle that everybody on earth should be "cleared," i.e., be successfully put through a course of Dianetic's training. Hubbard, in fact, claims that although he had twice
been declared dead he brought himself back to life via Dianetics. As one can see, the differences between these two genres of cults are astounding. In the religious cults the group worships the teachings of their leader or messiah. In the therapy groups, although the leader is often held in high esteem, his method to inner peace is what is valued, not so much a relationship with him. In Scientology, for example, we can note that it is a blending of religion and psychoanalysis, not a worship of L. Ron Hubbard.

The next question is, "who joins the cults?" Our own usual response is "Not me or anyone in my family, or anyone I know!" or "Only looney-tunes join cults!" Stated another way, who do cult recruiters look for as possible members? We know for example that on the average, most cult members are young, they are in their late teens or early twenties. Most of those recruited are white, middle-class Americans who have had an average of two years of college. The major reasons for joining a cult were problems associated with adolescence: separation from their families, personal setbacks, and alienation from a world that does not provide them with set roles and clear direction.

We do know that those who join cults are frequently intensely lonely persons who are attracted by the recruiter's friendliness:

"One afternoon, a young man walked up to me and began to start talking. He told me he was a missionary from England working with a group called the International One World Crusade. He said they were working all over the world to bring God not only into religion, but into politics, science, culture, and economics. I was very taken by his demeanor, his attitude and his dedication."
Other accounts depict the use of such tactics as "love bombing," a method recruiters use to gain a potential convert's trust and acceptance:

"Once he or she spots the mark, the proselytizer engages the person in conversation, trying to search out areas of interest and concern. Acceptance, friendship, and understanding are the initial bait. Within the space of a brief encounter, the proselytizer must manage to win the potential convert's trust and desire to continue the acquaintance." 29

Research has found that those who are lonely (thus the high percentage of college students) are primary targets. Also, those who are going through some kind of separation anxiety via death of a spouse, child, or parent, divorce, or who have recently moved from one community to another for reasons of education or job position are primary "marks" for cult proselytizer. Others who are vulnerable to cult proselytizer are those seeking counseling, cults seem to provide a cure for their problems. Another group vulnerable to cult recruitment are those who are "down and out." Those persons who have recently lost a job and are unemployed, or those who are simply financially struggling are open to cults via the "free meal" that goes with their typical Friday gatherings.

Research has shown that cult members fall into several psychologically descriptive categories. The first group is composed essentially of normal people who turn to cults at a moment of particular difficulty in their lives. The majority of cult followers probably fall into this category. Margaret Thaler Singer, a psychologist, estimates that approximately 75 percent of cult followers are "normal." 30
The second category of followers is made up of people who had developmental and emotional problems over an extended period of time. These people are seen as "searchers" or "seekers," they are people looking for something, some sort of magic belief or affiliation to fill up the emptiness in their lives. These persons have, according to Boston psychiatrist Dr. John Clark, a poor sense of identity and self-esteem. 31

The third category is composed of disturbed people. These persons are the truly psychotic individuals and they do not make good converts as eventually their enthusiasm wains and they revert to their own version of reality. 32

There are various reasons why cults appeal to so many:

1. The Appeal of Authority
2. The Appeal of Community
3. The Appeal of Commitment
4. The Appeal of Idealism
5. The Appeal of Experience 33
6. The Appeal of the fact that it is not tied to a strict institutional idea. 34

Once an individual joins a cult, who is likely to be considered his/her leader? It naturally varies from group to group but there are certain characteristics most group leaders share. The founder, often times referred to as the messiah, is one who has at some time in his/her life had an experience or experiences which he/she feels has enlightened him/her with the answers one seeks to the questions of how to have a prosperous life, the true path to salvation, or to arriving at a sense of inner peace. It should
be understood that like the many different cults, there are many different messiahs. Some messiahs are never seen by the cult members. The members only learn their messiah's teachings, but never have contact with their messiah. Other messiah figures such as David Brandt Berg from the Children of God, or Reverend Moon from the Unification Church are involved with their members on a more regular basis. Take an example the Unification Church's mass marriage, by Reverend Moon, at Madison Square Garden in New York. The leaders of cults are often seen as absolutists and as individuals who do not fit in society. These people are often ambition, intelligent, and very rigid.

