Discussion Guide on Religious Cults
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Sponsoring groups

American Jewish Committee, Dallas Chapter

Catholic Diocese of Dallas

Christian Life Commission, Baptist General Convention of Texas

Dallas Area Association of Christian Churches

Ecumenical Council, North Texas Conference, United Methodist Church

Greater Dallas Community of Churches

Oct, 1979
Statement of purpose:

In recent years a number of controversial religious movements have appeared in the United States which have received considerable attention in the press and have generally been labeled religious "cults." In the fall of 1977, a group of interested lay persons and theologians began a series of discussions concerning these religious groups. From these discussions emerged the viewpoint that many times individuals may become involved in the "cults" without being aware of the possible consequences of the commitment that they are making. It was felt necessary to make available teaching materials to make it possible for people to better understand some of the characteristics and potential consequences of what has been called the "cult experience." Thus, this discussion guide was prepared.

How to use this guide:

This is a non-denominational discussion guide and is especially designed for teachers to use with their students. However, it can serve as a focus for any group. The guide is divided into several parts. There are two autobiographical accounts of individual "cult" experiences presented with suggested discussion questions and other learning exercises. Then, there is a background section and a list of source materials.

This discussion guide can be used in a single values-clarification session or as the basis for a series of discussions. In a single session, the group would read one of the autobiographical accounts and then discuss the questions at the end. The purpose is to have the individuals involved examine their own values, ideals and goals in the context of the "cult" experience. Prior to the discussion, the leader should familiarize himself or herself with the background material in Section II. If more than one session is planned, both autobiographical accounts may be used as well as the additional activities listed in Section I. C. It should be mentioned that the examples of role playing, debates and reports listed are not exhaustive and the discussion leader might want to introduce other topics specifically relevant to the group involved. An in-depth, long-term analysis of the new religious groups can be carried out using the source materials listed in Section III.
Section I.
Discussion and other activities:

The following two autobiographical accounts are meant to be read and discussed. Both accounts are essentially true, although modified to make the individuals involved unrecognizable. The first account concerns what "cult" life is like and how an individual got involved with a religious "cult." The second account concentrates on why a couple left a "cult." At the end of each account there are suggested discussion questions.

Tony Harris

Tony Harris graduated from high school last year. In his high school year book he was described as "serious, likable..." and a participant in extracurricular activities including track and basketball teams and music club. Like most youths, he enjoyed the companionship of many friends that he knew since grammar school. He was reasonably close to his older sister and felt that he got along well with his parents. Tony went away to college after high school as did many of his classmates. After six months at college, he changed his entire way of life by becoming a member of a religious cult.

"Would you like to buy some flowers to help with a youth ministry program?" I asked the woman in the car, only to see her roll her window up abruptly. Smiling, I tapped on the window.

"Lady, would you like to buy some flowers to help our youth group?"

Shaking her head, she mouthed the word "no" through the car window and motioned me to go away.

Pressing the flowers I had in my hand against the car window, I said, "It's to help youth in the city."

"No, thank you," she replied, turning her head away.
“Father, Father, please help us Father,” Jack prayed aloud after the song subsided. “Thank you for showing us the path. We are so unworthy, Father. Help us in our efforts.”

After the prayer and a brief silence, Jack began passing out more bunches of flowers and assigning new areas to work for the second flower run. This time I was assigned to work with another member of the group named Kit. The van dropped us off on a downtown street corner.

So as not to duplicate our efforts, Kit and I decided to work a block apart and meet back around one o’clock for lunch.

The trip in the van had renewed my spirit and eagerly I began seeking out prospects on the crowded street.

“Sir,” I yelled, running after one nicely dressed older man.

Catching up with him, I smiled broadly and said, “Sir, I’m working to raise money for our youth ministry and wondered if you would like to buy a flower to help us in our work?”

“How nice,” the man said, returning my smile. “What church are you with?”

“A Christian church on the outskirts of town, sir. We have quite a good youth program designed to help keep young people off the streets,” I replied.

“Well, I guess I could spare a dollar for a good cause like that,” the man said, and digging into his pocket, pulled a dollar bill out.

“Thank you sir, and God bless you,” I said, handing him the flower in return for the bill.

