

Community Chapel & Bible Training Center

BALANCE

Issue No. 2



EXPOSE!

GOOD CHURCHES SLANDERED AS CULTS

At the three weekend services of Community Chapel and Bible Training Center spontaneous songs of praise to the Lord flow on for an hour or more before giving way to heartfelt testimonies and preaching. We have been learning to "come to the cross, live in holiness, and apply God's Word to every area of our lives. In the last several years wave after wave of revival has broken upon us, increasing our joy and love in the Spirit almost beyond anything we had imagined. But, along with other Pentecostal and fundamentalist churches, this assembly has become the object of wild accusations of "cultism." The growing trend of misdirected cult charges—and the Scriptural perspective on what really constitutes a cult—are the subjects of this issue of Balance.

emergence of cults, an even more insidious problem is building in our midst, and few appear to be aware of it.

Solid churches with greater than average zeal, discipline, love, and camaraderie are being confused with cults. Even Baptist churches and the popular Maranatha Ministries are being implicated as cults.

Christ-hating activists have entered the courtroom in force. In Alabama, they have brought a suit charging a Baptist church with religious brainwash, dangerous protracted prayers, and anti-social indoctrination. Scripture memorization is being called a "mind control technique" similar to what the Nazis used. A fundamentalist newspaper notes that the case may open the door for rebellious teenagers to sue parents and pastors.

In reaction to Jonestown, alarmists are crying for government control of religious cults. "The government should arrest every cult leader," declares Ted Patrick, deprogramming's most rabid spokesman. Patrick scores Jerry Falwell as a cultist and says Billy Graham hypnotizes his converts. 56% of local callers to a Seattle paper favor legal control of cults, not realizing that the antichrist forces would set the standards. Meanwhile, *Christianity Today* reports the attempted deprogramming of two Assembly of God girls who believe in divine healing, and the Christian Legal Defense and Education Foundation (CLD&EF) brings to light the incredible story of a Baptist woman kidnapped and tormented by deprogrammers hired by her parents.

People magazine interviews two authors who say that Campus Crusade for Christ members manifest the warning signs of cultism. In *Science Digest*, the same writers cite speaking in tongues as a symptom of mind control. The "experts" are running wild with cult charges, and unthinking Christians—even pastors—naively parrot the accusations, threatening to set the church of Christ against itself. A legislative push threatens cults and fundamentalists alike. CLD&EF sounds the alarm against judges who overstep their authority in religious cases and warns that we are headed toward a totalitarian state.

What a paradox! Homosexuality, adultery, rebellion, and Communism rage unchecked, but religion is slated for control. And who is charged with "cultism" and "overcontrol"? Not the Catholic church with its "infallible" pope and its co-mediatrix with Christ (Mary, "Mother of God")! No, these attacks are leveled at far more Scriptural and less authoritative bodies—a Pentecostal assembly here, a Baptist church there. Accusers, rumormongers, and antichrist activists are riding high, while every God-fearing pastor has become a suspect. "Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey (Isaiah 59:15)."

But first, the groundwork: a balanced and Scriptural view on what constitutes a cult.

Discerning the real cults

Few would deny that cults pose a peril to the Christian community. What is so alarming, however—and much more dangerous—is the way our very best churches are implicated as cults by well-meaning Christian writers and ministers who have not thought through the implications of their warnings. So anxious are they to protect us from cults that they unwittingly "protect" us from Bible-believing churches!

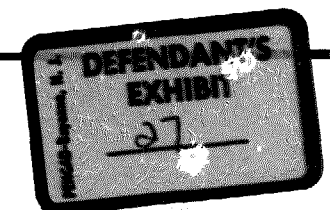
To be specific: How do most authors warn against cults? First, they list "typical cult practices" so that we may spot them. But this is dangerous, because cults typically copy many New Testament practices which God ordained. Thus, their external characteristics often mimic those of zealous churches which adhere to the Scriptures. Here, along with my comments, is what Christian writers commonly say in their warnings against cults:

- **"Cults have strong leaders."** But so do all good churches! Christ, Paul, Luther, Calvin, and Knox were all strong leaders. The church needs strong leaders.
- **"Cults have close unity among their members and with their leaders."** But so do all really spiritual churches.
- **"Cults exhibit a we/they mentality: We have the truth, but they do not."** But fundamental Christianity is based on the same kind of we/they distinction with respect to non-fundamentalists.

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INSIDE this issue . . .

A Baptist church is padlocked, the pastor jailed for his "extreme" position, while neighbors hint that the church is a Jimmy Jones cult. A push for legislation against "cults" threatens true Christian churches everywhere. See page 9.



Warnings Against Cults—What Is the Balance?

Dear Christian Reader,

This issue of *Balance*, from Community Chapel and Bible Training Center, contains perspectives that, to my knowledge, have never appeared in print before. It does not try to establish the fact that leaders such as Jimmy Jones, Reverend Moon, and Moses David have led many down a path of diabolical deception. That subject has been adequately covered by other Christian writers.

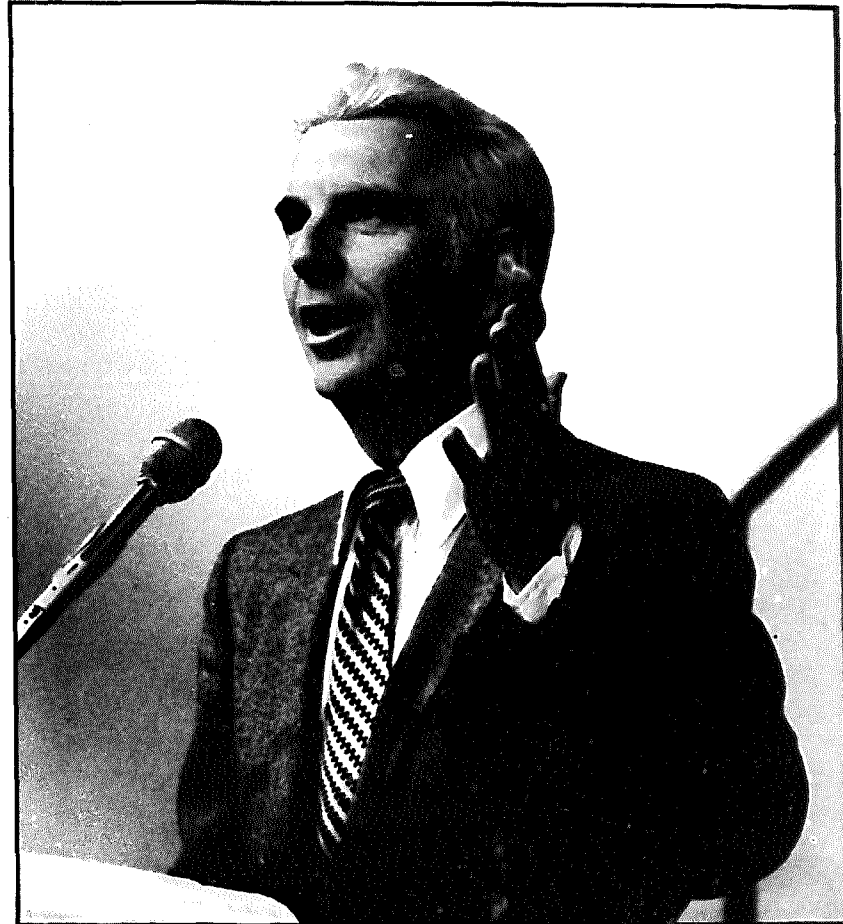
What this issue **does** attempt to do is **balance** the numerous recent one-sided, inadequate, and misleading publications about cults.

In recent years, a multitude of writers and speakers have set themselves up to define cults and warn the church against them. However, almost to a man, they have failed to come up with a proper set of characteristics that define a cult. If one applied their criteria uniformly, he would have to classify all Bible-practicing churches as cults! Indeed, many good, conservative churches **are** being slandered in this way. Ironically, some zealous pastors and writers have so recklessly attacked the practices of cults that they have unknowingly implicated their own churches.

If you will read this issue of *Balance* with an open, non-defensive mind, withholding judgment until the end, I believe you will see things in a new and clearer perspective. May the Lord Jesus bless this publication to the protection of balanced and innocent pastors and churches of God.

Gordon Lee Barnett

Pastor, Community Chapel and Bible Training Center



(continued from page one)

- **“Cults appeal to people who need authority and direction in their lives.”** But so do strongly spiritual churches. The Bible is full of teaching on authority.
- **“Cults are highly dedicated, zealous, idealistic, and energetic.”** But so are Christian churches during revival.
- **“Cults shower love and acceptance on new members.”** But so do

He knows that strong preaching may persuade, but it certainly does not control.

Another dangerous trend is the phenomenon of born-again Christians relying on the studies of secular “cult experts,” thereby inviting unbelievers into the body of Christ to tell us what balanced Christianity

Christian churches that have the Spirit of Christ!

If one followed this typical line of warning against cults, he would be terrified to step into one of the apostle Paul's churches! Notice, from Paul's own words, how his churches would be implicated if judged by this kind of misleading anti-cult teaching:

- "... *I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles* (2 Corinthians 11:5)"—standard cultish self-glorification.
- "*Be ye followers of me* (1 Corinthians 11:1)"—a standard practice of cult leaders to focus attention on themselves.
- "*What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod...?* (1 Corinthians 4:21)"—autocratic browbeating and overcontrol, typical among cult leaders.
- "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves* (Hebrews 13:17)"—cultish command to foster control.
- "*Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person* (1 Corinthians 5:13)"—judgmental, self-righteous pronouncement, typical of cult leaders.
- "*Now we command you... that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us* (2 Thessalonians 3:6)"—typical, heavy-handed cult practice to separate brothers.
- "*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord* (2 Corinthians 6:17)"—standard cultish exclusivism.

It is no overstatement to say that unbalanced anti-cult warnings are making it impossible for many Christians to trust their pastors and elders. They are becoming suspicious, critical, and unsubmitive "Laodiceans."

Common errors in discerning "cultism"

A particularly pernicious charge circulating today is that good, old-fashioned, strong preaching is "mind control." Even with a dedicated flock and years of forceful sermons, many a pastor knows how difficult it is to persuade many to follow God's commandments to flee worldliness.

Seneca and Tacitus (secular social commentators of their day) or Josephus and Gamaliel (respected but non-Christian religionists) to evaluate their doctrines and practices.

What I have observed, too, is "cult experts" from the less fundamental churches attacking the standard preaching of "holiness" churches (which, historically, they have never liked). Disagreement about how another pastor should lead his congregation is not license to play upon Jonestown-mania and call the brother in Christ an "agent of mind control." The same is true of calling ministers of the Gospel "extremists." Who is or is not extreme is a matter of opinion. Even if a group really is extreme, that alone does not make it a cult.

It seems that most people have forgotten that there is a devil, whose very name means "accuser."

One must not lash out at another church, calling it a cult, just because he disagrees with its doctrines. Nor should he use the standards of his own denomination (or of modern churches in general) to conclude that another group is a cult; such standards may well be Scripturally substandard. If Christians are taught to scrutinize other Christian churches in order to determine who is cultish, the church will soon sink in a morass of judgmentalism, criticism, and suspicion.

"Cult"—many things to many people

In the past, the word "cult" referred to a religion that steered people away from salvation in Jesus, especially one that venerated a man who heaped glory to himself. Most Christians agreed that Jehovah's Witness-

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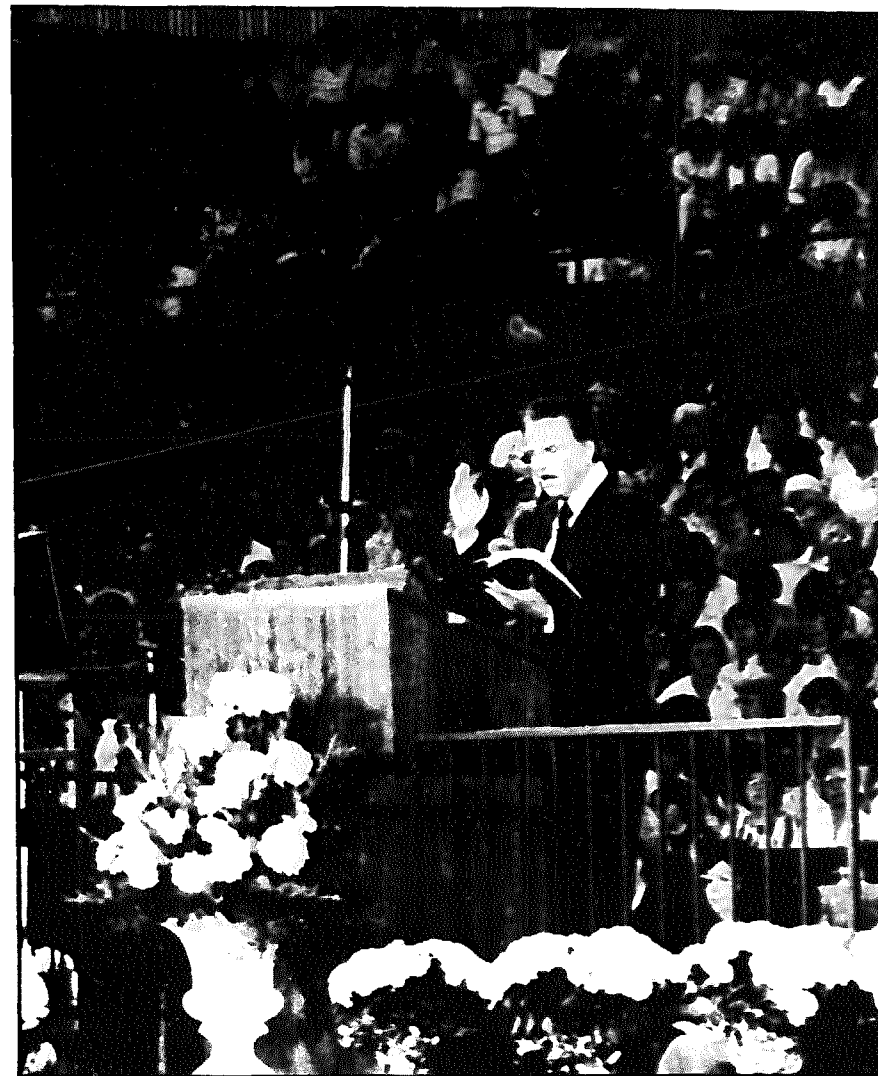
ses, Mormons, Christian Scientists, Universalists, etc., were cults. Today, however, "cult" seems to mean anything anyone wants it to mean. Any church with different views, standards, or polity, especially if it has zealous members or a strong pastor, can be called a cult. This charge is even more likely if a fast-growing church is attracting people from other churches in the area or if the church is doing so well that the devil, becoming fearful, raises up gossipers and accusers as he did against the first-century and Reformation churches.

Ever since Charles Manson and Jimmy Jones transformed cultism from a religious issue into a box office attraction, the charge of "Cult! Cult!" has been bantered about promiscuously. In recent years churches of Baptists, Pentecostals, and non-denominational fundamentalists have been called cults. Even Maranatha Ministries, a fast-growing evangelistic campus ministry, has been called a cult.¹

Bitter ex-members circulate evil stories. Unserved relatives, Christians from rival churches, and the media pass on rumors without even contacting the accused. They "hang" them without defense. Nobody even questions the charges. All **assume** they are true; otherwise why would the accusers be so upset, and why would the media report something that wasn't true? It seems that most people have forgotten that there is a devil whose very name means "accuser."

When false accusations pile high enough, the group really **does** seem to be a cult in the eyes of many. And, unfortunately, after such rumors are passed on by ministers (who should know better), they are said to come from "reliable sources." Even clergymen will sometimes disregard Scripture and pass on lies if they are naive enough to believe friends who lie against someone out of hurt or anger. After all, every rumormonger is somebody's friend!

Granted, carnality, wrong motives, unscriptural practices—even sin—are not difficult to find even among Evangelical and Charismatic pastors. But if everyone feels free to usurp the work of the Holy Spirit by stepping in to investigate, judge, and rebuke every pastor and elder accused by someone, what shall be the result? Certainly schisms and factions will ensue, and we will dismember the body of Christ while the world watches with wagging heads. Certainly this is Satan's doing! "... If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand," Christ said in Mark 3:25. When "pastor" Saul fell, David said, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph (2 Samuel 1:20)."



*Billy Graham at the Tacoma Dome, 1983. Some people equate strong preaching with mind control and cultism, but this view would make cultists out of all the great evangelists of the last three centuries. In defining cults, we must cite **only those characteristics exclusive to them**, lest we make cultists out of our own brothers in Christ!*

argument. Remember that "obsessive" (to be obsessed) is a stronger word than "excessive," which may only indicate imbalance. It is too common a practice to decide that someone else is obsessed with his

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True, a pastor has the obligation to warn his flock against doctrines he considers to be dangerous. But beyond this, he is treading on God's domain. It is a sin to publicly expose the sin of a brother in the Lord. Who knows if he is really guilty of the charge? And if he is, who knows if he has repented to God and has been forgiven? And, even if he has not it is an encroachment upon the office of Christ, the head of the church, to take matters concerning **another** church into one's own hands. We have not been given authority over other churches!

I am greatly concerned over the current radical, lawless, mob philosophy of taking matters into one's own hands against lawful authority. I am even more disturbed that many Christians have acquired the same activist mentality, apparently through the indoctrination of television and movies. Let's put our stones down and quit playing God, dear saints. He is capable of taking care of His churches. Let's allow each church to handle its own problems even as we would like others to leave our church affairs up to our church government.

If you feel you must pass on a judgment regarding another church in order to protect your church, children, or friends, do so with a caring, non-condemning, Christ-like attitude, in all carefulness. Say, "I do not believe that doctrine is Biblical," or even "I am sure that is a non-Biblical and dangerous doctrine"—but do not call them a cult! Say "I feel the pastor is too heavy-handed," not "he is cultish" or "a cult leader"!

But what is a cult?

What groups then shall we feel safe to call cults? We have a problem here, for everyone seems to have his own definition, and even the dictionaries do not agree. For example, *The American Heritage Dictionary* has as its first definition of a cult, "A system or community of religious worship and ritual, especially one focusing upon a single deity or spirit." This implicates almost all Christian churches as cults because they have a "system of worship" and "focus upon a single deity."

The second definition is, "Obsessive devotion or veneration for a person, principle, or ideal." This is a rather good partial definition perhaps, but the judgment as to what is obsessive could be a matter of

leaders of Church when, instead, he may only have great love and respect for them.

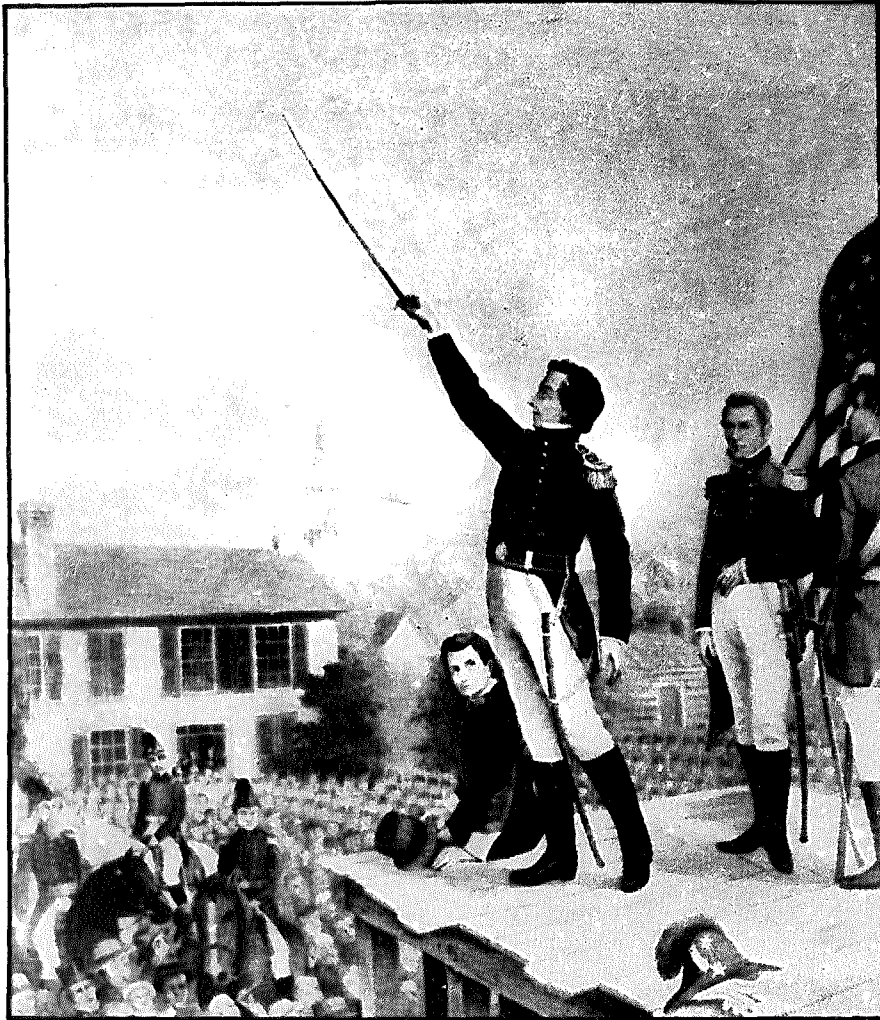
Even excessive devotion does not by itself make people cultists. Many Christians put too much confidence in their spiritual leaders, inasmuch as they are flesh and blood. Of course, if it comes to the point where a leader teaches his followers to venerate him to such an extent that it robs God of His glory, this **does** make his group a cult. Two examples are "Father Divine" and his followers and Reverend Moon and his followers.