We often times, as Christians, quickly point an accusing finger and call these persons crazy. These people with visions, there must be something desperately wrong with them--poor demented souls. But let us consider our reception if Christ were to come today. Would any of us (not having known Christ in our hearts before) welcome him with open arms? What would our response be to his changing the water into wine? We would probably proclaim that he is possessed by Satan. Our society often identifies "different" spiritual behavior as being satanic in origins. When does "different" spiritual behavior become acceptable, within the walls of a church? If we consider our reaction to Christ's presence here 2,000 years ago, we can understand why we condemn all others who have feelings of divine gifts or inspiration. Two thousand years ago people crucified the Son of God, and as the line from the play "Jesus in the Concrete City" states, "And if pushed we'd do the same thing again, commit the ugliest murder you've ever
seen!" Quite possibly, if Christ were to return today we would lock him up in a mental institution or find some reason to execute him once more. Man's society, attitudes, behaviors, and technology may advance, but not so his/her openness to something that challenges his/her spiritual beliefs. Morals change, attitudes are altered, and even behaviors are altered in given situations, but in basic human terms, man or woman's reactions when they feel threatened have not changed.
CHAPTER IV

We have examined the cult, its genres, who joins a cult, and the various methods of recruitment used. Now we will examine strictly mainline denominations and what they are all about today. When researching cults, books are one's main resource, many cults are reluctant to participate in scientific research, or allow their members to be interviewed by anyone outside the group. Therefore, room for original research and studies is highly limited. However, in the area of church research, I was very well supplied by nearly all of the denominations that I contacted. In January, 1984, I sent a letter to forty-nine denominations all over the United States (see appendix for sample letter). Of the forty-nine letters I sent, I received responses from thirty-nine of the churches with one letter being returned because the church had moved and left no forwarding address. This is a return of nearly 80 percent for which I was both shocked and very grateful. I did, however, often receive information concerning overseas missions. This was due to a flaw in my letter that I sent to these churches. I should have requested information about membership, evangelism, and witnessing in the United States and how they assist their churches in local outreach. However, this problem did not make a major impact on my research and study for this paper. Of the forty-nine letters that were sent, twenty-two of those churches were evangelical or fundamentalist, as defined in Chapter I. Of the twenty-two churches, sixteen responded to my letter with the one letter being returned as earlier stated. Overall, it seemed that these churches were more willing to share their literature with me and also seemed to better comprehend the meaning
of my letter requesting evangelism and witnessing materials.

The more evangelical churches seemed to have a more pronounced commitment to evangelism. They published more "how to" books and pamphlets than did the more liberal churches. For example, the Mennonite Brethren Churches publishes a membership manual entitled Becoming Disciples. This type of manual dealing with the church's expectations of its membership is common among the more evangelical denominations. The more liberal denominations sent me minutes of their church's conferences and conventions. They basically stated a belief in the Apostle's Creed and very few other church guidelines and doctrines. It is my finding over time, and from experience, that the more liberal churches do not, as a whole, provide a given set of expectations for their membership. Most often, these more liberal churches will focus on three aspects of the church:

Baptism: Either by sprinkling or submersion.

Communion: A) How frequently served, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually.

B) There is also the question concerning the consecration of the bread and wine. Does it become the blood and body of Christ?

Deity of Christ: That Christ is truly the Son of God and the second person of the Trinity.

The Bible is not one of the major concerns of the more liberal churches. Its use had not been abandoned, but the focus is placed more on "Christ-like actions and reactions" rather than reading and strictly following the scrip-
tures. Evangelism or outreach seems to also not be a major area of concern. Dr. Edwin Becker stated to me that, "Church growth is parallel to the cult in that the church seeks people's interests and appeals to them on that level." This statement seems to the writer to have both its good and bad aspects. It is important for the church to see people's needs and work towards fulfilling them. However, if we seek people's interests exclusively, we could easily stray from the purpose of the church:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." RSV--Matt. 28:19-20.