Encouraged by my first prospect, I sought out another. Sighting an older woman looking in a store window, I decided to try her.
"Excuse me ma'am, they sure do have nice things in that store, don't they?" I said, smiling enthusiastically.

"Why, ah, yes they do," she said, turning to look at me. Before she could say anything, I handed her a flower.

"I'd like you to have this flower. I'm selling them to help our youth group, but I'd like you to have this one. See, it matches your dress!" I said, hoping she would take the hint and donate some money.

I noticed she was looking at me suspiciously.

"What group are you with?" she asked.

"I'm with a new church-commune just outside of town, ma'am," I replied, skirting her question. "We are trying to raise funds so we can help drug abusers."

"I'm no fool young man," she retorted. "I know who runs that church and I would not give a dime to a group that takes children away from their parents. Take your old flower. I don't want it," and throwing the flower in my face, she turned and hurried down the street.

"God bless you," I said in a barely audible voice. Satan had really deceived her, I thought, and again thanked the heavenly Father for saving me from the evil one.

I picked up the flower the lady had thrown at me as it was still good. Every flower meant that much more money.

For my next prospect, I decided to approach a young man who was coming down the street towards me, halfway hoping that I might be able to lead him to our community. "Pardon me, how are you today?" I asked him.

As he glanced at me, I noticed a quizzical look cross his face.
"Do I know you?" he asked, hesitantly.

Looking closely at him, I thought he looked a little familiar, but the chances of meeting anyone I knew in this town were very slim, as I was not from this state.

"Aren't you Tony Harris?" he asked.

"Yes, yes I am," I replied, still wondering who he was.

"How about that!" the young man said, as a smile broke across his face. "This is a coincidence running into you up here. Don't you recognize me Tony, I'm Mark Edwards, I went to high school with you in Dallas. It's been about a year, hasn't it?"

The name Mark Edwards did ring a bell in the back of my mind, but it also made me feel a little uneasy. I did not like running into people from my past.

"Mark, how are you doing?" I said, still smiling.

"I'm doing great, but you look like you've been up all night partying! Is that all you do at Southern University anyway?" he asked with a laugh.

Southern University. That had been a long time ago, I thought to myself. It was while I was in school at Southern U that I first became aware of the church.

"I'm not at Southern anymore," I told my friend. "I found something better to do with my life while I was there and so I dropped out."

"Really, what are you into now?" he asked me, looking at my flowers.

This was a prime time to tell him about the community, I thought.

"I'm a member of a community that lives outside of town. They
are the most caring people I have ever met. They showed me that life is more than studying for exams and going out partying on weekends. They helped me to come in contact with myself."

The look on Mark's face was hard to interpret.

"Wow," Mark said, shaking his head. "That's nice, I mean, really nice. I'm happy for you." I could tell by his gesture that he didn't know what to think.

"You still into music?" he asked, changing the subject abruptly. "I remember that Gibson 12 string guitar you had. Man, it was beautiful!"

The guitar flashed through my mind, but I tried not to think of it. I loved that guitar, but feelings didn't count anymore. If the church needed the guitar, then they had a good reason for taking it.

"I don't play much anymore," I replied. "I'm too busy with other things."

"Boy, I never thought I'd hear you say that," Mark said.

Glancing at his watch, Mark told me that he had to hurry along, as he was meeting someone for lunch at a downtown restaurant.

"Say Mark, before you leave, would you like to buy a flower to help our group out? We sell things like flowers to help offset the cost of some of our group's programs such as a half-way house for alcoholics," I asked him, holding the flowers out for him to see.

"Yeah, sure, I think I have some change here. Here's 30 cents. You keep the flower, I don't need it," he said, handing me the change.

I grabbed this one last opportunity to put in a plug for the church. Looking Mark straight in the eye, I said, "I think you'd really enjoy our community. You'd fit right in. Why don't you come by sometime? We live in that big house on Ballard Street, right next to the public park.
Come by anytime. There's always someone there.

"Maybe I will," he said, averting his eyes. "Got to run, bye!"