If we say everyone who has "obsessive devotion or veneration for a person, principle, or ideal" is a cultist, then we could pin this label on anyone we think is on a doctrinal hobby horse. Therefore, anyone who continually preaches on being born again (as Billy Graham does) or who emphasizes speaking in tongues (as Dennis Bennett did in the early years of the neo-Pentecostal revival) would be a cultist. The same would apply to anyone who constantly teaches on eternal security, grace, holiness,

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Korean millionaire Sun Myung Moon denies Christ's Deity and insists that because Christ failed, a new Messiah was born in Korea between 1917 and 1930 to replace Him (incidentally, Moon was born in Korea in 1920). Here, Reverend Moon presides over the mass-marriage of 2,074 couples at Madison Square Garden. Moon matched most of them on the spur of the moment, allotting about two minutes per couple. One newly-matched disciple wrote in his diary: "There was pandemonium as Father became more and more wild with his matchings. I knew that Father was the Messiah. The harmony of all the matches was beyond doubt!" The offer of another Messiah is a classic cult deception.



Mormons believe that in 1820 God appeared to their founder Joseph Smith and told him not to join any of the Christian churches because all of them were wrong, all their beliefs were abominations, and all their ministers were corrupt. (This despite the fact that Smith himself joined the Methodist Church eight years later.) Smith, who had 27 wives, devised the doctrine that Mormon men may become gods just like the God of the Bible did (He was once a man, too, they say). The cult leader said, "I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I."

(continued from page three)

of Jesus. He may steer people from the blood of Christ as being necessary for salvation, to a system of laws, duties, or rituals. He may reject all Christians as being mystical Babylon or as being the Beast mentioned in Revelation 13.

However, even if someone were deceived, thinking himself to be chosen as a special prophet of God for the last days, that would still not necessarily make him a cult leader. He would also have to draw people to himself **instead of Christ**. Or, he would have to teach that salvation was based on some different or additional grounds than the Bible doctrine of salvation by the shed blood of Christ.

The third definition of "cult" listed in *The American Heritage Dictionary* is, "An exclusive group of persons sharing an esoteric interest." In turn, they define "esoteric" as "Intended for or understood by only a small group . . . Difficult to understand; abstruse . . . Not publicly disclosed; confidential." Of course, these definitions are also subject to misapplication. For example, many people accuse those who preach a "born-again" message of being an exclusive group because of their insistence that Jesus is the only way to heaven. Further, some pin the "elitist" label on those who hold that some Christians are Spirit-filled while others are not.

Although it may be impossible for anyone to come up with a perfect definition of a cult, I would think we could possibly define a cult as: **A religious group without salvation, that magnifies man, a system, or a principle rather than Jesus Christ. Denying the blood of Jesus Christ as atoning for sin. Denying the born again experience. Generally having a leader claiming exclusive revelation and authority from God. Generally requiring total, unquestioning acceptance of everything taught and surrender of one's right to hold individual opinions. Often rejecting all or part of the Bible and substituting or adding their own book of teachings.**

In addition we can say, but not by way of definition, that a cult generally has a closed membership (sometimes with secret teachings), often prohibiting fellowship outside the group and generally denying the universal body of believers. Often they deny eternal punishment. Usually they do not believe in the virgin birth of Christ, His Deity, and bodily resurrection. (Many liberal Protestant churches deny these truths. This makes them unbelievers, but it does not make them cultists.) Generally they believe they are the only true church. (Some Churches of Christ insist that their denomination is the only true church. They are wrong, but they are not cultists.)

Now, apart from cults, there are Christian churches that you would not want to attend because you believe they are out of balance theologically, spiritually, or authoritatively. Or their standards may be too loose or too tight. Final Base your judgments on facts (not rumors), avoid such

discipleship, shepherding, equal eldership, Trinity, Oneness, casting out demons, etc. No, such single-mindedness does not indicate cultism. The excess must be nothing short of "an obsession," and it must involve excessive veneration of someone other than Jesus.

A cult is a group, for example, in which the leader claims that he is Christ, or at least a savior, or that he has power to reinterpret the words

churches, and leave them in the hands of God. Do not become an accuser of the brethren (that is the devil's job—Revelation 12:10), and do not set yourself up as their judge (that is God's job—James 4:12; Romans 14:13). Do not accuse such churches of being cults (that is irresponsible). Accept them, if they are born again, as brothers and sisters in Christ (that is Biblical and Christian). If a man is going to heaven, he cannot be a cultist!



Red-garbed commune members wait reverently by the roadside each day for the Oregon cult leader Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh to pass by on his ritual afternoon drive in one of his 25 Rolls Royces (he is believed to be the world's largest collector of these luxury autos).

Man-worship is a widely-acknowledged mark of cultism and is just one of the many obvious signs that this group is a cult.

Even *our* church has faced the cult-mongers

Yes, we have had our "quota" of accusers, and some innocent people have been deceived by their false accusations. Of course, that could not have happened had the people who passed on the rumors verified the facts with us. Community Chapel and Bible Training Center positively is **not** a cult for the following reasons:

1. No one is **obsessed** with venerating the pastor or elders. The pastor teaches that all men, including himself, are subject to error and that only God is to receive glory. (Interestingly, those religions with leaders called "pope," "his eminence," "the most right reverend," or "chief rabbi" are seldom called cults.)

One must understand that a pastor is not a cult leader just because some people esteem him too highly. Lester Sumrall reports that during his ministry in the Philippines the people began to revere him excessively. This did not make him a cultist! Paul said the Galatians would have plucked out their eyes to give to him if they could have. Anyone with a successful ministry will be highly regarded, but in order to qualify as a cultist the leader must **demand** veneration from the people.

2. Community Chapel holds no doctrine, principle, or ideal that is not shared by thousands of other Christians across America. We have no exclusive book, teaching, or translation of the Bible.
3. Community Chapel is open to visitors. It is not exclusive. In fact, unlike the vast majority of churches, we have no procedure for "joining." We maintain that as Christians our "membership" is in heaven. Nobody signs any contract or makes any vows to the church, much less extrabiblical vows, in order to be included here.
4. Community Chapel and Bible Training Center has no esoteric interest. We teach nothing intended for our church alone. We have no mysteries and no doctrine that requires revelation outside the Word of God. As God provides the means, we hope to broadcast every major Christian doctrine over radio and television.
5. We preach salvation only by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, who was both God and man. We believe in being born again by repenting and accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We believe in being baptized in water for remission of sins, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and walking in true holiness of heart. This is fundamental Christianity, not cultism.

Many other non-cult churches in America come much closer to the definition of a cult than Community Chapel. For example, the first

should have a right to make his defense. His side is probably very different, and he may be right.

Do not assume that an accuser is a witness! Unless the accuser is an eyewitness, he is only passing on hearsay.

Do not trust people who have been put out of a church! If they say they left of their own accord, verify this claim with the church's elders. If they left because they believed rumors or because they did not like what they saw and heard, find out if they themselves are following the Scriptures in their actions toward that church. See if they have a godly love and concern for the people in the church or if they have a carnal, accusing spirit. No one who is violating the Word of God in this regard is trustworthy!

If you had listened only to the accusers of Jesus and Paul, you would have classified them both as fanatical cultists. We must do better than that.

If you have checked everything you can and all you end up with is accusations without proof, you have no grounds for passing them on lest you sin by becoming a rumormonger yourself. If you accuse an innocent party, you will be guilty before God while the accused remains innocent!

A respected lawyer has said that in the past decade it has become common for those who get upset and leave lodges, social clubs, political organizations, churches, and other groups to barrage them with bitter accusations. In fact, this practice has become so widespread in industry that big corporations are hiring staff specialists to ferret out and correct rumors before they do much damage. The media have trained Americans to accuse anyone they disagree with at the slightest provocation, and the devil is all too happy to fan to a flame any spark of accusation.

Why do you want to know?

Finally, ask yourself, "**Why do I want to judge whether a church is a cult?**" Is your reason:

- **Curiosity?** Forget it! If you do not need to know, leave the accused

definition of a cult we cited from *The American Heritage Dictionary* is a group that practices excessive devotion or veneration for its leader. Many Lutheran churches have a large picture of their founder, Martin Luther, hanging on the wall someplace in the building. Their leader is highly venerated (they even call themselves by his name). The same thing can be said of those who are "Calvin-ists." The veneration of the Seventh-Day Adventists for their prophetess, Ellen G. White, is also well known. Of course, not even the Christian Scientists' veneration for Mary Baker Eddy or the veneration of many blacks for the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King comes close to the Catholics' excessive veneration of the pope!

Community Chapel is far more conservative, in this respect, than any of these, not to mention the Wesleyans (John Wesley), the Salvation Army (William Booth), the Zionists (John Alexander Dowie), the Branhamites (William Branham), the Mennonites (Menno Simons), the Christian and Missionary Alliance (A.B. Simpson), the Brethren (John Darby), and many others. In fact, the pastor of Community Chapel is less venerated than many other Charismatic leaders. I am speaking of men like Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Bob Mumford, Jimmy Swaggart, and Derek Prince. And what of the veneration bestowed on Jerry Falwell and Billy Graham? Certainly none of these men of God is a cult leader.

Many churches expect their people to believe their dogma without even feeling obligated to prove it to them. At Community Chapel we believe people have a right to withhold judgment until we have proved our position.

Most pastors are also the chairmen of the deacon boards which handle finances. Here, I am not even on that board.

I would not think of making decisions for people's lives and interpreting God's will for them to the degree that I see many other born-again pastors doing.

Do not be part of the rumor mill

To believe rumors without substantial proof is both unscriptural and dangerous, no matter how reliable the informant may appear to be, for the possibility always exists that the informant himself has been misled (see Leviticus 19:16). Moreover, people rarely present an objective view of something they are upset about. If you had listened only to the accusers of Jesus and Paul, you would have classified them both as fanatical cultists. We must do better than that.

Do not just believe every accuser! Even secular courts hold that a man is innocent until proven guilty.

Do not be like a jury that renders a decision after only hearing one side! If you hear rumors against a pastor, check the story with him; he

alone; they are not your business. Develop the Gamaliel attitude of Acts 5:34-39; leave them up to God, the Great Judge.

- **To warn the community?** The idea that it is the responsibility of Christians to warn the community against other Christians is secular and activist, not Biblical and Christian. We are of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). We are not to parade every disagreement before the eyes of the world.
- **Because your son or daughter or friend or relative goes there?** Quiz him, the elders, and other members about the church. If you cannot find any proof for the rumors, you have no cause for alarm. Almost all good churches are lied against. Also, remember that any adult, even if he be your offspring, is entitled to make his own decisions. Of course, you have the right to present him with facts—but not with rumors.
- **Because you hear it is a wonderful church and want to go there?** If those who recommend it show a balanced Christian life, attend the church yourself if your thorough check reveals no substantial problem, and do not worry. Simply follow the Bible principles, and you will not get hurt. If it is a cult, it will soon be manifest.

Now, obviously, if we know that a group is a cult, we avoid it without checking it. But, because many good churches are accused of being cults, we need to be careful that we do not avoid churches on the basis of accusation alone. This is precisely what the devil would like us to do! Both the best and the worst churches are most liable to be accused.

Real cults should be exposed and boycotted, but sincere Gospel churches deserve fair judgment. Never violate Christian ethics, regardless of the situation. Never do evil that good may come (Romans 3:8). Remember, Jesus and the apostles did not send out mobs of Christians to accuse those who erred in the way. They preached truth and warned against false doctrine, but they did not teach the disciples to be mud-slingers. In the Bible, Christians never became accusing activists against other churches. Rather, this has been the practice of Christ-hating Jews of the first and second centuries, heathen, medieval inquisitors, atheists, and Communists.

The devil is alive and sick on planet earth. Let us not be his tools to divide the body of Christ! Let us leave each church under the authority of its own church government, and let us leave that government under the authority of God. Let us be as fair and careful as we would want others to be toward us if we were being accused. Let us be led by the Holy Spirit, not by the accuser of the brethren. May God help His children to walk softly and Scripturally. ▲

The Implications of Calling Christians "Cultists"

Many people think a religious group is a cult if it denies any doctrine they think is very important. Yet most do not consider the Salvation Army or the Quakers to be cults in spite of the fact that they do not practice water baptism or communion. Both of these are important, fundamental doctrines of the church!

In like manner, many Christians consider a church to be a cult if it has an exclusive doctrine—especially if the doctrine seems weird and is in an important area. And yet most Christians do not consider the German Dunkers to be cultists in spite of the fact that they immerse three times face down!

Few Christians consider the Church of Christ to be a cult in spite of the fact that they alone forbid musical instruments in church worship.

Absolutely no one considers Lutherans to be cultists, yet they alone hold a doctrine called consubstantiation, in which it is believed that the body and blood of Christ literally coexist with the elements of bread and wine in the Eucharist. And Luther believed and passed on to the state church the idea that the Holy Ghost gives infants faith to believe for salvation when they are brought to the baptismal font—a thing which seems impossible to most people.

Now, I respectfully submit that if we do not call the Salvation Army, Quakers, German Dunkers, Church of Christ, or Lutherans cults, we have no right to call other Christian churches cults if they twist, deny, or invent doctrines that are no more important than these.

"Cultism": inconsistent definitions

In order to demonstrate how inconsistent most Christians are in defining what is a cult, I have only to mention that very few Christians think of liberal "old-line" Protestant churches as cults. But these churches deny the inspiration of Scripture, eternal punishment, and the Deity of Christ, along with His virgin birth, blood atonement, resurrection, ascension, and Second Coming! What more damaging

Pentecostals are called) also point out that their belief is far different from those of Jehovah's Witnesses and Unitarians.

Oneness Pentecostals believe in one God in three manifestations—the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost—but they deny that each constitutes a separate Person of God. They cannot properly be called cultists merely because they refuse to use non-Biblical terms such as "Trinity, three Persons, co-equal, co-eternal, God the Son, the Blessed Three," etc. And all the more so when one considers that the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, a respected Evangelical work by Trinitarian scholars, states:

The term 'Trinity' is not a Biblical term, and we are not using Biblical language when we define what is expressed by it It has been remarked that 'the doctrine of the Trinity is not so much heard as overheard in the statements of Scripture.' It would be more exact to say that it is not so much inculcated as presupposed We cannot speak of the doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, if we study exactness of speech, as revealed in the New Testament, any more than we can speak of it as revealed in the Old Testament The doctrine of the Trinity lies in the New Testament rather in the form of allusions than in express teaching."¹

fact, God gave the most outstanding gifts of miracles and the word of knowledge in the whole healing revival to a cult leader!

The highly respected Trinitarian minister, Gordon Lindsay, who co-ordinated the healing evangelists and edited the popular *Voice of Healing* magazine, quit his ministry with the Assemblies of God to join Ern Baxter as co-manager of this cultist (William Branham) in order to further his cult ministry. Reverend Lindsay also declared that the cultist's ministry was documented with a host of infallible proofs!⁴

Further, Joseph Mattsson-Boze, the esteemed minister from Chicago who entered the miracle healing ministry and was influential in the international Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal movements, was an early friend and supporter of the cultist and continued to support his ministry until the end.⁵ Moreover, the respected evangelist T.L. Osborn was influenced by the cultist to start his worldwide ministry.⁶ Not only did hundreds of Pentecostal Trinitarians look up to this cult leader (Branham), but the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International invited him as a favored speaker at conventions!⁷ In fact, they backed his ministry ardently.

It is, of course, entirely irresponsible to conclude that these Pentecostal leaders enthusiastically supported, loved, respected, and had fellowship with a cultist, taking their congregations to him for teaching and healing. If they, who knew William Branham and his doctrine, did not think that this non-Trinitarian was a cultist, who are we to decide otherwise?

Fortunately, the miracle healing ministries of Branham (Oneness) and Roberts (Trinitarian) went a long way in the late '40's and early '50's toward causing Pentecostal saints of both persuasions to see Jesus in each other and accept one another: for they sang, laughed, cried, and applauded side by side as the testimonies, sermons, and healings took place. That revival swept aside much misunderstanding, but, unfortunately, not all the narrow-mindedness is



...to deny the very essence of salvation? Unless we are willing to label as cultists the liberal Methodists and many of their bedfellows in the National Council of Churches who deny these Bible tenets, we certainly have no right to call born-again Baptist or Pentecostal churches cults just because we judge them to be "off" on certain doctrines!

To go a step further, most Christians do not call the Catholic church a cult even though they pray to Mary to lay her maternal commands upon Christ her son, believe that the pope is infallible in spiritual matters, pray to the saints, buy indulgences to shorten people's time in purgatory, and believe that Mary is the Mother of God! They say that Mary is the co-mediatrix with Christ and Queen of heaven, hell, and purgatory. Add to this the veneration of images and relics, the burning of candles for the dead, prayers and masses for the dead, seven sacraments, transubstantiation, adoration of the host, confession to a priest, celibacy for priests, tradition equal with Scripture, salvation by works, etc.—and the Catholic church is surely very non-Biblical! In fact, the Catholic clergy does not even pretend that most of these doctrines are Biblical; their validity rests on the fact that they are Catholic. If the Catholic church is not a cult, then any Christian church with doctrinal errors of less gravity cannot be a cult!

It should be obvious by this time that anyone calling an independent, non-denominational Pentecostal or fundamental church a cult, is irresponsible.

Are non-Trinitarians cultists?

"But what if a church does not believe in the Trinity?" one may ask. This is not an uncommon question in these days of cult mania. Since it is outside the scope of this issue of *Balance* to prove or disprove any doctrine on the Godhead, let's examine the issue strictly as it relates to cultism, being fair to all.

Non-Trinitarians fall into two groups, those born again (generally Pentecostals) and those not born again (Jehovah's Witnesses, Unitarians, etc.). Trinitarians fall into the same groupings, except that their camps are broader; namely, Christian and heathen. Of course, Christian Trinitarians object that their Trinity is not like the heathen trinities, but then the Oneness believers (as non-Trinitarian



The Salvation Army began with William Booth's evangelistic ministry among the outcasts of London around the turn of the century. If doctrinal deviation is proof of cultism, then this group and the Quakers would have to be labeled cults for their rejection of two major Christian doctrines, baptism and communion. But almost everyone will agree that neither group is a cult! We must avoid tagging other Christian groups as "cults" simply because we disagree with their persuasions.

Certainly, whether he believes God is three Persons or one Divine Being, a person who is born again and filled with the Holy Spirit, living for and loving Jesus, is not a cultist!

In order to see that neither Oneness nor Trinitarian believers are cultists, let's look at the implications of calling either group a cult. The argument could go either way, but let's say, for the sake of example, that Trinitarianism is the truth and the Oneness doctrine is false. On that premise, would the Oneness Pentecostals be cultists? Let's look at the implications of such a position.