And yet, on the other hand, we must remember that if the church of the 20th century, often built on Pauline precepts, does not answer people's needs then surely it cannot be a church whose focus is on Christ's two greatest commandments:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your soul, and with all your heart, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these commandments depend all the law and the prophets." RSV--Matt. 23: 37-40.

As one can begin to see, the balance of the church is one that must be continually monitored, and monitored closely so that we are meeting fully the needs and expectations that people have of the church and yet fulfilling the expectations of God for our churches.

The focus on evangelism, as I have earlier stated, varies from church to church. World missions are always played upon more than the home mis-
sions. Somehow, reaching out to the other side of the world is a more noble mission than reaching out to those in one's own backyard. I personally feel that reaching those at home is equally as important as it is to save those in third world countries. There is almost an underlying idea that if one here at home has not been saved then that is their own fault. We assume that if one lives in a Christian society then, of course, one has had the opportunity to hear the Gospel. We must realize that this is not always the case and it is part of the Great Commission to ask.

As an example of how the church has downplayed home missions, the following is from a pamphlet entitled, Introducing Pentecostal Church of God. Under the subheading titled "Missions Ministries" is, in order:

"World Missions, which had its beginning in 1932 though our records show that missionary offerings were sent overseas in the early 1920's.

"Indian Missions, established in 1949, and sponsored by the youth of our movement.

"Hispanic Missions, for more than twenty years our boarder missions' efforts have produced approximately twenty works among the Spanish speaking people of America.

"Home Missions/Evangelism. In 1981, the establishment of the National Home Missions/Evangelism program became a reality."

This order of presenting a church's mission accomplishments definitely causes one to stop and think. We as Christians have always assumed that the guy down the block knew the Lord, and if he didn't, we didn't want to seem "pushy" about God by bringing the subject up.
I do not, however, want to present only a negative impression of what churches are doing today in the area of home missions, i.e. "taking care of our own." In the Conservative Baptist Church a program titled "Challenge of the 80's . . . A Call to Commitment," they express their goal of home missions in the following manner:

"The challenge of the '80's is a call to extraordinary commitment by Conservative Baptist churches to carry out the Great Commission where God has placed us." 38

This statement runs parallel with the Pentecostal Church of God's statements in that at last a reawakening is taking place. The denominations here in the United States realize that there is a need to be involved in missions at home and this perhaps is one of the most exciting things happening in the area of evangelism in the mainline denominations today.
CHAPTER V

The main point of this thesis has been to examine the cults, the mainline denominations of our society, and perhaps see where we can grow and learn from the cult experience. It would be very easy because of the negative impression we have of the cults to simply take the position that they are wrong, but are they? Dr. Edwin Becker of Christian Theological Seminary stated to me that he believes that, "The church has done all that it can do to be a substitute family to the youth today." He also stated that, "if we have learned nothing else from the cults, we must see that the cults meet their interpersonal needs and this is where the mainline denominations have learned things from the cults." 39

Before the mainline denominations can begin to learn from the cults, they must realize where they have failed in the past. These denominations, especially those in a more liberal vein, believe that they have done enough. This obviously is not true if the numbers of youth joining cults continue to increase at the rate in which they are. Frequently it seems that the more liberal denominations assume that the youth already know what the church believes and why, rather than taking the time to find out what they do know, and reinforcing that with what they should know. Dr. Becker of Christian Theological Seminary states that, "The church should pay more attention to cults, especially in concerns to the young people in high schools." 40 I would agree with Dr. Becker concerning the obvious point he is making in this statement. The church must pay more attention to the youth, especially those in high school as they are the ones most frequently open to the proselytizing
of cult members. I would, however, carry this one step further by stating that the church should pay more attention to the cults to evaluate their own youth programs. The cults obviously offer something that youth need, whether that be a highly structured environment, with set expectations, or a sense of loving and belonging totally, and a sense of unconditional love for that person. Frequently, we forget that cults can spring up at any-time from any place, and do not always happen somewhere else, to someone else, but it can happen in our own community and within one's own church.