As I watched him walk down the street, I reprimanded myself for not having gotten more money from him or even a commitment out of him to come by the church. I tried to put the whole thing out of my mind by throwing myself wholeheartedly into my flower selling, but when one o'clock rolled around, I had barely $10 in my pocket from my sales. I decided to go look for Kit to stop for lunch. I found her on the next block talking with a woman. As I walked towards her, I saw the woman walk hurriedly away.

"You okay?" I asked, walking up behind her.

"Oh! Tony," she said with a start. "Sure, I'm okay. That woman was just being negative on the church," she said, motioning at the retreating figure.

"Many people are just spiritually blinded," I said, comforting her. Kit was relatively new at flower selling and had not yet become accustomed to the negative people in the world. "All you can do is thank the Father that your eyes have been opened," I added.

We walked slowly to a park bench nearby to eat our lunch, which was a peanut butter sandwich Jack had given each of us on the van. It sure wasn't much, I thought, remembering my meager breakfast of coffee and juice, but it was better than nothing. I knew it was only selfishness that made me think that way, so I silently thanked the Father for the sandwich, and began eating it slowly.

"When did you find out about the church?" Kit asked me, breaking a long silence. The question was not an unusual one among members of the church, particularly for a semi-new member such as Kit.

"I was in my first year of college at Southern University when I was first approached by people from the Farmersville house," I told Kit, in
between bites of my sandwiches. "When I think back on it, I can see that I was searching for something to give meaning to my life. I wanted to do things for people. I was confused about the world, it seemed so cruel and uncaring. I wanted to care. Well, one day I was stopped on my way to class by some of the Farmersville people. We got to talking about things in general, and I could tell that they were really interested in me. I knew that they really cared, I didn't find much of that on the Southern campus. Well, they invited me to come to their house for the weekend and I jumped at the chance. I liked the weekend so much that I decided to attend a week long session at the farm in West Texas. I felt then that in the church, I would be able to help people, to give to them. So, I dropped out of school to devote all my efforts to the work of the church."

"That's kind of what I went through," Kit said, looking at me. She paused for a moment and then smiled, "I feel really blessed that I have been shown the path. Sometimes it's hard, I fail so often, but I know that it is because I am imperfect."

I knew what she meant when she said that it was hard. I still could not push out the thoughts of my meeting with Mark. Most of my connections with my past had been severed by the church, but unexpected meetings with old friends did occur. I only wished I could have convinced Mark to look into the church.

"We better get back to our flower selling," I suggested to Kit, as we had been sitting for almost 20 minutes and the van was to pick us up again in two hours.

Walking back to the street where the van had dropped us, Kit and I decided to change locations, and I walked on down to the next block.

The noon traffic on the sidewalks had thinned out by now, and good prospects were harder to come by. An hour passed with only one sale. Feelings of guilt began to creep over me. I was not working hard enough; I was not enthusiastic enough.
“Oh Father, help me. Save me from these attacks of Satan. Purify me. Bless my work,” I prayed fervently.

Things slowly picked up, but I was below my quota when the van sounded its horn for me.

When Jack asked me for my money, I handed him the meager sum that I had collected hoping he would let the thing slide. I could tell by the look on his face that he was not pleased with my work.

“You are below your quota, Tony. This is not good. Pray that you will do better on your next run. You cannot let the church down,” he reprimanded me.

This time the prayers and singing in the van did little to lighten my spirits. On this last run I was to work alone on another street corner, which suited me fine as I wanted to be by myself. The evening traffic was just beginning to get heavy, so my job was easier as there were many people to work. The afternoon passed quickly and I was able to take in more money than I did on my last run. This time I would not be the one to have let the church down, I told myself.

I was glad when the van came to pick me up for the day. I was hot, sweaty, and emotionally drained. It would be nice to be able to go back and take a nap before the community dinner, I thought, but as there were always many things to do at the house, I knew I would be immediately put to work preparing for the meal when the van arrived at the house.

I was assigned to help peel carrots when I arrived.

As I stood peeling a carrot over the trash can, I felt a hand upon my shoulder and turning saw the house father smiling at me.

“How are you today, Tony?” he asked in his fatherly manner. Although he was only in his mid-thirties, Alan has a very fatherly way with everyone in the house. He could be stern and reprimanding at one
moment, and kind and understanding the next. After my emotionally
draining day, I felt myself warming to Alan, feeling the need for un-
derstanding.