Untenable conclusions

Oral Roberts, at that time a respected Trinitarian Pentecostal Holiness preacher with a gift of miracle healing, greatly admired William Branham, a Oneness "cultist"! Roberts discussed his upcoming healing ministry with the cultist's team at the cultist's campaign in Kansas City in 1947.³ He was honored when the cultist attended his Tampa crusade in 1949, where the two embraced and prayed for each other's ministries.³

Hundreds of Trinitarian pastors joined to invite this cult leader (William Branham) to their cities, happily exposing their congregations to preaching and laying on of hands by a cult leader! The cultist filled the largest stadiums and meeting halls in the world, and tens of thousands of Christians testified that God had healed them through his ministry. In

gone.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, I want to explain that I am not a "Branhamite." I am not and never have been a follower of the man. I respected his ministry, as I did those of Oral Roberts, LeRoy Jenkins, Jack Coe, Tommy Hicks, and the others who had worldwide ministries of healing. I attended many of their meetings. We do not, however, sell any of Branham's tapes or books (as we do Gordon Lindsay's, for example) because he got off on some dangerous doctrine at the end of his ministry. Gordon Lindsay, who loved Brother Branham, was forced to dissociate himself from his ministry for the same reason, but it is noteworthy that he did not break with him because he denied the Trinity!

Prophetic delusion: no proof of cultism

True, in his later years, Branham came to believe that he was the seventh angel (i.e., earthly messenger) of the Book of Revelation. But John Alexander Dowie (Trinitarian), the pioneer healing evangelist who exercised miracle power around the turn of the century, taught in his later years that he himself was the Elijah who was prophesied to come! If one claims that Branham's Oneness belief was a symptom of an underlying "cultish tendency" that cropped up later, then he will also have to say that Dowie's Trinitarian belief foreshadowed his later "cultishness." The truth is that neither man's belief on the Godhead had anything to do with his later errors, for hundreds of other ministers of both persuasions never strayed into such eschatological delusions. Both Dowie and Branham were deceived by deceiving spirits as they listened to others with "revelations from God" and contemplated their special powers and ministries. Dr. Dowie admitted to pride; Branham was the humblest servant of God I have ever seen. Everyone who knew him or heard him attested to this, but as Brother Lindsay believed, "he was perhaps naive in some things" (an understatement) and therefore "misused and misled by some around him."⁸

Just as people wrongly followed and eulogized John the Baptist, Martin Luther, and John Calvin after their deaths, so people banded together to eulogize and follow William Branham. But Branham, while living, did not seek a following.

The important point for our argument is that no one is born a cultist. Before one is deceived, he is



*Excessive veneration of man, a common cult practice, raises serious questions about Roman Catholicism. Here Pope Paul VI is borne aloft in a procession similar to those of ancient pagan cults (inset). Even Catholic writers admit that the **fabellum**, or large fan made of feathers, is a carry-over from paganism, as are many other Catholic trappings and customs. Few Protestants think Catholicism is a cult, but they fire the charge of cultism at neighboring Baptist or Pentecostal churches—a terrible inconsistency!*

not deceived; and before one becomes a cultist, he is **not** a cultist. One's earlier life cannot be fairly judged by his later life, as we can see by looking at King Saul and King Solomon.

Before Dowie and Branham were deceived into thinking they were special messengers of God, no Pentecostal would think of calling them cult leaders. In fact, to be fair to them both, neither man was **ever** a cult leader. God wonderfully attested both of their ministries to the end. Both remained saved and true

anyone who has studied their history knows that the Holy Spirit did not leave either group after the split; both continued with God's anointing and gifts, loving Jesus and winning souls for Him, the same as before. And I have found no writings in which either group called the other a cult.

Some today claim that the Oneness Pentecostals are cultists because they deny "normative Biblical Christianity, as set forth by the church councils and held by orthodox Christians for fifteen centuries." But Trinitarian Pentecostals deny the "or

Second Coming, were heretical cultists because they denied fifteen centuries of "orthodox" amillennialism.

Is overcontrol proof of cultism?

If you try to determine whether a church is a cult by the amount of control the leaders exercise, ask yourself: Do they exercise more control than the "infallible" pope and the Catholic hierarchy? Do they exercise more control than Martin Luther, John Calvin, William Farel, and John Knox, all of whom would be called tyrants by modern standards? For example, Calvin turned the city of Geneva into a theocracy, censored the press, and ruled as virtual dictator. He had Christians jailed for not attending church on Sunday. Three women were jailed for improper headdress. Three men were jailed for laughing during a sermon. Several women were jailed for dancing. A girl was beheaded for striking her parents. A boy was whipped for calling his mother a "she devil." Even the number of dishes at meals was regulated.¹⁰ A council of ministers under Calvin acted as "a thoroughly organized inquisition tribunal, which regulated in all details the moral, religious, domestic, and social life of the citizens; called them to account on every suspicion of a fault; and had the incorrigible banished by the civil authorities and the more dangerous of them put to death."¹¹ As a result, "between the years 1542 and 1546 there were in Geneva, with a population of only 20,000, no less than fifty-seven death sentences carried out with Calvin's approval, and seventy-six sentences of banishment."¹² Are Calvinists today named after a cult leader? We will have to call Calvin a cult leader if we apply the standards that many use today. Be careful to label no Christian church a cult for overcontrolling unless you are also willing to call John Calvin a cult leader.

Ushers in the Anglican church used poles with bags of rocks on one end and feathers on the other to interrupt those who talked or dozed in church. Were they cultists? What about the present-day discipleship Charismatics who control people's lives through appointed discipleship leaders? Are they cultists? Were Moses and Paul cult leaders? Moses was "king in Jeshurun"; and Paul admonished, "be imitators of me" (Deuteronomy 33:5; 1 Corinthians 4:16, NAS). If the amount of control exercised by them was not a sign of cultism, then we should

to God. Neither ever wavered in the faith of their gross sin. It takes more than thinking that God has called you to a special ministry above others to be a cultist. These men, like Moses, Elijah, David, John the Baptist, Paul, Luther, Wesley, and others, were chosen to stand above others. Of course, Dowie and Branham were deceived into thinking they stood higher than they really did. But God still loved them; He did not cast them away. However, He apparently did not want either man to live long after he fell into deception—not as a judgment, but because He loved them and His people, and because it was best for all concerned that He take them home.

The split among Pentecostal ministers over the doctrine of the Godhead originated in 1914, but

others. But Unitarian Pentecostals deny the "orthodox" theology of the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon (A.D. 431 and 451) that Mary was "the Mother of God."¹ Nobody asserts that this denial of tradition indicates cultism.

If denying a position that most of the church has held for centuries makes one a cultist, then the followers of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and Knox were all cultists. They denied the "orthodox" doctrine of salvation by works which the "one holy, Catholic, apostolic church" had insisted on for more than a millennium. The Baptists were also cultists, for they denied over thirteen centuries of "orthodox" baptism by pouring. Likewise, men like Darby, Irving, and Scofield, who came to believe in a premillennial

them was not a sign of cultism; when we should refrain from leveling this charge against leaders who exercise less control than these!

To accuse other churches of "authoritarianism," "cultism," or "a spirit of control" just because they run a tighter ship than we would is to play into the hands of the liberals who would love to introduce legislation stripping the church of its freedom and authority. We must not label pastors as cultists just because they are heavy-handed! We must not label as cult churches which are exclusive! Even refusal to have fellowship with others is not, in itself, what makes a cult. Luther and his ministers stubbornly refused to accept Zwingli and other Swiss reformers as brothers because they denied the literal presence of Jesus' flesh and blood in the communion elements.² We may say that Luther's action was intolerant and wrong, but we cannot say it made him a cult leader.

God is trying to lead His people away from bigotry. God's sons have been name calling and rejecting one another too long because of dogmatism. If God gives others His Spirit, then He accepts them; and we are in no position to overrule God and reject them. The reproach is ours if we dismiss other sons of God as cultists. If they really are cultists, then cultists are not nearly as bad as we had thought, for we shall meet the cultists in heaven! Of course, cults are bad because we will not meet the cultists in heaven. That is why we warn others against cults! Let's be sure not to draw up boundaries of cultism so broad that they place our own brothers and sisters in the cultic kingdom.



Martin Luther and John Calvin (seated, center): the standards set by many Christian writers today would make these historic reformers into tyrannical cult leaders.

¹ "Trinity," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), vol. V, p. 3015.

² David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *All Things Are Possible* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 42.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 160, 178.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁸ Letter from Christ for the Nations, December 17, 1982.

⁹ McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), vol. II, p. 196 and vol. III, p. 247.

¹⁰ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3rd revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), vol. VIII, pp. 356, 490, 491.

¹¹ Rev. John MacPherson, ed., *Kurtz's Church History* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, n.d.), vol. II, p. 304.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 304.

¹³ Andrew Miller, *Miller's Church History* (London: Pickering & Inglis), p. 689.

Behind the Iron Curtain in Alabama . . .

Christians Called Cultists in Court

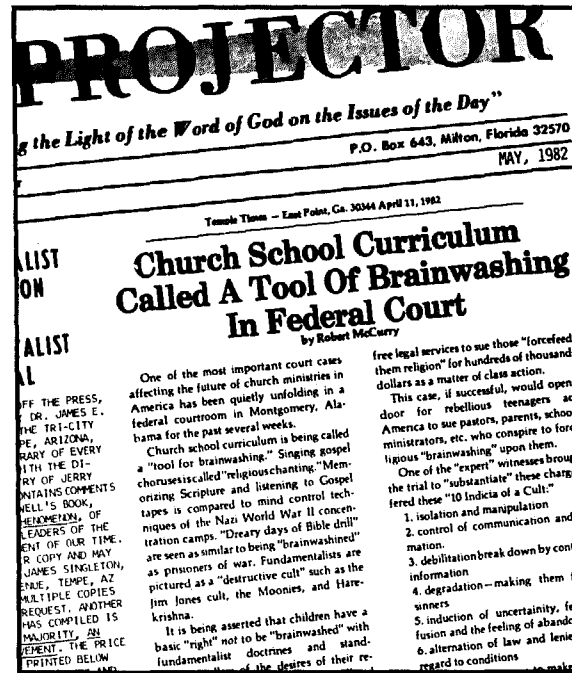
The lead article in the May, 1982, issue of *The Projector*, a fundamentalist paper, reads like a report of a court trial against Christians in Communist Russia. There, charges of religious brainwash, dangerous protracted prayer, and antisocial indoctrination are fired at Baptists and Pentecostals alike. In federal court in Montgomery, this chilling parallel account is unfolding:

Church school curriculum is being called a "tool for brainwashing." Singing gospel choruses is called "religious chanting." Memorizing Scripture and listening to Gospel tapes is compared to mind control techniques of the Nazi World War II concentration camps. "Dreary days of Bible drill" are seen as similar to being "brainwashed" as prisoners of war. Fundamentalists are pictured as a "destructive cult" such as the Jim Jones cult, the Moonies, and Hare-krishna.

It is being asserted that children have a basic "right" not to be "brainwashed" with fundamentalist doctrines and standards regardless of the desires of their religious parents. Children are being offered free legal services to sue those "forcefeeding them religion" . . .

One of the "expert" witnesses in this case against the **Friendship Baptist Church** presented "**10 Indicia of a Cult**" as evidence to substantiate the charges. It does not take a prophet to see that these "indicia," quoted below, could be used against every good Bible-believing church! A few of them are, in fact, typical practices of fundamentalist Christian churches (others would fit with only a little interpretation on the part of an antagonistic prosecutor or judge). If Christians fall to using such criteria to define cults, they will be hanging themselves unwittingly on the gallows prepared for another, as Haman did in chapter seven of the Book of Esther.

The following are the "Ten Indicia of a Cult," as presented in court; my comments follow each



The Projector, a fundamentalist paper, headlines the Alabama court attack on the Friendship Baptist Church. Allegations of "cultism" and "brainwash" formed a substantial part of the case against this fundamentalist church's Christian school ministry. "Cult" charges against good churches are increasing dramatically—a trend that should alarm all Christians.

4. Degradation—making them feel like sinners.
 It is easy to see how this could be used against a Christian school detaining a troublemaker after school, or a Sunday School teacher making a student apologize to the class or write an essay on respect. What about a student who really is sinning, according to the Bible? He cannot come to repentance until he is first made to recognize his sin. This "indictum" is rooted in a secular humanism which denies the law of God.

ing with the group. Spiritual survival depends on identifying with Christ, but most Christians recognize the necessity of being a part of the body of Christ. God's people are not to be a collection of independent agents (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Hebrews 10:25).

9. Assignment of monotonous tasks: Bible reading, prayer, and memorizing Scripture. God commands us to know the Bible and to pray always. This is not monotonous; this is our joy! This "expert" reveals his antagonism toward fundamental Christianity by singling out desirable Christian practices as "monotonous tasks."

10. Separation from previous life. Since the Bible commands Christians to separate themselves from the "old life," this "indictum" could lead to litigation against all Bible-believing churches. Perhaps this is what the "expert" has in mind.

The Projector states that if the Alabama case is successful, the door will be open for rebellious teenagers to sue pastors, parents, and school administrators who "brainwash" them with religion. As you can see, the plaintiff is using the term "brainwash" far too loosely!

Brethren! We must learn to use terms like "brainwash" and "cult" accurately or not at all. Reliable older works on cults never implicated heavy-handed Christian pastors, pious church leaders, Catholic Charismatics who practice close-quartered communal living, Oneness Pentecostals, Trinitarian Pentecostals, Baptists, Evangelicals, or fundamentalists! Instead, the cults were considered to be groups like the Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, Universalists, etc., who deny sin, salvation, and eternal life through the blood of Jesus Christ.

"Brainwashed": Who sets the standard?

To "wash" away someone's convictions is not easy. If it were, people would not be paying deprogrammers as much as \$25,000 to do the job. Deprogrammers "brainwash" their "clients" (some have

1. Isolation and manipulation. The charge of "isolation" could be leveled at churches or schools that forbid teenagers to associate with the ungodly. "Manipulation" might be applied to a church promulgating its fundamentalist theology in Bible classes. Such matters have no place in the courtroom.

2. Control of communication and information. This "indicium" could be used against church schools that forbid students to swear or tell dirty jokes, or that ban pornography from their libraries.

3. Debilitation breakdown by control and information. Even though this "indicium" is nothing but gobbledygook, an activist judge could use it to rule that fundamentalist Christian school and Sunday School discipline standards, which are usually higher than those of public schools and liberal churches, "debilitate" the students by robbing them of their freedom of expression.

5. Induction of uncertainty, fear, confusion and the feeling of abandonment. Any opposition lawyer could use this "indicium" to attack a church school that expels a student who continually breaks the rules.

6. Alternation of law and leniency with regard to conditions. Who is to decide when strictness or leniency is called for? That should be left up to the church-school administrators, not the state.

7. Use of peer pressure to make them feel like they have let others down. Peer pressure in Christian schools? If anyone knows anything about peer pressure, it is the public school student who is pushed into drugs, drunkenness, and perversion. And even though the real problem is in **public** schools, we cannot expect the liberals to attack it there. They want to wipe out fundamentalism, not peer pressure.

8. Insistence that survival depends on identify-



Regimented robots, programmed by "dreary days of Bible drill"? That's how the activist liberals depict Christian school students, but the children in our Christian School are always excited with their Bible lessons! Thousands who have switched from public schools to Christian schools have shown dramatic improvement in grades, attitudes, and behavior. If this is the fruit of "religious brainwash," then perhaps all of our children could use some "brainwashing."

been convicted on this charge). They assault them verbally day and night, accusing, demanding instant answers, and refusing to let them eat or sleep. De-programmers sometimes destroy religious objects in front of their victim; it may be a picture of his guru, or it may be a **Bible**. Sometimes they inflict shame through nudity.² Even after physical beatings (as some victims allege), they may still fail to change the person's mind.

The Soviet Union's professional brainwashers have failed with some people after **years** of torture. The Catholic inquisitors could not persuade some to forsake their "heresy" even after subjecting them to near-dismemberment on the rack, branding with heated pokers, and roasting over slow fires.

In light of these facts, it is reckless in the extreme to label the powerful pulpit manner or persuasive preaching of a Bible-loving pastor as brainwashing. Persuasion is **not** brainwashing! Paul **persuaded** the Jews, Greeks, and proselytes to believe in Jesus (Acts 13:43; 18:4; 19:26). He almost **persuaded** Herod Agrippa to become a Christian (Acts 26:28). Was Paul a professional brainwasher? No, of course not. Paul even used the **terror** of the Lord (fear of God's judgment) to **persuade** men (2 Corinthians 5:11). Even persuasion that includes fear of hell is not brainwashing!

If one asked a hundred people to define brainwashing, probably no two would agree, but all would concur that brainwashing is bad. In fact, many would be willing to sign a petition to outlaw it. There will likely be a law against "brainwashing" one day, but you may be sure that the Evangelical ministers will not be called upon to design the wording of the bill! Therefore, we had better be careful not to label counseling and preaching we disagree with as "brainwashing." Our careless labels may come back to testify against us in court for our own style of preaching and counseling!

God has forbidden His sons who disagree with each other to bite and devour one another (Galatians 5:15). We cannot afford to make reckless accusations just because we are troubled by someone else's persuasions. We must act responsibly, for we **are** responsible for what we do. The Bible says that every one of us shall give an account of himself to God (Romans 14:12).

¹ CLD&F Notebook, March/April 1980, p. 2.

² Evangelical Newsletter, vol. 8, no. 18 (Sept. 4, 1981).

Reaction to Public Outrage Against Cults . . .

PUSH FOR ANTI-CULT LEGISLATION THREATENS TRUE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

"The Moonies are moving into the neighborhood. My kids picked up some satanist literature at the shopping center last week, and I can't seem to go to the airport without getting assaulted by Hare Krishnas. There ought to be a law!"

Yes, there is growing sentiment in America to outlaw or at least restrict cults. However, if prohibitions against cults become law, we fundamentalist Christians will soon find ourselves in real trouble! In order to ban cults, some legislative body will have to define what constitutes a cult. Lawmakers, who are generally either agnostics or members of churches which are part of the National Council of Churches, will be drawing a line separating legitimate churches from cults, when they have practically no concept of a New Testament-ordered church full of the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, most of them will be antagonistic toward divine healing ("practicing medicine without a license"), prophecy ("control of others through claims of divine revelation"), other tongues ("irrational gibberish"), Biblical church discipline ("heavy-handed control"), Biblical counseling ("dangerous meddling by untrained workers"), etc. Is this what we want? Absolutely not!

Growing threat from activist judges

What will happen if laws are passed forbidding cults? Not only will the laws be framed by people unsympathetic to fundamentalist churches, but those laws will be interpreted by liberal judges increasingly inclined to favor "public interest" over our Constitutional rights. The Christian Legal Defense & Education Foundation (CLD&EF) lists

They cite, among others, the 1971 ruling of Judge Leventhal in *Green v. Connally* that "government interest is dominant over other Constitutional interests." Such precedents are the markers along the road toward a totalitarian state.

Already America's Christian churches and schools are coming under siege as the result of activist judges going beyond the law. In September, 1982, the CLD&EF reported:

Our greatest threat continues to come from the federal courts . . . A very disturbing scenario is likely unless Congress asserts itself more strongly . . .

Every tax-exempt school in the nation has reason for alarm at the rapidly deteriorating developments in the federal courts in Washington that threaten their freedom. A nationwide federal court order requiring vicious IRS attacks on tax-exempt schools and churches is a certainty, unless Congress acts. Although Congress has strictly prohibited funds for the requirements of this unlawful court order, tyrannical federal judges in Washington have simply defied the law. Churches and schools across the nation worked to enact the Ashbrook and Dornan Amendments which block such IRS action. Yet, federal judges, sworn to uphold the law, are defiantly showing that they will flout it instead.²

These actions were taken by federal judges with **no** legal sanction. What will happen when laws that meddle with religious ministries are **on the books**? They will soon be turned to the harassment of Bible-preaching Christian churches, tagged "cults."

Every month now, the CLD&EF and the Christian Law Association

recent ominous trends in the courts, as follows:

... the judicial arrogance displayed by many liberal state and federal judges... the use of the courts by government bureaucracies to enforce their humanistic standards, and... the ever-increasing decisions that those "humanistic standards" are, in the court's view, "public policy" and therefore must take precedence over even our religious freedom rights.

REPORT NEW HINGAMON AGAINST CHRISTIANITY AND CONSTITUTIONALITY IN THE NATION. In one widely publicized case, the **Faith Baptist Church of Louisville, Nebraska**, was padlocked at all but service times, and Pastor Everett Sileven jailed, for operating their Christian school without a license. The church holds that the state has no right to license a ministry of the church. Despite threats of fines, the church members have stood

(continued on next page)



Phil Johnson, Omaha World Herald photo

Faith Baptist Church of Louisville, Nebraska, was padlocked and the pastor jailed after he refused to subject his Christian school (a ministry of the church) to state licensing. Local antagonists fear that Pastor Sileven exercises a mysterious power over his followers. (See

Jim Jones. It seems that almost any Christian who takes a dogmatic stand for what he believes has become a target for cult-mongers.