Dr. Becker related to me that seminary students are given the opportunity to increase their own awareness of cults by taking a course called, "The Social Significance of New Religious Movements." In this course one examines the various new forms of religious expression. Overall, this is a positive step forward in the solving of the problem concerning the cults. The one point that the mainline denominations must realize is that a loss of membership to cults is just as critical and may be even more critical than losing one's members to an attitude of "I don't care," or "I don't need this stuff," which is often the attitude of the adolescent. A part of the appeal of the cult is that it is not tied in any fashion with a "boring old tradition."

The cults accept the new member as they are and then "persuades" them to accept the authority figures and situations in which they are placed.

The fact that youth are so attracted to the cults is an important fact, although understanding why is often difficult. Some would say that it is because most cult members come from loosely structured families and that they, in essence, are craving the authority they find in the cult. Others
say that it is the freedom which they actually seek in joining a cult. Many people feel that those who join cults have become bored with the usual church tradition and are looking for a new, more creative way of expressing their religious beliefs. 42

How do these young people come to join cults? Although we know that a new member of a cult is often submitted to heavy proselytization by recruiters, they are never simply forced to join a cult. We must realize that people join cults of their own free will. We can also see that in the majority of mainline denominations members are born into their church. Thus, those who join cults make a very definite choice to change his/her religious orientation.

Whether the person joins the church via confirmation, as in Roman Catholicism, or if it is by a decision of faith and baptism, most of these young people make a decision in a church in which their family belongs, and these young people are also strongly encouraged to make a decision of faith by the time they are twelve or thirteen. Some writers within the field of cults and new religious movements contend that what the churches do today in witnessing and evangelism is really no different than it is in the cults. I contend that all of the sides of this issue have not been examined. I do agree that some of the literature published by the more fundamental denominations is similar to what one would think they might find in a cult recruiter's handbook. For example, in the Nazarene Handbook of Membership, one can read the following quotation:

"Dr. Don Gobslon, district superintendent of Eastern Michigan District, said, 'We need to get down to basics if we really want our churches to grow--Prayer, Fasting, Revival, Holiness Preaching, Evangelism, Visitation.'" 43
This Handbook continues:

"Visitation Evangelism was developed after a number of years in the pastoral ministry, and has repeatedly been proven effective with the success in soul winning and church growth. One church saw an attendance increase of nearly 100 average per year for three years in a row. Visitation Evangelism is designed to involve a significant number of persons in a reasonable assignment each week to reach all absentees and build a prospect list in each church." 44

This statement has illusions of what one might expect to hear as a form of cult recruitment. For example: "Visitation Evangelism is designed to involve a significant number of persons in a reasonable assignment each week..."

Cult groups also frequently seek to involve most if not all of their members in locating and bringing in new recruits. The significant difference here is that these people in the church are focusing on people that they have become at least acquainted with via business or socially. The cults often times will not even know any of its potential members. Over time, new members, especially in the therapy cults, are often brought in via the recruitment of other older, successful members of the group. This, however, is not the case in the more strictly defined religious cults. These cults are very much seclusionary in nature and thus they would not have the opportunity to recruit from among family, friends, and work acquaintances. Cults do often set quotas for their recruitment for each week, month, or year. This is one reason why their membership rises as rapidly as is reported to be the case. However, as Willa Appel states:

"Determining cult membership is often difficult because many cults will not participate in scientific research"
Many persons feel that witnessing and evangelism in the mainline denomination is for the clergy only and that their only responsibility is to financially support the clergy in their efforts to gain new members. This is often the point of much conflict in the churches. The liberal churches feel that membership numbers are the responsibility of the pastor. The fundamental churches, however, view evangelism and witnessing to be the responsibility of each member and their membership is often more involved in the outreach program of their respective churches. Thus, those who compare cult recruitment with recruitment in fundamentalist churches are examining the materials and techniques used for evangelism, and many are drawing some very distinct comparisons between evangelism and cult recruitment. Many feel that there is no difference between Christian evangelism and cult proselytization, only that our society accepts Christian evangelism, so long as it does not become too over bearing. I contend that there is a significant difference between what the cults present to prospective members and what the Christian denominations present. The cults present a distorted version of Christianity. In the Unification Church, for example, they believe only what Reverend Moon directs them to believe and thus are presented a distorted version of Christianity. The Christian denominations do present Christianity as presented in the Bible. Granted, the strictness of what is taught varies from denomination to denomination, but essentially it is the Gospel that is presented. No human leader is placed into the position of messiah or god.
Granted, many Christian ministers are often elevated to lofty positions of admiration. Although these ministers are often lifted to a position of high esteem, they are able to maintain a sense of the reality in what they are preaching, as well as a sense of reality as to who they are in respect to what they are preaching. Another important point is that cults use a method of recruiting called "love bombing." One ex-cult member stated that she could look for people who seemed, as she put it, "sheepy, people who looked lost and vulnerable." Once she had found them, she followed the techniques outlined in the pamphlets that all members of the Children of God were required to memorize, such as maintaining intense, direct eye contact while talking with the potential new member. Persons who are involved in cult recruitment all learn this technique. These people learn that they must be agreeable to others whom they are recruiting. The cult recruiters use this "love bombing" technique to develop a sense of camaraderie among the potential members and the cult members.

Many feel that the evangelism of the church today runs parallel to that of the cults. This is simply not true if for no other reason than the fact that cult members, especially those involved in the religious cults, often depend a great deal on the fact that they are able to work on the new potential member with their "theology" by using intense lectures, often lasting several hours in length. Then the new members are often persuaded to go on a weekend retreat. This varies significantly from the fact that a church may perhaps make a home visit but they most certainly will not befriend these people in the manner that the cults do and they will not opt for an occasion of seclusion.
of its members from the rest of society. Yes, a church member involved in evangelism may talk fervently about being saved, but they will not encourage its members to exclude themselves from active participation in society. This is a major point. New members in a church are able to ask questions of the members and ministers, but cult members are not allowed to ask questions of the members, however, they are told they will begin to understand in time. And, in time they will begin to "understand," simply out of sheer confusion and deprivation of sleep, food, and societal contact. This "understanding" is, however, much more a matter of nonrational, utterly noncritical acceptance of teachings that are at best vaguely understood. This is not what occurs within a church no matter how fundamentalist their opinions are.
CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have looked at "the cult" from various different aspects. Examine in this thesis for qualities that make a cult a cult, the qualities of a person who joins a cult, and what qualities and ideals are attractive about joining a cult. Often when doing an analysis of another group, one tends to become very righteous. It is not easy for a person to let go of his or her own belief system long enough to investigate another form of belief, especially a belief in religious expression.

Perhaps though, one of the most difficult but valuable lessons to be learned, is to be able to examine another's perspective on religion, God, and how one's love for God is expressed. It is through examining others' religious expression that we come full circle and are able to examine and better understand what we individually believe, as well as why we believe what we believe. This lesson is perhaps one of the most frightening and challenging for us to learn. For when we dare to learn from others, including cult members, we challenge ourselves to come off of our lofty religious perches and come down to the reality of humankind. The reality of humankind being that we all are simply men and women searching for an answer to why we are here, not an excuse to make wrongs right, but answers so that we can better ourselves as a race. A race not of black, white, or red, religious expression goes beyond skin pigmentation, it delves into the inner being, the part of each of us which turns away from human indignity and cruelty and ultimately turns towards the sunrise and thanks God for that. We are ultimately searchers of truth. By letting ourselves examine others and
their religious expression, we can confront ourselves with another person's reality and force ourselves to evaluate our own religious expression our own set of truths.

The fact that this is true is evident if one examines the increase in church-community evangelism. In the past, evangelism was a world effort, choir boys grew up to be missionaries, going to under developed third world nations, and the guy next door was left to figure thoughs out for him or herself. Today many cults are seeing these struggling people as their "under developed third world" and thus many turn to a cult as a source of guidance.

I am not saying that cults is the way to go for everyone. I most certainly dissapprove of a cult using seclusionary tatics on its members and brain washing techniques. However, each form of religious expression has its problems. Even christianity has its share of problems, such as not ordaining women in some denominations.