"I had a very spiritually trying day today, Alan," I told him. Encouraged by his look of concern, I continued, "I really do try to do
what is right, to follow the Principle, but it is very hard at times," I
said humbly, thinking of my day's failures.

"I know my son," Alan said, putting his arm around my shoulder,
"Satan is always at work, but remember that the Father has saved us
from the wiles of Satan. Always look to the future; never look back.
the past is gone, do not dwell on it," he cautioned.

"I know Alan, but I can't help feeling sometimes that I'm not doing
anything. When I joined, I thought that I would be able to give
something to people, and it seems that all I do is sell flowers. I don't
feel we're having any impact on the people. They don't seem to un-
derstand our work, and sometimes I don't understand it. I guess I'm
confused," I admitted to him.

Alan turned, placed his hands on my shoulders and looked me
straight in the eye.

"Tony, you must never question your work. You know that we must
have money to be able to help these people. We must first gain control
of the materialistic realm, before we can move into the spiritual realm.
If we win over the powerful people, we will then be able to help the
poor and suffering. Trust me. Now, back to work, we have many new
people coming to supper tonight and that means many carrots."

I found his words somewhat encouraging, yet also disturbing. Was I
wrong to question the church, I wondered? I tried to put the questions
out of my mind. Alan must be right, I told myself, and went on peeling
the carrots.
Discussion questions:

1. In order to join this religious group, Tony had to do certain things. Each person should make a list ranking from hardest to easiest the following things which Tony had to do: drop out of college, sell flowers, sing together with friends, give up old friendships, give up his guitar, peel carrots for the community dinner. Discuss your rankings and whether there are any things on this list that you would refuse to do.

2. Each person should write down the job in the "cult" which they find most appealing: Tony's, Jack's or Alan's. Discuss how you feel about each of them. Is Tony being exploited?

3. Discuss what you think Tony's original purpose was in joining the "cult" and whether he has achieved his goal. Was he deceived into joining? Was the method of recruitment fair?

4. Each person should write down one circumstance under which they would join or consider joining a "cult." Discuss the circumstances and your reasons for selecting them.

5. Discuss whether Tony would deceive people about the church he was with in order to sell flowers. Discuss whether there are instances in which deceit would be o.k.

Louis and Leslie Green

Louis and Leslie Green were a Dallas couple in their early 20's. While members of a church in the Southwest, they heard about a former church member who had started a small communal group dedicated to the concept of brotherhood. They joined the group and were members for two and one half years.

"My wife Leslie and I were members of a religious cult for two and one-half years. During that period of time, we gradually stopped thinking of ourselves. However, a series of events occurred which
Louis and Leslie Green

helped us understand what was happening in our lives and we were able to walk away from the cult on our own.

“The cult we belonged to centered around the religious ideas of a man named Eli. We and other cult members lived in a commune and spent our time either working for the cult or in spiritual activities. Some of the men like myself worked in a nearby town. Our paychecks were sent directly to Eli who was in charge of our money. The other men spent their time either trying to recruit new members, working on the grounds or running errands for the cult. The women also worked and ran errands, but spent most of their time cooking and cleaning.

“The events which led to our leaving the cult began several months beforehand when I first began to feel that I wasn't being allowed any freedom. I remember the day I asked Eli for money to buy a news magazine, but he told me that it wouldn't be a good idea and made me feel guilty for wanting to know about anything outside the cult. Around the same time, Leslie told me that she had gone to a nearby park for 30 minutes and when she got back everyone wanted to know where she was and made her feel guilty. After that we began to talk with each other about our feelings and things that were upsetting us, and we discovered that we both felt guilty whenever we asked Eli for anything, no matter how small. Also we had to account for where we were at all times and what we were doing.

“I also realized that Eli didn't always practice the spiritual perfection which we were supposed to attain. He taught that love and trust and honesty were the highest moral qualities. One time when my paycheck was delayed and didn’t reach him at the usual time, the first thing he did was accuse me of taking the money for myself. His love for me always seemed to depend on how I was acting.

“On the other hand, our parents continued to show their love while we were in the cult by writing, calling and sending gifts even though we never wrote back and would only talk with them briefly, with Eli
Louis and Leslie Green

listening on another receiver. Eli discouraged me from writing my mother even though I wanted to. He didn't want us to have friends outside the cult because he said they would contaminate us.