(continued from page nine)

by their pastor and continued sending their children to the school. Townspeople, who cannot understand this fundamentalist adherence to principle, "hint that Sileven exercises a mysterious control, like Jim Jones and Jonestown."³ The nation is so infected with cult paranoia that any church which seems narrow or unconventional is fair game for cult charges.

Religion: singled out for control

What a paradox! Many religious people oppose the control of pornography and violence in the media, but they campaign to control religious practices. The same people who blast the old Salem witch-hunts for hurting innocent people are now campaigning for a national cult-hunt. Many naively believe that only the real cults will be implicated. **This will not happen.**

In reaction to Jonestown, the cry is resounding, "The government must control religious cults!" Paul A. Verdier, author of *Brainwashing and the Cults*, declares, "We must set up legal safeguards against these malevolent forces unless we wish to have a nation of mindless, automated, glassy-eyed robots."⁴ At Senator Robert Dole's hearings on cults in 1979, Ted Patrick, deprogramming's chief advocate, suggested that the government should "arrest every cult leader."⁵ And who is a cult leader, according to this "authority"? Quoting *Christianity Today*:

Basing his opinions on a *Penthouse* article, Patrick, who has no formal training in religion, compared television preacher Jerry Falwell to Sun Myung Moon. "Falwell has more people under mind control than Moon. He leads the biggest cult in the nation," Patrick insisted.⁶

The famed deprogrammer has stated that "reading the Bible drives people mad" and that Billy Graham "hypnotizes" his converts.⁷

On August 25, 1982, a suburban Seattle paper, *The Highline Times*, reported the results of a national telephone survey which asked if Americans felt that cults were harmful to young people. Most answered in the affirmative; over 70% in Seattle voted "yes." The next poll asked whether legislation ought to be enacted to control cults. The results showed that 56% of local callers favored legal control of religious groups. "That concerns us," the editor remarked, "because, as we said in the first question, most religions begin somewhere and we'd hate to have to choose which present religion should be forced to accept legal controls on its form of worship or its devotional practices."

Crime should be controlled. Violence, extortion, fraud, blackmail,

Even back in the 1890's, Reverend John Dowie was arrested for praying for the sick. Dowie suffered several attempts on his life, along with smear tactics by the press, mobbings by medical students, and an arbitrary postal rate hike (overturned by the Postmaster General after a personal appeal from Dowie).⁸ World-renowned evangelist Lester Sumrall has stated that the healing evangelist Clifton Erickson was sued in every Catholic country where he prayed for the sick. In 1956, an alliance of the *Miami Herald*, the local Council of Churches, the Churches of Christ, and Joseph Lewis, the nation's most notorious atheist and president of the Freethinkers of America, resulted in the arrest and trial of Reverend Jack Coe on the charge of "practicing medicine without a license."⁹ That year, revivalist O.L. Jagers warned:

There will come a time soon . . . when the combined efforts of the newspapers, magazines, federations and councils of churches have done their deadliest and reached their zenith in creating smear campaigns and other methods of liquidation, which they now have in mind.¹⁰

Four years later, Oral Roberts was threatened with a similar suit.

When deprogramming becomes persecution

The practice of "deprogramming" is **already** being used to force born-again Christians to renounce their faith. It is not too difficult to foresee the day when court orders will sanction forcible detainment of hundreds of Christians at the request of family members and cult "experts." A wild claim? Listen to the warnings of the CLD&EF.

Deprogramming is already being used to force Christians to renounce their faith.

The deprogramming process has come to assume a set pattern. It begins with abduction. The deprogrammer and his helpers, often including the young person's own family members . . . forcibly place him in a vehicle and transport him to a place where he is held against his will. Usually in a motel or resort home, he is subjected to a constant barrage of questioning, appeals, and denunciation of his religious beliefs . . . Some young people have asserted that they were physically harmed by

and kidnapping should all be condoned, and there are adequate laws against them. If a cultist or anyone else does such things, he should be prosecuted. However, freedom of worship is guaranteed by the Constitution and must not be infringed upon.

What will happen if we allow Congress or the state legislatures to control our churches? Will not a first step in that direction result in more boldness for more legislation to bring religious groups into conformance with the dictates of the ultra-liberal World and National Councils of Churches? Will not the leftists, radicals, and all those with antichrist spirits lobby vehemently against church practices they consider harmful, such as faith healing, speaking in tongues, putting the rebellious out of the church, and teaching that secular humanism is wrong? It is reported that the NCC has already pushed for legislation against praying for the sick and that the WCC, at its international meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, made plans to ridicule the King James Bible (the one most frequently used by fundamentalists) with the eventual goal of getting rid of it.



Through the testimony of a self-confessed West Indian witch and several young girls, seven men and thirteen women were executed on charges of witchcraft in the Salem witch trials of 1692. Above, George Jacob faces the accusers; Jacob was hanged after a number of Salem girls testified that he had bewitched them. Several ministers and even the president of Harvard were accused before public opinion turned against the proceedings. All suspected "witches," and even those executed, were ultimately exonerated. Similar hysteria has reappeared today in the form of a "cult mania" that is smearing the names of innocent churches and Christians.

deprogrammers. Forcibly restrained from a few days to several weeks, deprived of sleep, in constant emotional turmoil, and under unceasing emotional pressure, he usually capitulates . . .

Are there latent dangers in allowing deprogramming to continue in America? What does all this have to do with us as fundamentalists, with our rights, our freedoms, and our future?

Those questions are partially answered by relating what happened to a young woman named Rebecca . . . In the small town in which she lived, there was a **little Independent Baptist church** which held young people's meetings on Tuesday nights. A neighbor invited Becky . . . She attended regularly, finding adults with genuine love for her and young people who accepted her in sincere Christian friendship. As she says, "A great deal of love reached out to me . . . someone really cared about me. I can honestly say I had the best time in my life at that point . . . I trusted Jesus as my personal Saviour. A great void in my life was filled."

. . . Becky moved away from home at the age of nineteen to work full-time in another city in order to save money to attend a Christian college. Then her parents issued what has become their constant and bitter accusation: that the pastor and his wife turned Becky against them, brainwashed her, and drew her into a "cult." The pastor . . . tried to help Becky to understand and cope with her parents' attitude . . . "My pastor and his wife encouraged me to go home and see my parents. They offered me their car, and I went home, but there was just a family war."

In 1977, Becky's parents took two of their other children, not yet of legal age, who had attended the church with Becky, to a deprogrammer. Becky says, "At first, it didn't work, but after about two weeks, they (her brother and sister) broke. My sister is now a totally different person who very seldom attends church anymore. She went from a modest, shy young lady to wearing skimpy clothing . . . My brother went totally into a shell and quit attending church altogether. They both made a total about-face." Becky's parents and two other couples then went to the newspapers with accusations against the church. These accusations were printed as the "truth," causing the church great harm. Attendance dropped from 166 to 33 in just three weeks. Some examples of the false reporting are as follows: in January 1979, the pastor and his wife were honored in Mexico for long-time support of a missionary work there. On their return home, they found that the media was printing that the entire church was considering going, "People's-Temple style," to live in Mexico. Under such headlines as "Family Loses Children to Cult," local papers printed statements such as these:

"(Simple attendance at church activities) has evolved into total devotion to the leader, near-total isolation from the real world, and a hellish nightmare."

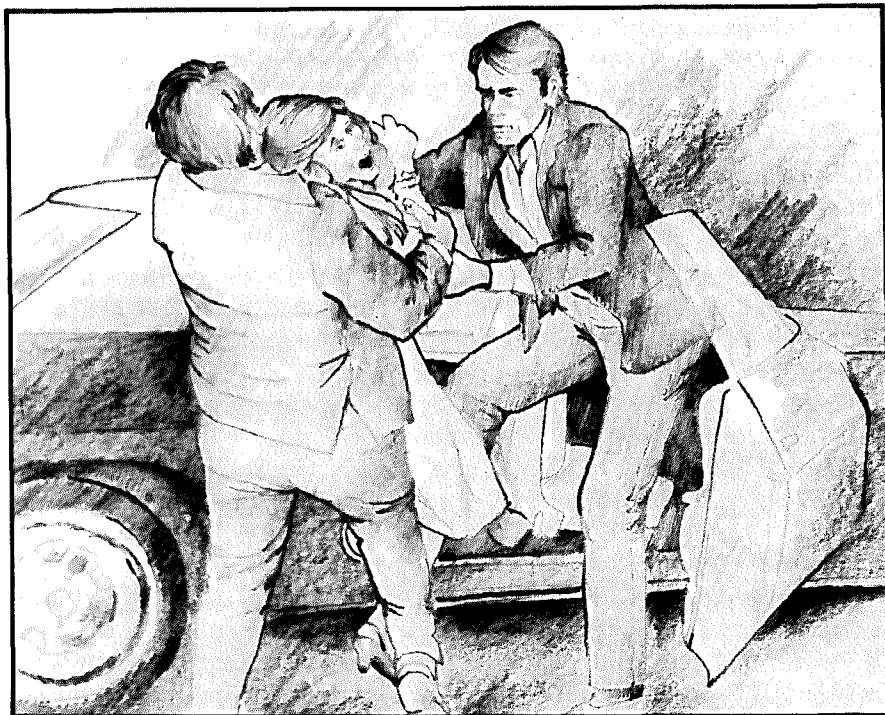
"Young people associated with the church have been set against their parents, even to the point of considering violent acts

against them, by the teaching of the cult.”

“(The pastor’s) manipulation of and power over the group has not dwindled, but the numbers of the cult have.”

What happened next is best told by Becky herself:

On March 15, 1979, I suffered the worst shock of my life Two men jumped out of the car and came toward me. Pam yelled for me to run, but things happened so fast that the men grabbed me before I had time to react. Pam tried to help, but the men just shoved her away. I kicked, bit, screamed, and clawed, but they knocked me to the ground and dragged me to the car and threw me in. The driver then sped off. One man was my father, one was my uncle, and the other is still unidentified. We went to a vacated house of a cousin’s. I was twenty-four years old, and could not believe that this was being done to me by my parents.



They brought in deprogrammers. The deprogrammers told me I didn’t understand the Bible and that there was more than one way to be saved. They said I was a robot and my pastor and pastor’s wife were controlling me. They made fun of my morals and laughed at me because I didn’t drink. They wouldn’t let me sleep. They said that the church robbed me because I tithe, and

let me sleep or think. I tried to close my eyes and pray instead of answering their questions. When I did this, they yelled, “You’ll never get out of here if you don’t talk.” Every time I started to doze off, they either violently shook me awake and screamed at me to sit up straight, or Kalman, the one with the scraggly beard, slammed a yardstick down about two inches from my face. Finally they made me stand up so I wouldn’t go to sleep. When I fell asleep on my feet, they made me walk, held up between two of them.

. . . they kept standing there. “Name Jewish babies killed by the hand of Jesus.” I didn’t want to but they forced me. “One Jewish baby,” I began. “Two Jewish babies, three . . .” “No!” they shouted. “Say, ‘Jewish babies killed by the hand of Jesus.’” Their mood was too ugly to resist. “O.K. one Jewish baby killed by the hand of Jesus, two Jewish babies killed by the hand of Jesus, three Jewish babies . . .” Every time I tried to stop counting, they screamed at me to keep on counting. They didn’t let me stop until I had counted like that to fifteen hundred.

I hadn’t slept for so long, I was dizzy, depressed, and spacing out. Still, the deprogrammers kept shouting at me to give up my faith, quoting Bible verses that were supposed to be mistakes, wanting me to give them answers. They burned Bibles in my face again. They wouldn’t let me sit down any more, and I had to stand there while they crumpled up more pages from the pocket testaments and stuffed them into my ears and mouth. At that point I hardly knew my name, let alone anything else.¹³

Targeting cultists—and Christians

An article in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (October 31, 1982) reports that those abducted for deprogramming in Alberta last year included not only several Moonies, but a fundamentalist man and a Pentecostal woman. Listen again to the CLD&EF.

A Roman Catholic woman from Canada has also been victim of an attempt to make her renounce her religious beliefs. A twenty-two year old monk was abducted by his father from an Oklahoma City monastery and subjected to deprogramming. Two young women in Denver turned their backs on the traditional Greek lifestyle of their past—the Orthodox church, the community, the family. Ted Patrick, a deprogrammer known as “Black Lightning,” accepted the request of their parents to persuade them to change their minds. Who then is safe? . . . It seems that as long as there is someone close to you . . . who is willing to pay the fee, you are an admissible target . . . As one alarmed citizen stated, “It shouldn’t be too long before you can hire a deprogrammer to have your Great Aunt Tillie ‘persuaded’ to leave her money to the right cause.”

said that I should not go to any church. Remembering Bible verses, along with a great deal of prayer, was all that kept my sanity for the next few days.

Three different deprogrammers worked on me for five days. These people have left me with emotional problems. I still have nightmares and get very frightened, but these two men and one woman could never take Jesus out of my heart, nor could they remove His Word from me. God willing, they can never change my stand for Christ.¹¹

How are you going to feel when your own church's converts become the victims of deprogrammers? A rare case, you insist? The *Evangelical Newsletter* (September 4, 1981) quotes a study by Professor Irving Hexham and Rudy Dirks of Regent College, who found that

A list of thirteen religious groups, arranged in order of the ones most frequently victimized by deprogrammers, begins with the Unification Church and the Hare Krishnas, but **seventh, eighth, and ninth, respectively, are Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Baptists** (emphasis ours).

In a recent article entitled "And Now—Deprogramming of Christians Is Taking Place," *Christianity Today* recounts the kidnapping of 21-year-old Betsy and 18-year-old Whitney Chase while on a holiday visit to their mother in suburban Detroit. The mother was worried that the two girls, members of an **Assembly of God church**, had shown a change in personality and believed in divine healing. On the second day of their visit, Betsy and Whitney thought they were going shopping but ended up being taken to a guarded house, separated, and denied access to the telephone. Deprogrammers showed them films about the Moonies and Jim Jones. In this case, the mother, stepfather, and eight others were arrested for kidnapping.¹²

"Deprogramming has also plagued Maranatha Campus Ministries," says *Christianity Today*. "Maranatha's director of missions, Ted Doss, knows of at least 10 incidents of attempted deprogramming of students belonging to Maranatha."

The article notes that Jewish believers are especially vulnerable. Moishe Rosen, president of the San Francisco-based Jews for Jesus, says that Jewish Christians are targets for deprogramming because many Jewish parents regard Christianity as a cult. The New York Jewish Community Relations Council has a task force on "missionary and cult activities," and the militant Jewish Defense League has assaulted Jews for Jesus street missionaries on at least four occasions.

Ken Levitt, a Jew who was kidnapped for converting to Christ, describes his ordeal with deprogrammers in his book, *Kidnapped for My Faith*.

All night long people kept coming in and leaving. They wouldn't

"Two men jumped out of the car and came toward me. Pam yelled for me to run"

Our freedom . . . to choose any religion we want (or create our own) is secure under the First Amendment . . . "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." We are thus protected from any governmental interference . . . as long as our religious practice does not break other laws of the land

Because of the First Amendment, we have an absolute right to believe anything we want, true or untrue, popular or unpopular, without having to prove to anyone at anytime that what we believe is valid. Young people, then, do have a right to turn from their family's traditional religion to another. In the light of the Constitution, a new cultist religion has as much right to exist, to persuade, propagandize, and recruit, as any long-established denomination or any independent, fundamental, Bible-preaching church. Whether its theology is Biblical or blatantly false, a new sect has the guarantee of religious liberty—the same guarantee that fundamentalists treasure. It is perhaps contrary to our nature to protect and defend those we know to be Scripturally wrong, but in a case such as this . . . we are protecting and defending ourselves.

To the world, fundamentalists are simply another unconventional religious group. Therefore, it is a great comfort to know that the rights of unconventional religious groups are guaranteed by the First Amendment and upheld by the courts.¹⁴

I am receiving more and more reports of Christian churches being smeared as cults. One Pentecostal pastor wrote to us recently, "Please continue to pray for us . . . as the devil is continuing his slander against us, spreading lies that we are a cult" Another wrote to one of our church members:

. . . you would probably not know the great amount of persecution, hostility, and animosity expressed towards Living Faith Fellowship in recent years; yet I know your congregation has experienced the same sort of rejection. It seems most groups dedicated to serious Lordship suffer this; but then, of course, it is one of the promises of Scripture.

In an advertisement in a local paper, an antagonist named our church in a long list of cults. We were the only Christian church on the

(continued on next page)



Is campus witnessing a mark of cultism? Some of the secular "cult experts" want you to think so. Members of the Campus Crusade for Christ, Maranatha Ministries, and other born-again groups have won thousands of college students to the Lord. All Evangelicals agree that these campus religious organizations are not cults!

(continued from page eleven)

list. The ad's sponsor had heard wild rumors and without verification included our church in his anti-cult seminar. History is full of gruesome stories of hundreds being trampled when a prankster yelled "Fire!" in a packed auditorium. Among churches, it only takes one irresponsible charge to incite a panic. Your church could be next.

The next step: anti-conversion laws

Already, activists are lobbying for "anti-conversion" bills. The *Evangelical Newsletter* (July 24, 1981) warned of one such attempt.

The New York state legislature approved an amendment to its mental hygiene law June 30 that could mean trouble for cults

volves a sudden drastic alteration of their personalities.¹⁵

Note the implication: "These other groups produce a sudden change and are bad; therefore, fundamental Christianity is bad because it produces a sudden change." Subsequent questions and answers betrayed the same thinking.

What is the difference between snapping and being born again?

When we began, we didn't even consider that the born-again experience would be part of our investigation. But when we talked to members in the **Campus Crusade for Christ**, many displayed the characteristics of the cult members we had interviewed. Warning signs include glazed eyes, a change in voice and posture, dropping all social activities to focus on one group and inability to carry on a normal conversation.

Once a person has snapped, is the process irreversible?

It's quite beyond the power of parents or loved ones to get people out of these groups by talking to them. The whole process of mind control has gone too far. It requires the direct intervention of a psychiatrist or skilled deprogrammer who knows how cults work.¹⁶

This implies that even members of Campus Crusade for Christ are fit subjects for deprogramming. After all, when interviewed by the experts (humanists, devoid of spiritual understanding, intruding into the spiritual realm which is entirely unknown to them) they betrayed some of the cult "warning signs"! They had the "glazed eyes" (perhaps as they fixed their gaze on these two skeptics and reproved them). They showed a change in voice and posture (probably gathered from their serious tone and stance). They had dropped social activities (that's right—when college students give their lives to Christ, they **should stop going to beer busts, frat orgies, and hashish-clouded rock concerts**). They were unable to carry on a normal conversation (that is, without mentioning how much they loved their Lord). Thus the "cult experts" conclude that the Campus Crusaders are one step behind Jimmy Jones, and many Christians seem content to let the blind be their watchmen!

In another article, the same "experts" cited **speaking in tongues** as a symptom of "information disease" inflicted by cultic "mind control."¹⁷ If we are to believe this, then the apostles and disciples, along with millions of Christians from the first century to the present, including at least 62 million in the world today, have suffered this cult "symptom."¹⁸

When interviewed by the "cult experts," the Campus Crusaders be-

give courts the right to appoint a temporary guardian for someone who has undergone "a systematic course of coercive persuasion" from a suspicious group. *Intended to control cults, it could easily backfire, critics say, to handcuff bona fide evangelism by churches* (emphasis theirs).

The November 28, 1980, edition of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* contains an article by Nicholas von Hoffman concerning another far-reaching proposal for anti-cult/anti-conversion legislation.

Recently James and Marcia Rudin... had an article in *The New York Times*, a 10-point program, no less, for saving our wee ones from irregular preachers who would lure them off to death in the tropics....

Point number seven is a lulu: "Cults must strictly comply with consumer protection legislation and not misrepresent themselves to prospective members." That would permit every church-hating atheist in the country to institute consumer protection legal proceedings against every church... [that promises heaven to believers—an "unverifiable" claim].

Point number eight would have worse First Amendment problems than point number seven: "Laws regulating proselytizations should be tightened. Perhaps laws barring conversion of minors should be passed, and the legal age defining 'minors' raised from 18 to 21 in cases of religious conversion." You're old enough to drink, kid, and you have the wisdom to vote, but we'll choose what church you decide to join. The Rudins also say, "residents of homes for the aged must be spared from cult recruiting campaigns." He's too young to join, and she's too old. The net result is the use of the power of the state to prevent anyone from joining....