Granted, the cult as a whole, are far to the left compared to christianity. However, the cults have challenged "the church" to get its act together and look at what we are as well as what we are becoming. This can be seen as good and positive as it challenges all of us who profess to be christians to seek answers to questions and continually evaluate our effectiveness as a form of religious expression.

I also included a list of organizations who deal specifically with cults, brain washing, and deprogramming for those seeking more information on this topic.
APPENDIX A

Cult Information Groups and Addresses:

Free Minds, Inc.
P. O. Box 4216
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414
(Affiliated with Citizens Freedom Foundation)

Citizens Freed Foundation
Box 86
Mannacroix, New York 12087
(518) 756-8014

Acts 17
P. O. Box 2183
LaMesa, California 92041

C.A.O.I.
P. O. Box 3295
Chico, California 95927

Christian Research Institute
P. O. Box 500
San Juan Capistrano, California 92693

Christian Information Network
P. O. Box 421
Pine Lake, Georgia 30072

Personal Freedom Outreach
P. O. Box 26062
St. Louis, Missouri 63136
American Baptist Association Office
American Baptist Churches in the USA
American Evangelical Christian Churches
American Lutheran Church
Apolstolic Christian Church
Assemblies of God
Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
Baptist General Conference
Brethern in Christ Church
Christian Church of North America
Christian Church and Churches of Christ
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Church of Christ
Church of God
Church of Jesus Christ
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
Church of the Brethren
Church of the Nazarene
Church of Conservative Baptists in America
Episcopal Church
Evangelical Church of North American
Evangelical Methodist Church
Free Methodist Church of North America
Free Will Baptists
Friends General Conference
Friends United Meeting
Fundamental Methodist Church
General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches
Jehovah's Witnesses
Lutheran Church in America
The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod
Mennonite Church
North American Baptist Conference
Pentecostal Church of God
Presbyterian Church in America
Presbyterian Church in United States
Reformed Church in America
Roman Catholic Church
Seventh Day Adventist
Southern Baptist Convention
United Christian Church
United Church of Christ
The United Free Will Baptist Church
United Methodist Church
National Conference of Catholic Bishops
United Presbyterian Church in the USA
Wesleyan Church
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
My name is Jane Stanley and I am a senior at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. I am majoring in Religious Studies and I am in the departmental honors program. As part of the requirement for graduation, I must write and submit an honors thesis.

As my topic, I am doing a comparison of several different denominations. At this point I am collecting as much information as possible about the different denominations. I would be very appreciative if you could please send me information about your denomination, especially in the areas of membership, evangelism, and witnessing. I will also be willing to pay any postage if that is necessary.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

In Christ,
NOTES


2 Benson, p. 67.

3 Benson, p. 69.

4 Benson, p. 73.


9 Linn and Schwarz, p. 46.

10 Linn and Schwarz, p. 35.

11 Linn and Schwarz, p. 18.

12 Linn and Schwarz, p. 98.


15 Linn and Schwarz, p. 15.

16 Linn and Schwarz, p. 15.

17 Appel, p. 25.

18 Appel, p. 27.

19 Ellwood, p. 291.

20 Ellwood, p. 291.

22 Bussell, p. 52.
23 Bussell, p. 52.
24 Bussell, p. 53.
26 Appel, p. 58.
27 Appel, p. 59.
29 Appel, p. 78.
30 Appel, p. 59.
31 Appel, p. 59.
32 Appel, p. 59.
33 Edwin Becker, Personal Interview, (Indianapolis: Christian Theological Seminary, 13 May 1983).
34 Appel, p. 49.
36 Introducing the Pentecostal Church of God, (ND).
37 Challenge of the 80's...A Call To Commitment, (ND)
38 Edwin Becker, Personal Interview, (Indianapolis: Christian Theological Seminary, 13 April 1984).
39 Becker.
41 Edwin Becker, Personal Interview (Indianapolis: Christian Theological Seminary, 13 April 1984).
42 Nazarene Handbook of Membership, 1981.
43 Appel, p. 78.
44 Appel, p. 65
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A Quick Look at Seventh-day Adventists, Department of Communication, Washington, D. C., 1981.


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