"Once Leslie and I began to discuss these things, we realized how boring our lives were. Every day was the same. I worked six days a week, Sunday to Friday. Leslie spent Tuesday through Thursday shopping and cooking and worked on the building and grounds the rest of the time, except Saturday. Saturday was our sabbath and everyone had the same schedule: breakfast (it was always the same food), going for a walk, dinner, spiritual meeting, bed. We had religious meetings after dinner every evening and then always went right to bed.

"The final event which led to our leaving the cult happened when one of the fellows at work gave me a copy of "Reader's Digest", the first magazine I had a chance to look at in more than two years. I secretly brought the magazine back to the commune where Leslie and I could read it. Eli had been able to convince us that the world outside the cult was evil and that other people were liars, cheats, selfish and had no love. In the "Reader's Digest" there was an article about a woman working in a hospital with a dying child and his family. The article showed us the woman's loving and caring nature and her unselfishness. In that same issue, there was an article by a father who had kidnapped his son from a cult. When Leslie read about that group, she realized how similar our situation was.

"The next morning we left. We had no money or resources and were far from home, but since our parents had kept in touch with us, we knew how to reach them and that they would give us the help we needed.

"When we returned home, we lived with my parents for the next six months. We were so used to letting Eli decide things for us that it took us that long to be able to make our own decisions in our day to day life again."
Discussion questions:

1. Louis and Leslie left this religious group for a number of reasons. Each person should make a list ranking from most important to least important the following reasons: not being allowed to buy a news magazine; having to account for their time; Eli's not trusting Louis; the monotony of their lives; reading about a cult in "Reader's Digest". Discuss your rankings and which of these things would cause you to leave the cult. Which would you find acceptable?

2. Why was it important for Louis and Leslie to discuss their feelings with each other? If the group had been able to keep them apart, do you think they would still have left?

3. Was it fair for Eli to keep Louis and Leslie from having outside friends or from corresponding with their parents? Why did Eli do this? Would you join a "cult" if you knew before hand that you would have to do these things?

4. Do you think that Louis and Leslie believed the world was evil before they joined the "cult"? Do you think that someone could make you change your beliefs the way that theirs were changed? Under what circumstances?

5. What would have happened to Louis and Leslie if their parents had stopped corresponding with them? If these were your children, would you continue to stay in touch? For how long?

Additional activities:

1. Films

(a) NBC Weekend on Cults (1975) Unification Church.

(b) NBC New Moon Rising (1977) Unification Church, Hare Krishna and others. Films are available for purchase through NBC, New York, or others can be rented from Citizens Freedom Foundation, 650 S,
2. Role playing

(a) Members of the class recreate a “cult” commune and form a circle around a potential convert. The “cult” members then try various ways to persuade him/her to join their group.

(b) The teacher plays “cult” leader and challenges the class to refute his/her messianic claims.

(c) Class members attempt to sell flowers to an individual.

(d) Class members take the roles of parents and a child and act out what might happen when parents try to convince their child to leave a “cult.”

3. Debates

(a) Freedom of religion vs. forced removal of an individual from a cult by legal or illegal means.

(b) Advantages and disadvantages of “cult” membership.

4. Reports

(a) Transition of “cults” to accepted religions in recent times.

(b) Histories of various “cult” leaders.
Section II.
Background information:

There are no simple definitions of what constitutes a religious "cult." In fact, most religions were considered radical in their beginnings. Nevertheless, there are a variety of religious groups, very active today, which have in common certain features in their organization, in their aggressive methods of recruitment and in the kinds of individuals who become involved. In this background information section, an attempt is made to describe some of the common features of these groups, even though it is clear that not all of them have all of the characteristics described in the following sections.

A. Typical characteristics:

1. Leader: Prophet or other intermediary to the Divine with absolute authority over members. Questioning the word of the leader is a sign of weak faith and is often defined as an attack on the member by external evil forces.

2. Doctrine: Members are taught to think along established cult lines. Possible objections to doctrines are anticipated and members drilled in how to answer them. Such programmed responses serve as reinforcement of the individual member's belief.