It's amazing that good intentioned proposals like this can come streaming out now when we are supposed to be sensitive to government encroachments. My encroachment makes sense and yours doesn't, so I will now proceed to draw up a list of approved churches....

The philosophical groundwork for such sweeping "anti-conversion" legislation is being laid by secular cult "experts" like Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, who wrote a book entitled *Snapping: America's Epidemic of Sudden Personality Change*. An interview with the authors in a national magazine yielded some revealing statements.

You say that three million Americans are involved in cults. Isn't that inflated?

That may be a conservative figure. A Gallup poll showed that six million Americans have done TM. Over 170,000 have participated in est [*Erhard Seminars Training*]. Scientology claims 3.5 million followers worldwide. The Gallup poll reports that **50 million Americans say they've been born again**, which also in-

Yes, true cults are a danger, but so are the activist liberals who are trying to destroy the work of Christ. So are the hundreds of backslidden Christians who have turned bitter and are retaliating against the churches of God. Such people go from church to church, leaving a trail of malicious lies against the churches they have left. Sadly, they are welcomed into each new church and, more often than not, when they tell their twisted tales of woe, they are comforted instead of rebuked for rumormongering.

In the case of our own church, every so often I have been contacted by a wise pastor who wants to verify the accuracy of the story of some ex-member who is seeking admission to his church. We need to trust one another's church governments over the accusers who were put out or left in a carnal huff. Oh, they can appear so sweet and lovable when they enter, but they leave a wake of diabolical destruction when they depart.

While the real cults pose a danger to the naive would-be Christian and the gullible new convert, the push for legislation against "cults" (i.e., churches with either the spirit and power of the devil or the Spirit and power of God) poses a danger to all true Bible believers. Therefore, we must avoid alarming the nation about each other's truly Christian churches.

Beloved, let us stick together for the safety of all, lest the devil divide and conquer!

¹ *Advance*, vol. 2, no. 9 (October, 1982), p. 4.

² Christian Legal Defense & Education Foundation letter dated Sept. 4, 1982.

³ "The Police Lock a Baptist Church," *Christianity Today*, November 12, 1982, p. 60.

⁴ Citizens' Freedom Foundation pamphlet, "This can happen to you!"

⁵ "Cult mongering," *The New Republic*, February 17, 1979, p. 12.

⁶ "Who Decides What Is a Cult and What Is Not?" *Christianity Today*, November 26, 1982, p. 48.

⁷ Irving Hexham and Myrtle Langley, "Cracking the Moonie Code," *Crux*, September, 1979, p. 25.

⁸ Gordon Lindsay, *John Alexander Dowie* (Dallas: Christ for the Nations, 1980).

⁹ *The Gordon Lindsay Story* (Dallas: Voice of Healing, n.d.), p. 195.

¹⁰ David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *All Things Are Possible* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1975), p. 103.

¹¹ *CLD&EF Notebook*, March/April, 1980, pp. 2,3 (emphasis added). Used by permission.

¹² "And Now—Deprogramming of Christians Is Taking Place," *Christianity Today*, April 22, 1983,

p. 31.

¹³ *Kidnapped for My Faith* (Van Nuys: Bible Voice Inc., 1978), pp. 36,61-63.

¹⁴ *CLD&EF Notebook*, March/April, 1980, pp. 3-5. Used by permission.

¹⁵ "In Their Own Words," *People*, December 4, 1978, p. 94 (emphasis added).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* (emphasis added).

¹⁷ "Information Disease," *Science Digest*, January, 1982, p. 90.

¹⁸ At the World Pentecostal Conference in Nairobi in 1982, Thomas F. Zimmerman, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, U.S.A., stated that there are 62-100 million Pentecostals in the world, making them the largest single family of churches in world Protestantism (*Christianity Today*, October 22, 1982, p. 66).

Where Experts Miss the Mark . . .

Problems in Recent Cult Exposés

In 1980, *Media Spotlight*, a Christian review, published a quiz entitled "Are You in a Cult?" Of the 26 questions posed to help readers determine if their church is a cult, 13 seriously lack qualification. Let's analyze them for the purpose of balancing our thinking.

The questions needing clarification

- [Does your church] **teach that no other church has the special revelation of God's purpose or working that they have?**

God has granted revelation to certain men before others received it. Someone has to be first! A list of such men would include:

John the Baptist: He alone, for a time, knew that Jesus was the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

Peter: The first (after John the Baptist) to know that Jesus was the Son of God. The first to know that salvation was being extended to the uncircumcised Gentiles.

Paul: The first to receive many spiritual revelations.

Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, John Darby, John Dowie, and Charles Parham are among the many men of God who had special or first revelation. All of the doctrines restored to the church since the Dark Ages were given first to someone!

The question should read: "Teach that only **they** receive revelation from God, or that only **they** have all truth while all others err."

- [Does your church] **tell you that you should not question what your leaders are telling you, but that you must trust them because they have been given a special position of authority or ministry from God?**

Of course, everyone must be free to study the Bible and accept only that doctrine which appears to him to be Scriptural. And everyone

and/or eldership, in which God invests authority (Hebrews 13:17).

- [Does your church] **teach you that should you leave their fellowship you will backslide, fall into Satan's hands, become ill, get divorced, or have some other calamity befall you as part of God's judgment against you?**

In the context that the writer means it, it would be very wrong for a pastor to use scare tactics to prevent members from leaving the church. God does not cause people to get ill or divorced, and He does not send judgment upon a person for leaving a church. However, there comes a time when a good pastor must tell a rebellious and stubborn member that if he leaves the church without settling matters with those he has wronged, he is in trouble with God. No matter where he goes, God will not release him from his responsibility to make things right with that church. And there are those who, if they leave a church in their shaky condition, will backslide, and they **should** be warned. So, some qualification is in order here.

- [Does your church] **have its own teaching aids and/or Bibles, and require that you shun all others as containing error, using primarily theirs as being the only ones having the whole truth?**

A valid warning sign in a general sense, but it must not be interpreted to mean that a church is a cult if it insists that the King James Version, or the New American Standard Version, or Panin's Numeric Bible, or some other translation is most accurate. Nor are churches cults if they publish their own prophetic charts because they feel others are inaccurate. They may be wrong, but that does not make them cults.

- [Does your church] **teach that if you are faithful to this true church you will find special favor**

- [Does your church] **teach that you should discard your own opinions and assume the opinions of the elders because they are in your best interest?**

True, people should not abandon their right to think and discern. However, we must not denounce a church for teaching new converts to trust the eldership in matters they do not yet understand. Dealing with new converts is akin to working with growing children—they need to trust their more knowledgeable parents and teachers even though they are sometimes wrong. Furthermore, the pastor must not be castigated for teaching that the congregation is responsible to follow God's commandments to deny self and sin, take up the cross, and follow Christ.

- [Does your church] **require that you give a substantial portion of your income to it or to its leaders?**

While at least one well-known cult pressures its members for very large offerings, I have seen Pentecostal evangelists do the same. This is not a mark of a cult, however improper it may be.

- [Does your church] **teach that you must cease thinking as an individual and begin thinking corporately, assigning your will to the will of God as defined by your elders?**

A valid question, but this should not justify Christians in keeping their selfish independence, refusing to act as a part of the body of Christ and care for one another as Paul taught them to do.

- [Does your church] **teach that everyone is "out to get you" and that you must be willing to sacrifice all you have including your life, if that is necessary, for the sake of the group?**

One must never be called to lay his life down

appears to him to be Scriptural and everyone should have freedom to think, question, compare claims with Scripture, and discuss the claims with other men of God. However, a pastor does have a right to explain to his congregation that it is improper for them to defy him or the elders in matters of church rules which they have the responsibility to decide. God has called the pastor to lead the sheep to higher ground, not to descend to the common vote of those just out of the world. Someone must set the standard, and that job falls to the pastor

with God so as to be delivered from the great tribulation while He pours out His judgmental wrath upon all others?

This must not be interpreted to mean that churches which believe in escaping the great tribulation by means of a pretribulation Rapture are cults. Nor should the question implicate the many churches which teach a Rapture of only those Christians who are prepared. Thousands of Christians believe in a partial Rapture, but this does not make them cultists.



A Roman catacomb, ca. A.D. 200. The recently published quiz "Are You in a Cult?" cited the belief that "everyone is out to get you" as a mark of cultism. If this is true, then Christianity in its early centuries was the world's grandest cult! The belief that people were "out to get them" drove Roman Christians to live out their days in the underground recesses of the catacombs. With pick, shovel, and hoe, they extended these tunnels into a system of underground cities adorned with Biblical scenes, having streets, rooms, chapels, and burial cubicles. Reached by obscure stairways, stacked on as many as four levels, the catacombs would extend about 587 miles if placed end to end. In Communist countries today the "underground church" must worship Christ in secret; in the great tribulation, according to Scripture, such persecution will be universal.

for the group, but he must be willing to lay it down for Christ if necessary (Revelation 2:10). Moreover, there have been times when almost everybody was "out to get" Christians, and there will again be such times. People were "out to get" Christians in ancient Rome; that is why many of them spent their lives hiding in catacombs. People were "out to get" Christians about 30 years ago in Catholic Colombia, where they gunned down Protestants in the streets, dynamited their homes, and even forced them to dig their own graves. And people are "out to get" Christians in Communist and Moslem countries today! In the great tribulation, such persecution will be universal (Revelation 13:7,15). Such a spirit is even now fast growing in the world.

- [Does your church] **shun those who have left the fellowship for whatever reason, and teach that they are "reprobate," "dogs," "heathen," "publicans," or some other derogatory term?**

We must not contradict clear Scripture concerning putting offenders out of the church and treating them as the Bible commands! The Bible details two different types of cases, one in which the ones dismissed are to be shunned and treated as "a heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:17); the other, shunned but recognized as "a brother" (2 Thessalonians 3:15). See also 1 Corinthians 5:11. Moreover, Paul called some believers who left the faith "reprobate" (2 Timothy 3:8). After all, if a Christian backslides and becomes morally unprincipled and headed for damnation, he is reprobate, for that is the definition of the term. We must not blast cultists for doing what the Scripture commands just because most Christians do not accurately follow the Bible as their rule of faith! Nor should we reject Biblical practices just because some cult happens to copy them.

Of course, not everyone who leaves a church is necessarily to be shunned. But this question, without qualification, leaves the impression that to put out a sinning, rebellious backslider and acknowledge that he is reprobate, makes one a cultist. This is false.

- [Does your church] **cover up or ignore the sins of**

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Cults dare not let the Bible speak for itself, so they introduce other writings, regarded as "inspired," or at least as indispensable supplements to Bible understanding.

(continued from page thirteen)

its leaders or its leaders' families while coming down hard on its members for their indiscretions?

A valid question, but we must not infer that Christians have a right to gossip about sins their leaders may have fallen into and repented of. Nor should we infer that if an elder sins and his fellow-elders deal with the matter, it must necessarily be made public. This would not

truth is that it is wrong to expose the sins of anyone, except for the purpose of helping them and saving them through proper channels.

- [Does your church] ***maintain such an identity with its leader's ministry so as to make the two indistinguishable?***

While the church must not be married to any human leader, the body of Christ should be one in mind and judgment, as Paul taught (1 Corinthians 1:10). **The congregation should be fully**

control of the situation. In a word, these groups offer security. For people who have lacked positive structure in their lives, who have difficulty in making decisions or resolving conflicts or who are just plain uncertain about the future, these movements (churches, programs) are a haven.

The leaders of many of these groups consciously foster an unhealthy form of dependency, spiritually and otherwise, by focusing on themes of submission and obedience to those in authority.'

drag forgiven sins from under the blood of Jesus and hurt the work of God. Leaders and non-leaders alike need to be treated with grace and love, yet with insistence upon repentance. Furthermore, we must be as quick to forgive and trust a repentant pastor as any other repentant Christian.

- [Does your church] *have a reporting system that suggests you reveal the faults or discontentment of others in order that they may be "protected" from error and kept on the right path?*

This question would imply that those at Corinth who wrote to Paul of the errors and sins of some in the church were in error. If this were true, Paul should have remonstrated them for "ratting" on others, instead of reproving the guilty (1 Corinthians 1:11; 11:18).

In order to properly define and warn against cults, we must be careful to list only those practices unique to them.

It is a **non-Christian world view** that takes the side of the lawless, giving no information to the authorities who are struggling to keep society clean. A good father wants his son to be eyes for him and report his brother who is just starting to get involved with dope or with a bad crowd, so the father can rescue his son before it is too late. If a congregation does not keep its pastor and elders informed when people fall into spiritual trouble, they often cannot help them, and many backslide and may end up losing their eternal life.

When one compares this question to the previous one, he is led to the conclusion that it is wrong to cover up the sins of leaders, but right to cover up the sins of everyone else. The

behind its shepherd. Their vision and heart should be one.

Cults: an imbalanced Christian view

Another anti-cult article is far worse. The author, a professor of sociology at a Christian college, borrows from another Christian writer a very wrong statement, which says:

... There is in us, especially in those whose intentions are of the purest, an excessive and destructive will to power which eludes even the most sincere and honest self-examination.¹

This means that there are no men of God without "an excessive and destructive will to power." And, if we are to believe this writer, the purer the intention, the more destructive one is! Christ, then, must have been the most destructive. The apostles, reformers, and revivalists must have been the next most destructive, and so on. According to the writer, we can never discern the problem, for it "eludes the most sincere and honest self-examination"! Who then can be safe? This is the most irresponsible statement on this subject I have ever seen from a Christian writer. What's worse, it was printed in a national Evangelical magazine.

Consider another misleading statement in the same article:

What is it about people, including evangelicals, that explains this apparent need for authority figures? There are obviously many individuals in our society who are looking for some kind of authority to co-sign for their lives.²

The implication is that Christians who sense a need for authority are unwilling to face life's responsibilities. Yes, authority can be and has been abused. Nevertheless, God **has** set authority in the church, and that authority meets a real need, not just an "apparent" one.

Another portion of the article voices several unbalanced concepts:

First, there are many people in our rapidly changing and often confusing world who have real dependency needs. They are attracted to authoritarian movements, Christian or otherwise, because these movements offer black and white, clear-cut answers (or systematized approaches) to life's problems. Moreover, the leaders of such organizations convey a sense of solidity, a feeling of being on top of problems, of being in

To simply tell why certain people fall into cults is not doing an adequate job, because people "fall into" good churches for the same reasons.

This type of warning creates a fear that to teach on submission and authority is cultish! It also implies that we should not offer clear-cut answers. What does the author want, vague answers? Does he feel that leaders should convey a sense of **not being** on top of problems, letting matters run **out of control**? Does he feel that the church should **not be** a haven, and that it should **not** offer security? The implication is that the strong should stop aiding the weak. I am sure that in Paul's churches many people with the kinds of difficulties which this author notes found comfort and security in the authority of Paul and the elders of the assemblies.

By the time the reader finishes this author's warnings, he will not only be afraid of cults; he will be afraid of the best Christian churches! For example, he says:

A preoccupation with Satan and his work is another characteristic of spiritually authoritarian groups. Members of The Church of the Living Word are led to believe that Satan is concentrating his efforts against that group.⁴

Regardless of the possible merits, faults, or excesses of the group he mentions here, the author's statements are misleading. One could infer that a pastor is a cultist if the devil assails the church and he is led of God to warn the people diligently about the devil's devices, calling them to pray hard against the onslaught. Or, that if the church is engaged in a ministry of deliverance from demonic spirits (such as those of Derek Prince, Don Basham, Win Worley, or Frank Hammond) it may be a cult.

Martin Luther threw an inkwell at the devil's apparition. Was he a cultist? He believed that Satan

was concentrating his efforts against him and his group, and he was right! This is no distinguishing feature of a cult.

In order to properly define and warn against cults, we must be careful to list only those practices unique to them! To simply tell why certain people fall into cults is not doing an adequate job, because people "fall into" good churches for the same reasons. To describe the methods of cults is not enough; some of their methods are copied from Biblical examples.

In another article the same writer cites "the loss of true autonomy" as a hallmark of cultic control.⁵ And how does he define "true autonomy"?

The truly autonomous person is one who does his or her own thing. . . . A person who has firmly established his or her own values and goals in the framework of his or her own Christian faith is not likely to find cultic alternatives appealing (*italics his*).

This is not the Biblical alternative to cultism! This is fighting cultism with an equally unbiblical "Christian relativism." The idea that we are to construct our own framework of faith is an idea that you will never get from reading the Bible; it is pure humanism. There is only **one** faith (Ephesians 4:5).

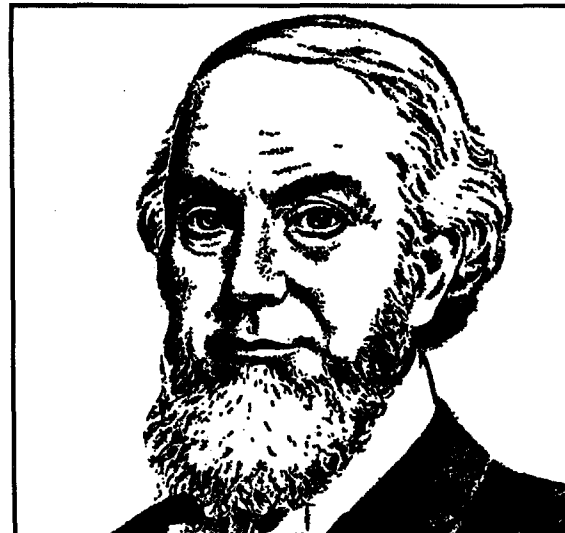
Now, of course, we must allow one another the right to think and to hold legitimate differences of opinion, keeping the unity of the Spirit until we come into the unity of the faith (Ephesians 4:3,13). But we must not let today's artificial and unbiblical scene of fractured denominationalism blind us to the goal of a body of Christ that is one in mind and judgment! We must not reject as "cultish" the inevitable conclusion that Christendom as it now stands is not the pattern for the finished body of Christ! Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10,

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak **the same thing**, and that there be **no divisions** among you; but that ye be **perfectly joined together** in the **same mind** and in the **same judgement**.

As the church comes closer to this goal in the days ahead, it is easy to see how the world is going to characterize this precious unity as a cultic "loss of autonomy," especially with the help of unbalanced articles like the one just quoted. (The unity I am referring to is not the outward ecumenism of man,

came out of the Presbyterian church. The Pentecostals, in turn, came out of the Baptist and holiness churches.

Furthermore, almost all denominations that have existed for any length of time have undergone many divisions. As of 1970, the Baptists had 27 major divisions; the Lutherans had 11; the Mennonites, 13; the Methodists, 22; the Pentecostals, 11; the Presbyterians, 10; and so forth.⁷ The so-called Latter Rain movement came out of Pentecostalism, and the Charismatic movement came from the old-line churches. The history of the Christian church is one long series of splits, divisions, and reorganizations. And, in most cases, the come-outers "started by describing themselves as in opposition to their local church or denomination." In fact, this was true of "Protestants" in general: their title stemmed from their **protest** against the Catholic suppression of Lutheranism, as demanded by the Diet of Spires in 1529. So, then, what is helpful (as this author implies) about knowing that Jim Jones (People's Temple), Rev. Moon (Unification Church), Moses David (Children of God), and Victor Wierwille (The Way, International) came from Christian churches? Are we to mistrust all who break from established churches? Obviously not, for those established churches likewise were once unestablished movements which broke from other established churches!



Such warnings are dangerous. They make Christians nervous about their own brethren. A great shadow of suspicion is cast upon the body of Christ as members learn to become like citizens of the Soviet state: suspicious of everyone. We have overreacted, and we have reacted wrongly. We are crying "Cult!" before we have decided what a cult is. Furthermore, many of those who **have** decided, decided too fast, without considering the implications of their definitions. These warnings, instead of equipping the people to discern the real cults, have bred hysteria and name calling.

The anti-Christian liberals are waiting, like circling vultures, for the opportunity to swoop down and decide the cult issue that Christians are raising.

The solution should be clear: Bible believers, stick together! Warn against real cults (those non-born-again groups that fall under the old established criteria of cultism) by defining what is **different** about them. Warn against teachings that take away the efficacy of the blood of Jesus for salvation. Warn against the tactics of the activists who would strip the church of its Constitutional freedoms. Warn against rumormongering. Pray for charitableness, discernment of the Lord's body, protection, and guidance. Finally, accept the decisions made by other church governments as being their responsibility before God and their churches.

"Cults": a secular view

The preceding errors from Christian publications, as bad as they are, are tame in comparison to those we found in a secular "cult exposé" written shortly after Jonestown:

At their worst, the cults acquire a psychosis

again saints.)

Are "come-outers" cultists?

Another Christian writer cites the following characteristics as indicators of a cult:

What is common to these churches and church leaders who have been led to cultism?

First, they all started by describing themselves as in opposition to their local church or denomination, or to the church at large. They had discovered the ideal church. The foundation was always begun with an identity by opposition.

Second, in these systems the pastor or leader was placed in a position beyond confrontation, coupled with a tight discipleship or shepherding approach to instruction.

Third, these groups placed a high emphasis on group sharing, testimonies, spirituality, devotions, and in some cases, Bible study.

Fourth, in these groups the leader had gained some new spiritual insight emphasizing the last days, healing, community, or spirituality.

Fifth, these groups placed a high value on community and caring.

Finally, all such groups slowly developed their own subcultural spiritual language.⁵

I predict that some of our Christian cult watchers are going to weep one day when they see the steamroller of cult-mania, fueled partly by their own irresponsible statements, flattening their own churches!

There are many errors in this catalog of "cult characteristics." The first error is the harmful and misleading statement that a group is a cult just because it came out of a church or denomination. Why is this so wrong? Let's look at the record.

The Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed churches came out of the Catholic church. The Anabaptists came out of the Lutheran and Reformed churches. The Mennonites came out of the Anabaptist movement. The Brethren came out of the German Baptist movement. The Puritans, along with the Congregationalists, Quakers, Methodists, and Plymouth Brethren, came out of the Anglican church. The Salvation Army split from the Methodist Church. The holiness movement of the 1800's came out of the old-line churches. For example, the Swedish Mission Covenant (founded 1878) came out of Lutheranism. The Christian and Missionary Alliance came into being in 1881 after A.B. Simpson



Charles Taze Russell, founder of "Jehovah's Witnesses." The Watchtower once claimed that studying the Bible without his writings would lead a person into darkness in two years. Many Christian groups have claimed that God gave them revelation, but cults differ in that they claim an exclusive revelation, unavailable to those without their special light.

What value is there in warning us that cults typically emphasize "group sharing, testimonies, spirituality, devotions, and in some cases, Bible study"? Shall we be suspicious of churches with such emphases? Shall we feel safer with churches that have no testimonies, no devotions, no Bible studies, and no emphasis on spirituality?

Are we to fear leaders who gain "some new spiritual insight"? Ever since the Reformation, various groups have been moving on to new truths (or more precisely, getting back to the Bible by regaining old truths). Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, Fox, Darby, Wesley, Dowie, and many others have claimed new truth. There have been many claims of new truth in the last decade of the Charismatic movement alone. To be sure, not all claims were valid, but even when they were wrong, the claimants were not cult leaders! Moreover, many of the claims were valid, for God has been slowly restoring truth to His church. And, He will continue to do so, for we must all come to the unity of the faith (Ephesians 4:13). This manifestly has not happened yet.

The recent Discipleship movement has placed a high value on "community," but they are not cultists. And "caring" is the responsibility of every Christian; surely caring is no salient earmark of a cult! Moreover, every new movement, both Evangelical and liberal, develops what could be called a "subcultural spiritual language." Aircraft engineers, computer programmers, mountain climbers, sailors, sociologists, and anybody else in specialized fields develop hybrid "languages" of terms which seem like nonsense to the uninitiated. So, what does that prove?

or millennialism.... Visions of the New Jerusalem... are bathed in a totalitarian light. And they are shadowed by glimpses of enemies: Antichrist, Gog and Magog; paranoia is often a cult's principal instrument of discipline....

Traditional religions allow people to live inside history, but still give sacramental expression to their spiritual longings. Cults too often strain to escape from history, through a reconstruction of Eden or a vision of the Second Coming.... Cultists reduce a multiform, contradictory world to cant formulas (i.e., group jargon), and they become as dangerous as anyone whose head resounds with certainties.⁶

Here we have an "anti-cult" commentary that implicates all Bible believers. To this *Time* editorialist, visions of the Second Coming, the Millennium, and the New Jerusalem are symptoms of a cultish "strain to escape from history." To teach that there will be a world government as the Bible prophesies, ruled by a Satan-possessed demagogue called "antichrist," and a climactic battle drawing armies from a great nation designated "Gog" to fall upon the mountains of Israel (Ezekiel 38; 39) is "paranoia." But this is Scripture! Actually, the issue comes down to how much stock one places in the Bible. To this writer, Bible believers are cultists.

The writer asserts that cults "reduce a multiform, contradictory world to cant formulas," and that anyone "whose head resounds with certainties" is dangerous. Evangelicals, take note! The day is approaching when anyone who believes the Bible is liable to be branded a "cultist." The anti-Christian liberals are waiting, like circling vultures, for the opportunity to swoop down and decide the cult issue that Christians are raising. They, of course, want to legislate against what they consider cultism, i.e., true Christianity. We must be very careful!

¹ Ronald M. Enroth, "The Power Abusers," *Eternity*, October, 1979, p. 25 (quoting Paul Tournier).

² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵ Ronald M. Enroth, "Any Preventive for the Cults?" (*Christian Herald* reprint distributed by Spiritual Counterfeits Project).

⁶ Harold Bussell, "Beware of Cults with Their Evangelical Trappings," *Christianity Today*, March 5, 1982, p. 42.

Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, new 5th ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970).

⁸ Lance Morrow, "The Lure of Doomsday," *Time*, December 4, 1978, p. 30.

Debunking Rumors Against Community

I have never heard of a man or a church which accomplished much for God without becoming the object of persecution and lies. Our Lord expressly declared that this would be the lot of His followers:

But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues (Matthew 10:17) . . .

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? (Matthew 10:25).

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matthew 5:11,12).

Jesus said, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! (Luke 6:26)." Paul said that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). Most of Paul's persecution came from the religious world, and so it is today.

What if you lived in Palestine while Jesus was ministering on earth, and you heard rumors that He was a glutton and a drunkard (Matthew 11:19), a blasphemer (Mark 2:7), demon-possessed (John 8:48), rebellious (Luke 23:1-5), or insane (Mark 3:21)? What if you also heard that Jesus had threatened to destroy property (Matthew 26:60,61) and that He ate with sinners (Matthew 9:11)? Would you conclude that He was guilty? Would you pass the rumors on? Many judged Him in this way, and many today are treating His followers in the same manner, just as He foretold.

Are you inclined to reject rumors against those you know or like but accept them against those you dislike? If so, you are unfair, and you are a candidate for deception by Satan's strategy to discredit ministers and works of God.

Does it seem incredible to you that people would lie against innocent men of God? Joseph was lied against. The charge? "Attempted rape." He must have been guilty, don't you think? Why would someone accuse him if he were innocent? Of course, we know that the false charge was the result of injured pride.

David was accused of things he knew nothing about (Psalm 35:11). Naboth was accused of blasphemy against God (1 Kings 21:10,13). Amos

Even the fact that several people make the same accusation "from their own experience with the accused" proves nothing, because those who initiate the accusation usually know what kinds of charges will hurt a person's reputation the most and what things will be easily believed. Such collusive "witnesses" have already taken sides, yet they pretend to render a decision as if they were disinterested judges! For example, a number of rebellious people who have been put out of a church may all charge the pastor with overcontrol, but their parallel accusations are no proof, because most rebellious people would consider proper control to be overcontrol. In order to ascertain the truth, the story should be checked with those still in good standing in the church. Unfortunately, many seem to think they cannot trust those in good standing—"They might lie." So they listen to the accusers only, trusting them to be fair and objective in all things and forgetting that, if anyone has a reason to lie, they have!

I have never heard of a man or a church which accomplished much for God without becoming the object of persecution and lies.

Have you heard rumors about Community Chapel and Bible Training Center? Did you accept them at face value without checking them with our eldership? Did you pass them on without proof? Those who have done so need to face the fact that they have disobeyed God and are guilty of sin.¹

One accuser wrote to me a couple of years after leaving the church and said, "Pastor, I have been pointing, accusing, and attributing my own failures and sins to you . . . Forgive me, God, and make me clean! And renew a right spirit in me."

Another wrote:

Don, I know I have hurt and offended you by speaking harmful untruths about you and the church and I want to

was accused of conspiracy (Amos 7:10). Nehemiah was charged with rebellion and treason (Nehemiah 6:6-8). Jeremiah was accused of being a false prophet (Jeremiah 29:27); Stephen, of blasphemy (Acts 6:11,13). You see, there need not be any substance whatever behind an accusation. Injured pride, desire for gain, resentment, dislike, pride of being in the know, even naiveté, are explanation enough.

Does the existence of **many** charges against someone constitute proof of guilt? If so, then the apostle Paul was definitely guilty, for he was accused of heresy and **many** other unprovable charges (Acts 24:5,13,14; 25:7). And since rumors travel fast, many people would all be mouthing these same accusations against Paul, but many accusers do not constitute many witnesses! A witness is one who sees and hears (witnesses) an action.

repent God hates those that sow discord among the brethren and cause dissension, for which I have been guilty I have learned a valuable lesson from all of this God does not take lightly His people attacking and maligning His ministers and churches doing God's work, for any reason whatsoever. I have learned the hard way, but I have learned, thank God I was deceived and rebellious. I have been disciplined by the Lord for my disobedience Because of my marriage problems, I found myself blaming you and the church, which I realize was wrong Naturally the devil took advantage and used me as a tool against Community Chapel I'm convinced that the reason for my actions in the past was . . . demonic deception and bondage in my life.

Another, who had rabidly accused Community Chapel of being a

My View of Community Chapel



Pastor Richard Frank

Born in the Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania, Richard Frank grew up in the Lutheran church, but with a longing for God that was never satisfied. At Thiel College he studied religion, waited on tables, and met a girl with an arresting, wide grin who later invited him to a Christian and Missionary Alliance church. There, he heeded the evangelist's call, made his way to the altar, and met the One he was pursuing.

Dick and Lorraine married in his senior year and moved to Hamma Divinity School of Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. There, the dynamic testimony of a local Lutheran pastor, invited to share his experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, propelled Dick on a four-year quest to analyze, understand, and receive this "promise of the Father." In 1967, Dick was filled with the Holy Spirit after a Full Gospel Business Men's meeting in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, under the ministry of Derek Prince.

The previous six years of pastoring a small Lutheran church were quickly followed by involvement in Charismatic prayer meetings and the local Jesus movement. Dick helped start a Christian radio station and a local chapter of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International. Meanwhile, about 80% of his church became born again, and about half the congregation were filled with the Holy Spirit. In 1975, when reports of this modern-day "Pentecost" became too much for the local synod, Dick left his pastorate and went to managing the Christian radio station full-time. In January, 1983, Dick and Lorraine flew to Seattle and visited Community Chapel, seeking a fresh move of the Spirit in their lives. What follows are experiences and observations from their three-week visit to our church.

Although I have visited many churches across the United States, I have never witnessed the magnitude and depth of Spirit-led worship as at

Community Chapel. This was my most deeply spiritual experience in twenty years of ministry. I was overjoyed to see the front of the sanctuary and front aisles filled with people praying, praising, and worshipping the Lord at least an hour before every service.

Life flickered again in our weary spirits as Lorraine and I began to participate. Spiritual melodies and lyrics were born spontaneously during the services; we had never seen anything like it. Musicians flowed with the worship without trying to dominate it. When a music ministry member was led to start a new song, we saw instant submission to that leading on the part of the other members—a manifestation of their love and respect for one another. Neither the pastor nor elders "conducted" this worship. It was led corporately, yet with order, so that special songs, spontaneous testimonies, and exhortations served to expand, confirm, or embellish the flow of the worship. Not all was perfect, of course, but it was awesome and heavenly—yet only a foretaste of what God will do with the entire body of Christ when it yields and breaks loose from tradition!

In all of northwest Pennsylvania, I know only a handful of persons who are practicing the ministry of intercession, or are even aware of God's call on their lives to this ministry. Most Christians

Chapel and Bible Training Center

cult, wrote:

I'm sick of my foolish life. I've been doing just what I've wanted for about a year now and it's crazy. My flesh is worn out, and my spirit is wounded. I'm worn out and tired of fighting God and [I] desire a clean slate. . . . I've been a stumblingblock to many saints, ending up [that] I'm the one who [was] stumbled the most.

I'd like to be accepted back. . . . I know I'd be better in [Community] Chapel than where I'm at.

What are the accusations against Community Chapel? And what are the facts? I've listed them below so that you might not fall prey to wild rumors against a church that is experiencing the greatest move of God that this old Pentecostal preacher has ever seen.

RUMOR 1: They sacrifice chickens as a religious rite at Community Chapel.

REPLY: Untrue. I'm wondering if this absurd accusation resulted from someone saying that the sound of other tongues coming out of the prayer room before or after service sounded like chickens in a hen house. Or, "It sounds as if they are sacrificing chickens in there!" Our before- and after-service prayer is "on fire" for God, but without chickens.

RUMOR 2: Those who join Community Chapel must turn all their money and property over to the pastor.

REPLY: Untrue. I am on a salary set by the church board as outlined in our bylaws, and I do not sit in on the meeting which determines my salary. Neither have I ever asked for any specific salary. No one turns his money or property over to this church or pastor in order to join the church, as alleged. In fact, you couldn't "join" this church even if you wanted to, for we have no registered membership!

RUMOR 3: The pastor of Community Chapel is pastoring only for the money.

REPLY: Untrue. If money were my goal, I would be operating far differently than I am! I pastored here for two years without a salary. I turned the substantial equity in my previous home over to the church for a building program. My starting salary at the church was actually a decrease from my previous earnings. I return a very



At one of our Fall Camp Meeting services, Pastor Barnett and ministers from other churches and fellowships listen as one of the pastors shares what the Lord has been doing in his assembly.

RUMOR 5: One must break ties with his relatives if he attends Community Chapel regularly.

REPLY: Untrue. We encourage the congregation to maintain good relationships with relatives, regardless of how the relatives themselves may act. On a rare occasion this is impossible because of the relatives' antagonism toward the Gospel. Some parents of Bible College students have deeply resented their children giving up social drinking, smoking, dancing, the theater, etc. It makes the parents feel judged, and it breaks up their worldly relationship. They, therefore, have blamed our church.

RUMOR 6: Everyone at Community Chapel carries a homemade gun.

REPLY: Untrue. I have never seen or heard of anyone at Community Chapel with a homemade gun. Certainly, we would not allow anyone on the premises with any kind of gun, unless he were a bona

...refused two standard cost-of-living increases due to yearly building projects necessary to keep up with our rapid growth. I have turned over to the church all rights to the books I have authored. I have no substantial savings, no properties, no stocks or bonds, no life insurance, and no retirement pay. I live modestly. I buy no tailored suits and have no extravagant possessions. I travel economy class, stay in moderately priced hotels, have no diamond rings, and I am happy this way. The church pays me a very adequate but reasonable salary, nothing more.

RUMOR 4: Community Chapel allows no one to wear nylons.

REPLY: Untrue. Virtually all women in the church, including my wife, wear nylons.

...ride police or security officer.

RUMOR 7: The pastor hired an agency to kidnap a woman who left Community Chapel.

REPLY: Untrue. I am not in the Mafia. I do not hire kidnappers, and I would not even know whom to contact if I wanted to do such an infamous thing. Neither would it serve any purpose, for the person would only leave again. We have no surveillance of people's homes and transportation. If someone does not like it at this church, we do not want him; there is no reason to kidnap dissenters. They can leave at their pleasure. We have no communal living and no church-owned homes, except, of course, the parsonage.

(continued on next page)

leave the task of prayer to their pastors. Not so at Community Chapel. The prayer life of this church as a whole is vast, exuberant, fervent, and effectual. Nearly a hundred intercessors uphold every aspect of the ministry of this church. No doubt this intercession is the heart-throb of the moving of God in this church, and if the intercessors neglect their part, the cloud of God's glory will move on.

Pastor Barnett is a diligent scholar of the Word, feeding his flock with relevant and revelatory teaching and sermons. Contrary to rumor, I found Don to be a compassionate pastor with an aversion to legalism and domination of the flock. I do not appreciate ministries propped up and pumped up by one man, and at first I was concerned that this might be a problem at Community Chapel. However, as I got acquainted with the leaders in this church, it became apparent that almost any one of them was able to carry on the ministry of the Word. If Don were to move on, the church would suffer loss, but they would not flounder. To me this is the ultimate test of whether a ministry is in New Testament order under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

As I mingled with the people, the fruit of the Spirit was undeniably evident, along with love and a servant's heart usually relegated to a faithful few. People everywhere ministered to

whomever, gently, lovingly, and without coercion. Lorraine and I were ministered to several times by individuals who quietly disappeared afterwards. In three weeks at Community Chapel, we didn't hear one word of gossip, criticalness, jealousy, or self-righteousness.

A heavy percentage of the accusations against Community Chapel and other Spirit-filled churches prove to be snap judgments and assumptions that are erroneous, sinful, and damaging to the body of Christ. At one point in my ministry back in Pennsylvania, the Holy Spirit convicted me sternly that to entertain gossip and accusation against other Christians and other ministries was to be a traitor to the unity of the body of Christ. From that time until now, I have chosen the way of a reconciler.

A congregational meeting was called to air grudges and criticism of my ministry, with me absent. A second meeting was planned, after a committee had briefed me about the first. I left Lorraine at home to save her from hurts and, in the flesh, I went to the meeting primed to knock down the lies and half-truths with the "final truth." The Lord zippered my mouth shut through the entire session. At the end of the meeting, He gave me a vision of the mob at Calvary and of the few who truly wept. Next, the Lord showed me the same scene, but with the faces changed to the

accusers in my congregation! It seemed that every cell in me was torn with grief, and I wept uncontrollably for the first time in my adult life. Satan was the leader of the mob in both visions! In the first vision, he was using unsuspecting people to rail and spit on the Savior. In the second, he was using them to rail, not at me, but at the Christ living in me! The spiritual war **behind** the shallow congregational issues was by far the more shattering and heinous.

To accusers of true works of God, the Lord would say: fight the **spiritual warfare**, and cease with the carnal! Forsake the path of the Accuser, and heed God's call to be a reconciler. To the accused: let the flesh die, weep before the Lord, and pray for the deliverance of your accusers. Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

Lorraine says, "I have never seen the magnitude of God's love in one place like I saw it at Community Chapel! I was in tears of thanksgiving many times, just overcome by His love. Such an utter lack of condemnation and such an outpouring of His grace—my life will never be the same. I have such a vision now for our family in Him."



(continued from page seventeen)

RUMOR 8: The pastor makes all decisions at Community Chapel—he does everything.

REPLY: Untrue. I have never seen another church where the pastor has delegated as many responsibilities as I have. I am not even on the deacon board. Jack Hicks is Corporation Manager and Director of Christian Schools; Donna Moren is Assistant Director of Christian Schools; Jack DuBois is Bible College Dean of Students; Scott Hartley is Corporate Budget Manager, Christian School Advisor, Secretary of the Board of Senior Elders and Deacon Board; Wyman Smalley is Treasurer; and each department—Sunday School, Publications, Music Ministry, etc.—has its own supervisor. I am the corporation president, but I certainly do not make all the decisions. In non-pastoral matters I have an equal vote with the other senior elders, and I am bound by a detailed set of bylaws with strict checks and balances. We have almost 150 avenues of ministry in our church. In every service, members of the congregation have the latitude to testify, exhort, and operate spiritual gifts as they feel led of God (most other churches plan their services in advance). Every few weeks several of our ministers preach and teach in my stead. We have much delegated authority and ministry.

One visiting minister told me: "I've preached around the world for 17 years, and this church has the best balance I've ever seen."

RUMOR 9: Community Chapel teaches that the beast of Revelation 13 is the Protestant churches.

REPLY: Untrue. We teach that the beast of Revelation 13:1 is the same as the dragon of Revelation 12:3, which is said to be the devil (v. 9). Each head represents a king and his kingdom (Revelation 17:10), the last one being the end-time world government under the antichrist.

RUMOR 10: Community Chapel is Mormon/Unitarian/Jesus Only/United Pentecostal/affiliated with Teen Challenge (five separate rumors).

REPLY: All untrue. We are not and have never been affiliated with any of these groups.

Timothy 2:5), "a man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3), "a man approved of God" (Acts 2:22), "the son of David" (Matthew 1:1); a man with a body (Colossians 1:22), soul (Matthew 26:38), and spirit (Mark 8:12), the same as any man.

RUMOR 13: Community Chapel denies the Father and the Holy Ghost.

REPLY: Untrue. We believe in the Father and the Holy Ghost—and, of course, in Christ Jesus, too.

RUMOR 14: Community Chapel has its own translation of the Bible.

REPLY: Untrue. We read from the King James Version and refer to several other well-known translations as the need for comparison arises. More often, we refer to the Greek manuscripts, Greek texts, concordances, and lexicons.

RUMOR 15: Community Chapel is legalistic.

REPLY: Untrue. We strongly oppose legalism and have done a great deal of careful, detailed teaching against it.

RUMOR 16: Community Chapel is fanatical.

REPLY: Untrue. As pastor, I am committed to having a balanced assembly. I know what fanaticism is and what it is not, and I have seen more than enough of it to last me a lifetime. I have given considera-



most groups.

RUMOR 11: Community Chapel denies the Deity of Christ.

REPLY: This rumor, broadcast on radio in Seattle, is totally untrue. We believe in the full Deity of Jesus Christ, as it says in Colossians 2:9: "... in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." We hold that Jesus is the same God who said to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14; cp. John 8:58).

RUMOR 12: Community Chapel denies the humanity of Christ.

REPLY: Untrue. We believe that Christ was "the man Christ Jesus" (1



A second-grade teacher at Community Chapel Christian School discusses classwork with one of her pupils. Enrollment in the K-12 school is swelling as more and more of our children reach school age (we will soon have six kindergarten classes). Work is beginning on a new multi-purpose educational building to help keep abreast of the growth. When completed, the 46,000-square foot facility will increase the capacity of the school to approximately 800 students.

My View of Community Chapel



Rev. Will Moore

After his missionary training at Southwestern College of the Assemblies of God was curtailed by a letter from the draft board, Will Moore served two years as assistant to the commanding officer of an army company stationed near Frankfurt, West Germany. Will impressed the chaplain, and soon he appointed Will superintendent of a Sunday School ministry to 200 youth. Staffing the classes with Spirit-filled teachers, he saw a number of children give their hearts to Christ.

His tour of duty completed, Will spent two years counseling converted drug addicts at Teen Challenge in Dallas and four years pastoring a small Church of God

(Pentecostal) in New Mexico. At this point, he continues the story:

As a substitute teacher in the public high school, I started a "Maranatha prayer group" that became known statewide. Revival fire swept the school for two years as students prayed before school, carried their Bibles, and witnessed for Christ.

A motor home came in with a clean-cut, enthusiastic ministry team from Community Chapel Bible College, and my young people were struck by their zeal and love for Jesus. The day after their arrival they were out on the street witnessing for Christ; you'd think they would have taken a vacation. Many in my prayer group wept and praised the Lord as the team prayed with them, sang, preached, and testified of their experiences in God. Unprompted, all our young men came to the next meeting with their long hair shorn and their "mod" clothes replaced with coats and ties. Six made immediate decisions for Bible college.

Meanwhile, I had all but lost touch with God. Back at Teen Challenge, I had fixed myself a closet big enough to sit in every morning and commune with the Lord. Now, pastoring, teaching, serving in the National Guard, and building homes—including my own—had crowded Him out of my schedule. The prayer group kept gaining momentum, propelled by the fiery zeal of a high school football hero who had dedicated everything to God, but I was "dying on the vine." I knew pastors who quit the ministry when they "ran dry"; others pastored a few years here and a

few there, moving on when they had exhausted their store of Bible revelation. I thought, "I can't go on ministering while I die spiritually. I've got to get my life on the proper foundation." Another pastor had already taken my place at the church. I sold the house, loaded my pickup truck, and ended up with my wife and daughter in Seattle.

At first we sent our daughter to Sunday School at Community Chapel while we attended another church. But as Camille kept coming home chattering about Bible stories she had learned and bubbling about "how much Jesus loves me," we knew this was the church for us.

My first six months at Community Chapel changed my life. What struck me most was the wisdom of the pastor, more than in any man of God I had known. On Sunday, Don would sow some seed of practical truth, and by Thursday I found that it was beginning to spring up in my life. I was impressed with his willingness to teach and correct in spiritual matters. He was no church politician; he said what he really thought, without forcing his opinions on people. I've learned so much about pastoring by just watching Don lead services.

I am so knit to this body of Christ. I've received so many benefits; wise counsel and teaching have put my life on the right foundation. When God calls us back into the ministry, it's going to be a sacrifice to leave, but I know I'm not going to waste away anymore in a spiritual wilderness. The rain of the Spirit is falling in my soul!





A typical service begins after more than an hour of pre-service prayer in which hundreds flood the front of the sanctuary for worship and singing in the Spirit. Later, Music Ministry moves up to the platform-risers to lead the congregation in worship. In 1982, the Holy Spirit

sovereignly swept us into the ministry of deliverance from demonic oppression. Since then God has sent one mighty visitation of His presence after another, causing such rejoicing that we can hardly contain it.

ble detailed teaching and guidance against fanaticism.

RUMOR 17: Community Chapel is unbalanced.

REPLY: Of course, this is a matter of opinion. One visiting minister told me: "I've preached around the world for 17 years, and this church has the best balance I've ever seen." We have in attendance five ex-pastors, five lawyers, business executives, many ordained ministers, trained educators, and career people, among others, who feel that this church has an excellent balance. Our dozen full-time administrative heads and seven full-time theology teachers help provide a check and balance. I have seen a lot of mistakes and excesses in the ministry in my day, and we try to avoid them all. I think we have an excellent balance. We are very careful to avoid excesses.

RUMOR 18: Community Chapel advises its members to divorce and have abortions.

REPLY: Untrue. We have a written policy against any of our counselors advising anyone to divorce or have an abortion.

RUMOR 19: The pastor at Community Chapel exercises heavy-handed control over its members, requiring everyone to believe as he does and putting out those who will not buckle under to his demon of control.

elders watch for my ministry. They would never allow me to err substantially without requiring repentance and/or correction. I submit to them as they do to me.

RUMOR 21: Community Chapel has fellowship only with those they agree with doctrinally.

REPLY: Untrue. I have had pastors and evangelists with whom I differ substantially preach at our church, and I have attended ministerial and public conventions sponsored by various Christian groups, including World Missionary Assistance Plan (Warm Beach), Gordon Lindsay (Dallas), Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (Seattle), Independent Pentecostal ministerial conference (Palm Springs), United Pentecostal Church (Portland), "Apostles and Prophets Conference" (Toledo), Charismatic convention (Kansas City), Bethel Bible Camps (Mirror Lake), and the Charismatic Ministers' Fellowships (Seattle), among others.

I accept all who are born-again as brothers in Christ. I have regularly attended several different Pentecostal denominations during my lifetime. I never make doctrine alone the basis of my fellowship. I have preached to a Presbyterian youth group at their church. I have had fellowship with Baptists, Presbyterians, Brethren, Catholics, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mission Covenant, etc., and

REPLY: I feel that I am a very tolerant, patient, fatherly pastor who freely forgives sins repented of, who bears long with the weak, and who allows each one his own understanding of Scripture. I do believe in obedience to the Bible, and I preach it without fear or favor. We reluctantly put out of the church only those who live in continual unrepentant sin and/or who are grossly rebellious.

RUMOR 20: The pastor at Community Chapel is accountable to no one.

REPLY: Untrue. I am accountable to the bylaws, the senior elders, fellow elders, even to the congregation, and, most of all, to God. The senior

even taught a Bible study to such a mixed group for years.

RUMOR 22: Community Chapel has a lot of weird doctrines.

REPLY: We have no doctrine exclusive to us. Everything we believe is also taught by other Pentecostal bodies. Every major doctrine that I teach at Community Chapel I have also taught as Bible teacher at an Assembly of God church, with the pastor sitting in on the class. Of course, I have gained new insights since those days, but not to the point of changing any basic doctrine. I derive my doctrine from

(continued on next page)

My View of Community Chapel



Rev. Gil Olson

At a youth meeting of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, the Lord spoke to my heart: "You shall be a missionary in Africa." I earned my B.A. in religion from Seattle Pacific College, then entered United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. United was liberal; the lecturers "debunked" Bible miracles, nearly destroying my belief in God's Word. My prayer life was wrenched away from me. I graduated from United still clutching two certainties: God existed, and I was saved.

After pastoring for two years in Michigan, I took my family to Sierra Leone, where I spent nine years as a Methodist missionary. In the process, I earned an M.A. in Mission Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary, while authoring *Church Growth in Sierra Leone* (published by Eerdmans, 1969). During my last three years in Africa, I headed a Bible training center for local pastors. A lot of people were saved through our ministry; I believe I immersed over 1,000 in one year.

In 1973, I returned to pastor two small Methodist churches south of Seattle. My pastoral pride was chafed when some Spirit-filled members of one of the churches let me know they were praying for me to receive the Holy Spirit. During this time I attended a healing seminar at St. Joseph's Hospital in Tacoma, where I saw my first real miracle healing. Instantly, a light went on in my mind, the darkness of liberalism fled away, and the joy of the Lord flooded my soul. The Bible was true; miracles were true. It was all true! Shortly thereafter, at a Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship dinner, I humbled myself and asked some of my Spirit-filled people to pray for me. With their hands laid upon me, I raised my own and began praying in a language I had never known!

Soon I realized how little I knew about leading a Spirit-filled church. I sought help from other newly Spirit-filled pastors, but they, like me, were wandering from discussions to conferences to tapes to FGBMFI meetings. I prayed, "Lord, I need training."

After one of my church members came to me with an excited report about the move of the Spirit at Community Chapel, I came to Camp Meeting 1977 and heard the most edifying, in-depth teaching I had ever encountered. I immediately enrolled part-time in the Bible College and began teaching my people what I was learning. After a year of this, I realized I couldn't stay in the Methodist Church anymore; I no longer agreed with its programs. I needed to be at this training center full-time.

When I came to Community Chapel, I saw people who cared for each other and submitted to their pastor. I saw a pastor who strove to exalt Jesus Christ and His Word instead of tradition. I saw services that were led of God, where the worship was deep and the Lord was powerfully present. It was so refreshing not to be stuck in a format!

The level of Biblical scholarship here is the highest I've seen. My wife and I are ecstatic to have our son and two daughters in Bible College with us, falling in love with Jesus in this revival atmosphere while they experience the ministry firsthand in witnessing teams, Sunday School, audio-visual, juvenile hall ministry, and Music Ministry. And the capstone of my preparation has been the Master of Ministries Program. There, I've been able to put my theology to work in a wide range of church ministries in preparation for my return to full-time service. ▲



Those in the congregation with the gift of healing pray in faith for the sick whenever there is a need. While they often are called to the bedside of a brother or sister in need, usually they minister to people at church. After every service, members of the healing ministry team meet in a designated area to pray for those who are seeking healing from the Lord. Faith is rewarded with tangible results, and irrefutable testimonies of Divine healing abound—some documented by attestations from physicians.

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careful Bible exegesis. This church does not teach strange, unusual, or exclusive doctrines, as charged.

RUMOR 23: People are required to give 40% of their income to the church or be put out.

REPLY: Untrue. The deacon board would be thrilled if everyone gave just 10%; fortunately, the majority do.

RUMOR 24: The pastor employs undercover agents, hitmen, and electronic home surveillance equipment.

REPLY: Untrue and absurd!

situation too complex to relate here). She, therefore, spread embittered accusations to someone who had left the church earlier. That one, without checking the facts, became angry and spread the rumors far and wide. Three couples in the church believed his rumors and resigned, asking for a meeting with the pastor and elders. After that meeting, two immediately repented and came back into the church; one left, along with the accuser (who had gotten all his information second-hand), after both promised before God that they would never say anything against the pastor or church again. But they did—and through covert operations, they managed to persuade a number of their friends to leave. (Almost all left without attempting to verify the rumors, all of which were false). Only 1 or 2% of the congregation was affected. Some have come back; most of the rest have divorced and/or are backslidden—some horribly so. Meanwhile, we have grown all the more, both in numbers and in the Spirit, experiencing marvelous times in God!

RUMOR 26: Don Barnett is like Jim Jones.

REPLY: Totally false. Jim Jones magnified himself, saying "Believe in Jim Jones." I point to Jesus Christ, never myself! I frankly and publicly state, "I couldn't heal a goosebump; I only ask the Lord. He is the healer." Jim Jones said, "Come to Jim Jones for healing," and instead of using the name of Jesus, he admonished the sick, "Think hard on Jim Jones." He pretended to extract cancerous tumors that were really chicken organs.²

The news media have painted Jim Jones as a Fundamentalist Christian preacher gone berserk. But the truth is he was a Marxist who believed he was the reincarnation of Lenin³ and used religion to con the gullible into joining his movement.⁴ To his inner circle, Jones scorned religion, saying, "I don't believe in anything. I'm a revolutionary."⁵ His newspaper, *Peoples Forum*, exalted socialism and praised Angela Davis.⁶ His henchmen enforced church discipline by beating offenders up to 100 times with a board. Children were disciplined with electric cattle prods; erring members were publicly stripped. Jones indulged himself with a temple harem—both male and female.⁷

Jones dreamed of transplanting his cult to the Soviet Union—a delegation from Jonestown twice approached Soviet attaché Feodor Timofeyev with this idea.⁸ In the months before the Jonestown tragedy, cult members took Russian lessons and had to recite Russian phrases before receiving their rice-and-gravy meals.⁹ Jones' will left all his property to his family and, if none survived, to the Communist Party, U.S.A.¹⁰

COMMENT: A great many people became dissatisfied with the church and left when the church would not change. Half the original members left.

REPLY: Untrue. We never had anyone threaten to leave if we did not change our practices. There has been no contentious faction in our church, and no large group has ever streamed out of the church.

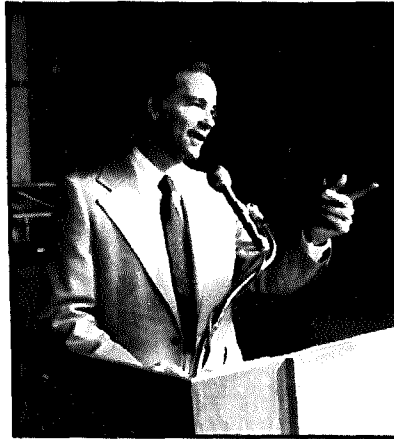
This charge is based on the following incident: In 1979, one woman was tossed from her judgment after a situation involving marriage problems, competition with a girlfriend, fantasies, lies, denials, misunderstandings, feeling unloved, and an alleged vision by a friend in another state who had been deceived by demons (a

PRIOR to the Jonestown massacre, the *Spiritual Community Guide*, a "New Age" catalog of occult, spiritualist, and mystic groups, listed "THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE... led by Pastor Jim Jones [who] preaches Christian Socialism as the foundations for the New Age."¹¹

Jim Jones said "I am the Acts of the Apostles," "Now we flood them, infinite mind," "Meditate on the blessings in this room or whatever forces there are present," "Relax your conscious mind—Christ's mind."

I have never made any such cultish, occult, and Christian Science-type statements. I do not control people's private lives. To

My View of Community Chapel



Rev. Don Kimbro

At age 38, Don Kimbro found Christ at the altar of an independent Christian church in Albuquerque. With a call of God to the ministry, Don and Dorothy studied under Christian professors at Eastern New Mexico University, where Don earned a Bachelor of Religion degree. After a time as associate pastor at the Christian church where he was saved, Don returned to the University for graduate studies in religion. Then, after a summer in Mexico helping set up a program to teach Christian businessmen to evangelize their peers, Don and Dorothy returned to Albuquerque and took the pastorate of a budding Charismatic fellowship. Meanwhile, their

daughter's experiences that summer were about to change the direction of all of their lives. As Don tells it:

A Gospel music/preaching team from Community Chapel Bible College ministered at the Christian drug and alcohol rehabilitation center where our daughter Karol worked, and she spent the summer rooming with Raye, one of the Bible College girls. Karol was so impressed with this young woman of God. No matter what issue they talked about, Raye knew what the Bible had to say about it—yet she was so sweet and humble. The margins of her Bible were full of notes. Just listening to her pray was a moving experience.

Karol flew to Seattle to visit the school and was thrilled to find revival sweeping the place; soon she decided she had to enroll. Seeing an opportunity to check out the college ourselves, we crammed Karol's belongings and our vacation gear into our Datsun and headed for the Fall Camp Meeting at Community Chapel.

Instead of being regulated by a schedule, the services were ordered by the Holy Ghost. Spontaneous praises swept across a congregation guided by music leaders anointed to bring forth songs that lifted the people to a higher place before the Lord. At times these "music ministers" would even receive melodies and words on the spot—something we'd never seen before. The sermon was food for my soul.

When the first three-hour service ended, I said to my wife, "Let's get out of here. When all these people leave, there's going to be the most

monumental traffic jam you ever saw." We got to the parking lot, only to find almost no one there; they were staying to pray after service!

We returned to Albuquerque, where our hunger for more of what we'd seen in Seattle was intensified by the teaching tapes Karol was mailing to us. God was dealing with us about our need for more training. I looked at my flock and asked myself, "How far can I take them in the Lord?" To be honest, I had to answer, "Not very far." The next fall, we enrolled in Bible College, leaving the fellowship in the hands of another Spirit-filled minister.

Although I had been a Bible teacher, every morning of Bible College classes made me more aware that there was an awful lot I didn't know. The lectures were anointed, loaded with information, and handled with magnificent expertise. The instructors treated the Bible with such reverence, always lifting it up as infallible. My university professors had Ph.D.'s, loved God, and were knowledgeable in the Scriptures, but they did not have the depth of Bible understanding I have found at Community Chapel Bible College. I feel I understand the Word of God as never before.

I am eager to get back into the ministry. In the meantime, my wife and I are in Bible College soaking in as much as we can as fast as possible, but not so fast that we fail to gain the depth we came here for. We feel that our cry for training has been abundantly answered. ▲

compare me, a Pentecostal holiness pastor, to Jim Jones is outrageous slander.

RUMOR 27: Community Chapel hired a staff worker to violate copyright laws.

REPLY: Untrue. This rumor is based on the fact that we hired a part-time staff artist to customize visual aids for our Sunday School. We did this because we are scrupulous to obey copyright laws. If we had intended to disregard the law, we would have saved a lot of money by merely photocopying copyrighted material (like many other churches do) instead of having illustrations custom drawn, with alterations. The perpetrator of this accusation was either ignorant of the copyright laws or else dishonest.

RUMOR 28: Don Barnett claims to be God's prophet.

REPLY: Untrue. I have never claimed the office of a prophet, nor have I claimed to be God's special man.

RUMOR 29: Community Chapel believes that they are the manchild company of Revelation 12.

REPLY: Untrue. We believe, as many other churches do, that the manchild is the worldwide body of overcoming saints who, along with the head (Christ), make up the body of Christ. As I see it, this is what the manchild, nation, and children are in Isaiah 66:7-9 and Revelation 12:1-6.

The traditional assumption that the manchild is Christ and the woman is the virgin Mary, or Israel, has been rejected by many Bible scholars. For one thing, the Book of Revelation is prophecy, not history (Revelation 1:3). For another, the manchild is born after the seventh head (the last-day world government) is already in existence (Revelation 12:3). For another, neither Mary nor Israel (the woman) fled into the wilderness for three and a half years after Christ was caught up (Revelation 12:5,6).

RUMOR 30: Don Barnett teaches members of Community Chapel that only fellow-members are their brothers.

REPLY: Untrue. I teach that all born-again Christians are our brothers.

RUMOR 31: Don Barnett refers to the denominational churches as "the enemy."

REPLY: Untrue. I have never made such a statement. I am not against denominations. Our teams of ministerial students and Gospel singers have ministered in dozens of denominational churches.

RUMOR 32: The elders at Community Chapel dare not question the ideas or decisions of Don Barnett.

REPLY: Untrue. They can and do. They are free to discuss or debate any

concerning our vision and goal.

RUMOR 35: Don Barnett teaches that he will be the head of the Spirit-filled church in the last days.

REPLY: Untrue and ridiculous. I teach that the ministers of God will stand shoulder to shoulder in a unity of the Spirit and faith (Isaiah 52:8; Ephesians 4:3,13), with Jesus as the head.

RUMOR 36: The pastor's wife is the high priestess of the Community Chapel cult and a lesbian.

REPLY: Totally absurd. We have no priest or priestess of any sort; we are Pentecostal Christians, not heathen! I suppose the fact that my wife is used in gifts of tongues, interpretation, and prophecy, and the fact that she sometimes shares with strong anointing what God puts on her heart in intercessory prayer, have given rise to this lie. But there is nothing anyone could possibly twist to infer that she is a lesbian! We have a wonderful marriage, and we both intensely hate the sin of homosexuality!

RUMOR 37: The pastor has admitted that he has a demon of lust and has had sexual relations with ten women.

REPLY: Untrue. I have never said I have a demon of lust—I do not. As to the second charge: the rumor grows with time. First it is "too much hugging," then "indiscretions," then "adultery with a woman" (although later the promulgator retracted this lie about me and an "unnamed someone," saying something to this effect: "Well, he didn't commit adultery, but I've heard other things.") Now it's "adultery with ten women"! I suppose next it will be "bigamy." I have never committed adultery and have no desire to. Besides, I would fear God's judgment, for the Bible clearly and forcefully condemns this sin. When I first heard the rumor of adultery, I stood in the congregation and publicly offered God to strike me with a plague or

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point or question with me.

RUMOR 33: Don Barnett equates himself with God.

REPLY: Untrue. Never have I implied any such thing, nor do I lift myself up before the people. I admit to my mistakes as well as to my need for God's grace and help. In my view, there are no big men, only a big God.

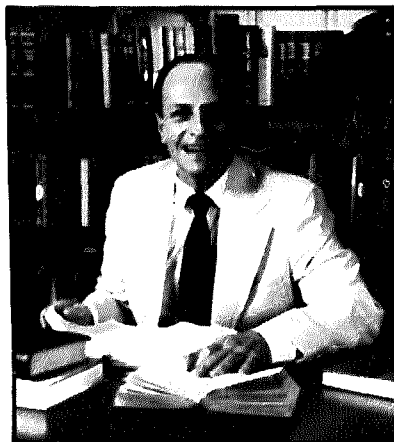
RUMOR 34: Community Chapel teaches that their church will become the largest, most spiritual, and most used of God.

REPLY: Untrue. I have never made such a statement. In fact, I have specifically said otherwise, lest anyone make any wrong inference



Pastor Barnett and his wife, Barbara, frequently share Christian fellowship with friends at their comfortable but modest home near the church. Both were raised in Pentecost and spent many years in support ministries in Assembly of God churches before the Lord called Community Chapel and Bible Training Center into being.

My View of Community Chapel



Rev. Marvin Williams

Saved in 1948 in his brother-in-law's interdenominational church in Bremerton, Washington, Marv Williams finished three years at Seattle Pacific College, entered the Army, and was stationed in Denver, receiving the Holy Spirit in 1954 at an Assembly of God church. With his wife, Joy, Marv attended the Assemblies of God until 1962, pastored Spirit-filled churches in California and Kansas, then spent five years at Overcomers Training Center in Springfield, Missouri, where he served as assistant pastor overseeing the visitation ministry. In 1982, the Lord called Marv and his family to Seattle and Community Chapel. As Marv tells it:

In our last year in Springfield, my wife and I sensed that God was preparing us for a move. He impressed us to seek Him for direction. One January morning, while we were in prayer, the Lord spoke clearly to our hearts: "Seattle." We decided to fly to Seattle for a vacation in June, to "spy out the land." We knew nothing of Community Chapel, but were praying for the best possible Bible college for our daughter, Faith.

We visited my niece, Donna, a sweet Spirit-filled girl who seemed very excited about her church. She gave Faith a Community Chapel Bible College catalog, and we grew more impressed with each page. From the pastor's opening greeting to the last course description, the book was a powerful expression of love, anointing, and—very important to us—Biblical holiness. This was the college we were searching for.

Soon we began attending Community Chapel. Sunday after Sunday, as ordinary people shared moving testimonies from the pulpit, we were struck by their genuineness. The pastor was not afraid to let God orchestrate the service; he gave the people liberty to share as led of the Spirit. Yet he did his part in overseeing and coordinating, and did it well, neither stifling the Spirit nor letting things run to excess. Very seldom do most churches allow anyone behind the pulpit except the select few with "professional pulpit delivery." The "ministry" tends to be exalted and the "laity" kept in place. Here I saw a beautiful horizontal relationship between the pastor and

the flock. I said, "Lord, here is a man after my own heart."

Even under revival, we have never seen a church that worships the Lord with the same fervency as Community Chapel. The people are seeing their need for deliverance from demonic hindrances and are humbling themselves to ask one another for prayer (James 5:16). Because they are getting delivered, they don't need to be "pumped up" to praise the Lord in church services; they are so thankful for God's deliverance that praise bursts forth like a geyser! It proves that people are being set free when they can sing so spontaneously, from the heart.

Across the land in this hour, Spirit-filled believers are in captivity, waiting for someone to break their bonds. God is looking for men to "stand in the gap." We are approaching a new day in the church. We don't see it experientially, but we see it with the eye of faith. We are looking for the formation of the bride of Christ. Brother Don and the people at Community Chapel are certainly pressing to fulfill their part in this vision. The pastor's messages are timely. The Bible College is training "valiant men" who know how to use the sword of the Spirit. Intercessory prayer meetings are gathering throughout the week. The people are streaming to the altar calls for deeper commitments to the Lord. I believe that this body of saints will play a significant part in the Lord's work in the days ahead. ▲

(continued from page twenty-one)

death if I was ever guilty of such a sin at any time in my life. This would be a terribly dangerous thing to do if guilty. And I believe in the power of God!

RUMOR 38: *The pastor's wife practices witchcraft, just like what is practiced in Uganda.*

REPLY: Untrue. My wife has never even met a witch, has never read even a part of a book on the subject, and knows practically nothing about it, except that it is of the devil. She is a devout Christian who has a ministry of intercessory prayer, praying many hours each week. She lives in holiness and in submission to Jesus, and to her husband/pastor. She has never said or done one thing that could ever be associated with witchcraft! I suppose envy is at the root of this allegation.

To put the rumors against Community Chapel in proper perspective, it would be well to look at the lives of the nucleus of people who have been accusing and attacking us since 1980. Four are now homosexuals (one left his wife for another man, another left her husband for another woman). Six couples have divorced. Several are now involved in adultery. Several are totally backslidden. Several have left Pentecostalism and other tenets of the faith. At least one believes in the transmigration of spirits. At least one denies that there is a kingdom of darkness (Satan's kingdom) and a kingdom of light (God's kingdom).

In order to try to prove their accusations, some have actually made illegal, covert raids on our garbage dumpsters to obtain in-house communications and office data that they could take out of context and piece together with other tidbits of information to fabricate some sinister story. They have even taken out *Playboy* subscriptions in the names of a few of our ministers—possibly they wanted to tempt them to sin, or perhaps they hoped to ruin their reputations when other people saw what was arriving in the mail. One imposter typed letters warning people that there would be a police raid on Community Chapel at the next service, resulting in a shootout. These letters were signed "Religion Editor of the Seattle Times." One dissident has vehemently threatened to buy a gun and murder the pastor of Community Chapel!—hardly the spirit of Christ. They use their children to help them in their "work"; they send unsigned letters full of slanderous allegations to our congregation. They attempt to influence newspapers, pastors, relatives, friends—anyone they can get to listen to them. This is their ministry: accusing the brethren.

From these emissaries of the devil, rumors have spread to pastors and churches, the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, and other



Students of Community Chapel Bible College have come from 32 states and 16 foreign countries to receive the training offered in our Bachelor of Theology, Master of Theology, and Master of Ministries programs. In a curriculum that covers every book and major doctrine of the Bible, these Spirit-filled men and women are studying with a vision to bring the Bread of Life to starving multitudes in these desperate last days before the Lord's return.

dale, Savonarola, Huss, Wesley, Finney, Charles Parham, Clifton Erickson, and other men of God. It was church people who fought Protestantism in the sixteenth century, and it was church people who persecuted Pentecostals in the early 1900's in America, even shooting them, committing them to asylums, and burning their Gospel tents! Most lies against men of God are brought by Christians. As shameful as it is, it is true.

saints. They attempt to break up every outreach fellowship we establish. Many have been stumbled and several have lost their salvation because of them. Is this the work of God? They do not fight the Satanist church, the homosexual churches, the Moonies, the Krishna devotees, or any other group—only this born-again, Spirit-filled church from which they have withdrawn themselves and/or have been disfellowshipped (Matthew 18:15-17). Obviously they are bitter accusers, not fighters of evil, although most of them can appear very sincere to those they intend to poison. They are smart enough to know how to deceive people; it is part of their well-thought-out strategy. Oh, that they would try as hard to disseminate the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ!

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The fact that we are intimately aware of the situation, while those who receive such accusations are not, is one reason for my dogmatic insistence that Christians should leave such in-house matters up to the government of the churches and not try to deal with things they know nothing about. The devil is even finding some Charismatic pastors helpful to tear down the church of Christ and make us all a spectacle to the world. This in turn is giving fuel to the Christ-haters, anti-Pentecostals, and activists who want to enact laws that will put our churches at the mercy of the public and the legislatures. Soon the Gospel pearl will be cast before swine who will turn and rend the church of Christ, if we are not more fair and careful.

When God is moving, few are neutral

People either loved Christ or hated Him. Paul had converts who would almost pluck out their eyes for him (Galatians 4:15), and he also got rocks, whips, and rods. No one who angers the devil will escape his accusations through his dupes. "But," you say, "it is **church people** who are against Community Chapel!" Of course! It was primarily **religious people** who were against John the Baptist, Christ, Stephen, Paul, Tyn-

A few years ago I had the opportunity to address a ministers' meeting for just ten minutes. Afterwards two pastors told me they would never say anything against me again, and one of them hugged me. They were surprised by my attitude and what I really believed (rumors had given them the wrong impression), and I think the Holy Ghost convicted them. We are too careless in obeying Scriptures against believing accusations against God's people (1 Timothy 5:19; Leviticus 19:16).

Almost all who actually visit our church are greatly impressed with the zeal and love of the people, the anointing and flow of the services, and the anointed, in-depth preaching. The haters are usually unsaved relatives, those who loved us but became bitter after they were put out for sins not repented of, or those in the rumor chain who listened to their twisted accounts of what is going on at Community Chapel. I take comfort in the knowledge that Jesus was likewise acquainted with the rumor chain, and that what we do, we do for the glory of God. The Lord is our Judge, and He will vindicate the righteous and judge the guilty. I lean upon Isaiah 66:5: "Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed."

We have kept the faith, we have not denied the Lord's name, and we have cut the Word straight and carefully, being able to prove all things that we teach. We have endeavored to walk righteously before God and man. We have not rendered evil for evil but have prayed for our accusers. Our conscience is clear before God, so let the devil rage. We are hid in God's tower, and He has done great things in us and for us. We have a message. Our large auditorium is packed, and outreach churches are continuing to spring up. God's Spirit is moving in our services and in our lives. He is changing us, and we are learning to hate sin and despise worldliness as never before. We are falling more intimately in love with Jesus. We are spending hours in His wonderful presence in prayer. We are preparing to be part of the spotless bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:27).

¹ Exo. 23:1; Lev. 19:16; Psa. 101:5; Prov. 10:18; 17:4,9; 1 Tim. 5:13; Jas. 4:11; 1 Pe. 2:1; 2 Pe. 2:10.

² "Sect Leader: Fake Miracles and Secondhand Suits," *U.S. News & World Report*, December 4, 1978, p. 27.

³ "Paranoia and Delusions," *Time*, December 11, 1978, p. 35.

⁴ "Jones' Marxism Almost Ignored," *Indianapolis Star*, December 12, 1978.

⁵ "I Don't Believe in Anything; I'm a Revolutionary," *San Francisco Examiner*, December 8, 1978.

⁶ "Inside Peoples Temple," *New West*, August 1, 1977.

⁷ "Jones Reveled in Sex, Drugs, Beatings," *Seattle Times*, December 4, 1978.

⁸ "Paranoia and Delusions," *Time*, December 11, 1978, p. 35.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁰ *Review of the News*, February 21, 1979.

¹¹ *Spiritual Community Guide* (San Rafael: The Spiritual Community, 1972), p. 25.

Summary of What Really Constitutes a Cult

Reliable indicators of a cult are their beliefs and practices which are **not** also found in true Christian churches. These include:

1. A denial of remission of sins through the shed blood of Christ and repentance for sin, substituting instead another messiah or savior—whether it be a man, an organization, or a principle.
2. Robbing God of glory and office by claiming to be the truth or the supreme authority over all the true church.
3. Claiming to be the only one through whom God works to save man or bring him enlightenment.
4. Claiming the right to cancel, reverse, or alter Bible commandments or principles.
5. Claiming to be the only one with the right to interpret the Bible.
6. Introducing another Gospel or other “inspired books” as infallible truth, either to supplement or replace the Holy Scriptures.
7. Requiring members to abandon their right to think and to accept everything told them by the leader(s) without question.
8. Turning over to the leader(s) all rights, decisions, and/or property, trusting them entirely for salvation or knowledge of the truth.
9. Teaching that the leader is the only one God will use to head His church, and that all other churches are enemies of God.

It is important to understand that it takes more than pride, immorality, love of power, love of money, or love of popularity to make one a cultist! Since none of these evils is exclusive to cults, none can be a meaningful sign of cultism. ▲

The Way to Live Uncultishly, for God

If one would ask me how to live a balanced Christian life, steering clear of cultism, I would answer as follows:

Seek the Lord with all your heart; enter into a love relationship with Jesus; let your light shine in a dark world. Live by the Book of books, coming out from the world. Buy the truth, and sell it not (Proverbs 23:23). Pray much in faith, and let the Holy Spirit lead you to emulate the Master. Don't believe every voice, feeling, or thought, but try the spirits, checking everything by the Word of God. Determine to speak only things which will edify. Do not be a judge or a gossip. Leave others to God. Love one another, accepting as brethren all truly born-again Christians who love Jesus. Pray for your church government, for the leaders of our nation, for Christians undergoing trials and persecution, for the entire body of Christ, and for the salvation of souls.

Be teachable, but avoid doctrine contrary to God's Word. Avoid being a doubter, a debater, an accuser, a man-pleaser, or a loner. Don't be schismatic, testy, sarcastic, or proud. Be free to think, but leave

others free, too. Forgive freely. Be tolerant. Think not too highly of yourself; prefer others; rescue the fallen; in doing good, seek to rise above the norm. Resist the devil; fight temptation; call on God for help. Do these things, and you shall not fail or go astray.

Be married to Christ, not to a church. But don't be a drifter; be a part of a local church. Hold your individual opinions to yourself; don't undermine your church. Seek a ministry to help expand God's kingdom. Be a reformer, not a revolutionary. Don't copy the tactics of the activist liberals. Be honest, never resorting to evil that good may come of it. Be kind, courteous, and benevolent to all men, even during stress and confrontation, by seeking to let God rule your spirit.

Finally, fill yourself with Scripture, agree with it, and live it, and God will be pleased with you. And in all of this remember: the Bible teaches that if you do these things, you will be slandered, accused, belittled, and persecuted. Accept such things with a good spirit, knowing that Christ also suffered in like manner for us (1 Peter 4:1). ▲

The Bible Forbids Spreading

Rumors and Accusations Against Christians

When we defame our brethren in Christ, we sin against Christ. When we are unfair to them and hurt them, we are unfair to Christ and hurt Him. How so? Christ answered this question when it was asked in His day concerning a similar truth: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40; see also verse 45).

What guidelines does God lay down concerning such practices?

God forbids false accusations and false witness

Exodus 23:7: Keep far from a false charge (do not even listen).

Deuteronomy 19:15-21: Two or three witnesses are necessary to convict of sin (not two or three links in the same rumor chain, but two or three eyewitnesses. And the witnesses are to present their charges to the elders, not to the city before the case is even heard).

Proverbs 6:16,19 and 19:9: The LORD hates a false witness and one who sows discord. A false witness shall not go unpunished.

1 Timothy 5:19: Receive not an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses (not "accusers").

God forbids talebearing, rumors, slander, and gossip

Leviticus 19:16: Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer.

2 Samuel 1:20: Do not tell or publish it, lest the uncircumcised rejoice and triumph.

Psalms 101:5: Whoso secretly slanders his neighbor, him will I cut off.

Proverbs 17:4: A wicked doer gives heed to false lips.

Romans 8:33,34: Who shall lay charge against God's elect? God justifies them.

James 4:11: Speak not evil of one another, brethren. He that speaks evil of his brother speaks evil of the law and becomes a judge of the law.

Put the disobedient out of the church

Matthew 18:15-17: If he neglect to hear the church, put him out and regard him as a heathen.

Romans 16:17: Mark them which cause divisions and avoid them.

1 Corinthians 5:1-13: Do not keep company; put away that wicked person.

Galatians 5:9-12: A little leaven leavens the whole lump; I would they were cut off that trouble you.

2 Thessalonians 3:6: Withdraw yourself from every brother who

walks disorderly (lit., "out of step").

2 Thessalonians 3:14,15: If any obey not our word, have no company, yet regard him as a brother, not an enemy.

Paul and the church were innocent but appeared guilty

Acts 14:2: The Jews stirred up Gentiles' minds against the brethren.

Acts 18:13 and 21:28: The Jews accused Paul of teaching against the people, the Law, and the Temple, and of teaching men to worship contrary to Scripture.

Acts 19:9: The Jews spoke evil of Christianity before the multitude.

Acts 24:5: Tertullus accused Paul of being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

Acts 26:24: Festus accused Paul of being out of his mind.

Acts 28:22: Everywhere the church was spoken against.

Romans 3:8: They were slandered and intentionally misquoted.

2 Corinthians 6:8: Paul and ministers of God were dishonored by evil report and accused as deceivers, yet they were true.

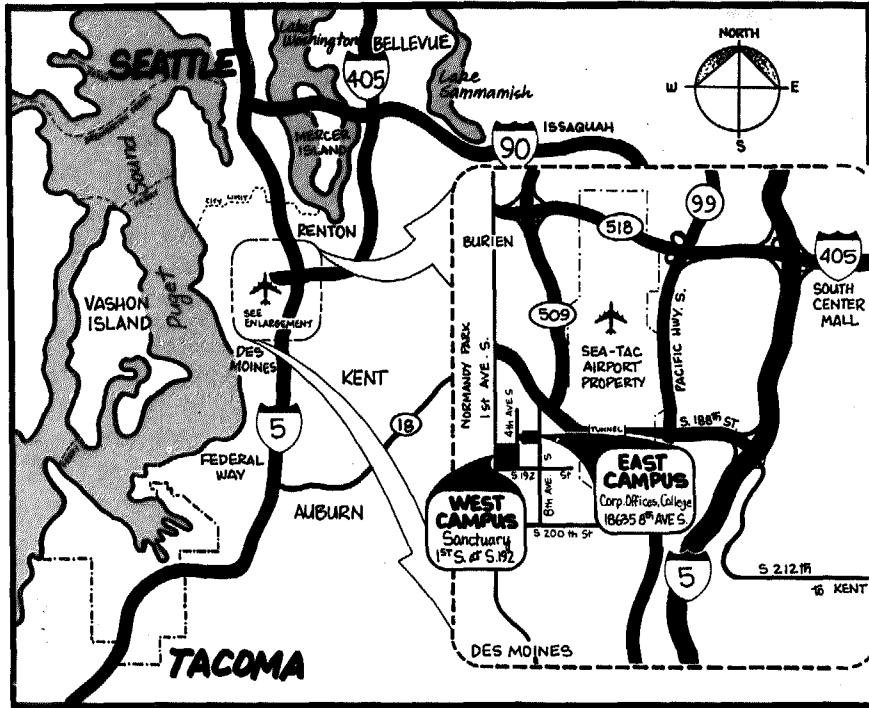
2 Thessalonians 2:2: A forged letter was circulated, allegedly written by Paul.

2 Timothy 4:14: Alexander did Paul much evil; the Lord repay him.

Every Christian should work hard to reverse the current trend of accusation, rumormongering, and gossip. We should reprove a talebearer instead of listening to his sordid story or unproven accusation. If we all simply refused to listen, the gossipers and slanderers would be put to shame and silenced. But alas, they are encouraged, because few Christians have the boldness, integrity, and spiritual sense to rebuke them. ▲

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We Invite You to Visit Our Church

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Sunday

Sunday School10:00 A.M.
 Morning Service11:00 A.M.
 Evening Service7:00 P.M.
 (7:30 P.M. in summer)

Friday

Evening Service7:45 P.M.

Last Saturday of Every Month

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