3. Community: Formation of an exclusive physical and/or psychological community. Individuals may be encouraged to achieve a sense of rebirth with a new identity and a primary allegiance to the communal family. Non-believers are viewed as strangers and possibly as enemies.

4. Material possessions: Individuals are taught that they must subserve the needs of the "cult" and nothing else. Therefore, all material possessions are viewed as belonging to the group and not the individual. Individuals are made to feel guilty (psychologically coerced) if they do not turn possessions over.
B. Methods of recruiting and keeping members:

1. Lack of informed consent: The potential recruit is generally unaware of the possible consequences of involvement. Although the "cult" makes sure that the individual knows all of the possible benefits of this involvement, the negative aspects are not revealed.

2. Isolation: The individual may have to give up family, friends, career, education, and personal assets for membership. Once this is accomplished, there is no one on the outside left to help and nothing to turn to.

3. Membership in stages: Participation in these groups occurs in stages with each higher level requiring increasing allegiance by the member. This makes it more difficult for the individual to recognize the transition that is occurring while increasing his level of commitment.

4. Redefinition of previous and present experiences: "Cults" utilize their own special vocabulary and attempt to have the member project ideology onto individual experience. This in turn serves to isolate the individual from anyone other than "cult" members. This is initially accomplished by social programming and peer pressure in communal groups. In non-communal groups, programming is ideological from the very beginning.

C. Who gets caught and why:

1. Usually young adults, 18-25 years of age are attracted. Most often they are white, from a middle class background.

2. Some potential members seek a sense of fulfillment. There is said to be a "spiritual" vacuum in our technological and materialistic society. "Cults" purport to offer "spiritual" renewal.

3. Some potential members seek escape. There are no easy answers to the hard questions of life.

4. Some potential members suffer a sense of alienation. Society is said to be corrupt. There is no clear purpose in life. "Cults" purport to offer an absolute purpose and a plan.
D. Possible consequences:

1. Disruption of the family: The family is said to be the biggest threat to the “cults.” Thus the “cult” often denies the validity of the biological family compared to the “spiritual” family. Proof texts may be cited (e.g. Matthew 12:50). Individuals are taught to cut off previous relationships, family or friends, if they interfere with membership.

2. Disruption of career: In communal groups, individuals leave job and/or education in order to spend full time in group activities. Activities are directed at furthering the “cult” and not developing the individual, and are usually fund-raising, seeking converts, or menial chores. Individuals are manipulated to stop thinking for themselves and ultimately cease psychological maturation. In non-communal groups individuals may retain their jobs or educational activities as long as they can afford to continue receiving instruction.

3. Loss of personal assets: Turning over assets to the group may be an irreversible process. It is not clear whether “cults” can be sued afterwards for return of assets that were “freely” given previously.

4. Psychological consequences: The individual becomes used to continuous peer support and has often given up adult decision-making ability. These constitute an overwhelming problem for the individual to directly leave and rejoin society. Extensive counselling or a half-way house situation is usually necessary.

E. Overview of three controversial movements

Estimates of the number of religious “cults” in the United States ranges from the hundreds to the thousands. Estimates of the number of individuals involved range from the thousands to the millions. There are no good statistics. The numbers are manipulated by the “cults” and countercult groups to serve their own purposes.
Following are very brief descriptions of three well known religious groups which consider themselves authentic religious movements but are often identified in the press as religious "cults." They were chosen for inclusion in this Discussion Guide because they have been very controversial and have attracted much publicity. More complete descriptions of these groups and their theologies can be obtained by consulting the references cited in the source materials (Section III) or by contacting the groups themselves.

1. Holy Spirit Association of the Unification of World Christianity (Unification Church)

**Leadership:** The Reverend Sun Myung Moon is the spiritual leader of the Unification Church. It is said that Christ appeared to Moon in 1936 when Moon was 16 years old and told Moon that he had an important mission to fulfill. Moon is then said to have discovered principles which made it possible to understand the spiritual and physical nature of the universe, the meaning of history, and the inner meanings of the Bible and purpose of all religions. These were eventually published in the "Divine Principle" in 1957 which the Unification Church accords equal authority with the Old and New Testaments.

**Organization in the United States:** The Unification Church was first brought to the United States in 1959. In 1972, Moon began national speaking tours. Presently, there are 120 communes and centers spread out among the 50 states and core membership is estimated at 5,000-10,000. Church members are often called "moonies." There are a number of subsidiary structures including: International Cultural Foundation, Creative Community project, Forum for Religious Research, International Family Association, Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles, and High School Association for the Research of Principles.

It has been claimed that the Unification Church practices "heavenly deception," by utilizing the subsidiary structures as "front" groups in soliciting funds and recruiting without making known their relationship to the Unification Church.

**Promises and Activities:** The Unification Church teaches that man was created as the embodiment of goodness, but his evil state is the result
of Adam's fall. Complete salvation would have been achieved if Christ had married and created the ideal family; however, his early death prevented this from occurring. Now, the salvation of the world and the fulfillment of Christ's mission are at hand. Release from original sin occurs through Moon's marriage blessing upon his followers. It is claimed that to qualify to receive Moon's blessing, followers must first prove their faithful service which includes extensive fund-raising and recruitment activities.

The church recruits by direct witnessing, public rallies and the distribution of literature. It has been alleged that followers are instructed to use "love-bombing" in their recruiting activities, that is, the use of warmth and friendship to entice potential recruits.

2. International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishna; ISKCON)

Leadership: Until his recent death at the age of 82, the spiritual leader of ISKCON was his Divine Grace C.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (Srila Prabhupada). Prabhupada joined the Goudiya Vaishnava Society in India in the 1930's which worships Krishna as the supreme manifestation of the creator of god Brahman. Subsequently, he rose to prominence in the group and became its spiritual leader. Krishna Consciousness says its sources are the Vedic scriptures which were written in Sanskrit between 1500-900 B.C.E.

Organization in the United States: Prabhupada came to the United States in 1965 and founded ISKCON in New York City in the following year. There are presently 27 ashrams (temples, communes) in the United States. The core membership is estimated at 2,500-10,000.

Promises and Activities: Krishna devotees say that they can become free from anxiety and attain a state of pure, unending blissful consciousness. The recommended way to achieve the mature state of love of God in this "age of quarrel," for most people, is to chant the holy names of the Lord. The easiest method for doing this is to chant the Hare Krishna mantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare. Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Each devotee is required to arise before sunrise for worship and chanting. The worshipper often uses traditional prayer beads. There are strict dietary laws and special emphasis on ritual foods. Each male
devotee wears a "sikha" (tuft of hair). Devotees also dress in traditional robes. It is alleged that most members spend the greatest part of their time selling literature and soliciting funds, recruiting new members, or doing menial chores at the ashram.

3. Church of Scientology (Dianetics)

Leadership and Organization in the United States: L. Ron Hubbard, philosopher and former science fiction writer, published a book called "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health" in 1950. In 1952, he founded the Hubbard Association of Scientologists International. The religious institution was established in Washington, D.C. in 1955 as the Founding Church of Scientology. In the United States, the Church of Scientology of California is the current headquarters. There are said to be more than 3 million followers; however, no estimates of core membership are available.

Promises and Activities: Scientology considers itself a religious philosophy with roots in Eastern religious perspectives. Each person is a Thetan. The Thetan is the immortal aspect which controls the body and passes through many incarnations. People are basically good, but are hindered by past painful experiences from the present and previous lives. Mental pictures of these experiences are stored in the mind and called "engrams." The engrams can be contacted and erased through a process called pastoral counselling or auditing. This is done by trained auditors and may involve the use of an E-meter (electropsycho-meter). As the engrams are being removed, Scientologists say the person is becoming "clear". There are eight levels through which an individual passes going from pre-clear to a state of clear. It has been claimed that the cost of auditing may be $15-$35 per hour and several hundred hours of auditing may be required to become clear.

Section III.
Source materials

a. Written from a psycho-sociological perspective:

"All God's Children" by C. Stoner and J. A. Parke, Chilton Book Company, Radnor, Pennsylvania (1977)
B. Written from a theological perspective:

"The Weekend That Never Ends" by J. A. MacCollam, Youth and College Ministries Office, Executive Council of the Episcopal Church (1977)


C. Written from a legal perspective:


D. Other: