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City University of New York PH.D. 1982

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MAKE-BELIEVE REVOLUTION:
A STUDY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

by

RUTH ELIZABETH WANGERIN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City University of New York.

1981

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1981

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philcsophy.

Feb 10, 1982
date

Chairperson of Examining Committee

Feb. 9, 1982
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ABSTRACT

The history of the 5000-member Children of God is traced, from its beginnings in southern California in 1968, through its expansion into approximately 80 countries, to its radical restructuring in 1978. Its ideology is analyzed as a syncretism between the dominant Pentecostalism of its founders and elements drawn from the counter culture which had influenced many of the recruits. The group socialized its children and new recruits using strict methods drawn from the conservative religious tradition. Children of God educators modified the Montessori method of early childhood education in such a way as to make the children more obedient and to prepare them to make an economic contribution at an early age.

Long-term socio-economic changes have made reproduction of middle class youth increasingly problematic in the post-Vietnam War period. Those youth who became leaders in the Children of God were able to reproduce themselves as a "middle class" only by structuring the Children of God as a class society in miniature. That was how they could ensure "middle class" roles for themselves analogous to teacher, manager, social worker, etc. It was also the way that they were able to marry and have large families. Opportunities for leaders came at the expense of the unmarried followers,

who contributed cash and labor tc the support of the leaders' families. Marriage for leaders depended on celibacy for disciples, particularly since birth control was considered taboo. When the Children of God became more democratic and sexually free, the leaders and the parents of large families were forced to find other means of support.

This work is dedicated to the memory of my friend Carol Eckel, and to the hope of a better world where young people won't have to kill themselves, or each other.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been in the making for more years than I hope the Department can remember. It seems as though everyone I know or knew has helped the project along in some way. Some people, however, have been indispensable. June Nash, my thesis adviser, gave me support and the benefit of her knowledge and judgement throughout the process, since the mid-1970s. Both June and Eleanor Leacock, another member of the dissertation committee, have been more than professors to me--they have been role models, nice "bosses," and friends. June and Happy have been the source of intellectual inspiration, a job, and (along with other senior colleagues) two organizations of anthropologists with whom I could identify--NYWAC and ARPA. Somehow they managed to convince me a long time ago that it was possible to combine theory and practice in anthropology, and that I should keep at it. They have also contributed clippings, articles, and books to this bibliography over the years.

Vincent Crapanzano went over the first draft with a fine-toothed comb. His overall suggestions and his comments on writing style, along with those of June and Happy, helped me put a very rough draft into its final form. Robert Paul was on my committee before he left the City University, and I want to thank him for understanding what my first proposal

was about, and for explaining Freud to me. The Graduate Center librarians took an interest and really helped. Finally, the outside reader on the committee, Bill Rowe, was helpful, patient, and good-humored.

For specific help on the topic of the Children of God, the most important person in the scholarly community was Prof. Roy Wallis, of the Queen's University at Belfast. He was very generous in sharing his many manuscripts with me, in corresponding and trying to answer my questions, and in sharing a tour through Italy which had originally been arranged for him alone by Rex Davis. On that tour, Jephthah, Milcha, Jeff, and, when we reached Geneva, Rex Davis, were very hospitable.

Prof. Armand Mauss co-authored two articles about Jesus People which helped guide my thinking from the beginning. He was also kind enough to answer a letter in some detail. Carol Lopate and Kaveh Safa-Isfahani contributed to my original formulation of the problem. Carol was the first to point out that "cults" exploited the cheap labor of youth, and Kaveh guided me to Worsley, Hobsbawm, and the literature on spirit possession. Bruce Mannheim helped by reading, talking, sending me clippings, and accompanying me on my first field visit. Vittorio Lanternari was a great help in Italy. The people to whom he introduced me showed me how to find my way about in Rome, and to Bassetto, and pointed me to some interesting people to interview. Jackie Saindon,

Susan Di Raimo, Ariel Contreras, and Valentin Soto Borges did the same in Mexico City. (Mona Etiene and Claire Marcus arranged for the stopover in Mexico en route from Houston to New York.) Mrs. Eunice Yergin was my key to Troy, New York. I could never have learned anything on these short, unfunded field trips without the help of friends. Almost all the above, and Joe Polletta and Alessandro Scassellati, translated materials from Spanish or Italian. Attila Konrad helped me understand the psychological processes within and between people.

My fellow students at the Graduate Center, colleagues and students at the City College, and colleagues in ARPA (Anthropologists for Radical Political Action) and URPE (Union for Radical Political Economics) were all helpful, as well as fun to be with. The URPE Women's Caucus and NYWAC (New York Women's Anthropology Conference) stimulated my thinking about the status and roles of women in the Children of God. There is no way to name all the people who were involved in some way in this project. A few were Constance Blake, Morty Marks, Florence Dinerstein, Paul Kneissel, Peter Friedlander, Lindsey Churchill, Steve Buff, Susan DiRaimo, Kathleen Holz, Zach, Bill Gruber, Phyllis Mirsky, David Gordon, and Kenneth Fox.

Many Children of God opened their hearts and homes to me, and loaned me their copies of Mo Letters and the Family

News. I hope that any disciples or ex-disciples that might read this will know that I could never forget them. I hope nothing I have written will hurt anyone's feelings. My criticisms are intended to be helpful, to disciples as people though not necessarily to COG as an organization. Also, I haven't forgotten that I still owe many people a free meal.

Several persons on various sides of the deprogramming issue were kind enough to let me see thousands of pages of documents and to explain their points of view. They included Rabbi Maurice Davis, Ed Doerr, Paul Engle, Galen Kelley, Gara La Marche, Audrey Winter, and Rev. William Wipfler.

Finally, thanks to my family (especially Kimberly) and friends for not giving me too hard a time about never being able to get together or go anywhere. I especially appreciated the hospitality of Ann Yergin toward Children of God guests, and the warmth which she, Kaveh, L-P, Paul, Adriana, and other friends extended to disciples for my sake. My brothers, sister, in-laws, and mother and father gave me (almost) never-wavering understanding and support. They, along with my "fictive grandfather" Tom Cox and my "fictive little sisters" Kathy and Susan, were the only "granting agency" that believed in my work. My parents have also earned a spot in some footnotes, due to the clippings they sent and their explanations of the background of the Luther-

an Church--Missouri Synod. Most of my higher education, research and writing has been funded by the good people of New York City, New York state, and the U.S.A through tax-supported social programs. Last but not least, I want to thank Pedarsaige Mani for repeating 10,000 times, "Keep typing," and "That's good enough."

GLOSSARY

ANOINTING	Special inspiration which helps a person through a difficult situation.
ARCHBISHOPRIC	The level between bishopric and ministry in the pre-1978 COG structure. Publications centers, with publications overseers, were usually on this level.
BABES	New recruits.
BISHOPRIC	A pre-1978 division or level between region and archbishopric. The Bishopric Mother was part of the Childcare Ministry hierarchy of COG as a whole.
BURDEN	A desire of the heart, something a person feels compelled to do or to have. "A burden for Africa" is a desire to missionize Africa. "I have a burden for you" means "I love you and want to marry you."
CAR LITNESSING	Litnessing at stop lights, entrances to tunnels, etc., by approaching people in cars.
CLAIM THE VICTORY	To "take God at his word"; to proceed in confidence that a prophecy or Bible reference will be fulfilled.
COG	Abbreviation for the Children of God.
COLONY	The pre-1978 term for the smallest unit within the Children of God; a group of people who lived together.
COLONY COUNCIL	All adult residents of a Home; after Feb. 1978 this group included everyone over age 12.
DISCIPLE	A member of the Children of God.
F-F-ING	Flirty-fishing.
FAMILY	Another name for the Children of God.
FAMILY NEWS	COG newsletter (abbreviated FN).

FAMILY OF LOVE	Another name for Children of God, used especially from 1978 on.
FISH	The person, usually male, who was being flirty-fished by a disciple.
FLEECE	An ultimatum issued to God, a way of making a decision by learning God's will. For example, "God, if the bus comes in the next hour then I know that you want me to go to the colony."
FLIRTY-FISHING	Making friends with persons outside the Children of God by using sexual charm. Sometimes F-F-ing included sexual contact, even intercourse, and could result in pregnancy. The purpose of FF-ing was to obtain converts, influential friends, and/or donations.
FN	Abbreviation for Family News, a COG newsletter.
FORSAKE ALL	1) To give up all possessions and all social ties to the outside world at the time of joining COG, or, occasionally, to give up possessions accumulated after joining COG. 2) The belongings donated to the group by a new recruit. ("I got my new coat from John's forsake-all.")
GET THE VICTORY	To go through a difficult time and come out happy. Said of children who understood why they had been punished and were able to smile afterwards.
HANDMAIDEN	A female leader from 1978 on. The term may not have been widely used.
HEAVENLY HOME	Ideally, a small egalitarian household of 6 or fewer Children of God, from 1978 on. The term was used even earlier to refer to COG colonies as small utopian communities, as in the letter "Heavenly homes."
HOME	The official name for the COG residences from Feb. 1978 on.
KING'S COUNSELLORS	The eight (four couples) highest officers in COG, directly below David Berg, as of June 1975.
LITNESSING	Passing out COG literature and asking for donations. (Literature + witnessing.)

MARRIAGE	Any relationship of cohabitation, whether legally sanctioned by the state or not.
MATE	A term often used from 1978 on for the person(s) with whom one cohabited.
MINISTRY	1) A person's job, task, role. 2) A subdivision of COG dealing with a particular function--child care ministry, food ministry, etc. 3) The pre-1978 level between archbishopric and prime ministry.
MO	Moses David, the leader and prophet of the Children of God. His legal name is David Berg.
MO LETTER	A printed letter from MO (David Berg) to the Children of God.
MURMUR	To complain or to ask too many questions, from the point of view of leadership. The Children of Israel murmurred against God and Moses in the wilderness, but the Children of God were not to murmur at all.
NEW BOTTLE	A flexible young personality which can adapt to new conditions and accept new ideas. Based on the parable of the new and old wineskins. The latter, said Jesus, would crack if filled with "new wine," a reference to his teachings. The expression was used to refer to youth, children, and new recruits.
NEW NATION NEWS	COG newsletter.
NNN	The New Nation News.
OFFICE COLONY	A group of COG officers or leaders, along with some clerical and childcare workers, who lived together in the period before 1978.
OLD BOTTLE	Someone who cannot change or accept new ideas. See "new bottle."
ON THE FIELD	In a mission field, away from headquarters.
PRIME MINISTRY	The pre-1978 level between ministry and counsellorship. The Prime Ministry Mother was a key person in the Child Care Ministry hierarchy.

PROCURING	Obtaining supplies by asking people to donate them.
PROVISIONING	Same as procuring.
REVOLUTION	Another name for the Children of God, based on the phrase "Revolution for Jesus."
SCORES	Numbers of marriages, births, new recruits, converts, literature distributed, etc. These numbers were totalled for the various subdivisions, and for COG as a whole, and published in the newsletters.
SERVANT	The title of an officer after Feb. 1978. The Home Servant and Handmaiden were to be elected by the Colony Council.
SHARE	To talk, have sex with, or give or share objects and friendships with others.
SHEEPY	Easy to convert, eager to be led. Said especially of prospective recruits or converts.
SHEPHERD OR SHEPHERDESS	The leader(s) of a colony, district, or other pre-1978 subdivision of COG.
STATISTICS	See "scores."
SYSTEM	The broader social system and all its institutions, such as the church, family, schools, and economic institutions such as corporations, jobs, etc. The Children of God rejected and forsook the System.
SYSTEMITE	A person enmeshed in the established social institutions and accepting the dominant worldview.
TEAM	Another name for the Children of God.
TSC	The Texas Soul Clinic, a ranch where the Children of God lived in 1970/71.
TITHE	A contribution of 10% of one's income, usually for religious causes.
UNDERSHEPHERD	The assistant shepherd(ess) in a colony.

VISITING SERVANTS	The couple, appointed by their superiors, who visted the Homes and helped them with their reports and their problems after Feb. 1978. The woman was sometimes called the Visiting Handmaiden.
WIDOW	A mother without a male partner.
WORLD SERVICES	The central headquarters of the Children of God/Family of Love, especially after Feb. 1978.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Since this research began in 1974, the Children of God have seen many changes. Their name is now (1981) the Family of Love. Their "shepherds" are "servants," and their "colonies" are "homes." The once-large communes have broken up into small households, and many disciples are once again working in regular "System jobs." A number of leaders have left the group, while others are busy "flirty-fishing" in clubs and bars, singing on radio and TV, visiting schools and prisons, and taking care of their children in several hundred cities throughout the "non-communist[1]" world. Many Children of God still believe it is the End-Time, but their emphasis has changed to preaching about love.

For another religious group who hated the American system and called their leader "Dad," the End came in November 1978, in a mass suicide/murder in an inaccessible jungle colony in Guyana. The fallout of horror from Jonestown increased public interest in post-'60s politico-religious groups. Suddenly I was called upon by various people to "explain cults," and to help parents find missing "children" who were rumored to have joined a "cult." It seemed clear

---

[1] Some of their literature has indicated that a few disciples may be living in socialist countries.

that much of what was appearing in the press was opportunistic, inaccurate and shallow. Yet I soon realized that I could do little better, since so many crucial facts were missing, about the People's Temple and Jim Jones, about the Children of God and David Berg, about the Unification Church and the Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

Meanwhile, strong public sentiment against "cults" after Jonestown drove the Children of God undergrcund. I heard that disciples had trouble selling their literature on streets in the U.S. Exposes on "cults" in media throughout the world usually included the Children of God (COG) in their lists of dangerous cults. None of the phone numbers I had in 1978 fcr COG homes in the U.S. were operating in 1979. In fact, after 1979 it was difficult to determine whether the organization as such was active at all. One disciple suggested that I write that COG had "disbanded." A defector predicted in 1979 that the group would fall apart within the next year and a half, because sc many long-time members were drcpping out. These defections were not all a direct result cf Jonestown, but had causes internal to COG as well. In January 1979, the COG prophet, "Father Moses David," wrote that the "System" would drive them off the streets, using the Jonestown tragedy as an excuse. He suggested that COG should compromise a little, like the Mormons, who gave up polygamy. The COG prophet tcld members to witness door to door and through the mail, and to support

themselves with jobs or welfare. For a prophet, he seemed rather uncertain about the future:

> So I believe the Lord will keep us going somehow, God willing. "But If Not," well, PTL! [Praise the Lord] We've done a good job, & if the job is done & He's through with us, well, PTL, we're finished! Maybe we'll do something else instead. But I don't think it's going to happen that way. I would be very greatly surprised if it did ("Coming of age!" 1/5/79[2]).

1.1 WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD?

The conservative religious magazine Christianity Today (Plowman 1971a,b) first brought the Children of God to the attention of many people in the Eastern U.S., including myself, in 1971. Charges that the Children of God were "radical" and possibly "subversive" were reported by the same magazine later (Plowman 1973). This third article said that other Jesus People were being used to "deprogram" members of the sect who'd been kidnapped/rescued (depending on one's point of view) from the Children of God[3] by their parents and Ted Patrick, a man who'd formerly been appointed to a state office by then-Governor of California, Ronald Reagan.

---

[2] Unless otherwise specified, a quoted title in parentheses will be that of a "Mo Letter" and the full reference will be given under "BERG, DAVID" in the Bibliography.

[3] The image amused and fascinated me--a long-haired "Jesus freak," tied to a chair in a locked motel room, being harangued by a short-haired "Jesus freak" about "doctrine." I suspected, perhaps even hoped, that the Children of God would turn out to have something in common with political "radicals."

The sect was founded in 1968 by David Berg, his wife Jane, their four married sons and daughters and the sons- and daughters-in-law. Berg was an evangelist who had been ordained by the Christian and Missionary Alliance. He was 49 years old in 1968. This extended Berg family, which had been working together as evangelists for years, began by recruiting youth in a coffee house near the beach in Huntington Beach, southern California, under the auspices of Dave Wilkerson's Teen Challenge, which is associated with the Pentecostal "denomination," the Assemblies of God. As time went on the Berg group began to seem very radical. This was not difficult, since southern California was and is John Birch Society country. Called "Teens for Christ," the Bergs and their converts criticized the American "System" and the war in Vietnam. Wearing long hair and sandals, they entered church services and preached against the hypocrisy of church people, arguing that God preferred street evangelism to the building of fancy churches.

Later the group travelled in a caravan through the United States and demonstrated in various cities, posing as Old Testament prophets in sackcloth and ashes, calling America to repent. The group became increasingly millenarian and David Berg took on the stature of "End-Time Prophet." The name became Children of God, and they set up communes which attracted hundreds of members. Then the group began gradually to leave for "mission fields" in Europe and South Amer-

ica. Their exodus was accompanied by prophecies of doom for America, and accelerated by opposition from Ted Patrick, a group of parents, and a former financial backer, TV evangelist Fred Jordan.

According to the Children of God's eschatology, in the late 1980s the Anti-Christ, in the form of a progressive political leader such as Colonel Ghaddafi of Libya, will take over the world. After 3 1/2 years spent eliminating many of the worst ills of capitalism, such as poverty and war, this leader will begin to think of himself as a god and force people to worship him. At that time the Children of God will flee to the mountains and resist, and many will be martyred. The Great Tribulation will follow, for another 3 1/2 years. Then, in 1992 or 1993, Jesus Christ will return. The Children of God will be his lieutenants as he defeats the Antichrist and the Devil, and sets up the thousand year rule of peace and happiness on earth. During that time everyone on earth and in hell will have another opportunity to receive Jesus (that is, to believe in him), and all will probably be saved in the end.*

Most of the time since 1969 the Children of God have been evangelizing in large cities, appealing to youth with rock & roll bands playing songs about love and/or Jesus. From

---

* This is a new doctrine which makes a sharp break with the Fundamentalist Protestant, and the Catholic, tradition. Berg said that he believed that "God is love" and would not be so cruel as to damn anyone forever.

about 1973 on the group taught that sex was given by God for his children to enjoy, and that masturbation and lesbianism were not sinful. Sexual attraction was used to gain new friends and converts, and in the late 1970s disciples went beyond "flirting" to "flirty-fishing," or actual sexual involvement with potential friends and converts. The practice lost them many friends (and members) as well as gaining others.

As of 1979 the membership of CCG had stayed at about 5000 for several years. Their means of supporting themselves has varied in different times and places. Three of the most important means of support have been:

1. "provisioning"--obtaining food and other necessities free by asking for them;
2. "forsake-alls"--the wealth and possessions contributed by new converts;
3. "litnessing"--distributing their literature on the streets in exchange for small donations.

This thesis will show that the need to support themselves and the methods chosen to do so have played a very important role in determining the structure and activities of the Children of God.

1.2 CONTROVERSY

From the very beginnings in Huntington Beach in 1968, David Berg and his followers have been surrounded by controversy. They seem to have sought it out. As a researcher I have been trying to keep some distance from the controversy, but this has not been easy. Whenever I have mentioned to disciples or to anyone with an interest in the Children of God that I am writing an article or book about the group, these persons immediately asked whether it would be "good or bad." Most who didn't ask assumed that I was on their "side" and tried to enlist me in their campaign for or against COG. To counter this pressure, for several years I talked very little about my research and interviewed only disciples, saving encounters with their opponents for later.

1.2.1 Deprogramming

The most virulent controversy has centered on the issue of "deprogramming." One observer called the conflict between the "cults" and the "anti-cult" or "deprogramming" movement a "little war" which distracted people from what was really going on in the world (Roger Bartra, personal communication, 1979). Most Americans seemed willing to "live and let live" in the area of religion, until a member of their own family joined an alien religion which rejected their values and even rejected them as persons. When large

numbers of parents had been thus rejected by youth joining "cults," and when the government took no action, these parents began to form groups, hire private detectives, and "take the law into their own hands." They would not have acted, they say, had they been convinced that their adult offspring were freely choosing to join the "cults." The problem, say opponents of "cults," is that the Children of God and other groups virtually kidnap and brainwash unsuspecting youth. Thus similar coercive methods are required to "save" the young people. Parents who thought this way sought the help of professionals like Ted Patrick, who had by Spring 1979 deprogrammed 1600 people (Siegelman 1979:54). The parents and deprogrammers, often with the help of private detectives and other family members, seized the young converts by force and/or trickery, confined them in homes or motel rooms, and tried to convince them of the errors of the sect. According to some sources (Emmanuel 1977; ACLU 1977), the only way out of that motel room was by converting to the deprogrammer's views, or by escaping. Some escapees, and people who lied to the deprogrammers while secretly retaining their faith in the sect, have sued their own parents and the deprogrammers.

The whole issue of deprogramming widens the rift between the generations. Two of the parents' organizations are/were CERF (Citizens Engaged in Reuniting Families) and FREECOG (Free Our Children From the Children of God). From the

names of the organizations it is clear that "family" refers to the middle-aged parents and their adult offspring who have joined "cults," and that these adult offspring are considered to be "children." In conversation and writing, the anti-cult people frequently refer to "cult" members as "kids." I know of at least one case where deprogramming broke up a family, the family formed by two young Children of God who had married and had children of their own.

Deprogramming raises extremely sticky legal issues. What are the legal rights of parents over their offspring who are over 21 (or 18, depending on the state)? What can a religious group do in the name of freedom of religion? The American Civil Liberties Union, the Americans United for Separation of Church and State (Doerr 1976), the National Council of Churches (1974), and others have taken public stands against deprogramming as an infringement of civil liberties and a violation of freedom of religion. (Lavine 1979 is an excelent discussion of the legal issues.) Some of these organizations have worked closely with representatives of new sects, who have asked them for help against deprogrammers. Part of the ACLU's "factbook" on deprogramming was contributed by Prof. Herbert Richardson, a faculty member at the Unification Church's seminary (ACLU 1977: preface). Sociologist Roy Wallis was asked by the Children of God to speak out against deprogramming, which he did (1977b; also n.d.). The TV series "Lou Grant" presented the anti-deprogramming point of view in an episode in late 1978.

Other legal and moral principles besides civil liberties and freedom of religion are involved. For example, one must consider the well-being of the young disciples. Many observers believe that the Children of God, the Unification Church, and other "cults" are harming young converts physically, psychologically, and economically. The tragedy at Jonestown brought on a rash of deprogrammings because of genuine concern. On the other hand, anti-deprogrammers feel that deprogramming itself is not only unnecessary but harmful (Doerr 1979: personal communication; also ACLU 1977). The psychological trauma of deprogramming, and the animosity it causes between the generations, could be avoided if the parents would wait for the youth to "outgrow" the "cult, say some civil libertarians. Furthermore, deprogramming is a financial drain on the parents and some ACLU members suspected that it was being promoted by unscrupulous practicioners who preyed on naive parents (ACLU 1977:36).

The ACLU's position paper, written prior to Jonestown, states that a young adult has the legal "right to blunder." On the other hand, the American legal system has gone beyond "buyer beware." There are laws setting a minimum wage and a Constitutional Amendment against slavery (involuntary servitude). Americans are not supposed to be confined against their wills. Persons asking for charitable contributions are supposed to be honest, or at least to follow certain accepted principles. It is no mystery why anti-cult activists

have not pressed (to my knowledge) some of these legal issues. While they might charge that the Unification Church doesn't pay the minimum wage, the Moonies could countercharge that the Roman Catholic Church doesn't pay it either. While opponents could charge that COG locks its members in at night and monitors their phone calls, COG could charge that deprogrammers do the same thing. If the state wants to see COG's books, shouldn't it also take a look at the books of all the large property-owning[5] denominations? And who among the anti-cult activists, many of them closely affiliated with the established churches, would suggest that cults, and therefore all other religious bodies, should pay taxes and refrain from indocrinating converts?

1.2.2 Conspiracy

Criticism of COG has come from the left, right, and middle. Particularly active have been the "yellow press," parents, and fundamentalist churches. COG itself (some informants, and some Mo Letters, such as "'The Truth'--vs. 112 Official Lies," 11/3/74) sometimes hinted that many of their opponents were Jewish groups who were angry because some Jewish youth were converting to COG. There has also been criticism by various groups in countries to which COGs have

[5] See Larson and Lowell (1976) for a thorough and revealing discussion of the property holdings of churches, and the issue of tax exemptions for religious bodies. The New York Daily News ran a series on this issue shortly after Jonestown (Bell 1979).

migrated. The Children of God have been accused of:

1. prostitution ("flirty-fishing") (Drummond 1977),
2. physical and mental coercion,
3. running a "million-dollar extortion racket" (FreeCOG, in Enroth et al. 1972:30),
4. "mass kidnapping" (Patrick 1976:57),
5. corruption of minors (disciples were jailed in Mexico on this charge) (see Ramirez de Aguilar L. 1978),
6. rape (NYS Attorney General 1974:48),
7. murder (see Oui 1975, Lelyveld 1974),
8. selling babies,
9. tapping a pay phone in a COG residence to spy on recruits (NYS Att'y Gen. 1974:43f),
10. exploiting innocent converts and building up huge Swiss bank accounts for leaders (NYS Att'y Gen. 1974),
11. false doctrine (Enroth 1980),
12. being generally "subversive" (Patrick 1976),
13. drugging, brainwashing, and hypnotizing potential converts (Patrick 1976:45f, 64),
14. deceit (Patrick 1976; Plowman 1971b, 1973),
15. cultural imperialism (Contracultura/11 1975; Salvatori 1976),
16. diverting youth from political awareness and struggle,
17. charity fraud (New York State Attorney General 1974),

Also of great interest has been the question of <u>who</u> is really behind the scenes. COG has been suspected of involvement with the following groups:

1. the CIA (Contracultura/11 1975; Salvatori 1976; Interviu 1977),

2. Nazis or neo-Nazis,
3. Eastern European intelligence agencies,
4. the Christian Democratic Party in Italy,
5. "terrorists,"
6. the Mafia (Interviu 1977),
7. the Libyan government (Serra 1976).

Anthropology is not well designed for studying crime and conspiracy. Investigative journalism would be a better profession for one trying to establish or refute any of the charges listed above. Using the methods available to me, I was able neither to substantiate nor eliminate most of the theories about COG which have been put forward by various other persons or groups. The whole project of explaining COG was therefore very complicated.[6] The only honest solution is to show that a conspiracy theory is compatible with many other theories, and to limit discussion to parts of the phenomenon rather than the whole. An organization like the Children of God does not have to have been originally contrived as a "plot" or an "operation" by an outside force to be manipulated and used by that force. The Children of God themselves admit that they were used by Fred Jordan and later by some of the backers of their musical group in Paris (see Ch. 3). A leader in Rome told me that they were often approached with "deals" by people who wanted to use them, but that COG could not be manipulated because it had princi-

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[6] Some would say futile.

ples. Their principles, however, were somewhat flexible, as I will try to illustrate later in this thesis. David Berg had assembled a few thousand young, healthy, enthusiastic full-time workers and literature distributors. He used them to push some of his own pet projects--such as creationism and prayer in the public schools--and he let other evangelists use them to enhance their own reputations and raise money for themselves. Among the political forces which probably used COG were the 1976 Carter presidential campaign and the Ferdinand Marcos regime in the Philippines. A group which demands that its members obey the leaders above them without question can be manipulated by or through those leaders. A group which seeks donations and support from outsiders can be bought, or at least "rented." In the case of the Children of God, many of the disciples were gullible and naive, like many of their age-mates who did not happen to join "cults." For the disciples, "faith" was much more important the "knowledge," and asking too many questions was "murmurring." Thus the way that the Children of God was set up almost invited attempts to manipulate it. We cannot determine what David Berg is <u>really</u> doing, or why, but we <u>can</u> explain what many rank and file members <u>believe</u> about him, and what <u>their</u> motivations and needs are. We cannot describe all the activities of the COG organization, nor penetrate appearances to learn if there is another organization and a secret agenda involved. We <u>can</u> describe many of the

activities of the actual disciples we observed, and describe the social structure of COG on the local level in several places. We cannot know the full story, however, even about the activities of individuals insofar as the individuals fulfill the instructions of higher leaders whose motivations are not verifiable. For example, Disciple X joined COG for reasons I can discuss, and went tc Italy in 1976 for reasons he explained to me--for adventure, to save souls, in hopes of going on frcm there to Africa, and because the prophet said to flee America. Disciple X also went to Italy then rather than at another time, and to Italy rather than another country, because his leaders urged him tc do so and gave him "clearance." His leaders "sent" him to Italy at that time because it was COG policy to send many disciples to Italy at that time, but at what level that policy was set, and why, are unknown to me. A member of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) suggested that the Children of God ("Bambini di Dio" in Italian) were affiliated with the CIA, and came into Italy at this time in order to lend propaganda support, and possibly to funnel mcney, tc the Christian Democratic Party in the upcoming election. It was widely felt that 1976 was the year the PCI might actually win the Italian election, and electoral slogans and political graffiti were everywhere. When the charge was made in an Italian newspaper (Salvatori 1976) that David Berg was a CIA agent, disciples were distressed, not because they suspected it

might be true, but because they thought the attack might hinder their "work."

Faced with such obviously contradictory theories, a person might try to find some middle ground. However, the truth is not somewhere in between the view of the innocent Disciple X and the view of the Italian newspaper. Since this and many other questions that have been raised about the true nature of COG, and the true extent of its activities, cannot be answered definitively, at least not in this paper, the reader must remember that these questions are open.

1.3 THE CONTEXT IN WHICH COG AROSE AND OPERATED

It is important to understand the relationship of the Children of God to the "outside world." COG is clearly not a static entity separable from the rest of life and history. We might envision it rather as a fish swimming in water[7] and set ourselves the task of studying the water and the entire ecosystem. This is particularly apparent and important with the Children of God, for it was not even a "separatist sect." Though COG talked a lot about "dropping out" during its early years, that phrase in reality meant that members as individuals shifted their loyalty from established insti-

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[7] A better analogy might be a bacteria colony in the colon, though some critics would prefer the image of a tapeworm for COG.

tutions--schools, jobs, churches, families (their parents and siblings, etc), the military, etc.--to the Children of God. COG called itself a "new nation," but economically it was completely dependent upon the old nations. And COG's purpose was not to leave the world, but to "reach" it. Even in terms of ideology they were and are thoroughly enmeshed in the larger society. COGs never restricted their comments to the spiritual realm, nor kept their ideas to themselves. They put out hundreds of pamphlets on politics, sex, and economics, which they distributed in major cities in 80-some countries and handed personally to celebrities and heads of state whenever possible.

"Studying the water" in which COG swims, or swam, could be a never-ending task. Questions which must be asked range from the general to the specific:

1. What is happening in the world?
2. What is/was the relationship of religion to politics in the 1970s and 1980s?
3. What are the Children of God doing, whom are they working with, whom are they influencing, what effects are they having?
4. Whose interests are served by COG's activities?

Each country or even region in which COGs were active seemed to be a different case, and each case had to be studied individually. Conclusions based on one case might be contradicted by another case. Within each case, also, there were

contradictory elements. For example, COG in 1968-69 in the context of Fundamentalist Protestantism and conservative southern California seemed "radical" to many people. COGs called attention to the existence of youth (whom society was pushing aside) and they opposed the Vietnam War. Ted Patrick even thought they might be a "communist front" (1976:39). Yet in Italy in the spring of 1976, as noted in the previous section, no one thought they were a "front" for the PCI (Italian Communist Party), since, first, the PCI did not need "fronts," and, second, the net effect of COG's activities seemed to be either to depoliticize youth altogether or to win votes for the Christian Democrats. Back in the U.S. that summer they were definitely involved in electoral politics. COGs handed out literature favoring Jimmy Carter to delegates to the Democratic National Convention in New York City. Five years earlier they had put out a scathing attack on a President they called "Nitler." It was hard to pin COG down politically--they wrote pamphlets praising Col. Ghaddafi of Libya and President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, two leaders placed in opposing camps by the U.S. government, among others. Moses David's position on Iran was inconsistent, according to some informants. Likewise, though Mo claimed to be anti-racist and defended the Palestinians against what he considered to be Israeli racism, by 1978 he favored the whites in Zimbabwe/Rhodesia and in South Africa. Also, a COG cartoon referred to Jews

(portrayed as a miniature Kissinger) as "a powerful racial minority."

Another example of the importance of studying COG separately in each country is the area of sexual ideology. The Children of God thought of themselves as promoting sexual liberation. This is relative. In big cities in the U.S. and Europe, and in resort areas such as the Canary Islands, COG's practices were similar to those of at least some other people. In Mexico, however, and many other countries, and in small-town U.S.A., these same practices were scandalous. As one vehement opponent of COG in Mexico told me, once a Mexican girl or young woman joined COG and engaged in "flirty-fishing" or a "trial marriage," thereby losing her virginity, she would have difficulty being accepted back by her family. Fewer North American women, by contrast, were virgins when they joined COG.

1.4 INITIAL APPROACH TO THE TOPIC

The preliminary question I asked about the Children of God was <u>who</u> they were. I felt that clearly they were not just a random sample of Americans between the ages of 16 and 25, but must have some class, regional, or other characteristics in common, and that these characteristics would help explain <u>why</u> they had formed such a group. The method by which I tried to discover the composition of the group was a

questionnaire survey, including items on region of origin, parents' occupations, education, and religious background, as well as questions about the converts' experiences prior to joining COG. Unfortunately my survey results are based on a sample which cannot be shown to be representative of the membership of COG as a whole. However, the sample I used was generally acknowledged by disciples to be "typical," and my observations in other locations assured me that this group was not unusual. Furthermore, since one of the "colonies" surveyed was a "border base," disciples from all over the U.S. moved through that residence on their way out of the country. My original plan had been to distribute the questionnaire to everyone present during a certain week in each of a "quota sample" (Festinger and Katz 1965: 193, 215) of colonies throughout the world. At first the project was approved by the leader responsible for the northeastern U.S. and Canada, but later he restricted it for a variety of reasons. During a period of two weeks in March 1976 I administered the questionnaire to every person present (except one or two) in the four COG colonies in Staten Island, New York, including a few people who were passing through. The strengths of this method were that there was a high, almost perfect, rate of return, and that ambiguities could be clarified on the spot. Furthermore, the questionnaire served as a springboard for several extended interviews which provided additional data. The fact that disciples in Staten Island

knew me by the time I started administering the questionnaire ensured that they were helpful and cooperative, and, I believe, honest.[8]

My initial hypotheses were that the membership would be largely rural and lower middle class in origin, with a heavy representation from religious sects and conservative religions of all sorts, including the Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics. I expected that members and leaders alike would be inexperienced politically and come from families which did not belong to either the intelligentsia or the organized working class. As to why youth would join such a group, one of my initial hypotheses was that the high rate of unemployment among youth would be a direct causative factor in the growth of COG, and that many members would have been unemployed at the time of their conversion.

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[8] One person who has opposed COG for years warned me that disciples invented life histories and family backgrounds to tell outsiders. This "enemy" had checked out some of the stories and found they were "all lies." In general, disciples came from wealthier families than they had admitted, and also from different cities, she said. Though COGs had a tendency to exaggerate, and may have invented parts of their "testimonies," I believe my data are accurate. I cross-checked much of what was told me, knew people over time, and verified some of the life histories. Furthermore, many of the questions I asked were detailed and not the type of question that a reporter or "enemy" would have asked. Thus, there would have been no way for disciples to prepare consistent lies to answer the questionnaire.

What I found was slightly more complicated. The membership came from the upper middle as well as the lower middle and working classes. Many were "declasse": runaways, drug dealers, draft dodgers, ex-convicts, "unwed mothers," failures in school. There were more converts than I had expected from the organized working class, and even a few with political experience. Though a significant number had been unemployed, as I'd predicted, many others had quit jobs in order to join. In terms of relicious background, there was heavy representation from the grcups which I had supposed, but a great many had little religious upbringing or came from moderate tc liberal denominations. On the other hand, the offspring of clergy and missionaries were over-represented.

It quickly became evident that many factors were significant in predicting conversion of an individual to COG. Among these were social psychological factors such as being in the midst of a personal crisis or transition at the time of being approached by a Child of God. Also, members tended to bring in their siblings and friends, and people who knew each other would sometimes join together. Some converts were picked out by COG as desirable prospects and were actively recruited, and, in later years, seduced.

Yet why particular individuals converted to an existing group explained neither why the group originated nor its na-

ture. To answer these "whys" it was necessary to look into the history of the group and its founders and supporters, and to learn more about the situation of youth in general in the Western world. A major social transformation was taking place which not only made the Children of God possible, but gave it much of its form and content. That transformation was the mass defection of youth from the social institutions and value systems of the Western nations. Disheartened and disgusted with the world as it had been handed down to them, a significant part of the generation began to turn its attention to the building of an alternative, a counter culture. The Children of God told youth that its organization was that alternative. Some background information was available from the Children of God themselves. A literate group, they had published their own official history and continually updated it through newsletters. Further, their official statements of who they were and why they existed pointed to the problems of youth in Western society, and the shortcomings of the major social institutions. The origins and nature of COG are probed through their history (Chapter 3) and through a discussion of Pentecostalism (the source of much of COG's religious ideology) interacting with the counter cultural sentiments of many of its converts (Chapter 5). COG saw itself as an alternative, and to understand an alternative we must understand what it is an alternative to. For a view from outside COG on the problems of youth, I

turned to the literature on youth, on counter culture, and on political economics in Western countries. Chapter 2 reviews some of this broader literature and discusses the role of COG in history. Life histories in Chapter 4 illustrate how six individuals assessed COG as an alternative to the lives they had been leading and the futures they felt were available to them. Each life history provides a "slice of life" in America: each represents a different slice of American culture.

Finally, what kind of organization was it that attracted the converts I was studying? How did they live? How did they convince other young people to join them? How did they shape the organization in an effort to meet their needs? And was it a truly "alternative" form of organization? I approached these questions with an assortment of anthropological research methods. I was an intermittent participant observer in COG residences in the New York area over the period of 1975/76. I also visited colonies in Chicago and parts of Italy during that time. In late 1977 I spent part of a week in Mexico City interviewing disciples and some of their friends and enemies. In Troy, New York, I examined artifacts left behind by the large colony which had operated there, and talked to neighbors and other people who had had contact with the disciples. Besides observing disciples in their settings, I observed them in my setting when they came to visit me between 1975 and 1982. Sometimes I spent time

with disciples I knew in relatively "neutral" settings like restaurants or parks, or train stations. Interviews, both casual and structured, both short and lengthy, were a key source of information and insights. Many of these interviews resulted in disciples giving me their autobiographies, in the form of their "testimonies" supplemented by the answers to my questions. The six "autobiographiese developed in Chapter 4 give a picture of the way COG operated at the "grass roots."

An important part of the research was analysis of the literature written by the Children of God about themselves, and the literature written about the Children of God by outsiders. The Children of God wrote and published prolifically. The two main series were the Mo Letters (letters from David Berg aka Moses David) and the New Nation News, which later became the Family News. Mo Letters included dreams, fantasies, prophecies, administrative instructions, advice, political commentary, and spiritual exhortation, sometimes combined in one Letter, but often in separate letters. Some of the Mo Letters were directed mostly to the public, while others were for disciples or even "leadership trainees" only. The Letters were COG's most important product, sold on the street for the cash that paid disciples' expenses, and they were also the most important written description--for both insiders and outsiders--of what the Children of God as an organization was and what it taught. Some of the

Letters appeared to function as "press releases" meant to convince disciples and the general public of the integrity of the COG leadership. "Share the know," for example, repeatedly asserted that Berg was not getting rich off the labors of the "street distributors," the regular disciples, and that the latter had a right to know where their money was going. The Letter gave no specifics, but urged the local leaders to draw pie-graphs to show to the disciples. Over the course of ten years the Mo Letters and the newsletters showed the dynamic interaction between who the Children of God were, what they did, who they recruited, what they said about "the world," what they said about themselves, and what others said about them. "Share the know" is a verbal response to charges by the public and the outside press. It is a response which also altered to some degree the nature of the organization as David Berg's instructions were carried out by the local leaders, and as disciples read the Letter and agreed that COG was, indeed, <u>their</u> "business." Thus the "ideology" of the Children of God was never static. COG was creating its own "origin myth" and its "culture heroes." It taught a combination of a core Christian ideology ("faith in Jesus saves people from sin") and syncretic elements drawn from Christianity (especially Pentecostalism) and the "counter culture" as well as other sources, some deep within the unconscious of David Berg. COG "ideology" was also the continually readjusting self-definition and

program of an actual group of people moving through history in interaction with the outside world, exchanging goods, services, and personnel across a boundary which was unendingly being redefined. Chapter 5 describes parts of the COG worldview and ideology and their sources. Chapter 6 shows especially how the ideology of child-care was readjusted to fit the changing forms of socialization needed by the organization.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis argues that the Children of God preserved a relatively independent way of life in a time when the middle classes in the Western world were/are losing ground to the tides of capitalist history. COG helped recruits "survive" in roles, identities, and relations of privilege analogous to those of their former class, for those from middle class backgrounds, and of the middle class to which they aspired, for many of those from working class backgrounds. COG was an alternative status system in which they could be successful (Peterson and Mauss 1973:275).

1.5.1 Disinherited Middle Class Youth

My argument is that COG was in large part a movement of the "disinherited" youth of the fading middle classes, and that the only way these youth could claim their inheritance

was to start their own separate society, and run it their own way. To test this theory I pursued a number of courses of inquiry:

Is It "Working"?

If my theory is correct, then some of the founders and senior members should indeed have been enjoying a "comfortable" standard of living and relative independence and fulfilment in work. This was investigated primarily by observations of five households in the U.S. and about eight in Italy. In addition, I met members of several other households which I did not visit, in the U.S., Italy, Switzerland, and Mexico, and was able to observe some aspects of their standards of living and the type of work they did. In interviews I asked people to tell me what their lives had been like before joining COG, and what they would expect if they left the group. (Some of these results are given in the life histories in Chapter 4.) I expected to find that COG was equal or better in terms of the factors mentioned. One of the key variables, I learned, was the number of children a couple could support.

Disinherited?

It seemed that if the "disinherited youth of the middle classes" theory were correct, then the following would also be true:

1. Many COGs would have been training for or aspiring to jobs and professions which were either in decline (like teaching) or were losing their independence (like art),
2. Many converts should have been unemployed prior to conversion,
3. Survey and interview results should show downward social mobility between the generation of the disciples' parents and the disciples' own generation.

Questionnaire items (see Appendix A) were deliberately included concerning unemployment, the person's income, the disciple's parents' income, work experience, education, aspirations, and other factors. Interviews with many more disciples filled in the picture, and the life histories were particularly important in this regard.

Exploitation of the Sheep?

An important question was whether the motivation to preserve (or pursue) these "middle class" privileges was strong enough to outweigh the egalitarian ideology of COG, an ideology derived both from the Bible's description of the primitive communism of the early Christians and from the counter culture's commune movement. In other words, would leaders and senior members of COG strive to obtain these privileges even if they had to do so at the expense of the rank and file members? Observation in individual colonies

comparing the privileges of the leaders with those of the followers was my key method. I observed such factors as leisure, decision-making power, allocations of space, diet, wardrobe, and access to cars and telephones. Any and all ways that disciples might have been exploited to help leaders "survive" were investigated--labor, money, and less tangible aspects. Another important method was the comparison of one colony with another. Particularly in Italy at the time of my visit it appeared that there were whole colonies, mostly "selah" (secret) colonies, that were enjoying a higher standard of living than other colonies.

Middle Class Aspirations?

According to my theory, the leaders and or senior members should have been aspiring to a middle class or higher standard of living. Of course, since they were living in many different countries, we must investigate whether the lifestyle to which they aspired was "middle class" relative to the "middle class" of that country, or relative only to the "middle class" of the U.S. The Children of God often said that they tried to "become one" with the people in order to win them for the Lord. <u>With whom</u> they were "becoming one" in their host countries could sometimes be determined by simple observation: where did they have their residences, for example, how did their clothes compare with those of the masses on the streets, what were their homes like, etc. In

addition, I could observe what members said in evaluating their own standard of living. In later years such evaluations appeared in the Family News.

Middle Class Leaders?

I expected to find that a disproportionate number of the COG leaders were drawn from various types of independent middle class backgrounds. Here my questionnaire survey was a key method, as well as interviews of leaders and of people who knew something about the leaders who were inaccessible to me. Using the questionnaire results, I compared both the parental occupations and incomes of the leaders in my sample with those of the followers in the sample. In addition, I compared the income and occupational backgrounds of the entire sample with that of the U.S. population as a whole. My assumption was that converts would expect to move up in the hierarchy and live like leaders, and that therefore COG would disproportionately attract persons of middle class background.

Middle Class Ideology?

The ideology of a middle class movement should theoretically be different from that of a class-conscious workers' movement. According to some theorists (see Guerin 1973), the lower middle classes have often been prone to fascism and hostile to socialism, anarchism, communism, or even

trade unionism. Whether or not that is always the case, I suspected that the kind of conflicts in which COG became embroiled with the State would be over issues important to the "petite bourgeoisie," such as freedom from government regulation, freedom of thought, freedcm of movement. I did not expect to find disciples on picket lines at factories or in demonstrations about housing or unemployment or welfare rights, despite their lip service to the needs of the poor. I expected that, like Frances Wright (see previous section), the Children of God would be insisting that you have to change man's heart before you can change society. In Chapter 5, I discuss the ideology, emphasizing elements that were a syncretism between Pentecostalism and the 1960s counter culture.

One of the methods I used to investigate the political ideology was tc provoke arguments with disciples about politics. Of course, I also collected written and verbal examples of ideology. I particularly looked for examples of arguments between COGs and communists, and in fact was able to obtain copies of letters between a disciple and a young American who was a member of the U.S. Communist Party.

More observations on where COG's ideology fit into the political spectrum were made in Italy. I visited the Bambini di Dio during the Italian election campaign of 1976, when the Communists were expected to do very well and possibly

even win. I examined the leaflets they were distributing in Rome and tried to compare them with the issues being raised by the Communists and the neo-Fascists.

Speaking of fascism, my analysis of the class origins and the political ideology of COG has disturbing parallels with analyses by Guerin (1973) and Carsten (1969) of European fascism. Was COG an incipient fascist movement, or was it helping to lay the groundwork for the resurgence of fascism? Carsten's list of the classes that were attracted to fascism in Europe in the 1930s nearly matches what I learned of the class backgrounds of Children of God from questionnaire and interviews. Some ideology had fascistic elements, such as anti-communism, anti-semitism,[9] or assertions that the masses could not rule themselves but needed a strong leader. The social structure of COG itself was mixed, and changed over time. Blind obedience was a fascistic element, but occasional attempts at sexual freedom were anti-fascistic (Reich 1970). The discussion of fascism is exploratory, and I come to no resolution of the issue.

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[9] Guerin's analysis (1973:80f) is enlightening:

> National Socialism's trick is to transmute the anti-capitalism of its followers into anti-Semitism. "Socialism," Goebbels wrote, "can be achieved only in opposition to the Jews, and it is because we want socialism that we are anti-Semitic".

1.5.2 Incidental Hypotheses

While the survey and interviews were primarily aimed at the goals outlined above, I was also interested in testing other hypotheses which have been raised in the literature on religious movements. Mauss and Petersen (1974/3) had suggested that the Jesus People they visited were disproportionately the offspring of alcoholics. Therefore I included an item about parental addictions in the questionnaire.

Lofland (1966:61f) had argued that any model of recruitment had to take into account "pre-existing friendship nets" of people who might join as a group or serve as a source of new recruits once one of them joined. Forewarned, I made a point of noting down instances of brothers and sisters and friends in COG (there were many). A questionnaire item on the topic was also included.

Lofland had also noted that many of the early recruits of the Unification Church came from rural areas and had a predisposition toward a religious worldview, rather than a psychological, political, or some other more secular kind of worldview (1966:41-43; also Lofland and Stark 1973:37). Questionnaire items about the kind of place a person was raised and the early religious training were partly aimed at testing the same hypothesis for recruits to COG.

Questionnaire items and other methods were also used to determine how many converts came from "broken homes," had been "drug addicts," had had a history of mental illness or serious trouble with the law (spent time in jail), or were unemployed Vietnam veterans.

1.6 INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

In order to interpret my findings, I had to distinguish a sort of class system within the organization of COG itself: the leaders[10] and the led, the shepherds and the sheep, and, many times, the married and the single. Leaders tended to come from relatively affluent origins, especially leaders recruited in later years (a young Italian duke, for example). Some "social outcasts" and workers also became leaders, especially, I suggest, if they joined in the first few years. Most converts I met from the working class reached only the level of leader on the local level, if they were promoted at all. It seems that what most workers did during their COG careers was what they would have done in the outside world--they worked. In the creation of ideology the leaders also had more influence than did the average members.

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[10] Some disciples even said that leaders had a tendency to look alike. This seemed to have to do with hairstyle and wardrobe. Many leaders I met were white men, around 5'10", with blonde or brown hair, wearing down jackets.

COG as an organization, and the Unification Church and several others as well, captured and utilized the youthful labor which the larger society had rejected. However, COG did not exactly "provide jobs" in the sense that full-employment activists demand. For at least half-a-decade it super-exploited the youthful labor, providing in return bare subsistence rather than even the minimum wage. And from that exploitation it built a new organization. If COG has accumulated capital somewhere--and David Berg did tell interviewers in the Canary Islands (M.I.R. 1977; Peytavi 1977) that he had investments--then we might even draw an analogy with the way early capitalists built their businesses and fortunes by exploiting women, children, and dispossessed peasants (Marx 1967). After a period of time a COG recruit could sometimes advance from the status of "exploited worker" to a "management" position which had a certain amount of "profit-sharing" built in. That is, the veteran members and leaders often shared in the benefits of exploiting other members. The difference between COG and a capitalist firm is that exploitation in COG did not necessarily result in more money for leaders. For some it may have simply involved a better lifestyle based on having access to personal services such as unlimited babysitting. For others, the key benefit may have been prestige or a feeling of power.

A factor complicating "class analysis" of COG was the fact that so many of the members came from the families of

clergy. One possible theory was that the Children of God was best explained as a movement of unemployed preachers and seminarians[11] in search of a following. For David Berg, the founder, that was almost literally the case.

> For three years I taught school, about the only kind of job open for the talents and education and idealism of an unemployed preacher! (Berg 1972: 14)

> Nevertheless, right after this prophecy, we went to California, hit our all-time low visiting with Grandmother--no openings, no bookings, no money! ("David," 6/20/71)

The way Berg tells it, he had been wandering about with his little family band for many years seeking his "ministry." Through the urgings of a "prophetess" and of his evangelist mother he finally found the youth of Huntington Beach, who seemed to belong to no other congregation and who were not responding to the efforts of Teen Challenge (1972:17) to save them. Could we say that the COG "ruling class" consisted of "preacher's kids" and the "exploited class" were converts from the "masses," many of them people with personal problems who in earlier times would have consulted their clergymen? That would be an oversimplification, for, on the one hand, many leaders had no relationship to the clergy, and on the other hand, many preachers' kids were never promoted to leadership within COG.

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[11] Perhaps TV evangelists have put travelling evangelists like the Bergs, and even many local churches, out of business.

Seeing COG as class society in miniature also helped explain the ideology. The religious backgrounds of the leaders, especially the top leaders who had been together before COG was formed, had a much greater influence on the ideas and style of COG than did the religious backgrounds of the converts. In Chapter 6 we shall examine an area where ideology was adapted to fit the needs of leaders and of the organization as a whole. That area is childcare. The heavy emphasis on nursery schools was related to the fact that most of the children were the offspring of leaders. Only leaders or "inspirationalists" were permitted to use the nursery schools (Family News 4, No. 8, July 1978[12]). Where a colony leader was single, according to some informants, the colony put no emphasis into child-care. The "progressive" child-rearing practices developed by Maria Montessori were used in the hope of accelerating the COG children relative to their peers outside COG. The methods, however, were altered; greater emphasis was put on "discipline," by which COG actually meant "obedience." This was necessary not only for the continuation of a group which required obedience of its members, but also because the children themselves were playing an increasingly important role in fund-raising and other activities.

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[12] Family News (FN) and New Nation News (NNN) are the later and earlier titles of the COG newsletter. They are listed under Children of God in the Bibliography, along with all other COG publications except those written by members of the Berg family.

An example of behavioral change leading to ideological change was the abandonment of the requirement that converts "forsake all." Though this practice had been at the center of their self-definition for many years, it was quietly dropped in fact and later dropped in theory when rich people like Duke Emanuele Canevaro were "flirty-fished" into the Family. Well-off prospects either did not want to forsake all, or as Berg later stated, they were seen as of more use to COG if they retained their estates and businesses ("Rags to Riches," 3/4/73). This ideological adjustment was especially convenient for the leaders in COG, who no longer had to be embarrassed if they lived better than the rank and file.

1.7 DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN THE COURSE OF RESEARCH

Besides the immense scope of the theoretical problems involved and the impossibility of doing fieldwork in 85 countries, there were a great many practical difficulties in researching the Children of God.

1.7.1 COG "Security"

The Children of God were secretive with me, as with other scholars, journalists, and outsiders in general.

> When the Children of God don't want to talk about something, they have a way of retreating from the subject like frightened squids, leaving behind them a large, dark cloud of vagueness (Cui 1975).

They said they had to be secretive because of their enemies, which made sense up to a point. On the other hand, COG's secrecy could not fail to lead the well-meaning observer to suspect that they had something to hide. It is important to remember that history has shown that protest, minority sects tend to define themselves as the chosen ones, and to see the rest of the world as fallen. Secrecy naturally follows from that dichotomy--all outsiders who refuse to convert must be deceived and/or used. Disciples were fond of quoting Berg: "There are no neutrals" (3/22/70).

A comprehensive ethnography was impossible under those conditions. Often I could not obtain crucial facts. The refusal by leadership to permit me to conduct the original survey plan was a case in point. It seemed that leaders were unwilling to let me have access to any addresses or membership lists, and in fact were not happy about me independently contacting members at all. Every little datum cost hours in observation, interviewing, and piecing together verbal slips and other tidbits accumulated from many different sources. I didn't infiltrate, steal documents, etc., because I felt it was unethical. Data which were "security" (secret) for the Children of God were sometimes available from outside observers. Most of these observers, however, were highly biased, rarely gathered the kinds of data I needed, and usually failed to give their sources. Long-term participant observation was ruled out both by "security"

regulations and by my own temperament.[13] Nevertheless, I managed to spend a lot of time with Children of God, visit many of their "colonies" (later renamed "homes"), read boxes full of their literature, tape-record their music, interview almost 200 members, and develop on-going relationships with several disciples, a few of whom have become friends.

There were roadblocks in almost every avenue of research. Some disciples, particularly leaders, were impossible to reach for interviews. The identity and location of some leaders and of some colonies were kept secret. I was not allowed to enter certain rooms or whole floors of a few colonies where I did extensive interviewing. It was sometimes difficult to continue relationships I had established because people would move suddenly (during the middle of the night in one case), and mail was not always forwarded. Ideology was the easiest kind of data to obtain, yet even that was restricted in many ways. The only literature I usually received from disciples were GP (General Public) Mo Letters, and sometimes, DFOs (Disciples and Friends Only). It was very difficult to obtain a DC (Disciples Only) letter, or, heaven forbid, an LTO (Leadership Trainees Only) or one restricted to leaders. A few of these limited-distribution letters--mostly "pornographic" ones--came to me from COG's "enemies." When I wrote several times to "mail minis-

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[13] After a day or two in a colony, oppressive boredom would overcome me; I would lose all objectivity and have to leave.

tries" for specific letters or to get on the mailing list, I received one packet at best, with a note saying many of my requests were not available.

It would have made sense to interview the parents, neighbors, and some former classmates or coworkers of the people in my sample survey. This was impossible because COG recruits took "Bible names" and kept "System names" (or "legal names") a secret from "Systemites" such as myself. Even though some people would have cooperated by giving me their home addresses, it would have been difficult to systematically survey their families and former associates because they lived in so many different places throughout North America. I would also have liked to follow up on my sample a year or two later, but most of the people had scattered throughout the world within a few months of the time I did the survey.

Finding out how COGs really lived, how the organization really worked, was difficult. COGs used to try to put up a front for outsiders, and had "greeters" and special colonies[14] to show visitors. I could not be sure how much of the behavior I was observing was designed solely for my benefit, nor whether some important activities might have been postponed until after I left. Most people, inside COG and

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[14] In Italy, both Roy Wallis and I found that COGs wanted us to see nothing but the schools and the discotheques, at least when we were near Rome and Florence.

out, told me I was seeing a lot. That was true partly because I dropped in unexpectedly, partly because I became knowledgeable enough that I was sometimes mistaken for a disciple[15] by CCGs who did not know me, and partly because I was young and sympathetic to the people. When I visited colonies I tried to participate in daily life as a disciple, develop relationships with the rank and file, help with the chores, and not be disruptive.[16] The obvious area to fit in was playing with the children and talking with the mothers, childcare workers, and teachers. It was easy to learn about pregnancy, childcare, and education, and about diet, dress, layout of the houses, and methods of doing housework. The areas which were most inaccessible to me were finances, application of negative sanctions, sexual behavior, and leadership structure. The "colony shepherds" (local leaders) were often confused about how to relate to me. Some treated me as a friend of higher leaders, some as a troublesome "babe" (new member) or "lowly disciple[17]," some as a "snoopy" reporter. Things went most smoothly when I was an expected guest on a visit pre-arranged with the approval of higher leaders.

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[15] Having a Bible name myself (Ruth) turned out to be a convenient coincidence.

[16] The fact that I didn't pray and didn't share their mystical beliefs was a barrier between us, however, and was undoubtedly disruptive in some sense. It plainly upset some people who liked me.

[17] A humorous phrase used by a disciple who resented the way underlings were treated by leadership.

1.7.2 Native Anthropology

One reason I chose this topic was that I felt Western anthropology as a whole had been ethnocentric in that we had not seen our own native cultures as appropriate subjects of research. In the spirit of the late 1960s, I rejected the role of anthropologist-in-the-service-of-imperialism (Gough 1968; Keesing 1981: Ch. 23) and decided to study America. While I did not have to contend with malaria and learning a language like some anthropologists, there were several other new kinds of problems.

Subjects Who Can Read

Various things may happen, depending on how Children of God like what they read. Several writers have been sued by other religious groups, particularly by Scientology and the Unification Church. Roy Wallis has had some of his work reprinted in COG literature. It was also impossible to ignore the unsolved murder of a reporter in Thailand, which occurred shortly after she had written a negative article about COG (Lelyveld 1974; Oui 1975).

Protecting the Identities of Informants

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[18] To protect privacy, I changed the Bible names of all disciples mentioned in this thesis except the top leaders. I made up a list of actual COG Bible names (using the

Informants must be disguised[18] from people who have lived with them, both in their own "System" families and in COG homes. There are two reasons in this case why protecting informants is particularly important. First, I don't want my material used in deprogrammings or lawsuits. Second, I don't want disciples to be accusing each other of telling me "Family secrets." Actually, most of my informants were scrupulous about security, and the "secrets" I learned usually came from other sources or by "detective work."

Fieldwork Never Ends

When you live in the field, it is difficult to stop doing fieldwork. If I'd gone to New Guinea, I would have returned to New York after a set period of time and been unable to gather fresh materials while writing up my dissertation. But since part of COG was accessible, it was difficult to ignore further developments--like "flirty-fishing," like Jonestown--or to resist chances to conduct further interviews. As late as summer 1980 a disciple passing through

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publications as a source), first names only, and put them into a bowl. Then, for each disciple who was quoted or described, I drew a name from the bowl, making sure that it was not the person's actual name and that it was the same sex. For some, I kept drawing names till I found one(s) that seemed appropriate or I chose COG names which seemed appropriate, rather than drawing names from the bowl. Sarah and Abraham (see Ch. 4) are names which illustrate the practice among some of the senior couples of naming themselves after a married couple in the Bible.

[19] One of my friends commented, when I told her once on the

New York called and asked me for a place to stay.[19] He reciprocated my hospitality with an update on the Family of Love and some new Mo Letters.

Familiarity Breeds Confusion

Finally, I found that doing ethnography in my own backyard meant I and most of my friends and colleagues were too familiar with all the factors involved. Tracing the cultural roots of the Children of God, for example, could have become a labyrinthine affair, for well I knew that comic books, rock & roll, the boy and girl scouts, summer camp, the Pentecostal movement, the Methodist circuit riders, the hippies, hoboes, and dharma bums, and hundreds of other American cultural phenomena had contributed to the Children of God. Since my colleagues also knew a lot about America, they could often be very helpful. But just as often their lack of intellectual detachment was a problem. Assertions which would never have been made without scientific proof if they had to do with another culture, were frequently offered in this case. Too many people already had a theory about "cults," and all they wanted from me were "the gory details." I even found that some people were too emotionally involved in the issue to discuss it objectively--the fear of "losing" their own "teenagers" to "cults" is/was apparently

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phone that I was too busy to talk because my house was full of Children of God, "You didn't go to the field--the field came to you."

widespread. Like others who have done fieldwork in America, I had to think of an answer to the inevitable question, "Where did you go to do your fieldwork?" Not all anthropologists are comfortable with the notion of studying ourselves, but would prefer to think of a group like COG as a discrete socio-cultural entity (analogous to a "tribe" or village), an "other," "amongst whom" one could do field work.

Chapter II

MILLENARIANISM AND CLASS STRUGGLE

The Children of God was/is a unique and creative phenomenon, while at the same time it repeated a familiar historical pattern. It was and was not "another example" of a millenarian movement, a new religious sect, a Christian missionary campaign, and a youth movement or part of a counter culture. The Children of God managed to creatively synthesize various familiar elements and form an adaptation which took advantage of a particular political economic context offered at this point in history. To understand this one group, it is helpful to review some of the relevant literature on millenarism, on religion, on religion in class society and particularly in the U.S., on "generations," and on the "counter culture."

2.1 MILLENARIAN MOVEMENTS

Many writers have noted the similarity between millenarian ideology and revolutionary ideology. Thus, it seems only natural that some parts of the "youth revolution" of the 1960s and '70s should have held a millenarian ideology. Some of the questions which have been most often addressed by scholars include: What is the relationship between a millenarian movement and a secular political movement? What

causes millenarism? Why is there so often a religious component to millenarian movements? And what happens when the millenium doesn't come?

2.1.1 Millenarianism and Revolution

Millenarianism is here defined as "any religious movement inspired by the phantasy of a salvation" which is to be a) collective; b) terrestrial; c) imminent; d) total; and e) brought about by agencies regarded as supernatural (Cohn 1962:31). People who can imagine a radical social transformation of the earth during their own lifetimes--the millenarist vision--may be no more than a short step from attempting to bring it into being by overthrowing the old order with force. Realizing this, colonial officials frequently arrested the leaders of millenarist cults (La Barre 1972:228, 237, 235; Worsley 1970: 23f, 97-99). And many religious cults have indeed engaged in armed struggle--the Burkhanists of Siberia, the Taiping Rebellion, the Kitawala movement in parts of Africa (Engels 1973:108; La Barre 1972: 234f, 237, 228f, 266f; Lanternari 1965: 37ff).

Yet the step from millenial dream to revolutionary action is one which may or may not be taken. Bryan Wilson (1973:61) draws a distinction between a revolutionist sect (which relies on supernatural agencies to achieve the col-

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[20] Even among those who take some action, revolutionists

lective vision)[20] and a more political revolutionary group. For Peter Worsley,

> the basic division...is not between millenarian and non-millenarian movements, but between activist and passivist movements. Whether the activist content is expressed in the form of separatist sect, prophetic cult, or millenarian movement, or in some combination of all three, these are similar responses to similar social situations (1970:236; see also 30f).

This division between activist and passivist groups (and religions) applies also to those holding the hope of the coming millenium. To Worsley, there is a world of difference between a millenarian movement as a large-scale social phenomenon and "'millenarism' as the belief systems of small-scale micro-sects among coteries" (1970:xlii). A millenial or millenarist ideology could be developed by an individual or a small group of elites, or may be found in the Christian teachings. It is only when a social movement embraces this ideology that a millenarian movement takes shape; the ideology alone, without a social movement, is commonly indicative of escapism and passivism (Worsley 1970:xli, xlii). Activist movements,

> all ultimately result either in the emergence of secular political organization or turn into cults of passive resignation (Worsley 1970:236).

"know that they do no more than put a shoulder to an already turning wheel and give an earnest of faith: the outworking of the prophesied cataclysm and subsequent restoration is essentially the doing of supernatural agencies" (Wilson 1973:23).

Eric Hobsbawm's view is similar. A serious revolutionary group progresses from an early stage such as a millenarian movement, one of Hobsbawm's types of "primitive rebellion," toward formation of a more secular political group (1965:59).

Historically, millenarian movements have often hastened political action. Of course, the movement heightens expectations of a better world, and may make a significant contribution to the development of a revolutionary ideology. Kimbanguism and all its offshoots and sects seem to have played a very important role in the development of anti-colonialist ideology in the Congo (Lanternari 1965: 25-39; Worsley 1970: 235). Another role which has been played by millenarian movements has been the unification of people who had formerly been organized on only a local basis. Even the non-millenarian "Spirit of Taro" movement had this effect in Melanesia: it and later Cargo Cults broke down local animosities and united the colonized people in opposition to the colonizers (Worsley 1970: 66, 227). In North America the great American Indian leader Pontiac took advantage of the spread of the teachings of the Delaware Prophet to forge a very effective, if temporary, political alliance (Wilson 1973: 226ff). In the case of the Hau Hau movement among the Maori it was a millenarian movement which served to inspire a struggling group for one last desperate attempt to throw out the European conquerors (Worsley 1970: 230; Burridge 1969: 15-22).

Of course a revolution or rebellion in the real world must be directed against real people, preferably against those people who are actually causing the misery of the group which finally revolts. Most of the millenarian movements studied by anthropologists took place in a colonial context and the participants perceived the Europeans (or Americans) as the source of their problems. Often the early prophetic teachings called for abandonment of habits and commodities received from the Europeans, a first step toward independence. For example, the Delaware Prophet preached that people should use two sticks rather than flint and steel to make fire, and he taught them to forsake alcohol and firearms (Wilson 1973: 227). La Barre points out that buying tobacco from Russian traders had kept the Altai Turks in perpetual debt. That is the reason, thinks La Barre, that the prophet Chot Chelpan advised them to quit using tobacco, or, if they had to smoke, to mix tobacco with two parts of birchbark (1972: 234f). Tokeriu, in 1893 in Milne Bay, New Guinea, preached not only the forsaking of items obtained from the whites, but that the village itself should be moved inland (away from the whites) to save themselves from a coming tidal wave (La Barre 1972: 237). Most of the millenarists described by anthropologists also dreamt that the Europeans themselves would soon disappear--they would be swallowed by the earth, covered over by a new skin of earth which would come sliding from the west, driven into the sea,

turned into fish, or suffer some other poetic fate (La Barre 1972: 230, 235f).

2.1.2 Religions of the Disinherited?

It is the naming of an outside human source for their problems--that is, naming an "oppressor"--which seems to distinguish potentially revolutionary millenarian movements not only from "passivist" millenarism, but also from passivist forms of related phenomena which have been discussed under the broad headings "revitalization movements" (Wallace 1956), "organized social movements" (Glock 1973: 212), "sects" (Wilson 1970; Niebuhr 1957), "crisis cults" (La Barre 1972: 42), "religions of the oppressed" (Lanternari 1965), or "protest religions" (Wilson 1973). A rich literature exists on these diverse social phenomena, much of it devoted to suggesting classification schemes. As Worsley pointed out, there may be non-millenarian or partially-millenarian movements which are activist and directed against an oppressor (1970: 236). There may also be "movements" or "cults" which are not apparently directed against an oppressor, or which at least are not so perceived by the scholars writing about them. Most of the literature seems to agree that sects, crisis cults, millenarian movements, etc. (whether activist or passivist) form in response to a problem. Wallace, for example, uses an "organismic analogy" to draw together movements as diverse as utopian communi-

ties, revolutions, nativistic movements, or social reform movements. In the face of "perceived stress" which threatens all or part of the social "organism" with danger, a "revitalization movement" may arise as

> a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture (Wallace 1956: 265).

Ernst Troeltsch (1931) first distinguished between "sect" (small, voluntary, radical, drawn primarily from the lower classes) and "church" (conservative, allied with the upper classes) in the early 20th Century (see Johnson 1967: 125). For Wilson, the rise of sects shows in general that the existing powers and institutions cannot give relief from problems--"salvation"--for the people involved (1970:21). H. Richard Niebuhr calls sects the religions of the "disinherited," meaning the lower socioeconomic classes (1957: 26-76). This viewpoint has become enshrined in "sect-church theory," according to which sectarian "theological dissent masks an underlying social protest" (Glock 1973: 208). Lanternari and Worsley document numerous cases of millenarian, messianic, nativistic and other movements, both activist and passivist, which sprung up in response to European conquest (Lanternari 1963; Worsley 1970). For Worsley the fact that the historically important millenarian movements had been movements of the disinherited was obvious (1970: xlii). According to Worsley, an early observer of the Cargo Cults, A.C. Haddon, understood that

> these...were religious movements, but religious movements which strove to 'sanction social or political aspirations'. They were products of a situation of social unrest and of the 'weakening or disruption of the older social order' (Worsley 1970: 66).

In Melanesia such movements were mass movements at the time, and thus by definition movements of the oppressed, colonized, and disinherited (Worsley 1970: xli). Eric Hobsbawm also accepted the model of millenarian movements as being responses to oppression, but he focused on "primitive rebellions" within Europe itself, rebellions of the lower against the upper classes (1965).

There are some problems with this whole approach. For one thing, social movements and sect-like phenomena have sometimes arisen among groups which are not at the bottom of the "socioeconomic scale," or not under colonialism. (The Children of God is an obvious example.) But even more than that, the theories that oppression leads to sect formation are all based on analyses of known sects, millenarian movements, etc. Thus the finding that there had been oppression and the identification of oppression as the cause of the movement are ex post facto. Once we have convinced ourselves that millenarian movements are the result of oppression (or whatever), it is relatively easy to find some kind of oppression in the situation of the people who have formed the millenarian movement. Our reasoning becomes tautologi-

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[21] See Kaminsky 1962 for a similar criticism.

cal.[21] The theory cannot explain negative cases. There are and have been many situations of "disinheritance," "oppression," or "perceived stress" which do not or did not lead to millenarian or similar movements.

These criticisms can be answered in several ways. Charles Y. Glock and David Aberle broaden and refine the concept of "deprivation" and the theory of how it gives rise to "movements," covering thereby most cases and eliminating or explaining the negative cases. E.P. Thompson justifies the case study method which has been used (1980:46-49). And Frank Musgrove applies a new method to the problem, and comes up with a new theory (1974).

"Deprivation" is defined by Glock as

> any and all of the ways that an individual or group may be, or feel disadvantaged in comparison either to other individuals or groups or to an internalized set of standards (1973: 210).

He differentiates five kinds of deprivation: economic, social (social status), organismic (physical or mental impairment), ethical, and psychic (lack of value system) (1973: 210ff). Even "anticipated...deprivation" can "stimulate an organizational response" (Glock 1973: 216). This is so inclusive a definition that one would find it difficult not to call everyone in the world "deprived" in at least one of these ways. For negative cases, situations in which there is deprivation but no social movement, Glock explains that "felt deprivation" is a necessary but not a sufficient con-

dition. Several other conditions will also have to be met before a social movement will arise:

> that the deprivation be shared, that no alternative institutional arrangements for its resolution are perceived, and that a leadership emerge with an innovating idea for building a movement out of the existing deprivation (Glock 1973:212).

David Aberle takes the concept of "relative deprivation" and applies it to known millenarian movements. Like Glock, he defines deprivation in terms of the participants' "standards," rather than according to some objective, quantifiable criterion.[22] There are four areas of possible deprivation: possessions, status, behavior, and worth (Aberle 1962:210). Like Glock, Aberle discusses only those types of deprivation which affect groups, since only these would lead to attempts at collective solutions:

> It is where conditions decline by comparison with the past, where it is expected that they will decline, in the future by comparison with the present, and where shifts in the relative conditions of two groups occur, that the deprivation experience becomes significant for efforts of remedial action. Indeed it is change itself that creates discrepancies between <u>legitimate</u> expectations and actuality, either by worsening the conditions of a group, or by exposing a group to new standards (Aberle 1962:210).

Relative deprivation is defined here within a broader social context, the colonial or neocolonial situation in Aberle's examples. The focus is on the relations between groups and the processes of historical change.

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[22] Examples would be calories/person/day, or amount of wealth owned.

The case study method has been essential to the theory that deprivation causes millenarianism. Yet the case study method has been criticized for being

> low on control, and...low on representativeness. One can hardly differentiate cause from effect, and inferring from the intensive study of one or a few cases involves a high and generally unknown amount of risk (Labowitz and Hagedorn 1971:48; emphases mine).

E. P. Thompson, on the other hand, has defended the case study method. History itself, he says, is a sort of gigantic laboratory, "providing results for every human experiment that has ever been conducted" (1980:48). With careful analysis of many congruent cases we need not withdraw from the conclusions about process, cause and effect that we learn from studying history (1980:47-49).

Frank Musgrove raised the question of method very forcefully in his study of "counter cultures," which he defines as "discrepant, discordant, 'unhelpful' and even subversive beliefs and social movements" (1974:12), which surely would include millenarian movements. He attacks not the intensive case studies carried out by historians like Thompson, but the "social scientific" comparative studies which look at cases out of context and arrive at pseudo-scientific, pseudo-statistical "proofs." Their logic, he points out, is tautological.

> Comparative studies which start with a collection of appparently similar counter cultures seek to 'explain' them by the features they have in common. There is no reason why the social contexts which gave them birth should not also be contrast-

> ed and compared. But explanation starts from common features of counter cultures and works outwards; and having defined counter culture as retreat from the world, the banal conclusion is that the world was experienced as noxious and retreat was sensible. This has the virtue of simplicity and the vice of tautology (Musgrove 1974:14f).

To remedy all that, Musgrove tries a new method. He tests the hypothesis that counter cultures were associated with periods of economic change, and he does this by examining a number of such historical periods. How he chose his "sample" and how he determined whether or not a counter culture was "flourishing" during that period were not revealed. Musgrove's findings did not support the theory of relative deprivation, at least not the contention that economic development or either scarcity or surfeit caused "counter cultures." Rather, the cause he argued for was openness.[23] Musgrove's findings were that counter cultures were associated with the neolithic (Dionysian cults), the high middle ages (chiliastic movements), the new capitalism of the later sixteenth century (witchcraft accusations[24] and trials), and the industrial revolution of the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Romanticism). The Italian Renaissance, on the other hand, nurtured no counter culture, despite the high degree of economic growth and change (Musgrove 1974:12f). The key variable in all these historical periods--except the

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[23] The concept of "openness" was drawn from Mary Douglas' Natural Symbols (1970).

[24] Anthropologists are wary of the assumption that an increase in witchcraft accusations signifies an increase in witchcraft itself (see Harris 1975b; Nash 1967).

Italian Renaissance--was population growth and dislocation (1974:14). All of this leads him back to his discussion of the English "counter culture" of the 1960s and '70s, which he insists is a "revolt of the uncppressed" (1974:19).

> It is a search for new interactional norms in the widening, more diffuse marcins of postindustrial societies. It is most satisfactorily conceptualized not as a revolutionary ideology but as an exploratory curriculum, a rance of experiences and exposures through which the postmodern generation seeks a sense of significance....It is not a 'youth culture.' It is a rebirth of Dionysian culture which has striking historical parallels (Musgrove 1974:19).

There is one other possible answer to the criticism that the relative deprivation theory is weak because it could be applied to any group. If it is true that everyone and every group is "deprived," and that all of life is a series of crises, then perhaps that is precisely the reason why religion is a cultural universal (La Barre 1972: 44f, 47). The explanation for new religions, then, would be that the old religions were no longer doing their job, or that for social or historical reasons people were cut off from their religious communities (Freud 1969:172; Wilson 1970). Clearly then the emergence of a new social group with its own institutions would be accompanied by the formation of new religious organizations which would meet their religious needs. From that point of view, the formation of religious groups like the Children of God would indicate the degree to which <u>youth</u> had become a separate social group in the West.

It is not necessary to choose one from among these various explanations of millenarianism. They could be combined into a comprehensive theory. Youth have become a new social group, a new social category, which creates new religious ideologies and institutions. However, the character of these new ideologies is being shaped by the situation of youth, which is one of relative deprivation vis a vis their elders, and of dislocation. Furthermore, the "baby boom" generation were the first "post-Bomb" babies. Thus a millenarian religion, rather than some more passivist or individualistic religion, was able to get its start in this new social grouping.

2.1.3 After the Date

Much has been written about the inevitable disappointment of those who wait for the "new world" to appear (Festinger et al 1956). The Children of God have survived the failure of a prophecy that California would fall into the sea, and the failure of a prophecy that the Comet Kohoutek would bring the destruction of America. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ has, from the origin of the Children of God's movement, been predicted for a date safely in the future, though excitingly near--1992/3. Before that date, however, COGs expect a seven-year period of great world-wide changes, including the rise of a one-world socialistic government about 1985. One disciple shrugged off the disappointment

about Kohoutek by saying it was "just a prophecy." But another tactfully advised me to put my efforts into something other than a book, since soon there would be no more libraries. If the Children of God/Family of Love lasts through the 1980s, it will be interesting to see how they relate to whatever differences there will be between their prophecies and the actual unfolding of history.

Indications of Passivism

While the Millenium, as yet, has never come, the Revolution sometimes has. Sometimes members of millenarian movements have taken steps to bring in a better world by other than supernatural means, that is, by political organizing and action (Worsley 1970; Hobsbawm 1965; Thompson 1963). Members of other groups, which Worsley has called "passivist," have come to accept the "old world." One clear indication that this acceptance, however unhappy, is taking place is the postponement of the Date. A group might put off the End indefinitely, and/or remove the "new world" from this earth altogether to the "next world" to which one retreats after death--heaven (Engels 1969:214; Worsley 1970:231). A millenarian movement which expects a thousand-year reign of peace and plenty to begin very soon on this earth has little use for the concepts of "heaven" or of "afterlife." These latter concepts are more appropriate to people who have accepted defeat in this world, and who hope

that the tables will be turned in the life after death. A doctrinal concomitant of "heaven" is a value system which symbolically defeats the oppressor by praising the traits of the oppressed. Part of "sect-church theory" is that the poor compensate themselves for their inferior social and economic status by awarding themselves superior religious status (Glock 1973:208). According to Nietzsche, Christianity is heir to the "slave revolt in the area of morals": it praises poverty and asceticism, and teaches that "the meek shall inherit the earth" (1969:103).

For those whom Worsley calls "passivists" there are sometimes practical benefits to be derived from sectarian "moral" practice. Max Weber's famous thesis about the Protestant ethic (1958) has inspired other sociologists to look at the effects of the Protestant ethic not only in terms of creating capitalists, but in terms of small-scale social mobility as well--from abject poverty to the employed working class, for example. In historical periods when some social mobility is possible, it has been found that the ascetic, hard-working, well-disciplined, non-drinking sect member may be the person who rises out of poverty (Glock 1973:208f; Schwartz 1968; Johnson 1961).

A millenarian movement lives in tense expectation of a collective salvation. At some point the emphasis may begin to shift to more personal types of salvation, what Bryan Wilson calls the return from "millenium to magic"

(1973:348-383). Several writers have already seen that shift take place in the United States during the 1970s, as the great collective movements of the 1960s were replaced by "personal salvation" movements such as EST or Transcendental Meditation (TM). This change has been called the "new narcissism" (Lasch 1976), "the awareness trap" (Schur 1976), and "the Me Decade" (Wolfe 1976). Preoccupation with personal problems may serve as a method of "consciousness contraction" (Foss 1972:201). While one is busy saving oneself, one also must be rid of the anger which had formerly been directed against a collectively recognized oppressor. One may begin to blame one's close associates for all the troubles in life, and witch-hunting and social discord may function as a substitute for revolt (Worsley 1970:232). The

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[25] Nietzsche seems to have been enraged by this aspect of Christianity, which he called the "wound-poisoning" of the priests:

> I suffer: it must be somebody's fault"--so thinks every sick sheep. But his herdsman, the ascetic priest, says to him, "Quite so, my sheep, it must be the fault of some one; but thou thyself art that some one, it is all the fault of thyself alone-- it is the fault of thyself alone against thyself....everywhere the wilful misunderstanding of suffering, its transformation into feelings of guilt, fear of retribution, everywhere the scourge, the hairy shirt, the starving body, contrition; everywhere the sinner breaking himself on the ghastly wheel of a restless and morbidly eager conscience; everywhere mute pain, extreme fear, the agony of a tortured heart, the spasms of an unknown happiness, the shriek for "redemption"....This grand old wizard of an ascetic priest fighting with depression--he had clearly triumphed, his kingdom had come: men no longer grumbled at pain, men panted after pain: "More

Christian tradition is to blame oneself,[25] so that we find guilt, self-punishment, and emphasis on self-improvement in Christian lands.

Nonrevolutionary Millenarism and Evangelism

While the Children of God have not (yet) transformed themselves in the ways outlined in the previcus section, it was clear by 1976 that they were not headed in the direction of political activism. Therefore we must explain the retention, however minimal, of the prophecy of an imminent millenium. A hint of postponement came in February 1978, when Berg said,

> If you don't give the warning, you're holding up history! God has to postpone the judgment ("More lit laws").

For the individual, the hope of millenium is more appealing than the hope of heaven. A classic concern of most religions is death, and the millenial doctrine eliminates the need for the individual to die and be resurrected before achieving perfect happiness. The Date set by the Children of God also eliminates the need for disciples to grow old. This is particularly significant since so much of COG's identity is tied up with its being a group of youth.

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pain! More pain!" (Nietzsche 1969: 108).

The nearness of the End also puts a lot of pressure on evangelists to "reach" the world with the Christian message before it is too late.[26] Linda Meissner, founder of the Jesus People's Army of the Pacific, said she felt the millenial expectations in the air on the West Coast in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For her, this inspired untiring evangelistic efforts and the recruitment of people to help her, since she estimated that there were only between three and twenty more years to fulfill the "Great Commission[27]" (Enroth 1972: 179f). Meissner later joined the Children of God. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the End will lead to a millenium on earth, but they do not set an exact date. The relation between their millenial doctrine and evangelism is described by an observer:

> In this way all one's spare time is used for the extension of the Kingdom and the warning of the people of the imminence of Armageddon [the final battle at end of the world]. He [the new convert] is required sooner or later to fit into his life all the duties of those who have been called out from a dying world. The nearness of Armageddon rules out the necessity of so many things, such as education, community projects, and any other long-range plans that one may have for oneself and one's family. Eventually, this means giving over one's vacation time exclusively to the work of Jehovah's Witnesses. The guilt generated by touring the country during a holiday is eventually too heavy (Sterling 1975:148).

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[26] In fact, the warning that the End may come unexpectedly--"like a thief in the night"--is also used by non-millenial churches and evangelical organizations to keep up the level of dedication.

[27] Jesus Christ's supposed directive to spread the Gospel to all nations.

That description fits the Children of God perfectly, with the exception that it is not only "one's vacation time" that is given over to the work of COG, but all one's time, one's whole life.

Roy Wallis, a British sociologist who has studied the Children of God, believes that the millenarist vision is a determining factor in COG. He feels that it takes precedence over the desire for community in guiding COG's activities (Wallis 1976). Wallis uses the example of COG, who have, in his view, sacrificed community many times for the sake of millenarianism, to counter Rosabeth Moss Kanter's theory that millenarist ideology operates in the service of the "mobilization and formation of a new community," and then functions to help maintain the community (Kanter 1972:221). In my view, it is David Berg's ideology, which is evangelistic much more than millenarian, which has played the most important role in shaping COG's nature and activities. In an article written in 1979, Berg reviewed his early days (1955) in Florida training missionaries, some of them natives of the Caribbean and the other fields to which they would be sent. He clearly saw the COG as a continuation of that work.

> We sent 17 missionaries to their fields within 7 of our 1st months!--Now we've sent over 10,000 in 10 years! (Berg 1979:70)

Many COG members were oriented toward community and toward revolutionary millenarianism, but Berg has consistently em-

phasized "mission work," even when it has meant splitting up local COG communities into "teams" and asking members to behave in an unoffensive manner so as to win "souls." This pattern will be illustrated in Chapter 3 when the history of the group is traced.

2.2 RELIGION

The Children of God is a millenarist group, or at least it once was, and it is also a religious group. The religious aspect requires some explanation, particularly as it seems to contradict the trend toward secularization that some sociologists have observed in Western society (Herberg 1967: Glock and Stark 1972:289).

2.2.1 What is "Religion" in Western Society?

When I say that COG is "religious" I mean that its members, the wider society of which it is a part, and the legal system all consider it to be part of the category "religious phenomena." I think it is useless, and fallacious, to try to create some general, all-purpose definition of "religion," based on all examples we can find cross-culturally that we consider related, and then declare "religion" to be a cultural universal. Rather than reifying a vague abstraction, I suggest that a more satisfying approach would be to study each sociocultural system and ascertain what are the important subsystems within it. In Western society "religion" is

something--a word, a set of institutions, a heading in the Readers Guide, an entity in legal terms, and, to some degree, a consensus among the vast majority about certain aspects of worldview and ideology. COG has self-consciously chosen to include itself within the category "religion" in Western society, and has been accepted as such by the society.

The word "religion" is most comfortably used by Europeans and Americans to refer to doctrines and organizations within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Tylor's definition of religion--"belief in spiritual beings"--is qualified in Western tradition: the spiritual beings must be "God" and a set pantheon of saints and angels, plus the souls of the deceased, plus usually Satan and the evil spirits. A "religion" which focuses on the spirits of the ancestors or other deceased persons, such as Spiritualism, is not as easily considered a "religion" as is COG. Likewise, a "religion" which worships the spirits of the deceased or especially of Satan and the evil spirits is rarely thought of as religion by Americans, but rather as some sort of paganism or wickedness. Americans sometimes even refer to Hinduism or some other of the great religions as "false religions" due to their belief in the "wrong" spirits. But to Americans COG is religious, and, moreover, it is Christian. It might be "more than a religion" because of all its other activities, and it might be guilty of "false doctrine," but only the

more conservative Protestants would kick it out of the religious camp into the category of manifestations of the power of the Devil, and that only after a period of debate (Carruth 1980).

Religion to Americans is what one "believes in," in the senses both of worldview and of moral values. For example:

> I believe that Jesus was the Son of God, but I don't believe that Jonah was really swallowed by a whale.
>
> I don't believe in capital punishment.

Some pluralism is accepted in both areas. Judeo-Christian religions aspire to be total worldviews incorporating and justifying a set of moral values and loyalties. A different worldview incorporating other values--such as "atheistic communism"--can thus be considered by many Americans to be "almost a religion itself." Even theologian Reinhold Niebuhr referred to Marx as

> ...the revolutionary prophet who had transmuted atheism into a new religion. The priests of this religion are now the priest-kings of an empire based on utopian illusions, of a culture in which materialism has become the canonized philosophy (Niebuhr 1964: xiv).

The concepts of "belief" and "faith" which are so important to our religions have further implications. Faith and belief contrast and to some extent are opposed to rational thought and knowledge based upon sense perception.

> I believe in angels, even though I know there's no way to prove they exist.

In one's total worldview, there are things one knows and things one "takes on faith[28]." If one cannot appeal to one's sense perceptions, one can appeal to authority. In the tradition from which COG springs, this authority is the King James version of the Bible. This leads us directly to the tension between science and religion, a major preoccupation of the Children of God. Sense perception and rational thought sometimes challenge the credibility of people's worldviews. Many people fear that adopting the worldview of science and abandoning the worldview based on traditional religion will leave them without a set of moral values or principles for living. Science is amoral, after all. Blinder and Uncritical faith has become the prescription for many people trying to retain a coherent worldview. To believe unbelievable propositions requires a "leap of faith[29]," and that could take the form of an ecstatic religious conversion experience. One feels the presence of the Holy Spirit and one knows. It is almost as convincing as sense perception. It does not convince the outside observer or skeptic, however. The Children of God used the Holy Spirit to convince themselves of the absolute truth of every word in the King James Bible and of the truth of the teachings of their prophet. They told outsiders that it took just as much "faith" to believe in the evolution of humans

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[28] Note the expression "blind faith."

[29] The phrase is borrowed from Kierkegaard, though he meant something else by it.

from apes, or, for that matter, in the "workability" of communism, as it did to believe in Jesus.[30] For the undereducated and unsophisticated, for people who have been hearing about and talking to "God" all their lives, this is undoubtedly true.

The Children of God said that they differed from other people in that they really believed in their religion and wanted to practice it every day, not just on Sundays. They called themselves the "100%-ers" because they lived their faith. COGs criticized others who separated worldview from practice. That characteristic--living their faith--in addition to their unorthodox teachings and their formation of a particular kind of separatist social organization, was the reason American culture seemed to feel more comfortable calling COG a cult rather than a religion.

2.2.2 Why was COG Religious?

Let us return now to the question of why the Children of God organization was religious rather than secular. The first and most obvious reason is that the founders were religious missionaries and that they set COG up as a religious organization. People have almost always been recruited with that understanding.

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[30] Have I seen Australopithecus, or a gene, for that matter? They say they have felt the presence of Jesus.

All the same, COG remained religious for 10 years, through many changes and with the addition of thousands of new members. The next chapter will show in more detail how the original leaders kept control and how those with religious orientation were selectively promoted to leadership. Yet the followers also had to be interested in religion or there would have been no group.

For some youth, it was a question of joining a religious group or joining nothing at all. COG was the only group which had ever approached many of the converts, and for those from small towns, it was the easiest way to participate in the "counter culture." Membership in COG offered many advantages, and for some people it is not at all clear that religion was one of these. The religious aspects of COG may have been irrelevant to some recruits, or may have seemed a necessary evil or a fringe benefit. After all, what COG was saying was not very different from what many youth already believed: that the world was in imminent danger of destruction, that socialism was based on "sharing" and would be impossible as long as people remained "selfish," that we had to downplay the roles of commodities and machines in our lives. For that large portion of American youth who had been brought up in a world where everyone took the existence of God for granted, it was not too difficult to understand the phrasing of the same ideas in a religious metaphor by the "Jesus freaks." (See Chapter 5 on counter culture and syncretism.)

> Counter-culture's glad tidings of revolution by consciousness are neither new nor revolutionary. Christianity has been trying to achieve a revolution by consciousness for two thousand years. Who would deny that Christian consciousness could have changed the world? Yet it was the world that changed Christian consciousness. If everybody adopted a peaceful, loving, generous, non-competitive lifestyle, we could have something better than counter-culture--we could have the Kingdom of God (Harris 1975b:253).

Nonetheless, an explanation is needed for the many cases of religious conversion which COG induced and for the many disciples who came to COG in the first place because they were of religious temperament. We know from many studies that religion and mysticism are very seductive to some, perhaps most, people in certain situations. People who are lonely, frightened, confused, and/or feeling guilty often find solace in religion (La Barre 1972:24). The Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal denomination in which some of COG's founders were trained, is well aware of this. It quite consciously sends missionaries to disaster areas in order to reap the bountiful harvest of souls (Time 1973). Anti-cultists charge that COG and the Moonies deliberately prey[31] on people in crisis and in transitional periods (Enroth 1977:158f). Many of the COGs I interviewed joined under such circumstances. The questionnaire I administered tried to get at other factors which might have been related to an early interest in religion among some of those who joined

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[31] A favorite place to find lost and lonely youth is the bus or train station (Edwards 1979).

COG. Such factors included parental alcoholism, religious upbringing, and early traumas. I found that some disciples had found solace or companionship in religion already as children. There were also many disciples who had been raised in religious homes and had been attracted to COG because it permitted them to continue a familiar lifestyle.

The testimonies of COGs were usually filled with tales of former woe. An Italian student who interviewed several Bambini di Dio (the Italian name of COG) told me that they all spoke of personal problems. Yet we must not be misled by these stories, which are to some degree stereotyped. It is the accepted pattern in the branch of American religion from which COG emerged (roughly, the "evangelicals") that people phrase everything in terms of personal problems, which Jesus then cures. One cannot easily ascertain the degree to which the troubles outlined in a "testimony" were the cause of the person's conversion.

There are two factors that came up frequently in testimonies, and that my questionnaire confirmed as very important, and those were drugs and loneliness. Hallucinogens seem to have sensitized many people to "the spirit world," as COGs would put it. They became used to seeing strange visions, and perhaps that altered their view of what was "real." Drugs also hurt many people. One informant said he lost the ability to read. Another said he was about to sign himself

into a hospital. Several others spoke of friends who had died because of drugs. Sarah's testimony about virtually losing her mind (Ch. 4) was especially dramatic, though, again, it had been told and retold for ten years and it is difficult to know exactly what happened. All the same, it is the type of thing that probably happened to many people. Weston La Barre's assessment of religion as crisis cult is especially fitting to such cases:

> Both neurosis and sacred culture are the frantic nonce-solutions of people under stress which are frozen into permanence by fear (1972:24).

La Barre also talked about severe loneliness. "Social deprivation"--isolation from other people, which La Barre considered a subtype of sensory deprivation--can result in hallucinations. In the vision quests of many American Indian cultures this was well known and the resulting hallucinations were culturally managed to provide a source of strength for the individual. Lonely children sometimes invent "imaginary playmates," and stranded travellers tell of the appearance of companions and helpers (La Barre 1972:53ff, 65 note 25). One of my informants told me that as a child he'd had a little friend in his head, and that ever since he asked Jesus into his heart he had felt like he had his friend back again.

Analyzing a phenomenon such as the Children of God from a psychological point of view has many dangers and shortcom-

ings. Among these are reductionism. Even if everyone who joined had psychological problems before joining, it would not explain the group any more than would the popular expression, "They're just a bunch of crazies." Furthermore, without longitudinal data it is difficult to separate the individual's deep-seated characteristics from symptoms brought on by membership in the group. The anti-cult movement has insisted that cults destroy a person's thinking ability and may cause ontogenetic regression. Women may stop having menstrual periods, for example (Clark 1979). Like the relationship of relative deprivation to millenarianism, the psychological factors assumed to cause religiosity are easily identified among the religious converts ex post facto. A few disciples seemed insane, that is, out of touch with reality and other people. There were also some who fit Reich's diagnosis:

> My medical experience has taught me that adolescents who are sexually sick have an unhealthy appreciation of the legend of Jesus (Reich 1970:168).

Most of the Children of God seemed to this observer to be as "normal" as most other Americans, except, of course, when they were talking about miracles or the End Time. Unless we postulate some sort of "group mind" working out some classic cultural problem, we must explain all the other "normal" people who didn't join. The Children of God had their own view on the question of psychological normality:

We live in a world full of madness
Where all are insane but we.
I prefer my world full of gladness,
Though you say it is all fantasy.

I'd rather have madness than sadness.
I'd rather be glad than be sane.

The biggest pitfall in the psychological approach to social and historical phenomena is, however, that it leads people to propose solving the psychological problems of the individuals as a way to change broader factors. Offering psychotherapy tc all youth would probably not prevent the formation of "cults." It might result in a cult of group therapy, however. To illustrate with an extreme example, would it have been possible to prevent the Iranian revolution of 1979 by offering psychotherapy to all Iranian youth so that they could work out their "problems with authority" and their "masochistic fantasies" about torture? That sounds ridiculous only because the world has reached a consensus that the Shah was a tyrant who used torture, whether or not oedipal conflicts were muddying the waters for some Iranian young people. Yet in the U.S. during the 1960s and 1970s many youthful rebels were told that the "real" reason they were rebelling was not the war in Vietnam or any of the other issues they raised, but was actually that they had not yet "worked thrcugh" their problems with their own parents. I do not want tc be accused of dismissing the protest religion of the Children of God so lightly. Obviously psychological factors are important, but the analysis must go far beyond the study of individual psychology.

We have said that the Children of God knew what the word "religion" meant in America and that they consciously chose that appellation. One of the reasons for this was that religion, like "nonviolence," can be a political strategy as well as a system of beliefs. As the reader will remember, both religion and non-violence were used in the 1960s Civil Rights movement to gain legitimacy for the cause and to lessen the repressive reaction of a more powerful opponent. In 1969 hippies and draft resistors were faced with harassment and persecution (Brown 1972). Things were particularly difficult in areas like Texas and southern California where COG had early strongholds. "Jesus freaks" may have seemed relatively "innocent" in such contexts, and a group which called itself religious rather than political or counter cultural was, without a doubt, relatively more popular with the local Establishment.[32] Wherever they went, Children of God were quick to take advantage of the fact that they could get special favors by being religious, as will become clear later in this paper.

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[32] Harris (1975c:202f) suggests that the early Christians, with their avowed pacifism, were less severely persecuted than other Jews, who were seen as revolutionaries by the Romans.

2.3 RELIGION AND CLASS CONFLICT IN THE U.S.A.

The perception of the Children of God by outsiders, and its self-perception, were shaped in part by the history of religion in Western capitalist society. Religion has played a number of political roles, and among the most important have been its roles in the class struggles between workers and capitalists. The most appropriate point of departure for this discussion is Karl Marx's famous passage:

> Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of the vale of woe, the halo of which is religion (Marx 1964:94; emphases his).

2.3.1 Religion vs. the Workers

Many writers since Marx have tested or illustrated the "opium theory" of religion. Stark, for example, believes that religion and radical politics have proven to be, not perhaps mutually exclusive, but at least "mutually corrosive" (1964:703). Both communism and religious sectarianism express the discontent of the lower classes.

> This is not to imply that religious sects supported by lower-class elements necessarily or usually become centers of political protest. In fact, such sects often drain off the discontent and frustration which would otherwise flow into channels of political extremism (Lipset 1963:100).

In 1950s Sweden, one study reports that the communists and religious sectarians seemed to be competing for the same populations (Lipset 1963:100). Trotsky recruited the first working class members of the South Russian Worker's Union from among religious sectarians (Lipset 1963:99). Niebuhr notes that since the rise of Methodism there has been no important religious movement among the Western European working classes. This is due, he explains, to the fact that the working classes have been channelling their discontent into secular political struggles since the 18th century (Niebuhr 1972:72ff). Hobsbawm and Worsley, as noted earlier, wrote that in advanced nations secular protest is the norm and religious protest is backward and escapist (Hobsbawm 1963:59; Worsley 1970: xliii, 233). Both Hobsbawm and Lanternari, as well as E.P. Thompson (1963), are clear in their assessment of some religious movements as being part of the class struggles of their place and time.

The United States differs from Europe in respect to both politics and religion. Many scholars have noted the exceptional strength of religion in the U.S. as compared to Europe (Luckmann 1969). Repeated Gallup surveys have found that 96 to 97 percent of all American adults respond "yes" when asked, "Do you, personally, believe in God?" However, a large minority of these, including church members, have some doubts about the existence of God as well as of religious tenets such as life after death (Stark and Glock

1970:26-30). A study done in England showed that the working class was significantly less religious than the upper class (Stark 1964:703ff), but that is not the pattern in the U.S. (Luckman 1969:145ff). Socialist and communist ideology are, conversely, very rare in the U.S.

The "opiating" effects of religion have been well known to the ruling classes throughout American history. Factory owners filled the workers' districts of company towns with churches (Pope 1965: 36ff, 279). Religion has frequently been prescribed as the cure for working class unrest or revolt. Dwight Moody, a millionaire businessman, and Charles G. Finney, "the father of modern revivalism," quite consciously tried to "reform" and pacify the poor. Finney received a church in Chatham Street, New York City, from the wealthy Lewis Tappan. Here a few pews were open to the poor, while Finney met with his rich friends to solicit donations for his revival campaigns. Billy Sunday was a third famous revivalist who specifically preached to the urban masses (Weisberger 1958:121-126).

How effective have these religious campaigns against working class revolt been? Blauner credits religious sectarianism as a major factor which has blocked the development of the labor movement in the South (in Stark 1964:702). Liston Pope, in a brilliant and detailed analysis of the Loray cotton mill strike in Gaston county, North Carolina,

1929, shows how the supposed opposition between God and communism was explcited by the mill cwners, thrcugh the preachers, to destroy the strike. The owners alsc attempted to distract workers from the strike by scheduling two-week-long revival meetings featuring popular evangelists. Afterwards, the mill management worked hand-in-glove with the churches to ensure that only tame, church-going workers had jobs or could even live in the mill villages. Owners funded and preachers conducted two anti-communist campaigns. The result of these various strategies was that future unicnization drives in Gaston County were even more difficult (Pope 1965: 262f, 282, 322f, 327).

2.3.2 The Religion of the Workers

The relationship between religion and political revolt is not that simple, however. The separation of church and state is a tenet of a historically recent ideology and it is questionable whether it has ever actually been put into effect. The current Pope (John Paul II) illustrates how "political" religion really is, for he has not kept his own views on politics a secret, while he has asked proponents of the Theology of Liberation in Latin America to keep religion and politics separate. Religion and politics address many of the same questions and most people in the United States have ideas about each. Thus in many cases religious ideology has conformed to or served the political struggles of workers, slaves, and other oppressed groups in America.

Historically, the slave churches played an absolutely essential political role, as no other meetings were permitted. The Black churches have been centers of political organizing down to this day. It should come as no surprise to those who know history that religious people sometimes participate in political revolt without abandoning their religion. Pope (1965:262f) noted that in Gaston County, while "uptown" clergy opposed the strike, sectarian and lay preachers sometimes addressed the strikers, and workers' meetings frequently began with prayer and were punctuated with "Praise the Lord" as a sign of approval. In the Civil Rights movement, a great deal of the leadership consisted of preachers, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., having been the most famous among many.[33] Prayer and Gospel music supported that struggle, and also, to some extent, the subsequent struggle against the war in Vietnam. A.J. Muste, another preacher, founded a labor college and later was one of the founders and leaders of the American Workers' Party. Many church people contributed to his early "reformist" efforts, before he joined the Trotskyists, according to one source (Cannon 1944:204f). In 1981, Black preachers are still active in political struggle, and the Berrigan brothers and the Plowshare Eight have been convicted of trying to destroy a nuclear weapon. Archbishop Romero of El Salvador has become a political martyr, and the Ayatollah Khomeini has convinced

[33] Note the organization name: Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

the rest of the world that religion and politics can indeed mix.

2.3.3 Revolt in the Religious Realm

If political revolt is to take place in a cultural context where the established churches support the established secular powers, then some sort of revolt in the religious realm is also necessary. There are four main forms this religious revolt can take: revolt against all religion, sect formation, doctrinal reform, and schism.

Revolt Against Religion

The obvious example of revolt against all religion is atheism. The American Society of Separationists played a theme song containing the following lines on its radio show (WSAI 1981):

> Can't you get free from the jail inside?
> You sold your own mind for a place to hide.

Isaac Asimov, well-known science fiction writer, spoke on the show and also made some tapes for "Dial-an-Atheist." He argued that science, civil liberties, and social progress are stifled by religious organizations, which are very bigoted and intolerant, and by religious thinking in general.

"Atheistic communism" is just about as evil as the Devil to many Americans. (Perhaps that is why most people say

they personally believe in God when asked by Gallup pollsters.) Though the labor organizers who came to Gaston County were not militantly anti-clerical or atheistic, it was the atheistic tenets of Marxism that shocked the workers when preachers allied with mill owners read Marx from the pulpit (Pope 1965: 278, 282).

Sect Formation

The formation of new sects is a revolt against the particular religious organizations which support the status quo. A new religious sect, the Anabaptists, took a leading role in the Peasant War in Germany. Peasants also formed the Christian Alliance which went about burning monasteries and confiscating church estates, seizing their jewels (Engels 1973:103, 107f, 113). The Anabaptists could be called a millenarian movement as well as a sect. The Jehovah's Witnesses and Black Muslims are American examples of new sects whose opinions are at odds with both the church and state. Holiness and Pentecostal sects, and the Children of God, are very critical of the larger denominations.

Doctrinal Reform

A related form of religious revolt is against the objectionable ideas in some religious groups, without breaking all ties with religion. Obviously doctrinal reform, or

change, is part of the sect-formation process. It also takes place within theology and popular belief. Pro-working class "theology" seems usually to emphasize this life rather than the next, and may eliminate the concept of "hell." This latter is important because hell is the ultimate thing that most people fear. Where the established authorities equate protest with sin, one must decide that one's own conception of God's law is above the level of the earthly authorities, or one must wipe out hell. Of course one can always send the oppressors to hell. Bob Dylan's "Master's of War" implies this in the line:

Even Jesus could never forgive what you do.

Speaking of Jesus, he himself had the selfish rich man sent to hell in his Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man. (Lazarus starved to death and went to heaven.)

A "temporal" emphasis is common among the religious people engaged in political activity, almost by definition. One study found that among the large minority of Civil Rights militants who were also religious, most had a "temporal" outlook (G. Marx 1973: 70- 73).[34] The national study of the English cited above found that only 43% of the Labour Party voters in the working class believed in heaven, hell, or the devil, while 58% of the working class Tory voters held these beliefs (Stark 1964:706). Finally, Paul Tillich

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[34] Unfortunately, the questionnaire had only two items to measure "temporal vs. otherworldly concern." One was on belief in life after death; the other was very ambiguous.

(1977), a theologian who became a socialist after the First World War, wrote a book concerned with temporal matters--the rise of fascism--during the 1930s. In this book it was impossible to find the usual words referring to otherworldly matters, such as God, heaven, or hell.

Schism or Shift in Organizational Alliance

Doctrinal reform can lead to schism and/or shifts in coalitions among church groups. Sometimes the break can come because of struggles in the outside society, without much emphasis on doctrinal dispute. During and just prior to the American Civil War, most of the major denominations split into Northern and Southern sections. There were fierce doctrinal and organizational struggles over slavery and secession, though some denominations were reunited after the War (Ahlstrom 1972: 648-675, 695). Something parallel may have happened because of the Vietnam War. This time, however, the country was divided more along age than along regional lines. Schisms within denominations between old and young would have been unworkable, but the Children of God was probably the closest thing to such a schism that occurred--dividing the Pentecostal movement between the hawks and the doves by organizing the youth separately. Within the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, doctrinal disputes had been festering for years which were associated (though not overtly) with political ideologies as well. After the Vietnam

War, a major schism occurred in that denomination, allegedly over literal inspiration of the Bible. However, my Lutheran sources and my own observations indicate that the Vietnam War had been a catalyst, and that many of the "liberals"[35] who were expelled had begun to agitate for an anti-war position during the final years of the war, in part because the youth were demanding help against the draft. Throughout the U.S. there has been polarization since the Vietnam War between the "liberal" denominations affiliated with the National Council of Churches and the "fundamentalists" who are contributing to the formation of the "Moral Majority." Unless they were a sort of "trial balloon" for the "Moral Majority," the Children of God are in an ambivalent position regarding this division.

2.4 GENERATION UNITS AND SOCIAL CLASSES

The Children of God must be analyzed in terms of both age and class, since it consisted of people mostly between the ages of 16 and 30 and was found in class societies. A very useful model for the necessary type of analysis has been provided by Karl Mannheim (1972) in "The Problem of Generations."

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[35] Some of them would rather be called "moderates." A "liberal" in the Missouri Synod is perhaps a bit too unusual.

2.4.1 The Importance of Class Analysis

To analyze protest religion in class society we must determine which class or classes are participating in the protest. I am using the word "class" in the Marxist sense here. It has little to do with the folk taxonomy of "lower, middle, and upper classes." Marxist historian E.P. Thompson defines social class this way:

> ...a self-defining historical formation, which men and women make out of their own experience of struggle, [not]...a static category, or an effect of an ulterior structure, of which men are not the makers but the vectors (1980: 46).

The Marxist method does not restrict itself to analyzing the struggle between the working class and the capitalist class, though those two classes are considered the most important in capitalist societies and their struggle the most crucial. Marx himself discussed the interactions, class interests, alliances, etc., of other social formations in his classic The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (for the period 1848-1851 in France):

> ...the aristocracy of finance, the industrial bourgeoisie, the middle class, the petty bourgeois, the army, the lumpenproletariat organized as the Mobile Guard, the intellectual lights, the clergy and the rural population....[and] the Paris proletariat....(Marx 1968:23).

To illustrate the advantages of class analysis in understanding a social movement, we can look at a well-known example. In the vision of the German National Socialists (Nazis) were many millenarian elements, such as the dream of

a thousand- year Reich. There was a strong "nativistic" and "revivalistic" flavor, and of ccurse "messianism." But National Socialism was not just another Cargo Cult or Ghost Dance! Class analysis can take us beyond that thought and also beyond the theory that it was "simply" anti-semitism or that it was the result of the deceitful powers of one man. A European socialist (Guerin 1973) has written that various class interests were originally represented in the Nazi movement, including some peasants, some workers, demobilized soldiers, and much of the petite bourgeoisie, or artisans and small business owners. As Hitler grew stronger, however, he made an alliance with the owners of heavy industry, who provided much of the financing for his mass rallies and other propaganda. In the internal struggle within the party, the proletarian faction was defeated by the the pro-capitalist petite bourgeois faction. Working class organizations in Germany, and various mincrities, became the "enemy" (Guerin 1973: 40, 46ff, 80f). F.L. Carsten, an eminent British historian, provides a similar analysis of the Fascist movements throughout Europe:

> Unlike many middle-class or working-class parties, the Fascists appealed to all social groups, from the top to the bottom of the social scale. Excluded were only those who were their favourite objects of attack: the profiteers, the parasites, the financial gangsters, the ruling cliques, the rapacious capitalists, the reactionary landowners. But even there exceptions were made if it suited the Leader's book.
>
> <u>There is nc doubt, however, that certain social groups responded much more strongly to the Fascist appeal than others</u>. This is particularly true of those who were uprooted and threatened by social

> and economic change, whose position in society was being undermined, who had lost their traditional place, and were frightened of the future.
>
> These were, above all, the lower middle classes--or rather certain groups within them: the artisans and independent tradesmen, the small farmers, the lower grade government employees and white-collar workers.
>
> Perhaps even more important in the early stages were the former officers and non-commissioned officers of the first world war for whom no jobs were waiting, who had got accustomed to the use of violence, and felt themselves deprived of the 'legitimate' rewards (Carsten 1969:232; emphases and paragraph breakdown mine).

Class analysis is exactly what is lacking in most discussions of the "youth movement" or "counter culture." One of the main spokespersons for the "counter culture" theory, Roszak, uses the terms "the young," "middle class youth," "hippies," and "the pampered children of the bourgeoisie" almost interchangeably (Roszak 1972). An anthropologist saw the "youth rebellion and counter culture of the 1960's" as a single phenomenon, and to illustrate his points he drew from the leading student radicals of the New Left and the defendants in the Chicago Conspiracy Trial--Jerry Rubin and Tom Hayden (Klein 1969). Both these scholars are guilty of ethnocentrism in that they extrapolate from the youth they know best to all youth, or they simply ignore the existence of working class, minority, conservative, rural, or any other young Americans who were not supporters of the Chicago Conspirators. Various studies have shown that many youth had completely different views (Musgrove 1974:93; Yankelovich 1974).

2.a.2 Studying Generation Phenomena

At the same time, it would be a mistake to overlook the age factor. Unless we talk about both age and class we have no choice but to assume the "pendulum theory of history" (see Ch. 8) when something happens such as the rise of religious sects among youth. Karl Mannheim felt that the mass of youth did not swing from one worldview to another, but rather that a core group representing a particular worldview gained temporary ascendancy over another core group representing a different worldview (1972).[36]

Mannheim has developed a formal sociological model which takes into account the generational and class factors, and also the factor of cultural and ideological tradition.[37] He

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[36] Mannheim gave an example from German history to illustrate his theory:

> It is quite wrong to assume, for example, that in the first decades of the nineteenth century there existed in Germany only one romantic-conservative generation, which was succeeded later by a liberal-rationalistic one. We should say, more precisely, that in the first decades of the nineteenth century the situation was such that only that section of the younger generation which had its roots in the romantic-conservative tradition was able to develop new generation-entelechies [actualizations]. This section alone was able to leave its own mark on the prevailing tone of the age.
>
> What happened in the thirties, then, was not that a 'new generation' emerged which somehow happened to be liberal and rationalistic--but the situation changed, and it now became possible for the first time for the other section of the younger generation to reconstitute the tradition from which it derived in such a way as to produce its own gener-

distinguishes three categories of generation-related phenomena:

1. generation location,
2. generation-in-actuality, or actual generation,
3. generation unit.

The generation location consists simply of a locus on a biological age scale in a certain "historical and social region" (Mannheim 1972:118). According to this definition, Chinese and Prussian youth in 1800 did not occupy the same generation location, but French and Prussian youth did. We might argue that in the 1960s and beyond all youth who have access to television have been living in McLuhan's "global village" (1968) and hence are potentially in the same generation.[38] Those persons within the generation location who are "sucked into the vortex of social change" become an ac-

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ation-entelechy.

> The fundamental differentiation and polarization were undoubtedly always there, and each current had its own younger generation: but the opportunity for creative development of its basic impulse was granted first to the romantic-conservatives, and only later to the liberal-rationalists (Mannheim 1972:131; emphases and paragraph breakdown mine).

[37] Unfortunately, it neglects the factor of sex, which can be very important. COG, for example, is 2/3 male. Batya Weinbaum (1978) has an intriguing analysis of the interplay of sex and generation among revolutionary socialists.

[38] Students in Taiwan in the late 1960s used protest methods they read about in TIME magazine (Yao Lop-poon, personal communication).

tual generation (Mannheim 1972:119). People's approach to life is worked cut during their ycuth, says Mannheim, and as history moves cn each new generation must adapt to new circumstances. The monumental events of the day, such as a war, have a deeper impact on the young than on older people, for the young integrate these events into their emerging worldview (p. 113). Thus those young people who are drawn into the events of the day come to perceive themselves as a generation, as sharing a common destiny. The more rapid the pace of social change (up to a pcint), the more likely the formation of an actual generation (p. 125). Margaret Mead was convinced that this was exactly what had happened in our day. She wrote that the history of exploration of the world and of advances in science which culminated in the "atomic age" had brought about

> ...a generation gap that rinced the earth, a gap that separated all those bcrn and reared before the mid-1940s and all those reared since (Mead 1978:96f).

Within an actual generation, according to Mannheim's model, differences of class and ideological background ("intellectual trends or currents") continue to operate. Each group which forms around a commcn approach to the major issues is called a generation unit, and different generation-units are criented toward each other, if only for the purpose of conflict and debate (1972:122). Each generation unit perpetuates the ideological trend of its own social

group, but modernizes it and applies it to the current issues. Misunderstanding with the older generation within each "trend" stems from the fact that the young are relating to a new set of problems, while

> ...the older generation cling to the reorientation that had been the drama of <u>their</u> youth (p. 116).

Mannheim does not actually use the concept of class in this article, but rather talks about "intellectual currents and trends." However, his view is compatible with Marx's theory that different forms of consciousness arise from different social formations. Therefore there is no problem in using Mannheim's model to discuss class.

One very useful application of the concept of "generation unit" is in the comparison of the Children of God with other groups of young people. For example, it seems clear that the Children of God are a generation unit different from the Weather Underground, and also different from and in some ways opposed to the Unification Church ("Moonies"). An article in the <u>New York Daily News</u> (English 1981:17) quoted a Methodist minister who was familiar with the latter:

> The way they are headed, they'll be your typical middle-class suburban Republican before too long.

The Children of God were not headed that way when I studied them, nor were most of the members before conversion. A good part of COG's membership was drawn from Southern or urban Democrats, though there were the midwestern and suburban

middle-class members as well, some of whose parents were Republicans (see Ch. 7). But the Children of God opposed Richard Nixon (they called him "Nitler" in one Mo Letter, dated Aug. 1971) and favored Jimmy Carter, while the Moonies demonstrated in Nixon's favor at the time of Watergate, calling him an "archangel" (English 1981). The public opposition to "cults" made many COG members I interviewed feel more affinity for the Moonies than they would otherwise have had. The educational backgrounds of the Children of God and the Moonies may have been different. The Unification Church claimed in 1981 (English 1981) that 22% of their members had graduated from college, and 95% had finished at least high school. In the sample of 20 Children of God I studied in 1976, only 1 (5%) had graduated from college, and only 65% had finished high school. These figures, while they should not be taken too literally, suggest a difference in the type of person to which each group appealed. The Children of God drew more recruits from the working class and from the "drop-out" culture than did the Moonies.

2.5 THE GENERATION OF THE LATE 1960S

Those who were coming of age in the 1960s and early 1970s have been generally considered to be an "actual generation" in Mannheim's sense of the term. Some writers feel that this actual generation was international (Mead 1978; Lifton 1972a:183). The reasons offered for its formation have been several:

1. The segregation and agglomeration of youth on college campuses and in youth ghettoes (Lofland 1972).[39]

2. The coming of age of the millions born during the "baby boom of the late 1940's and the 1950's" (Moller 1972:223, 231).

Some attribute youth's troubles, such as unemployment, to there being "too many" of them. However, generation consciousness was also abetted by the fact that all the world seemed young. The young set the styles in fashion and seized the initiative in politics. "They can't put us all in jail," anti-war demonstrators often assured each other.

> Contemporary millennialism is the millennialism of an age when the young are a rapidly growing proportion of total population, and when the young, particularly those gathered into institutions of learning, have attained a position of much greater relative influence than they have previously enjoyed (Wilson 1973:6).

3. The Bomb--a major fact of life which those born after Hiroshima had to integrate into their emerging world-views.

Air raid drills during the 1950s frightened millions of schoolchildren[40] who became adults in the 1960s. Years later, when middle class parents were trying to influence their offspring to plan for the future, the young people were uncertain that the future would ever be (Lifton 1972a,b).

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[39] "Cults," incidentally, actively perpetuate this trend, imitating the college and crash-pad life-style for those who are not in college or in youth ghettoes.

[40] Callers to a radio talk show about the Bomb (WBAI 1981) pointed out that the adults had been telling them to take shelter under their desks or in school basements, while they (the children) had known that the atom bomb was so powerful it could destroy a whole city. The experience undermined many children's faith in the older generation's ability to protect them.

> And, to this day the majority of those older than thirty-five have failed to grasp emotionally, however well they may grasp it intellectually, the difference between any war in which, no matter how terrible the casualties, mankind will survive and one in which there will be no human survivors (Mead 1978:72).

4. The rapid rate of change in the contemporary world.

This is probably the single most often cited reason for the emergence of an actual generation in the late 1960s. Rapid change produced a sense of "fatherlessness" (Lifton 1972b:390), "future shock" (Toffler 1970), and social dislocation (Musgrove 1974). In Mannheim's model it is rapid change in general which usually results in formation of an actual generation (see previous section).

5. The war in Vietnam.

The draft ensured that most young Americans were drawn into the controversy over this war. Since the fatalities were primarily among a group disenfranchised because of age, generational conflict was inevitable.

> It's always the old
> Who send us to the war
> And it's always the young
> Who fall.
> (Phil Ochs, "I Ain't a'Marchin' Any More")

Of course the Vietnam war also raised the painful issues of the Twentieth Century--genocide, racism, imperialism, capitalism vs. communism, the threat of nuclear war, the right of the state to force its citizens to go to war, etc. Many young men felt a moral dilemma between obeying the Fifth Commandment (Thou shalt not kill) and obeying the Pentagon.

Guilt over having shed human blood plagued many Vietnam veterans into the 1980s, and has undoubtedly been one of the factors which has contributed to the 57,000 suicides among these veterans.

6. Relative deprivation in the area of social status. A West Coast study of "Jesus People" saw "status loss or deprivation" as a major causal factor of the movement, though "adult status" per se was not the issue raised (Peterson and Mauss 1973:274). Various factors contributed to a delay in achievement of full adult social status for many young people:

a) high and rising unemployment among youth,

b) increasing educational requirements for many jobs,

c) rising costs in the necessities most affecting young families, such as new housing,

d) the high medical costs involved in having babies and rearing children.

In March 1971, U.S. News & World Report (1971b) reported that hiring by big companies on campuses was down 20-25% from the year before, that there were not enough jobs for teachers or Ph.D.s, and that in general it was the tightest labor market since the end of World War II.

Anthropologists have shown that in many societies full adult status can begin as early as age 12, with puberty/initiation rituals. (See Turnbull 1962 for one of many examples.) Musgrove argues that emotional maturity and immaturity are found in all age groups, and among youth are mostly

a function of social status (Musgrove 1965:13-17). The political and social status of youth rises and declines along with their role in the economy. He found that age of marriage was a sensitive index of the status of young people, and was largely dependent on the age at which they were able to become economically independent (Musgrove 1965:58, 70-85).

> It seems grotesque to speak of a society without teenagers. However, if we pause to think, does it not seem equally grotesque to think of Joan of Arc as a teenager? Or Cotton Mather at 16, when he took his Master's degree at Harvard? Or Samual Gompers at 14, when he joined the cigar makers' union? They were not teenagers because the teenager had not yet been invented[41] (Musgrove 1965:ix).

We might imagine that the U.S. is a society with an age-grade system. In this type of system, an age-set (a group of people of roughly the same age) proceeds in an orderly and predictable fashion through the various grades from infancy through old age. Society assigns members of the age-set the appropriate rights, duties, and relative power of each age-grade as they occupy it. The age-grades in the U.S. until recently would have been childhood, adolescence, adulthood, retirement/old age. Economic and political power were/are virtually monopolized by the adult age-grade, with the exception that in the ruling ("upper upper") class old age is no hindrance. When the economy began to decline in

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[41] "The adolescent was invented at the same time as the steam engine" (Musgrove 1965:33).

the 1970s a new age grade which had been emerging--"youth" (student/young adult)--became institutionalized (see Keniston 1971), and since then has been extended up to indefinite age. This third age-grade shared with the first two their relative powerlessness and low status,[42] a fact which caused frustration among those kept perpetually in society's ante-room.

In high schools[43] youth were often rigidly controlled in an atmosphere not unlike jail or the army. Tension was generated by the delay in transition to adult social status. One of my informants ended up in CCG because he was expelled from high school. The reason he'd been expelled was that he had punched a teacher who had kicked him--for smoking in the bathroom. On college campuses issues such as censorship of student newspapers and theatrical productions and regulation

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[42] Although the adolescent may drive a car and the young adult may drink and vote, in many other ways these grades are an extension of "childhood." Children have few legal rights, and may legally be struck ("corporal punishment") by parents and, in some states, teachers. An abused child who runs away from its tormentor often ends up incarcerated. (See Ned O'Gorman, The Children are Dying, for a discussion of child abuse and children's legal status.) The status of "teenager" is not much better legally, though teenagers (especially male) are more capable of defending themselves from beatings, and may have some measure of economic discretion. Teenagers, however, are negatively stereotyped as a "hot-blooded minority," like southern Europeans and non-whites, according to Friedenberg (1972), and teens are America's only totally disenfranchised minority.

[43] One of the biggest issues during my own high school years (1960-64) was respect--we students did not want the teachers to call us "boys and girls" or to tell us how to dress.

of women's "private" lives were fought out between students who wanted to be treated as adults and administrations who wanted to act in loco parentis.[44]

7. Decrease in economic independence in late capitalist society.

An inevitable process since the dawn of capitalism has been the centralization of capital. "One capitalist always kills many," said Marx (1967: 763). As time goes on more and more people become property-less wage workers. The chances of earning an independent living by starting a small business or taking over the family business have greatly declined in the United States.[45] In cities like New York where there seem to be many small businesses, they are often subsidized by the government. Crafts, trades, and professions have become less independent; their practicioners are increasingly likely to be employed by large corporations or large government bureaucracies.[46] The family doctor, the creative archi-

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[44] A very popular article on some college campuses in the late 1960s was "The student as nigger," later published as a book (Farber 1969).

[45] I have spoken to many students at the City College of New York whose parents had businesses or farms. Very few of these students planned to continue their parents' work; most were instead preparing for jobs in large corporations, as engineers or computer programmers, for example.

[46] I am indebted to Karl Saindon for pointing out the importance of this development. Guerin described a similar development in Germany between the World Wars:

> Technicians and members of the liberal professions came more and more to feel themselves the house servants of big capital. Reduced to the rank of intellectual laborers, they were nothing but "a number in a factory" (Guerin 1973:45).

tect, the independent inventor, the family farmer or business owner, the artist--all are going the way of the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker. A European writer, talking about the Italian middle classes between the two World Wars, also seems to have been prophesying the fate of many contemporary Americans:

> Too refined to adapt themselves to the narrow existence of the proletariat, too poor to bear the burden of continually increasing prices, they felt themselves caught in pincers that were slowly crushing them....(Russo, 1923, Mussolini et le Fascism, quoted in Guerin 1973: 44).

Paul Tillich, a socialist more famous as a theologian, said that "pre-bourgeois" groups were reacting to the continuing expansion and development of capitalism in post-World War I Germany. (Among these "pre-bourgeois" groups were many supporters of the Nazis.) The "bourgeois principle" works its way into all aspects of life and all corners of the globe, he said, transforming everything and everyone into objects to be rationally manipulated toward goals which are not their own, but are those of a capitalist class (Tillich 1977: 1, 27, 48). The result is alienation, from the products of our labor, from each other, from nature, and from our own selves (Marx 1967:287-301).

For youth (mostly "middle class") who'd been raised to believe that adult status included economic independence and some sort of fulfillment in work, the acceleration of this process in the U.S. delivered a double blow. Not only was

adult status delayed, but it was not going to be very independent or fulfilling when it finally arrived.

8. The end of scarcity.

Ironically, the economic problems of youth were occurring within the context of the most productive agricultural and industrial system the world had ever seen. Children of God frequently pointed out how much of value was wasted or thrown away in America. With wealth all around it was difficult for youth to accept the notion of scarcity, which had been, up until the 1960s, an essential underpinning for the entire socioeconomic system. As Philip Slater (1970) expressed it, a donkey will not be willing to work hard to get a carrot held in front of him and just out of reach, if he knows that carrots are growing everywhere by the side of the road.

2.6 CLASS SOCIETY IN MINIATURE

Feeling themselves to be different from and better than the counter culture, the Children of God were able to reject some of the counter culture's primary principles (see Chapter 5). One of these was the attack on power, particularly exploitative power. The Children of God preached unity through obedience, and the strict hierarchical structure permitted an internal class system to emerge. Leaders benefited from the labor of the disciples under them. COG's ideology of "sharing" did not prevent differences in privi-

leges and even in standard of living from appearing between leaders and followers. Much of the sharing was one-way, from disciples to leaders. These differences seemed to be an embarrassment and were often denied or explained away, until 1978. Then the top leader instituted sweeping reorganization, exposing and firing "little dictators" and abolishing "unauthorized taxes" (Berg 1978).

Chapter 7 will show the ways in which COG functioned as a middle class survival mechanism for middle class youth who were for some reason disinherited. It is not only for the "hereditary" middle class that contemporary economic changes mean disinheritance. In the U.S., a large part of the working class has/had believed in upward mobility as a component of "the American Dream." Many factory workers were saving money to buy a gas station, for example, so they wouldn't have to work for a boss anymore. They told their children to go to college so that they would never have to work in a factory, or be forced to "marry some bum" (Boggs 1963:14). When these young people finished college and found no teaching jobs, for example, waiting for them, or when they took a job in an insurance or advertising agency and felt alienated and exploited, their reaction was to feel that someone had stolen their piece of the American pie. To some extent COG preserved a middle class standard of living. But even more, it preserved a set of role relationships (teacher/student, manager/worker, counselor/client, etc.) in which "the disinherited" now played the dominant roles.

For some people, however, COG represented radical and irreversible proletarianization. Proletarians are people who have nothing to sell but their labor. All recruits, until exceptions began to be made in the mid-1970s, "forsook all," meaning they gave up all possessions and social ties in the outside world. That made them totally dependent on the group, and all the more so if they migrated overseas. Within COG, recruits of course were not selling their labor--they gave it away in exchange for army barracks-level subsistence. There were working class members of COG who were satisfied with this new "job." Some of them had been unemployed and were glad to be eating, while others liked COG because at last they knew what they were working for.

At first the senior members benefited from the possessions and labor brought in by new members who could be assigned lower status and who had no children to support. As recruitment tapered off, however, some of these lower status people were held back from marrying and moving into leadership positions. In some ways COG was like a "pyramid scheme," which can only work for a certain period of time, so that the last ones in lose everything. (See Conn 1977 for another example of a pyramid scheme.) In 1981, the Unification Church admitted having the problem of a decreasing proportion of single people vis a vis married people with children. The single people had been disproportionately supporting the entire population (English 1981). Now the Moonies had to look for new sources of income. My argument

is that the Children of God gave up the communal lifestyle at about the point when too many people were pressing to marry and move up, while too few new young single people were joining.

For a utopian community to evolve a class structure is not without precedent. We must remember that many of the founders of the U.S.A., now a highly stratified society, came over in communities of religious dissidents. Weber has argued that there were elements of the ideology of the early Puritans and Quakers which helped them to transform themselves into capitalists (1958). But even many of the early "socialists" did not understand the class relations of the capitalist system. The "secular communitarians" who followed Robert Owen and later Charles Fourier were primarily "middle class idealists," according to Albert Fried (1970: 63-84). They eschewed class struggle as the solution to the inequities of capitalism, and tried instead to change the world by example and by education. Despite the fact that utopian communities failed usually within a few years, Frances Wright and Robert Dale Owen argued in the New York Workingmen's Party that "man must be re-educated before society could be revolutionized" (Fried 1970:75). Frances Wright's own scheme to free slaves, the Nashoba community, ended up in 1830 (after four years in existence) auctioning off its land and sending the former slaves to Haiti (Fried 1970:73f).

The Oneida Community of upstate New York, which, incidentally, tried to implement "Bible communism," was consciously based on communalism and self-perfection. But rank was built in. Those considered most advanced in perfection were ranked higher and had special privileges, including sexual and reproductive privileges. Furthermore, as the Oneida Community began to get more and more of its income from its various industries, it began to hire workers from the surrounding areas. The Community constructed a separate workers' village rather than integrating the employees into the Community itself. The evidence shows that prosperity for the Oneida Community resulted from their enterprises, which they owned and ran collectively as a sort of early corporation. Though working conditions and wages in Oneida's factories were better than the American standard at the time (1860s), the fact is that these religious communitarians found it necessary to extract surplus value from their neighbors (that is, to pay these workers less than the value they created (Marx 1967: ch. 1).

There are many parallels between the histories of the Oneida community and the Children of God. Both started as separatist religious communities, both believed in sharing, of love and sex as well as goods. Both were considered scandalous by many outsiders. Both had strong male leaders. And both became businesses. One difference was that in the Children of God, unlike the Oneida community, the "working class" were also members of the community.

How the Children of God, which at first resembled a millenarian movement, evolved class stratification, and how it related to the issue of class, will be traced in the next chapter.

Chapter III

HISTORY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

The Children of God originated in southern California in 1968, according to most sources, and in the next ten years they expanded to as many as 5000 full-time members in 76 countries ("Knew disciples" 3/7/79). Tracing this history, from its true origins long before 1968 until the present (1981), is the task of this chapter. Piecing together the facts was made difficult by the Children of COG's secrecy and by the biases of most observers. The more recent history has been documented in the press and in CCG's newsletter, called first the New Nation News and later the Family News. The period during which I directly observed the group was from 1974 to 1980, especially 1975 and 1976. For the early period up to about 1972 I have had to rely on various sources inside and outside COG, which often differed in their accounts. I tried to cross-check the sources and verify the stories with veteran disciples who had been involved in the early years. However, few of these disciples lived in the U.S., and therefore many question marks remain in the following account. In some cases several versions of the history must be related. In general I have ranked my sources in the order of decreasing reliability as follows:

1. My own observations;

2. Material drawn from interviews I conducted with COG members and outside observers;
3. Factual accounts in the news media;
4. Articles by sociologist Roy Wallis;
5. Publications of the Children of God, including "Survival" (their own history, written by David Berg) and the New Nation News
6. A whole collection of books and articles by opponents of or apologists for COG, most of which do not follow scholarly procedures such as citing their sources.

The Children of God's survival, and growth, were[47] due to a number of fascinating paradoxes. COG was successful in "reaching youth," while other sects or organizations of Jesus People were not. Therefore it attracted contributions. On the other hand, its life-style and doctrines were offensive to many of the contributors. Therefore these donors withdrew support and COG had to move on to new patrons, and new countries. Yet the features most criticized by patrons and "enemies" were an essential part of the formula which made COG relatively successful. For example, parents of converts were upset because their offspring gave all their possessions and devoted 100% of their labor power to COG. Yet it was this level of commitment and this quantity of

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[47] The past tense will be used throughout this chapter, though at the time of writing, summer 1981, there were still disciples who considered themselves members of the Children of God or of the Family of Love, CCG's new name.

trained labor which gave COG the edge over Jesus People or political groups whose members devoted only their spare time to their organizations. Conservative Protestants were upset at COG's slightly liberated sexual mores. Yet these sexual mores were one of COG's greatest attractions for many young people. (See last section for changes in COG sex practices.) Most church people were upset that Moses David (David Berg) was considered a prophet. But as I shall show, his prophecies were what always directed the group and helped to inspire the high level of commitment which was COG's trademark. Representatives of established social institutions criticized and sometimes persecuted COG for asking youth to "drop out" of society. Yet that was how COG recruited its "full-time youth missionaries."

Before we begin to trace COG's history step by step, some generalizations can be made for the period up to 1978:

1. Converts were encouraged to "drop out," that is, to leave other institutions such as home, school or job and to depend entirely on the COG communal group for material and emotional needs.

2. For some young men in the Vietnam war period, COG served as an elaborate way to avoid the military draft.

3. Moses David always had his converts out witnessing to others, from the very beginning. His vision for COG was always of a group of youth missionaries to the world.

4. Major migrations were spurred by Mo's (Moses David's) prophecies of doom.

5. Major organizational and doctrinal changes were communicated to the members after the first few years in "Mo Letters," published letters from Mo to the disciples.

6. COG would do almost anything to get into the newspaper or other media, considering even bad publicity better than none at all.

7. There was a radical confrontationist streak which was sometimes shown and sometimes covered up for practical reasons; in later years this streak began to fade away from lack of use.

8. The Children of God got their start with the aid of more conservative Pentecostalist organizations. These usually denounced COG after a while, but in the meantime had provided facilities, perhaps other funding, and a base of operations from which COG could go out to recruit other youth.

9. COG "sold itself" to businessmen from the very beginning, as a group of young people more able than their elders to do something about "the attitudes of young people and the problem of drug abuse" (Drakeford 1972:130f).

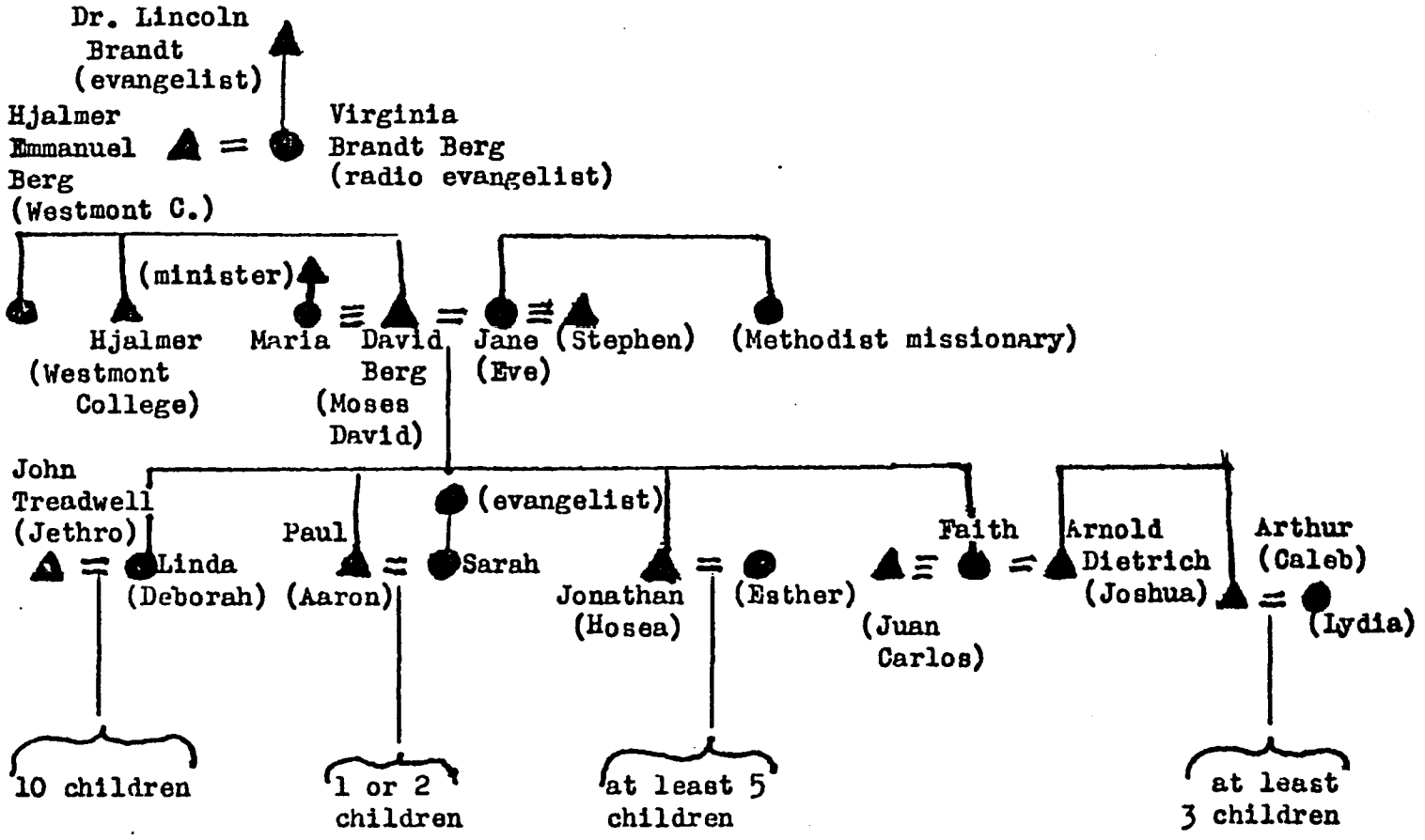
10. COG never identified with the Jesus People, and had vehement disputes with them.

11. "All things change," Children of God constantly reminded each other, and COG most of all. A saying in the "Family" (a term often used by members to refer to the group) was, "Don't sew your sleeping bag to your mattress." The Children of God collectively and individually took pride in always being ready to move on to a new location, a new strategy, a new "sponsor," a new image when the old situation became too constrictive or when a better opportunity arose. Rex Davis (1976: personal communication) called it "opportunism."

3.1 DAVID BRANDT BERG AND THE BERG FAMILY

It is helpful to think of the Children of God as the fourth generation of the Brandt and Berg families of evangelists. In Survival (Berg 1972), David Berg traced his genealogy (see Figure 1). His maternal grandfather, Dr. John Lincoln Brandt, converted to Methodism and became a multi-

millionaire as writer and lecturer. Berg's parents entered the same profession, founding a Gospel Tabernacle in Miami, Florida, and travelling, with little David, on what Marjoe (another travelling evangelist) has called "the Hallelujah Trail" (Gaines 1973:201). Berg's mother, Virginia Brandt Berg, founded a religious radio program, "Meditation Moments," WQAM, "oldest religious broadcast in Florida" (Berg 1972:10), on which she preached for 15 years. She later was instrumental in the founding of the Children of God and wrote their first prophecy, "The Warning Tract," and one of their first pamphlets. Disciples referred to her as "Grandmother." The Bergs were Pentecostalists. They had belonged first to the Christian Church, then the Christian and Missionary Alliance (Berg 1972:6,9f).



KEY:

≡ extra-legal cohabitation
= legal marriage
▲ male
● female
descent
siblings

Figure 1: The Berg Family

We know less about Jane Berg (Mother Eve) than about her estranged husband David Berg (Moses David). She lead a mass prayer in the Rcme Disco while I was there, and gave the impression of having been a revivalist all her life. David Berg said ("Your two-year-old can receive Jesus") that she was steeped in "that Pentecostal Holiness" tradition. Her sister had been a Methodist missionary for five years in Brazil (Jane Berg, "Letters Home").

David Berg was born in 1919 and after high school graduation worked as an evangelist in California with his parents. Ordained by the Christian and Missionary Alliance, he served as the minister of a little church in Valley Farms, Arizona from 1949 to 1951. Fired for what he calls "radical preaching," his integrationist policies, and his refusal to plaster the adobe church he'd "built with my own hands," sent off without severance pay or any cther support for his young family, Berg developed an intense animosity tcward institutional church denominations (Berg 1972:11; 1979:45).

Discouraged, Berg attended the University of Arizona for the Spring session, using the GI bill, and then went out to California again. His first idea was to attend Life Bible College (the Los Angeles Institute of Foursquare Evangelism), founded by Pentecostalist Amy Semple McPherson. But he needed a job and the children needed to go to school, so he began driving the bus for a Pentecostal Christian school

in exchange for the children's tuition. Before long he was teaching the 7th and 8th grades, a job he kept for almost 3 years (Berg 1979: 45, 48ff, 51, 54)--

> ...about the only kind of job for the talents and education and idealism of an unemployed preacher! (Berg 1972:14).

That was how he became familiar with American youth and their problems, he said. Berg said that he and his wife Jane began "taking in waifs off the street," feeding and housing them, and supposedly starting little "schools" where the "waifs" lived communally with his family. It is difficult to know exactly what happened, but one possibility is that they recruited other children, possibly of similar backgrounds, to do some kind of evangelizing along with their own four children. Berg says he taught these waifs "how to live for others" (Berg 1972:13f). Sarah Berg testified that she was taken along with the Berg family, with her parents' permission, starting at age 15, and later forced to marry Paul Berg (NYS Att'y Gen. 1974). Her parents were evangelists too.

Later Berg attended a 3-month American Soul Clinic personal witnessing course under Fred Jordan, a Pentecostal evangelist. Berg had been listening to Jordan's radio program when he was in Arizona, and had liked him, partly because Jordan seemed to be fed up with the churches, too. The Berg family began attending classes at the Los Angeles Soul Clinic, eating their meals there but sleeping in their

trailer in a trailer park. Jordan had attracted Berg with a call for missionaries to Israel, though, as neither of them then knew, there was a law in Israel against the entrance of any new Christian missionaries. Jordan promised to send whole families abroad, whereas the Christian and Missionary Alliance hadn't sent the Bergs overseas because they had four children (Berg 1979:54f). Berg worked for Jordan for 13 years, booking "The Church in the Home," Jordan's TV show, on 300 TV and 1100 radio stations (Berg 1972:14; Wallis 1976). Berg's mother did not like Jordan, and when David and Jane started the Florida Soul Clinic, the older woman would not introduce them to her contacts or help them in any other way (Berg 1979:60). Berg's father and brother were associated with conservative Westmont College in Santa Barbara, CA, and through them he also became acquainted with many wealthy fundamentalists (Berg 1972:10).

During the 1960s David and Jane Berg and their four children, Linda, Faith, Jonathan, and Paul, lived for six years on Fred Jordan's Texas ranch, the "Soul Clinic." Apparently the training school in personal witnessing which had supposedly been there was inoperative and the ranch served at best as a rest station for missionaries.[48] Actually, the Berg family had lived there for one summer as part of Jordan's training program until they learned that they couldn't

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[48] McFadden (1972) is probably mistaken in saying the Texas Soul Clinic had been vacant for 15 years prior to 1969.

go to Israel. After that disappointment, Berg had the idea of volunteering to work on a kibbutz as a way of getting into Israel. Instead he got a job with Dr. Michaelson of the First Hebrew Christian Synagogue, an international radio mission directed toward Jews. Michaelson supposedly was a converted German Jew, like one of Berg's own ancestors (Berg 1979: 54, 57). In the early 1960s the Bergs were in Miami, and Arthur Dietrich (Caleb) and his wife, whose Bible name later became Lydia (see Figure 1), joined them (Berg 1979:78). In Miami, Berg got into some dispute concerning evolution, and said that his Soul Clinic school building was condemned, or zoning laws were used against them, and they had to move out (Berg 1979:77). One informant thought it was "because of evolution or anti-semitism," and we can only speculate if his evangelistic efforts aimed at the Jewish population had backfired. An Italian newspaper, however, referred to his efforts on behalf of creaticnism (Salvatori 1976). Both Berg daughters were married in the mid-1960s, Faith to Arnold Dietrich (COG name Joshua) and Linda (COG name Deborah) to John Treadwell (COG name Jethro). (It is not certain when Faith, still a teenager, married Dietrich.) Both sons-in-law worked with the Berg family at the New York World's Fair in 1964/65, when the group had a Soul Clinic booth or display (Berg 1979:76f). Treadwell (Jethro) at one time ran Jordan's data-processing department (Plowman 1971b). According to one report, Jordan was displeased when

some of the in-laws moved to the ranch (Enroth et al. 1972:23). In any case, in 1966 or 1967 Berg left Jordan's employ and his extended family became travelling evangelists--unsuccessful ones, according to Wallis (1976).

3.2 TEENS FOR CHRIST

Berg claimed to have been receiving prophecies from the time of his birth about some kind of special task God had in mind for him (Berg 1972:9,15). This is a fairly common form of legitimization in professional evangelism circles (Gaines 1973:11). However, Berg had particular interest in prophecy, and followed Jeanne Dixon for many years. He claimed that for almost 20 years he had been "receiving" prophecies about the doom and destruction of America, including exact dates (Berg 1972:15).

In 1968, when the whole country was in an uproar over the Vietnam war, opportunity finally knocked on David Berg's door. His mother, who was living with his sister in Huntington Beach, California, pointed out to him a potential ministry among the hippies living on the beach (Berg 1972:15). He began working, with his children and their spouses, at the Huntington Beach Light Club, a coffee house run by Teen Challenge. This latter group is a nationwide network affiliated with the Pentecostal denomination Assemblies of God. Teen Challenge is run by Dave Wilkerson, a

preacher who had become "famous" for his work with teen gangs and drug users in New York City (Wilkerson 1973). The Dietrich brothers (Joshua and Caleb), were brought up in the Assemblies of God in New York City, and some of the Berg children had been trained by Wilkerson. Obviously these were connections which helped get the job for the Bergs. Another of these connections was Jonathan Berg (Hosea), who had been working in Texas with the Christian Businessmen, now called Full Gospel Businessmen,[49] the group who actually "owned" the Orange County Light Club (Berg 1979:78, 87). Faith and Paul Berg (renamed Aaron) were talented musically and sang their own songs with guitar accompaniment at the Light Club. Apparently the Berg family was relatively successful, because they took over the Club and started a ministry they called Teens for Christ (Berg 1972, 1979). A local newspaper reported that youth came for the free sandwiches and coffee and suffered the sermons only if they could not escape (Edwards 1969).

3.2.1 The Early Converts

Berg said his early converts were hippies, the "poorest of the poor":

> ...the most hated, maligned, discriminated against, abused, harassed, persecuted, and downtrodden element in all American society!--which

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[49] David Berg said he was invited to a Christian Businessmen's luncheon in Phoenix once when he was a preacher (1979:45).

seemed determined to stamp them out! (1972:15).

As his words indicate, he felt some sympathy for the youth he met in Huntington Beach, and, like many other Americans, he believed that youth were "searching":

> And as I wandered about amongst them, wondering about them, God spoke to my heart that all they needed was His love and a good shepherd to guide them, and God asked me if I'd be willing to be that shepherd! (Berg 1972:16; emphases his).

Berg's sympathy for and understanding of young people seemed genuine to some young people I've interviewed; they decided to "forsake all" and follow him. In July 1968 the Orange Coast Daily Pilot reported that twelve "hippie-appearing youths" were telling other youth on the beaches about Jesus, "the ultimate trip" (McFadden 1972:89). Most likely these twelve included the four Berg offspring and two or more of their spouses, who had grown their hair and dressed like hippies for the purpose.[50]

Interestingly, in "Survival" Berg portrayed his converts as drunks, drug addicts, sex perverts and tramps, living lives of crime and debauchery (1972:16). The rhetoric must have been designed for external consumption, because those words do not indicate the type of sympathy which disciples felt he actually had for them. In any case, Berg believed that God was the answer to these and all other problems, and

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[50] Actually, Jethro (John Treadwell) appeared in a January 1971 television film shot at the Texas Soul Clinic as an older man (at least 35) with greased hair. At that time he could not have "passed" for a hippie.

he, along with his family, set about translating the ancient Gospel message, along with the prophecy of an imminent millenium, into the language and music of youth culture. He felt that Dave Wilkerson was too "churchy," and like the churches, ignored and didn't know how to relate to hippies.

Though the 49-year-old evangelist thought of, or at least portrayed, his converts as poor sinners, many were upper middle class. Some were runaways, others drug dealers suffering remorse as they watched the death which was beginning to follow the drug epidemic in California. "Street people," "surfers," and "drug addicts" are the terms that the Huntington Beach newspaper used to describe them (Wallis 1976). They moved in with the Berg family and lived communally, studying the Bible intensively and witnessing on the beach. Partial life histories of two of these early converts are given in Chapter 4.

The Teens for Christ began with what has thenceforward been a regular COG practice--ministering first to the material needs of the "target" population. They took pots of hot food to the beach and fed anyone who was hungry. Shelter was provided too. People suffering from bad LSD trips were aided, and others were induced to give up drugs altogether. The free food was "provisioned" from various food establishments. For example, caterers would have left-over sandwiches which they were willing to donate to a Christian charity.

Berg says they learned about provisioning from the hippies. The converts also contributed all their possessions, though some may have kept their jobs and aided the group financially. I do not know if there was any church backing for Teens for Christ.

3.2.2 Church Walk-ins

While they were gathering their strength in Orange County, CA, the Teens for Christ began a program of visiting established churches on Sunday mornings. One disciple told me that David Berg was a popular preacher and was invited to speak at various churches. In the Spring of 1969, however, this disciple related, Berg began to speak out against churches and the military. After that the invitations ceased and the group began to have confrontations with the churches. Most reports I have read gave other versions of the early relationship between the group and the churches. Berg said that the larger and more liberal churches welcomed the group, while some conservative churches were frightened and a few threw them out (1972:18f).

According to most reports, between 30 and 60 young people in hippy garb, perhaps barefoot, entered the churches and sat en masse in

> ...usually the front seats, which are normally vacant in most churches, although in some of the more crowded churches we were compelled to sit on the floor (Berg 1972:18).

The youth participated in the services in the Pentecostal style, singing loudly and shouting "Amen" and "Hallelujah" whenever the spirit moved them. Of course Berg and many of the youth must have known how shocking and disruptive these "Amens" would seem in middle-class and ritualistic churches, and how offensive their dress would seem almost everywhere--especially in Orange County. However, that was the summer when the Yippies were running an actual pig for President in Chicago, and the mood of many youth was to shock and confront the Establishment and their elders while appearing perfectly innocent.

Several observers agreed that the purpose of these visits was to set up a confrontation, to demonstrate that the churches were cold and rejected hippies (Enroth et al. 1972:24; Wallis 1976:5). Apparently there were some nasty incidents, and reports differ as to how many times these occurred. Berg, and Davis and Richardson, claimed that it was a few members or former members of Teens for Christ who, without authorization from Berg, denounced the church people (Davis and Richardson 1975:5). McFadden portrayed the Teens for Christ group itself, and later the Children of God, as utilizing the methods of the youth revolution to condemn the churches and church people in no uncertain terms. According to McFadden, disciples interrupted church services to read from the book of Jeremiah in the Bible, prophesying doom for the nation of America and calling the church members hypo-

crites. They even picketed outside with signs reading "Jesus didn't say to build big buildings," and were almost run over by an angry parishioner in his car (McFadden 1972:89, 91). Some disciples who were in Teens for Christ told me that they were very disappointed because the church people wouldn't join them in evangelizing in the streets.

One possible hypothesis about these confrontations is that Berg was channeling the disciples' desire to shock and denounce the Establishment in general into a specific attack on denominational Christianity, towards which he reportedly had long felt hostile. Berg himself gave a different version of the incidents in his later writings:

> Nobody ever saw me hardly....Except finally when I got the vision of the church walk-ins. I would lead the parade, because I knew the churches pretty well! I'd wear an old Japanese kimono & this funny big medallion around my neck, & slippers. I looked like an old hippie for sure! We'd walk into these churches 50, 60, 70, 80 strong! It scared them half to death! Some of them called the cops....(Berg 1979:99).

Some church leaders, according to Berg, thought he was "publicity-mad" (1972:18).

> Newspapers carried stories of these happenings, and the Children of God got their first taste of publicity--a taste that has become insatiable (Enroth et al. 1972:25).

In the end, the result of all these dozen or more visits (Enroth et al. 1972:24f) was that the little band had justification for feeling persecuted and for rejecting the churches. And that took them to their next stage.

3.3 ON THE ROAD

The Teens for Christ phase lasted about 1 1/2 years and attracted about 50 members, according to Enroth and some of my sources, though Davis gave the number as 100 (Enroth et al. 1972:24; Davis and Richardson 1975:3). At some point they also began calling themselves "Revolutionaries for Jesus." In the Spring of 1969 they "fled" to Tucson, Arizona, where they began to work in a coffee house called the Lighthouse, run by an old Berg contact, Brother Ware. Back in March 1960, Ted and Millie Ware had become executive directors of the "Florida Soul Clinic," which the Bergs had founded in connection with Jordan's American Soul Clinic. Ted Ware, said Berg, had been in Cuba for 6 years and was wounded 5 times in the revolution. He didn't say on which side Ware had fought in the revolution (1979:73).

Several reasons have been given for the Teens for Christ leaving California, similar reasons to those given for their leaving every other place they have settled. Detractors said that David Berg, along with other southern California "psychics," prophesied that California would soon have an earthquake and fall into the sea (Enroth et al. 1972:24). Berg and the faithful denied this, said he said it "might" fall into the sea "some day." Berg even attributed the

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[51] He said that he had agreed with the prophecy, however.

> But I still believe it's going to happen, espe-

prophecy to "some of the kids."[51] The Children of God said they left California because of "persecution" (Berg 1972:19). The "enemies" induced Teens for Christ's landlords to raise their rents, thus driving them out of town (Berg 1972:19). The Attorney General's Office of New York State reported that 21 members of the group, including the two Berg sons, were arrested in December 1968 and February 1969 for violation of California Penal Code 602.9 (interference with peaceful conduct of activities of a school) and jumped bail totaling $34,950 (New York State Att'y Gen. 1974:3). They were distributing tracts, probably the Warning Tract, on campuses. Meanwhile, some disciples had not reported to their draft boards.

While the bulk of the Teens for Christ accepted Brother Ware's hospitality at the Tucson Lighthouse for the summer, "road teams" established hippy coffee houses in Texas, Florida, and Quebec, all of which were forced to close because of "persecution" (Berg 1972:19). These road teams also brought in new converts, bringing the total to about a hundred disciples.

Apparently the Teens for Christ were "misunderstood" at the Lighthouse too, for according to Enroth they were kicked out (1972:24). Berg said later that they had been convert-

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> cially after the way some of you Californians treated us! You really deserve to sink, but I'd honestly rather see God have mercy on you and save you if you're sorry (Berg 1972:19).

ing too many Catholic youth at the University of Tucson, and Catholics collected 9000 signatures on a petition demanding that they leave town (Berg 1979:102). About this time Berg received a prophecy called "Old church New church"--his group being the new church, of ccurse. They split up into four teams which went to different parts of the U.S. and met up again in Fall 1969 at Laurentide, Quebec. It was a campground or farm belonging to Dr. Martin, probably another of Berg's preacher contacts. They sang (and gave their testimonies) at Laurentide, which was in the Laurentian Mountains of Quebec, and also at a house in Montreal and at Expo 67, which had been held over in Montreal. Dr. Martin seems to have been using them in exchange for giving them a place to stay and some support. But the 100 or so disciples were engaged at this time in something they considered much more important--studying and organizing themselves. David Berg was training them all to be teachers, according to some of the original members. Fifty leaders were chosen and ordained (Berg 1972:20). There were more "old church new church" prophecies.

Someone received the prophecy that they should warn America of its impending doom. Dr. Martin and the Teens for Christ may have been tiring of each other, and supposedly there was an incident at the World's Fair which led to their ouster (NYS Att'y Gen. 1974:57ff). At Laurentide they made sackcloth robes and wooden staves. Then they came down to the U.S.

The first stop was Woodstock, N.Y., where they provisioned large tents and lived with a hippy commune called the Hog Farm, a group which was helping to organize and prepare food for the mammoth pop music festival. Disciples claimed they helped clean up after the Woodstock festival was over.

From there the group moved to Washington, D.C., where they stood in a silent vigil at the lying-in-state of Senator Dirksen. In their striking outfits of red sackcloth, foreheads smeared with ashes, huge wooden yokes around their necks and long wooden staves in their hands, they attracted the attention of the national press. Berg said they were mourning the death of the last great proponent of prayer in the schools, and the death of the nation (1972:20). Others stood about on Washington street corners and in front of the White House, demonstrating for, said Berg, peace (Ibid.).

Beginning either in Washington or shortly afterwards in Cheese Quake Park, New Jersey, they began referring to themselves (following the lead of reporters, they said) as the Children of God. David Berg became Moses and Arnold Dietrich became Joshua. Others also took Biblical names, and their real names were not lightly revealed. Looking back, we can speculate that the young men who had left Canada but were fugitives from the draft may have found the Bible names a useful innovation.

The group had a few tents from Woodstock, an army car, and some buses and other vehicles, about 39 in all (Davis and Richardson 1975:3). They had no other camping equipment. Now they began travelling from camp ground to camp ground through the United States, stopping in various cities for more vigils. From Cheese Quake Park they went to the UN on the very day when both Nixon and Kosygin were in New York City. They demonstrated at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. At the Chicago Conspiracy Trial they tried to show the "alternative of spiritual revolution as opposed to violent revolution" (Davis and Richardson 1975:3). Chicago Sun-Times reporters (Foster and Chandler 1969) were baffled by the sudden appearance of "50 'prophets'," who seemed to come out of nowhere and disappear to who-knew-where. They interviewed Joshua Levi, who said his home was Egypt and that their group had 7000 members. Other vigils were at anti-war rallies (Enroth et al. 1972:34). According to Berg, they stood "between the police and the violent [sic] demonstrators," and the police began to like them (1972:20). According to Davis and Richardson, they demonstrated against the war in Vietnam (1975:3). COG vigils also took place at a Texas-Arkansas football game, in Los Angeles, and at the University of California in Santa Barbara, where they disrupted a speech by Jerry Rubin with their clanking staves and chants of "Woe, woe, woe...." (Enroth et al. 1972:34). It is not certain that all these vigils took place during

this migration period, for the group does not seem to have travelled west of Pittsburg. Perhaps there was another group of COGs who stayed in the West.

For the 100-120 disciples, this period on the road was "a real purge," according to one who participated. Many people left the group and few new recruits joined. The group was completely isolated from other people because they only stopped for supplies or vigils. Many times they did not know what state, much less what part of the state, they were in. They camped in parks and the men slept in a big army tent and a yellow bus while the women slept in various vehicles, crowded together so tightly that they couldn't turn over without waking the others. The group "lived by faith." This meant, in part, that they begged for food--day old donuts, catered sandwiches, "chicken delight," etc. from businesses, and bags of grain from farmhouses. Breakfast on the road, said one veteran, might have been cooked milo (chicken feed) plus 4 pieces of chicken and 4 pieces of bread. Many of the women gained weight because they ate so much grain. Informants told me that they were excited because they had abandoned the "System" and it was really working. The spiritual atmosphere was becoming overwhelming. Once when jets flew over some of the disciples thought it was the end of the world, or at least the end of America.

Conditions were rough and the caravan began to look rather wild. There were wood stoves in some of the buses and tanks of water and gas in the army truck. Some of the men began wearing knives on their belts.

> The longer we were on the road the more weird we got as far as clothes (Sarah, personal communication).

Whenever they pulled into a gas station for supplies and to wash up in the rest rooms the police were invariably called. Perhaps one reason they were successful provisioning was that people were afraid of what must have appeared a huge band of marauders.

As 1969 drew to a close and the weather became cold they headed south through Mississippi. Some hoped to settle down on a farm. So many cars had broken down that most of the cars which were still working were towing other cars. Most state parks allowed them to stay only two weeks, and many people were leaving the caravan. In Louisiana they took in a girl who was under the legal age, and the police came out to their campground. The vehicles were in a circle, trenched, as usual. Inside the circle a tall man with a big black beard, Joshua, was leading Bible study. "Uncle Dave" (Berg) was in his trailer. As the story goes, the police heard them shouting out "That's right" as part of their Bible study, and thought they were saying "Let's fight." It was the South and the Children of God were hippies. Twenty people who looked under age or didn't have identification

were arrested, including the man the police took to be the leader--Joshua. Later the police told some of the women that they had shaved off Joshua's beard. But, according to one participant, "they never even found out that Mo existed."

The vehicles moved across the state line into the Houston, Texas, area and waited. With the help of the American Civil Liberties Union those arrested were released and all but one man, a foreigner, rejoined them. The group camped near Houston, at Bear Creek Park (Berg 1979:111: informants).

Next the Children of God rented a riverboat in Houston and set up a teenage club with CCG musicians. Many people were "saved" and "delivered from drugs" at this club, according to Berg (1972:21). One of my informants said that this was when Joshua and Mo met some gypsies, who were also travelling and camping. Later, the Children of God called themselves the "gypsies of the Lord" and Moses David began to receive communications from a familiar spirit named Abrahim, a long-deceased gypsy king.

The group was camped near Houston in about January, 1970. According to Berg, it was rainy and the sleeping bags were getting soggy, so he asked Fred Jordan for the use of the Texas Soul Clinic ranch (1972:21). It may not have been that spontaneous, however. Other reports have Berg and

Joshua flying to California to talk to Jordan, or one of Berg's daughters making the request. It may have even been a plan that was arranged much earlier than January. In any case, Jordan agreed to a provisional stay of a few months, and the caravan headed north to Thurber, Texas.

3.4 THE TEXAS SOUL CLINIC

The Texas Soul Clinic (TSC), part of Fred Jordan's umbrella organization, the American Soul Clinic, is located six miles north of the nearly deserted town of Thurber, on the road to Mingus. It is midway between Abilene and Fort Worth on U.S. Highway 80. For the wet and worn-out campers it was heaven on earth. Joshua later told new recruits that they had been camping so long that he was shocked when they turned on the lights at TSC. This part of Texas is inhabited mostly by cattle and cowboys. The countryside is (or at least was at that time) "dry" (meaning no liquor can be sold), except for a "wet" town near TSC. On weekends, consequently, there were often drunken cowboys coming around to shoot at the hippies (Drakeford 1972:14f; McFadden 1972:84; my notes). One of my informants said the Children of God started cutting their hair because of these men with rifles. Some observers claimed that the Children of God had a few rifles, too, and were patrolling the ranch (Enroth et al. 1972:32). In any case, they set up a tight security system, with a locked gate and a guard. The tradition of tight se-

curity lasted at least until 1976 in every CCG colony I ever visited.

The Children of God fixed up the ranch and Jordan decided to let them stay on indefinitely. Like many other groups in various parts of the country at that time, they set up a rural commune. Men slept in one dormitory, women in another. They planted some seeds, had babies by natural childbirth (possibly as the result of arranged marriages), didn't bother to register the babies for birth certificates, practiced preventive medicine, and set up a "Montessori school" (see Chapter 6). The Children of God tried to model themselves on an Israeli kibbutz, and, for a time, raised the children in special homes away from their parents. The division of labor was according to "tribes," a system which had been devised while they were on the road. There were twelve tribes at first to which people were assigned, and each tribe was responsible for a particular set of tasks. Levi were teachers and elders, Issachar were mechanics (because the name sounds like "car"), Zebulon were the farmers, and Dan operated the ham radio. Extra tribes were added as needed (Enroth et al. 1972:35).

The story of the Children of God might have ended there, as a little group harvested their crops, or gradually lost their enthusiasm and their members like most communes did in the next few years. However, the Bergs were evangelists,

not hippies, no matter how much they may have hated and not wanted to be part of "The System." And evangelists preach the Gospel, to as many people as possible, and they live off donations, not farming. There may or may not have been some missionary forays into the highways and byways of Texas from TSC. We know that at some stage they began going to Texas music festivals to recruit youth, advertising TSC as a free camp ground. A roadside sign also invited hippies to visit TSC (Berg 1979: photo and caption on 118). Two writers who have presumably talked about this period with veteran COGs disagree radically on the extent of growth of the group during this early TSC period, Davis and Richardson (1975:4) saying there was very little growth and Wallis (1976:19), who called this period "subsistence communitarianism," saying growth was rapid. Probably both are right, and COG grew very little at first but very rapidly later in 1970, after Fred Jordan and NBC had given them substantial publicity.

There <u>may</u> have been some conflict at TSC between those who simply wanted to live in an introverted hippy commune based on subsistence farming and those who shared Berg's vision of evangelizing the world. As Drakeford explained, communes always wanted to be rural but land was expensive, and the COGs had devised a unique solution (1972:15). In 1970 they portrayed themselves to some visitors as commune farmers, but in 1971 the land was clearly barren. They had tried and failed in growing watermelons and peanuts:

> The Lord showed us that we were spending our time with watermelons and peanuts when we should have been out harvesting souls (quoted in Drakeford 1972:50f).

Meanwhile, it is almost certain that the tribe of Joseph continued to provision food, as it had on the road. Some press accounts accused these provisioners of falsely presenting themselves as youth missionaries or students at a Bible College in order to obtain free food and supplies. Clearly, if they were going to make a living through evangelism, in the Bible Belt, they would have to actually preach the Bible, sooner or later.

At some point the Children of God began to refer to TSC as a Bible College. This had two immediate practical effects. First, it helped with the draft boards, for ministerial students were among the last to be sent to the Vietnam war. Of course TSC was not accredited, and if a draft board had really wanted a young man they could have drafted him (see NYS Attorney Gen. 1974:4,18f). Second, it gave COG a certain legitimacy in the eyes of their neighbors and helped to attract donations. Buildings, vehicles, food, and financial support were given by people who thought COG might effectively treat the problems of youth (Drakeford 1972:130f). One of these was Houston industrialist M. J. Dupuy,[52] whose two sons joined the Children of God, one of them supposedly getting off drugs in the process (Newsweek

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[52] Whether or not Dupuy deducted his contributions to COG from his taxes I do not know.

11/22/71).

Once COG began appealing for donations, they opened themselves up to scrutiny by the public, especially by potential donors. If they ran a Bible College, church people wanted to know, what did they teach? Drakeford (1972) and Enroth (1972) both engaged in doctrinal disputes with the Children of God during their field trips to COG colonies. Yet all observers agreed that COGs did indeed study the Bible, many hours per day, and tried to memorize as much of it as possible. There was another major area of concern to outsiders--sexual mores. The very word "commune" conjures up images of sexual orgies in the minds of many Americans.[53] Fundamentalist critics had a very clear idea of right and wrong in the area of "sexual morality," and, as the Oneida community, the Mormons and others had discovered in earlier years, could tolerate no changes or experimentation in this area. They wanted to investigate rumors of arranged marriages, group sex, "illegitimate" children, failure to have the proper marriage or birth certificates, infidelity or sexual license among the leaders, and even "skinny dipping" (nude swimming). The Children of God were therefore very secretive about sex, etc., and only much later acknowledged that Mo "took a new wife" (Maria, a young convert), and Eve (Jane Berg) had begun to travel with a disciple named Stephen dur-

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[53] See, for example, a paperback entitled Case Histories from the Communes (Sprague 1972).

ing the Spring of 1970.

During the summer of 1970 a number of "road teams" travelled to other places in the U.S. to attract more converts and set up colonies. With the help of contacts in Cincinnatti, Kentucky, and Detroit, according to one informant, they began several colonies. A colony in Ann Arbor, Michigan, was led by one of the few Black disciples, Black Simon. He was back in TSC in the winter of 1970/71.

3.5 MO AND MARIA LEAVE THE U.S.

Late that summer (1970) Berg himself, with Maria, left TSC on a very ambitious road trip, first to New York City where they obtained a visa, and then to England and finally by train to Israel. The purpose of the trip was to "explore possiblities for establishing similar communities overseas" (Davis and Richardson 1975:4). Israel was very disappointing to Berg, who suffered a "personal crisis" (Davis and Richardson 1975:5). Berg had imagined Israel to be a communal heaven. Earlier he had claimed to be Jewish, and the Children of God had danced Jewish folk dances and modeled themselves on a kibbutz. Part of the disappointment was Israel's hostility to Christian evangelism (Wallis 1976:817f). Berg had felt a "calling" since his youth to convert the Jews, and his early training with the Soul Clinic was directed toward going to Israel (Berg 1979:54,57). In Florida

in 1960 he tried to convert Jews in Miami Beach (Berg 1979:73). Another factor may have been Mo and Maria's first-hand observations of the discrimination suffered by Palestinians in Israel. After this trip Mo was consistently anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian, as well as pro-Arab, in his writings. In "The Arab Wall" (Oct. 1973) he said he had seen Israelis mistreating Christian Palestinians.

From Israel, Mo and Maria went to Cyprus for three months, where, he said, he began writing the Mo Letters.[54] They went on to London. Actually, following the trip to Israel, Berg left the daily administration of COG to the Berg children and their spouses. However, Mo remained very active in communicating with the group through letters. At the end of 1970 a letter from Mo appeared entitled "I Gotta Split." It explained the new pattern of leadership through Mo Letters (Davis and Richardson 1975:7). Mo and Maria came back to the U.S. in May 1971 because, supposedly, there was trouble with Jethro and Deborah. In April 1972 they returned once more to London, and from there "fled" to Tenerife, Canary Islands (Berg 1979:118). By 1979 Berg said he had written about 900 letters (1979:124).

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[54] So many disciples talked about being in Cyprus, some of them with Mo, and so many things are supposed to have happened there, that it seems likely Mo and Maria either stayed longer than 3 months, or returned to Cyprus again later.

3.6 THE WAREHOUSE--LOS ANGELES

At some time early in the stay at TSC, perhaps already by February, if it was not all prearranged before their arrival, Fred Jordan offered the Children of God a deal which proved profitable to both parties. In exchange for financial support and the use of TSC and an old hotel at Sixth and Towne Streets in Los Angeles' Skid Row,[55] the Children of God would appear on Jordan's TV show to sing and give their testimonies (Enroth et al. 1972:26f). "Everybody hated it," according to one early member. Disciples allowed Jordan to present them as troublesome youth whom he had converted back to the "straight and narrow." Enroth said that Jordan tried to hide the fact that he had worked with Berg in the past (1972:29). Right-wing businessmen especially were happy to contribute large sums to Jordan to cure youth of "radicalism" (Enroth et al. 1972:27). A team of 29, lead by Faith and Joshua, with all the various skills needed for "self-sufficiency" as COG defined the word, took up residence in the Skid Row mission, which they called the "Warehouse." Though some disciples claimed they did not attract, but almost repelled, youth with their TV appearances, they engaged in very aggressive street evangelism in Los Angeles--Hollywood Boulevard, Sunset Strip, Griffith Park and other youth hang-outs--and sent bus trips up and down the

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[55] Jordan claimed that he paid Berg $1000/week (Patrick 1976:62; Plowman 1971b).

southern California coast, recruiting rapidly. According to Mo, the population of the Los Angeles colony grew to nearly 200 in a few weeks (1972:22). Another report said they gained 15-20 new disciples/week and sent them hitch-hiking to TSC for training. One informant (who joined several years later) said that he had heard that the Warehouse contained 950 people at one time, and was set up like an army barracks. They were handing out little printed "Warning Tracts" at this time and holding classes.

During January 1971 COG received a tremendous boost to recruitment when NBC-TV featured them in the First Tuesday special, called "The Ultimate Trip." (The show was rerun that summer.) It was filmed at TSC and featured the Children of God's way of life, with women in long dresses working in the kitchen, Bible study in small outdoor groups, haircuts for new converts, singing, and interviews with Jethro and other leaders. There were 500 people at TSC at that time. NBC also showed film of a silent vigil held by COGs in their sackcloth and ashes at a football game in Austin, Texas. An NBC official told Plowman (1971b) that NBC received many phone calls and letters inquiring about the Children of God. Hitchhikers began arriving at TSC from all over the U.S. Several disciples I met had first heard about COG on NBC.

The increased recruitment was helpful tc COG in a very material way. In most cases the possessions of new members were given over to the group. These "forsake-alls" formed, according to Berg and some other observers, the bulk of COG's income (Berg 1972). In order to survive, COG had to grow. Ted Patrick charged that CCG was a con game on a massive scale, using brainwashing techniques to coerce youth into signing over their possessions. Patrick claimed he saw $100,000 worth cf cars, motorcycles, TVs and stereos on COG property in Santee, near San Diegc, California in July 1971. He said that it was being rapidly sold to dealers (1976:47).

Just who these new recruits were is not clear. Davis and Richardson said that most of those who joined in Los Angeles were between 18 and 22 years old and from "upper middle class families" (1975:4). Drakeford, however, who visited TSC in 1971, said that most of the recruits came from "fairly humble backgrounds" (1972:130). Some were religious youth who saw an opportunity to make evangelism their profession. One was a famous English rock star, Jeremy Spencer. According to the New York State Attorney General's report, many were looking for a draft deferment. Jordan ordained 101 young men as ministers in the American Soul Clinic (NYS Att'y Gen. 1974:4,18).

The greater the number of young people who forsook all and joined COG, the greater the number of parents who were

forsaken. Some of these parents began to charge COG with kidnapping, brainwashing, and drugging their "children." Oftentimes recruits would simply disappear, until a letter arrived from Texas months later which sounded like it came from an entirely different, and slightly insane, person. Parents criticized the authoritarian leadership structure, the censorship of mail, the fanaticism, and, in the case of Fundamentalist parents, the unorthodox teachings of COG. In the summer of 1971 about 60 parents in the San Diego area, with the assistance of Ted Patrick (1976:62), formed FREECOG (Free Our Children from the Children of God) (McFadden 1972:101ff). This group lasted at least until 1976/7, though it underwent some changes. FREECOG asked the U.S. and several states attorneys general to investigate COG as a subersive organization and as a million-dollar extortion racket (Enroth et al. 1972:29f; also Drakeford 1972:85,100f). Ted Patrick spoke at a FREECOG meeting in August 1971. Before long he had resigned his job in the California state Reagan administration, and, along with various parents, begun his career as a deprogrammer (Patrick 1976: Chapter 1).

3.7 THE BREAK WITH JORDAN

In late September 1971 Fred Jordan evicted the Children of God from the three properties he had let them occupy for 1 1/2 years--the 400-acre Texas ranch, the 6-story Los Angeles mission, and a 110-acre date and citrus ranch in the Coachella Valley of California. According to some observers, the break was inevitable as the association had been a "marriage of convenience from the outset" (Wallis 1976:813) and the COGs were unhappy with Jordan's repeated attempts to coopt and control them (Enroth et al. 1972:27-29). In addition, FREECOG was pressuring Jordan. Patrick claimed that Jordan sent Gov. Reagan a telegram trying to get him (Patrick) fired, and that when that didn't work Jordan decided to dump Berg (Patrick 1976:62f). The immediate issue which seemed to have precipitated the split was Jordan's refusal to let the disciples use the facilities of the 100-acre Coachella ranch which he had bought with donations earmarked for them. He had appealed to his TV audience for $544,720 for "The Children of God Ranch" and claimed to have raised $160,000 of it in two months (Enroth et al. 1972:27). However, the young people were crowded into

> ...a tin quonset hut on the small ranch [10 acres], which was like an oven in the blistering heat of the desert summer! (Berg 1972:22)

Jordan did allow the Children of God onto the more luxurious property during the daytime, however--to work in the fields[56]! Apparently some of the donors discovered this im-

propriety, whereupon the COG elders at the ranch confronted Jordan, who tried to depose them. The disciples, however, followed their leaders off the ranch (Enroth et al. 1972:28). The groups opposing COG named Jordan in a suit, despite his attempt to disassociate himself from COG (NYS Att'y Gen. 1974).

It was probably at TSC (though it may have been Coachella) that the disciples packed up their things and camped right outside the gate, a powerful message to Jordan. Before they finally left, they wrote him another message, on the roof:

> Saul has slain his thousands but David his ten thousands.

This quote from the Bible was a not very discreet way of saying that Mo was surpassing his teacher in the field of evangelism.

The residents of the Los Angeles "Warehouse" were caught off guard by the eviction. Jordan locked them out suddenly, giving them no time to prepare a united action other than camping in nearby MacArthur Park until he agreed to return some of their belongings. They were forced to give him back two buses (Enroth 1972:28).

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[56] This incident certainly leads one to wonder whether Jordan was in the business of evangelism or of real estate speculation. Also, why was it a donor and the local elder who confronted Jordan, rather than Joshua, Faith, or other COG leaders who were in charge of making arrangements with Jordan?

The Children of God lost the value of the improvements they had put into the properties, and they lost their ministerial licenses. In fact, Jordan informed their draft boards that they were no longer eligible for the ministerial exemption (Drakeford 1972:86; Lefkowitz 1974:4,18f). Some of the young men had to flee to Canada; others, I believe, went to Europe.

There is evidence that the COG leaders had been preparing for the break with Jordan. Prior to the supposed Coachella incident they had taken these steps to prepare for a major move:

1. Founding other colonies to which people could move;
2. Merger with the Jesus People groups led by Linda Meissner, Russ Griggs, and David Hoyt, and takeover of some of their properties;
3. Trips by Mo and Maria, and later by Faith and others, to Europe to make contacts and prepare to open colonies there;
4. A prophecy which more than ever separated COG from politically conservative Fundamentalists, and foreshadowed COG's political identification with the Third World.

On the whole, the Children of God fulfilled the purpose for which they had associated with Jordan--to increase their numbers. When they moved onto the Texas ranch there were only 100 to 120 disciples. When they left they numbered be-

tween 500 and 2000.[57] The three properties had served well as bases of operations and training camps for a stage of rapid recruitment. In general, whenever COG had to choose between people and property, it chose the former.[58] And, for reasons which shall be spelled out in detail in Chapter 7, its people were its greatest resource.

The 500 or so disciples who had been living on the three Jordan properties dispersed to the various other COG colonies which had already been founded, such as the one in San Diego, to the properties of the other Jesus People who had converted just in time, and to new colonies which they opened all over North America. Besides the old contacts of the Berg family, there were now new contacts through the hundreds of new disciples. Some travelled about in "prophet buses" as itinerant "gypsies of the Lord," looking for places to start new colonies. Before long there were COG colonies in San Francisco, Colorado Springs, Boulder, Detroit (where they had opened the colony during summer 1970), Cincinnati, southern Kentucky, Austin, Dallas, Corpus Christi, upstate New York, and in foreign countries, including the interior of Mexico, Vancouver, London, and Amster-

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[57] Estimates differ. Another report said they put $40,000 worth of improvements into the three Jordan properties. Jordan, on the other hand, claimed he gave them $98,000 cash and spent $500,000 promoting COG (Plowman 1971b).

[58] That is, officially COG has chosen people over property. Jordan, obviously, preferred property, and what Berg and other COG leaders were actually doing behind the scenes we cannot know.

dam. When evicted, according to Enroth (1972:29f), they had 40 places to go.[59]

Who were these Jesus People who joined the Children of God? Especially in 1969 quite a few Jesus groups had formed, many of them with funding from the churches (see Enroth et al. 1972). Some of these groups were beginning to experience difficulties, having to devote too much of their time to subsistence activities and too little to evangelism (Enroth et al. 1972:50ff). They were not expanding as rapidly as COG. One particularly energetic Jesus People leader was David Hoyt. He had founded religious communes in the San Francisco Bay area and in Atlanta. (One or some of these were called the House of Judah.) Hoyt saw the NBC-TV special about CCG and visited TSC. In June 1971 he joined, followed by about 90 of his converts and four communes (Enroth et al. 1972:48-50). One of his disciples who joined COG with Hoyt told me that he preferred COG because it was full-time, and they didn't have to keep their outside jobs. Hoyt sent out a letter telling why he had joined COG. One of the recipients, Russ Griggs of Vancouver, British Columbia, visited Los Angeles to investigate. Griggs merged his ministry with CCG, contributing a bakery, chicken farm, and training houses. Linda Meissner had been David Wilkerson's first counselor for teenaged girls in Brooklyn, when Teen

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[59] Another informant added Tucson, El Paso, and a farm in Merkel, Texas, to the list.

Challenge first started (Wilkerson 1973). Perhaps she knew some of the COG leaders who had worked with Wilkerson in later years. In any case, she became interested in COG through Griggs, but Hoyt, Jethro, and Deborah had to travel to Seattle to bargain with her. When she joined she brought along the name of her group--the Jesus People's Army of the Pacific, some properties leased by the JPA, a newspaper called Truth West, probably printing equipment, but perhaps as few as 10-15 of her followers. Enroth, who reported these mergers in his book on the Jesus People, expressed doubt that these strong leaders would be able to accept COG discipline in the long run, and later developments proved him right (Enroth et al. 1972:50-53). Griggs and Hoyt joined COG's "enemies" within a few years. Apparently there were some problems when so many Children of God arrived in the Northwest, taking over JPA properties and the financial contributions sent to the Jesus People's Army. Competition with other groups of Jesus People ensued (Berg 1972:23). That trouble probably took place in Seattle. Vancouver, incidentally, was a haven for U.S. draft resistors at that time. In all likelihood some of the COGs who had just had their ministerial licenses revoked by Jordan took refuge on Griggs' Vancouver properties. In the meantime, COG leaders had been preparing for a migration to much more distant countries, as the next section will show.

3.8 FLEEING BABYLON

Even before the break with Jordan, the Berg family had been thinking in terms of international evangelism. Mo, Maria, Faith, and others were already in Europe. We have already described the trip of David Berg and Maria to Europe and Israel in the fall of 1970. They remained overseas from then on, most likely in Europe, possibly Cyprus. In March, 1971, Mo had written a letter to the disciples suggesting that they should break up into smaller colonies which were more widely dispersed. In this way they could better reach the whole world (Wallis 1976). He also felt that small colonies were better than sending young missionaries out as individuals or married couples, because a few extra people could provide needed support. Berg thought he had improved Jordan's methods by introducing the colony (Berg 1979). From 1971 on Mo continued to push for this plan.

Faith Berg led the first team to Europe in summer 1971, before the split with Jordan. Some of the early "pioneers" to England contacted a millionaire real estate magnate who was a member of the Plymouth Brethren, Kenneth Frampton. Two of Frampton's sons were later to join. Frampton wanted to support evangelism among youth, especially after seeing a BBC documentary on the Jesus Movement, according to Corry (1973:18f). He encouraged more COGs to come to England, giving them the use of four properties in South London.

Deborah claimed that the Billy Graham organization in London also helped Faith (Plowman 1971b). During September 1971 COG moved their international headquarters and publications unit to Bromley, one of Frampton's properties.

Faith, Jonas (a musician) and the other "pioneers" had moved on to Amsterdam by August, 1971. At this time Amsterdam was full of hitchhikers from all over the world. According to one of my sources, a young Dutch man who had joined the COG caravan in the U.S. in 1969 was now helpful in opening up the Netherlands to COG. At first the group camped in the park, but before long they had the use of an attic of a restaurant, complete with kitchen, located right on Van Dam Square, the main hippy hangout. It became a "crash pad."[60] Somewhat later the owner of a Christian publishing company offered COG a house and help with publications in the Netherlands.

The membership of COG began moving out of North America to South America (Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico) and England by the end of 1971, and large numbers of them went abroad in 1972 (Davis and Richardson 1975:8). Many went home for Christmas 1971, asked their parents for financial help, and then left the country. The colonies were broken up into road teams, which then began to leave America as small groups or married couples, in response to Mo's directives

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[60] A place where people could sleep without charge.

and his prophecies of the imminent fall of America (Wallis 1976). Nixon's reelection was imminent, and Paul (Aaron) Berg's wife Sarah had left COG and denounced the group on an NBC-TV Chronolog. Mo was portrayed in that show as a dirty old man (Plowman 1973). By the end of 1971, only 50% of the members were in North America. Of those who had gone abroad, some had already been deported from their "mission fields"--Uruguay, Chile, and Israel, according to one disciple.

During 1972 a new pattern emerged in the U.S. which made the not-so-popular group less visible. Few large colonies remained. There were small colonies[61] and regional headquarters, but the largest concentrations were in Puerto Rico, Amsterdam, and Bromley, England. One hundred and fifty people lived together at Bromley. COG still had farms in the U.S., however. In July 1973 there were four farms listed for the Eastern U.S. (NNN 5, Nc. 12).

This phase of COG's history is called by Wallis "evangelical millennialism":

> There was an attempt to win support from other churches and church groups, to draw in the Jesus People, and to convert new members on the basis of personal witnessing, and presentation of the happy, loving atmosphere of the COG way of life through the mass media, in coffeehouses, or on the streets. This was probably the period of most rapid recruitment (Wallis 1976:19).

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[61] One intermediate level leader told me that they lived in small nomadic groups for protection. This way they could not all be wiped out.

Gone were the angry prophets in sackcloth and ashes, the parent-haters, the uncompromising opponents of "Churchianity." COGs began to resemble Pat Boone's type of Jesus People, though a little more "hip" and with the added attraction of a communal life-style. However, underneath they retained a different outlook, and one key to this difference was Moses David.

By summer 1972 they had alienated another group of Christian friends. Hoyt had left COG in June after they tried to exorcise the demons which supposedly caused him to criticize the leadership (Plowman 1973). Frampton became an enemy, ostensibly because of doctrinal disputes--specifically, because of Berg's claim to be the End-Time Prophet (Corry 1973:24). Frampton later was reported to be funding deprogrammers in Cleveland and in Europe through his Deo Gloria Trust (Emmanuel 1977). In September 1972 the Evangelical Alliance held a press conference condemning COG and warning the British public against them. Russ Griggs, who had also left COG, came to England for this conference (Corry 1973:24f). There was a series of attacks in the press and even TV, and someone asked the government to investigate. In the end the government found nothing illegal and the COG headquarters remained in London; no disciples or leaders were deported (Corry 1973:24f).

Frampton had been letting COG use a factory building for their printing. They had put out the New Improved Truth for a while, and were now specializing in the New Nation News and the Mo Letters (Wallis 1976). When Frampton became COG's ardent enemy they were of course forced to move.[62] By early 1973 they were semi-nomadic once more:

> All their housing arrangements are provisional, for they rely on cheap accommodation, vacant property or local council property due for demolition. To have three months use of a building or house is quite a luxury. Opportunities are seized wherever they are presented and when a house is lost or a door closes, they move on in faith that new openings will be shown them (Corry 1973:19).

If the Plymouth Brethren, the Evangelical Alliance, the American Fundamentalists, and the Jesus People had rejected "God's true children," there were other groups COG could court. The more liberal church organizations such as the World Council of Churches began to take an interest in COG, as evidenced by Corry's investigation, which was commissioned by the British Council of Churches. Corry approved of COG's participation in the "One for Renewal Conference" at Swanwick in May 1973, and said they were cooperating well with liberal groups in Britain and charismatic prayer groups in Ireland (1973:26f). A few COGs were invited to the World Council of Churches meeting in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in August 1972, where they made important contacts (Plowman

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[62] The impression received from Corry's account (1973:19) is that Frampton allowed COG to continue using the factory building, but began to charge rent or in some other way made it too expensive to maintain.

1973

(New Nation News 5, No. 7, April 10, 1973, p. 4). In Spring 1976 a COG disciple was employed in the Renewal Section of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, working under Rex Davis, who wrote at least one favorable article about COG (Davis and Richardson 1975). This young COG disciple attended the World Council of Churches Congress in Kenya.

By April 1973, the Children of God claimed to have nearly 2500 "missionaries" in 40 countries. They had colonies in most European capitals and major cities and were trying to branch out into North Africa, Eastern Europe and Third World countries. The New Nation News of summer 1974 (vol. 7, no. 1) showed pictures of disciples taken in Tehran, Iran, and in Georgetown and New Amsterdam, Guyana. They were talking about trying to "save" youth who were on spiritual quests in Morocco and India, who often had serious problems with drugs (Corry 1973:20). One disciple I interviewed in 1974 claimed to have met and joined COG in India or Tibet, where he was just such a wanderer.

By summer 1974 COG had also moved onto the wine and olive-oil producing estate of Duke Emanuele Canevaro near Florence, Italy. Emanuele joined the Family by marrying Rachel, who'd joined as a teenager in Huntington Beach ('68/69). Rachel and Emanuele were not required to forsake

all, and were immediately elevated to the positions of King's Counselors, the top offices in COG under Mo.

3.9 "REACHING" THE CATHOLICS AND MOSLEMS

The international expansion of the Children of God could have been blocked by one of their own most striking characteristics-- Fundamentalist Protestant chauvinism. The Evangelical "cause" is to bring the "misguided" adherents of "false" religions such as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Roman Catholicism, as well as the various forms of "paganism," to the "true faith." While this type of attitude motivated young Children of God, as it had motivated generations of missionaries before them, to travel to foreign lands carrying the Gospel, the attitude was not always appreciated by the residents of these lands. Even within the U.S., Fundamentalism has long been anti-Catholic (Handy 1974).

Mo soon realized, especially after the cool reception he recieved in Israel, that COG would have to be more diplomatic if it wanted to be accepted in Catholic and Moslem countries. Therefore, in 1972 and 1973 he addressed the issue of solidarity with Catholics and Moslems in a number of letters, and Faith and Hosea Berg visited first the Pope (Fall 1972) and later Colonel Ghaddafi of Libya (January 1974). According to the New York State Attorney General's report, the sudden pro-Catholic stance was wilfully deceptive. The

Berg family's "papal audience" was not a personal audience at all, though the COG literature tried to give that impression. The report quotes a Mo Letter:

> We are now beginning to invade the Catholic countries of the world and we are going to have to be pro-Catholic...They believe much the same as we do! They also believe in communes, in forsaking all, in brainwashing and memorization! (Berg, "Arrivederci Roma," Sept. 1972, quoted in NYS Att'y Gen. 1974).

Faith also contacted Sister Magdeleine of the Little Sisters of Jesus in Rome (Ibid.). According to Jane Berg ("Aaron's heartcry," 5/73), this group typed and printed "Brother Sun" (4/73) in Italian (for Rachel and Emanuele's wedding), and also translated the first Mo Letter into Arabic. Another disciple told me that the Little Sisters helped make some introductions for COG in Yugoslavia. How much these propaganda efforts helped in France, Italy, and later South America is difficult to gauge. Actually, the Children of God had always attracted some American Catholic members, including the former president of the Catholic Youth Organization, who was with them in Europe in 1976.

It was more difficult to bridge the gap between Christian and Moslem. Mo's first prophecy about Ghaddafi came in September 1971, but was not distributed to members until Spring 1973, when it was quickly followed by a whole series on the young leader. Mo liked Ghaddafi because he was religious. The letters flattered Ghaddafi, calling him handsome and intelligent and expressing the desire to work with him to

unite the true believers of all faiths in a revolutionary godly socialism, an alternative to both capitalism and communism. Mo had already turned against Israel after his visit there in 1970, and these letters expressed political sympathy with the Arabs. To Christian readers, Mo explained that Ghaddafi might be the coming Anti-Christ, who, according to COG prophecy, would rule the world first with justice, then cruelty. It is unclear to what extent Mo's overtures toward Ghaddafi succeeded. At least two delegations of COGs, including Mother Eve (Jane Berg), Stephen, Faith, Hosea and others, were welcomed by the young Colonel. Some Italians suspected that Ghaddafi was contributing money to COG (Serra 1976). It is against the law, or considered in very poor taste, in many Moslem countries to try to convert a Moslem. Through 1976 COG had distributed very little literature and in general had made little progress in North Africa or the Middle East. Mother Eve's delegation managed to bring back one Arab convert, their translator, in 1976. Those disciples who had been in Iran said they had stayed with Christians there. In June 1978 Mo wrote a letter called "Black Holes" suggesting they abandon Africa since the people there didn't appreciate them. Disciples told me that in the Middle East, Afghanistan and India they were tolerated as long as they restricted their work to American and European youth who were wandering through the countries and who were sometimes in jail there.

The Children of God were much more successful in Catholic countries. In France in Autumn 1973, Faith, Jonas, and a group of singers and musicians were featured on nationwide TV. Thereafter, Les Enfants de Dieu were a successful musical group in France and sold a number of records. They claimed that one of their singles, "My Love is Love," was a "hit," having sold over 300,000 copies (Faith Berg 1974). The strategy of Les Enfants de Dieu was to find a patron, in this case a young singer and music producer, Jacques Monty. After the record was released, disciples bought it up in the stores and sold it on the streets, thereby catapulting their disc onto the charts. An informant in Italy told me they were going to try the same thing in Italy in 1976, and there were some indications they sold their own records in Mexico City too. Les Enfants de Dieu developed a large show troupe with dancers and fancy costumes which was invited along on a Europe One Radio tour of France. In Paris, a huge colony of disciples developed around them.[63]

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[63] Interestingly, members of the Paris show group were not able to support themselves through their music and their performances. Berg complained in one letter that they were asking the headquarters in London for money, and even for show costumes, when they should have been getting these things from their "kings" (sponsors, contacts, etc.). He advised that if they couldn't make show business pay they should give it up, and that instead of thinking of themselves as big-shots, they should start witnessing (see next section) for a living like everybody else. He compared the situation with their "kings" to COG's unhappy experience with Fred Jordan ("Mo's worldwide newsletter no. 9").

A similar pattern of "pioneering" with high quality "Jesus rock and roll" was used in Brazil, Italy, Peru, and Mexico. In all of these countries professional backing was obtained for their bands. LND Musica put out COG's album in Peru. Memo Mendez (of the Mendez Trio) was Los Niños' producer in Mexico (NNN 10, No. 2, June 1977). Part of the secret of COG's success in the musical field was that much of the personnel would move from one country to another, along with the songs and some of the equipment. Jeremy Spencer and Faithy Berg were among the key musicians and organizers of the music ministry for COG. In August 1971 a COG band in Los Angeles recorded tapes of their own music (Children of God 1975). The first COG album was released in the U.S. by Columbia in 1972--"Jeremy Spencer and the Children." For many years, from the earliest days at Huntington Beach, through the coffeehouses in countless cities, to the first discotheque with electric music in London, disciples had been practicing their instruments and writing new songs. As I will show in Chapter 7, music students and other young musicians were attracted to COG for reasons of their own, and the group had a large pool of talent to draw from. Quite a few disciples were Southerners who grew up with the "Nashville sound," and they made COG music all the more appealing to youth in much of the world. COG colonies were like West Virginia: everybody learned to play the guitar. In addition, COG made a special effort to attract trained musi-

cians, such as Spencer, or an Italian named Angelo whom the Duke Emanuele Canevaro (see Ch. 7) brought in just in time to cut the Italian single. An employee of Melody Records, the Mexican music company which was releasing their albums, told me that Los Niños de Dios was the best band in Mexico (anonymous, 1977). This praise came grudgingly, because the employee did not like Los Niños, personally, religiously, or politically.

The New Nation News gave many indications that Catholic clerics were as willing to work with COG to "reach" youth as the Protestants had been before them. For example, Father Ramon opened his coffee house in Notre Dame Cathedral to them. In Venezuela, they had a Jesuit friend. In Italy, disciples bragged about their friendship with religious film-maker Franco Zeffirelli, who had them sing one Christmas Eve at the Vatican and who came to their Disco.

3.10 LITNESSING

While it was exciting to bounce cleverly from patron to patron, from property to property, living off the "forsake-alls" of new converts, gifts from parents, and "provisioned" food and other items, there came a time when disciples wanted a more reliable source of income. The increasing number of babies being born (birth control was considered wrong) was one important reason for this. Another reason was that

many of the converts had been attracted by the idea of dropping out of the System and being independent. The "use-and-be-used" relationships they'd had with Jordan, Frampton, etc. had irritated many of these people. Moreover, since many conservative religious groups had denounced COG there were fewer rich Christian businessmen willing to fund them.

"Litnessing" ("literature" + "witnessing") was the answer! If they could distribute their own literature on the street, with a smile and a few words, and receive small donations this way, they could have both income and independence. According to Wallis, the practice developed gradually (1976:16). Printing started quite early, possibly in Dallas and Los Angeles even before Linda Meissner brought her newspaper in September 1971. They had been handing out the "Warning Tract" and then began to print New Improved Truth (sequel to Meissner's paper) and later New Nation News. Finally they started printing up some of the Mo Letters. At first literature was distributed free, though donations were accepted. A disciple who offered me a Mo Letter at the Guru Mahara Ji's Millenium '73 in Washington in 1973 did not ask me for a donation, and was surprised and pleased when I gave her the dime listed on the cover. The suggested donation began to be unofficially required as years went by.

By 1973 "litnessing" had beccme economically important (Wallis 1976). It was justified as a quick way to reach the world, since naturally each person could transmit more "words" to more people through literature distribution than through individual witnessing. Within COG various incentives, quotas, and positive and negative sanctions were established and the whole system became rationalized. "Scores" for individuals and regions were tabulated by computer and printed in the New Nation News.

The emphasis on litnessing and on the income so generated was strongest in the period of 1973-74. Leaders were very concerned about "statistics" or "scores." Naturally the public became suspicious that all that money being collected on the streets was going to the leaders' Swiss bank accounts, etc. The Charity Frauds Bureau of the Attorney General's Office of New York State made several legal attempts to see COG's books between Fall 1973 and Spring 1974. One disciple told me he told investigators COG had no books, but showed, or offered to show, a pie-graph of local colony expenses. By May 1974 the elusive "books" had been removed, possibly to Puerto Rico (Lefkowitz 1974:9). The State jumped to conclusions:

> Without evidence to the contrary, the obvious inference from the testimony of ex-COG's [sic] and parents is that monies are directed to the key leaders for their personal use and enjoyment (NYS Att'y Gen. 1974:10).

By this time, however, the Berg family and the international headquarters and the person who collected all the "stats" had been out of the U.S. for almost three years.

3.11 FORTY DAYS

On the morning of November 12, 1973, Mo reportedly dictated a very important prophecy to Maria. He had calculated that America would be given 40 days warning to repent by the appearance of the Comet Kohoutek, and then the country would be destroyed around January 31, 1974. Disciples were given an extra 40 days notice through Mo--their "Early Warning System"--starting November 11, 1973, when a ceasefire was signed in the Vietnam war. Mo called on all disciples to flee the United States. Actually, Mo had been thinking about what Kohoutek might protend since at least September, when he wrote "The Christmas Monster."

The Children of God believed the prophecy. They hurried to get out of the country before it was destroyed. Disciples wrote letters to everyone they knew (including me) urging them to leave, at least for a while. One catacombs disciple (see Chapter 4) went to visit relatives in Europe, and it was only much later that her parents realized the trip had been motivated by the "40 Days" prophecy. Friends who couldn't leave the U.S. were advised to prepare a place outside the major cities which could be reached in an emergen-

cy, and also to store water and food and candles in safe places. A small "Survival Manual" was printed. "Refuges" were prepared in the countryside and in the basements of COG colonies.

The sackcloth and ashes came out of storage and the Children of God once more warned America to repent. They stood in silent vigil at the UN plaza with signs giving the message of Kohoutek. Both TIME and NEWSWEEK wrote up the COG twice in the months from November through February. In the last article, dated February 18, 1974, the TIME reporter noted that only a few hundred of the 3000 or so hard-core members remained in the U.S., the others having already "fled," many during the "40 days." Informants told me that only 20% of the members lived in North America by the end of 1974.

The comet never really showed up, and the 40 days passed uneventfully. Some disciples quit despondently, including one young man who had written many of the Bible lessons for COG. Those who remained, however, were more deeply integrated into COG than ever. One of my informants (Samuel; see Chapter 4), who had been a catacombs disciple, joined full-time during the "40 days" excitement. Another who had drifted away from COG joined anew. Those disciples who had committed themselves publicly and in writing to the prophecy now continued to defend it (see Festinger et al. 1956).

Hundreds had gone overseas, where they were more dependent on COG in every way and more cut off from alternative sources of support, points of view, or life-styles. The prophecy seems to have served at least one of its purposes, that of accelerating a major migration which had been previously prepared by the leaders.

Leaving aside the question of whether Mo's prophecies were believable at this particular time in America's history,[64] we might ask why the COG leadership was so eager to move the membership out of the U.S. right then. There were several reasons, in my view.

1. The apocalyptic vision and the "separation from the world" (see Aberle 1962; Wallace 1956) involved in travelling had worked well during the summer and fall of 1969. Thus migration was a tried and true method for increasing group solidarity.
2. With the end of the Vietnam war there would be an end to the massive anti-war movement among youth that had been the context and given much of the form to COG's religio-political protest. And, of course, there would be no new draft resisters.

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[64] Peterson and Mauss pointed out that all Jesus People believed firmly in the imminent Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It was not only COG who thought America's destruction was near. Two secular statements of the apocalyptic mood of the day are Vassi's The Stoned Apocalypse (1972) and W.I. Thompson's At the Edge of History (1971). See also a news article on the topic by Alexander (1974).

3. The Charity Frauds Bureau of the New York State Attorney General's office was putting pressure on COG, subpoenaing leaders and records, etc., and threatening to challenge COG's tax-exempt status and right to litness and solicit tax-exempt contributions. An Interim Report on the COG investigation (NYS Att'y Gen. 1974) was published on January 8, 1974 (toward the end of the "40 days"), and over 250 copies were distributed to interested persons in several countries. It was quoted in several national periodicals and many local newspapers.[65] The report gave FREECOG further justification for their continuing campaign against COG and their kidnapping/deprogrammings.
4. The exodus was in accordance with David Berg's long-term plan of evangelizing the entire world.

3.12 THE "NEW MO"

In 1975 a whole series of letters concerning administrative matters began arriving in the colonies. People called these letters the "New Mo." In fact, one of the earliest members told me, these letters contained nothing but what Mo had been telling them from the very beginning. What was new was that Mo was now insisting on certain organizational patterns, and was establishing sanctions to hasten compliance.

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[65] The New York Daily News emphasized the lurid details of Sarah Berg's testimony and other aspects of the report that hinted at sexual scandal (Meskil 1974).

The big colonies, or "blobs," were to break up into colonies of no more than 12, with a shepherd for each colony. This way the shepherds would have time to minister to the needs of the disciples. Greater emphasis was to be placed on witnessing and winning disciples, while litnessing was to be toned down to some extent. Furthermore, Mo was becoming angry that people had stalled so long in moving out of the U.S. to the mission fields overseas; they were to get their passports and get out!

From the very beginning, COG had had large central colonies, "road teams," and small colonies. Mo had always felt that they could expand better by dividing, and now he wrote a number of letters such as "The Blob Story--A Sob Story" (Oct. 1974) about the big houses where sometimes as many as 100 people lived together. Disciples began to joke about how Hawaii, Paris, Staten Island, etc. had "blobitis." Some of the large houses complied legalistically by dividing themselves into two, three, or more colonies, with shepherds for every 12 people, but remaining all together in the same house. This was what the house I observed in Staten Island did during this period--it became three colonies, on paper. Each house in Hawaii suddenly constituted a "region." Table 1 shows the increase in the number of colonies, and the decrease in the number of disciples/colony, over a period of years.

TABLE 1

Number of COG Colonies and Average Colony Size

Year	Disciples	Colonies*	Disciples/Colony*
early 1968	6	1	6
late 1968	50	1	50
on the road, 1969	100	1	100
1970	300	2-3	100
May, 1971	500	40	13
1971	1475	69	22
1972	2123	130	16
1973	2244	180	12
1974	3031	228	13
1975	4215	725	6
1976	7000**	736	10
1977	8000**	800	10
1978	5000**	879	6

*Sometimes more than one colony resided in the same house, especially in 1974/5.
**An apprcximate figure ("Knew disciples" or "'78 here we come").

In Scandinavia the attack on blobitis was also a power struggle. The large colonies were firmly established and

their leadership provided a potential regional challenge to the central COG leadership. Judging from the material given by Davis and Richardson (1975), it seems obvious that it was Linda Meissner, formerly of the Jesus People's Army, who was at the center of the controversy. In any case, there was a leadership shuffle and the 8-12 person colony came to Scandinavia.

A series of Mo Letters came out which prophesied doom and urged people to flee America. This time it was to be a flood on the Bicentennial or some general destruction of America, perhaps by nuclear war. Letters Mo had written much earlier were released all at once, including "Grandmother and the Flood," (Oct. 1974) and "The American Holocaust!--A nightmare of three rivers" (written 3/9/75 and 7/12/75). As in previous times of prophecy and flight, excited Children of God urged their families and friends (including me, once again) to leave America. Each disciple packed a "flee bag" with essentials and kept it handy for sudden flight. One evening in December 1975 there was a special demonstration at the big house in Staten Island showing how to survive in the wilderness in subzero temperature. All kinds of camping and survival equipment were demonstrated and the leaders recommended that everyone begin to buy these things with the "shiner's rewards" they were allowed to keep from their individual litnessing incomes. "See," the leaders told me. "Write down that we really believe in what we are saying."

For several years the Children of God ran a discotheque in Greenwich Village, New York City. It had a band, singers, actors and actresses, a variety of sound and light equipment, and served sodas and cider. In 1975/76 everyone was supposed to be making plans tc go overseas, and a steady stream of people from other parts of the country moved through New York, a "border base," and on to Europe or South America. The band decided to go to Japan. In February 1976 disciples took up the disco floor which they had just built when remodelling the club a few months before, and they used the wood to make packing crates to ship their instruments and equipment tc Japan. When the band finally reached Japan they planned to dismantle the crates and make a new disco floor from them there. The New York disco had never been a roaring success, in my view, evangelically or financially. When it was finally closed down, COG left a hand-painted sign on the door, which quoted a Mo Letter:

> Flee the City! We delivered our souls, and have left!

The "New Revolution" succeeded in resolving the contradiction between the introverted communal tendency and the extroverted evangelical tendency. From here on COG was predominantly focused on overseas "missions," using small teams. Within a few years starting in 1976, 400-500 Children of God flew out of the U.S. from Kennedy Airport.

Throughout 1976, COG was characterized in the U.S. by the bustle of getting up funds to go overseas (by witnessing and selling "love buttons," which shall be described in the next section), obtaining clearance (permission from the colony to which disciples planned to go), and getting passports. During March almost everyone at the Staten Island house had a passport and a destination. One man, for example, planned to go first to Rome, and then ultimately to Egypt, which was "just opening up." Colonies were closing throughout the U.S. as people moved to "border bases" or road teams and then abroad. The entire printing and communications colony in Troy, New York, left in April. Neighbors weren't sure where they had gone, though they thought maybe Florida or Puerto Rico. One neighbor thought the group had taken some rented IBM typewriters along when they disappeared. By the beginning of 1977 the main U.S. colonies were on borders: Laredo and El Paso (Texas), Miami, New Orleans, New York, Seattle, San Francisco, and a few other places. From these border bases people and supplies were sent overseas. Throughout 1976, for example, the living room of the Staten Island house was full of packing crates and barrels filled with toys, baby supplies, dehydrated food, and portable drinking water purifiers bound for Rome by ship. The West Coast colonies sent things to Japan, such as the crates packed in New York by the band and carried cross-country in rented trucks and drive-away cars. Border colonies tried to

cultivate relationships with shippers and travel agents to get special rates.

3.13 PACKAGING AND MARKETING MO

During 1976, and increasingly in 1977, new sources of income were developed. Small commodities based on Mo Letters were manufactured and sold, both through the mail and on the streets. Some of these were new and slicker publications, while others were decorative items. The market for these commodities included not only the public, but also disciples and catacombs disciples (members not living in colonies).

Making and selling things was not new to COG. Literature had been printed and distributed in staggering amounts since 1973, and even Teens for Christ had handed out tracts. During the mid-1970s disciples could order a little necklace with the yoke symbol, or Children of God postcards, or coloring books and other children's materials. Early in 1975 cassette tapes of the Mo Letters being read by a disciple named Simon Peter were available for $2.50 each. In all of the items derived from the Mo Letters, there was some disparity between the slick "packaging" and the contents, which were the words, obviously considered sacred, of Moses David. Nowhere was the packaging more incongruous than in these tapes. Simon Peter was a British ex-actor. Only believers could have considered his deep, trained voice and his Brit-

ish acting style appropriate to read the simplistic, folksy, repetitive preaching of a rural-American evangelist.

What was new in the period after 1976 was the quantity and quality of the commodities. Suddenly there were many publications and other items in full color, and some were made out of plastic! The new items were coming out of "Wild Wind[66] Productions," which was located first in Toshima, Tokyo, Japan, and then in Hong Kong.

During the beginning of 1976 CCG seals began to appear on letters and cards, and disciples also sold packets of seals. The seals were little colored pictures drawn by COG artists, based on the Mo Letters, with gummed backs like postage stamps. There were posters and T-shirt iron-ons featuring Don Quixote and other COG characters. Another item was the "love button," a little square plastic button or badge which could be worn pinned on the clothes. The "love buttons" picture a little cartoon boy and girl kissing, and the words "God's Only Law Is Love." They sold very well, often bringing a dollar in the U.S. Disciples raising money to go overseas often concentrated on selling these buttons.

The Wild Wind Book called To Hell with the Proper Way, 1976, indicated a transitional period. The cover was in full color and inside it advertised products and gave addresses of offices in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Australia, London

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[66] A reference to a Mo Letter, "My love is the wild wind."

and Chicago. This little pocketbook, measuring about 3 1/2 by 5 inches, did not advertise its COG parentage, but it did not hide it either. The contents were a series of Mo Letters, reprinted more or less as first published, with the original illustrations. The printer was listed as Wing Tai Cheung Printing Co., Ltd., Hong Kong. The publisher was Wild Wind, with addresses in Tokyo and Hong Kong. An address was given for the Children of God, the same main address in London, a box number, which had been used for many years.

Later in 1976 the New Nation News carried ads for two books, published by "Gold Lion[67] Publishers" in Hong Kong. The "handy pocket size" Thoughts from Chairman Mo had a "laminated full colour cover by Eman Artist!" Both books were collections of Mo Letters. During 1977 several other small pocket size books with color covers appeared, this time published by Wild Wind, Hong Kong. The first colored New Nation News, called vol. 1, no. 1, for the occasion, was copyrighted in Rome as usual but printed in Hong Kong. Paul Berg (Hosea) had masterminded the switch to Hong Kong, according to Mo. COG had obviously discovered what many multinational corporations already knew: there is cheap non-union labor in Hong Kong and things can be shipped in and out duty-free (see Barnet and Muller 1974:41). COG's commu-

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[67] The "Gold Lion" is undoubtedly Mo himself, who appears as a lion on the covers of both books.

nications network must have been very sophisticated. They received news from colonies in 74 countries, edited and copyrighted the New Nation News in Italy, printed it up in Hong Kong, and then distributed the finished product throughout the world.

One of the little pocket books contained a list of Wild Wind Products, which, it said, "make a perfect gift for all ages!" They were:

1. plastic "love buttons,"
2. seals,
3. cloth patches,
4. Wild Wind Butterfly metal pin,
5. "Our Symbol" pendant and chain,
6. iron-ons in eight different designs,
7. "love yoke" necklaces.

Apparently the inside of the colored cover was printed in different versions for various parts of the world. The one I examined listed two Wild Wind post office box numbers in the U.S. on the inside front cover, and nine box and phone numbers in the U.S. and Canada in the back. Interestingly, this pocketbook, Change the World, by Moses David, made no mention of the Children of God. That omission can probably be taken as testimony to the extent to which bad publicity

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[68] Unsystematic observations by myself and several friends suggest that members of the Unification Church tried not

had hurt COG in the U.S.[68]

During 1976 COGs talked about recruiting people with a background in business. "We need people like you with college degrees," several disciples told me. The rapid transition from a hand-typed, black & white, offset-printed New Nation News in 1976 to the slick, full-color, type-set version printed in Hong Kong in 1977, along with the various other Wild Wind products and publications, clearly shows the influence of new recruits from the business world. A leader I interviewed in Rome in Spring 1976 called COG a "business." By the next year it had a distinctly businesslike appearance, both in its products and in the dress and hairstyles of its intermediate-level and higher leaders, who all looked, according to one educated observer, like "junior executives."

Besides selling these commodities through the mails and on the streets, COG marketed its products to its own members. Practically every disciple wore a "love yoke," and Mexican disciples in late 1977 were the new necklace called "our symbol." The colonies were well-stocked with the lit-

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to appear as followers of the Rev. Moon when they sold things on the street or other public places. They had a number of other organizational names which apparently sheltered them during the late 1970s from hostile responses. A COG informant told me that after Jonestown some Hare Krishnas wore wigs when fund-raising. I saw a Krishna devotee wearing a hat while selling books at a bus station in New York City in October 1981. And in the late 1970s some members of that sect were arrested for soliciting donations in Santa Claus costumes.

erature and posters and the cassette tapes, not only of Simon Peter reading, but of the various musical groups. Letters from disciples often carried several COG seals, and members wore the "love buttons" in addition to selling them. There was no way to know if COG made a "profit" by sales to disciples. I was told that they, as well as all COG literature, were sold to disciples at cost. Some of the prices quoted for later books published were very much below cost, $1/volume for a set of three leatherette-bound collections of Letters, with gold-edge pages. The Wild Wind products, whether profit-makers for the central organization or not, and they undoubtedly earned the central organization some money indirectly through members' tithes or other percentages on earnings, functioned as symbols of group identity for members and for catacombs disciples.[69]

3.14 THE FAMILY OF LOVE

Young businessmen are not so easily attracted by the combination of hippie life-style and Fundamentalist doctrine which had been COG's drawing card in the earlier period. Perhaps that is how it came to be that a new method of recruitment--"flirty fishing"--received greater and greater

[69] The motivations of the young catacombers have not been explored in this dissertation, except in the few cases of informants who started out as catacombs disciples (see Chapter 4). It is clearly an important question, however, particularly in foreign countries where the disciples were predominantly Americans and Europeans and the catacombers predominantly natives of the host country.

emphasis until another internaticnal scandal broke around COG in late 1977.

3.14.1 "Flirty-fishing"

"Flirty fishing" was an attempt to convert people by first attracting them sexually and then gradually introducing the ideas of "love," "God's lcve," being "saved" and finally of joining the "Family." Since very early the Children of God have/had told strangers "I love you" cr "We love you" in an attempt to "reach" them. At their clubs and discos both men and women disciples tcok the initiative in approaching guests and asking them to dance. The literature was filled with sexual metaphor and often with sexual illustrations.[70] Obviously when a young woman handed such a pamphlet to a man, told him she loved him, and asked him to dance, there was a good chance that he would suggest that she prove her lcve by going to bed with him. The Children of God soon discovered the extent of sexual frustration and loneliness in the world, and by 1977 at least some of them were doing their little bit to help.

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[70] The Mo Letters "Revolutionary Women" and "Mountin' Maids" feature cover drawings of vcluptuous women in scanty clothing. In many cultures, prcbably including much of the American South, these drawings would be considered pornographic.

The practice supposedly originated with Mo and Maria, who were beginning to write about it in 1974 and especially 1975. The first experiences may have been no more than accidental. One letter described an incident in which Maria had kissed a waiter and he had wanted more. After much soul-searching, Mo and Maria decided it was only right for her to give him what he needed. Apparently they spent a lot of time in bars and clubs:

> We soon found there was no stopping place, no limit to which God would go to save a poor lost soul with His infinite love and unlimited mercy! We soon found our hearts irresistibly drawn into the vacuum of their hearts to satisfy their spirits, even as our bodies were irresistibly drawn together and sucked into each other to satisfy their flesh!
>
> There was nowhere to draw the line between the two, flesh and spirit. There was no halfway, there was no "almost". It had to be "all or nothing at all" or they could not believe it was real love. (Mo Letter 502, quoted in new New Nation News, vol. 1, no. 1, 1977, p. 24.)

In London, Maria recruited a young man named Arthur as a full-time disciple using this technique (Wallis 1978:14f). A series of Mo Letters about "King Arthur" tell this story. Artnur, incidentally, was one of the businessmen recruits responsible for the slick packaging and marketing referred to earlier (Wallis 1977a:10). In "The Dancer" (1/16/74), Mo related how he himself made love to a lonely young woman after listening to her troubles and talking to her about spiritual matters.

Starting with the publication of "Revolutionary Sex" in 1973, COG had strongly affirmed the healthiness of sexual pleasure, and the right of young people to satisfy this need, within certain rules. COG's literature, their ideology, their manner and the fact that they lived in "communes" all stimulated the prurient interests of those accustomed to greater sexual repression, such as Fundamentalist Protestants. Disciples were accused of everything imaginable, and became secretive about their sexual behavior. Wallis believed that there had long been a great deal of sexual license among the leaders, and that Mo especially had had many mistresses among the disciples (Wallis 1977c). Wallis outlined a form of group marriage or multiple partners among the Children of God, presumably among leaders. Jack Wasson (who wasn't there) claimed that group sex and "skinny dipping" were practiced by married couples already at TSC, supervised by Mo, until the NBC Chronologue expose in 1972. They were practicing "all things common," Acts 2:44 (Christianity Today, 2/18/77, p. 20).

During the summer of 1977 the press again tapped the sure-sell combination of sex and religion and a series of exposes on the activities of the Family of Love in the Canary Islands appeared in the popular magazines Interviu in Spain, Stern in Germany, News of the World in Great Britain, Time in the U.S., Kena in Mexico, and later in Revista de Revistas in Mexico and the Sunday supplement of El Comercio

in Lima, Peru. The same photograph[71] appeared in most of these articles. It showed a white-bearded Moses David surrounded by 15 young women in low-cut dresses, with four other men barely visible in the background. According to most of these articles, Mo lived with a harem of prostitutes recruited from the international membership of the Children of God, now called Family of Love. They picked up men every night in the clubs and bars of Tenerife or Puerto de la Cruz, Canary Islands.

COG responded differently to this than to former scandals. At their request, Roy Wallis, who had taken a scholarly interest in the sexual practices of the Children of God, wrote to Stern scolding them for irresponsible journalism (Wallis 1977b quoted in new NNN, vol. 1, no. 1, 1977). Time quoted a top leader, Queen Rachel, who denied most of the charges, but added:

> There is nothing wrong with a sexy conversion. We believe sex is a human necessity, and in certain cases we may go to bed with someone to show people God's love....this is the exception rather than the rule....No one has ever charged one penny for this and never will (Time 1977:48).

The new New Nation News published that summer was full of talk of love, carried a little "cheesecake" photographed in Tenerife, excerpted Mo's defense of "flirty-fishing" from "King Arthur's Nights," and referred to the group as "Your

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[71] Most likely the same story and photograph also appeared in other countries which haven't come to my attention.

Children of God Family of Love." Their strategy, according to a few of my informants, was to counter the bad publicity by handing out as much literature as possible which explained their views on love. In the U.S. those I met were handing out "Jealousy," a Mo Letter criticizing husbands and wives who wouldn't share their mates. In Mexico City, Los Niños de Dios hired a lawyer who threatened to sue Revista de Revistas. Los Niños settled for a full-page rebuttal in the "letters" section of one of the next issues (COG, "Letter...", 11/30/77).

3.14.2 The "RNR"

February 1978 brought the "Reorganization Nationalization Revolution"--"RNR". One aspect was a gradual name change, in some regions, to Family of Love. Another was an increasing emphasis on flirty fishing and "bar witnessing." According to one informant, these were not practiced until then in the U.S. because of a leader, since demoted, who was very possessive of his wife. "Nationalization" referred to the attempt to have natives of the countries in which they were working take on positions of leadership. The "Chain of Cooperation"--leadership hierarchy--was restructured. Two letters in the 3/78 Family News (vol. 2, No. 7) give the flavor:

> We have been in Paris now for 4 1/2 years and have suffered every "big" leader there ever was, mostly personalities using the Letters, wrongly. Being in the band here, we were unable to breathe unless

> we had consent from the AB [archbishop], Minister, Prime Minister-- on every little thing, even sex needs and sometimes whether or not to FF ["flirty-fish"] someone. We did some FF'ing, but we could have done more with less centralization (excerpted from letter from Home Servants Chronicles and Patience, Paris, France, 7 Feb. 78).
>
> Dear Dad and Maria, God bless you both so much! I love you more each day as you continue to set the captives free....Here in the U.S., we have lost many potentially strong disciples as a result of the lack of freedom in decision-making, but now I am just ecstatic that it is all over! (excerpted from letter from Houston, 17 Jan. 78).

The intention of the restructuring was to give more freedom to the individual disciples to follow God's leadings for them, according to several informants. Previously, "little dictators" had controlled their lives in the various colonies. Now most of the leadership was to be eliminated, and "home servants" were to be elected. "Visiting servants" would have little authority over disciples, but would come around just to help. These leaders would be chosen by the central leadership around Mo from nominations submitted by the membership. Disciples would be responsible only to World Services, the central headquarters around Mo. They had only to send in reports and tithes, and the literature would be sent to them. Mo wrote to leaders in one letter, "You're all fired." Many were actually fired, and some, including most prominently Jethro and Deborah (son-in-law and daughter of David Berg) left the Family, accompanied by letters from their former subordinates and even from Mo about all the terrible things they had done. Some leaders were

offered the chance to apply for the new positions such as visiting servants, and it is unclear to me how much the hierarchy was really shaken up. Some intermediate and higher-level leaders I knew in 1975/76 in the U.S. were still leaders in 1980. No matter how much of the shake-up of the "chain of cooperation" actually took place, two things are clear:

1. The top leadership of CCG was more sensitive to charges from members that it was authoritarian and undemocratic than it was to charges by outsiders of sexual license.
2. Once again, the central leadership was asserting its control over regional power blocs, this time assisted by the improvements in the communications network and management described above. Disciples told me, and the Family News reiterated this point, that Mo was closer to the members than many of the leaders had been (FN 2, No. 7, 3/78; FN 1, No. 7, 2/78).

Chapter IV

SIX LIFE HISTORIES

In this chapter the life stories, as far as I know them, of six American disciples are told. I chose six people who comprised three couples, so that the reader could learn more about the individuals by seeing them in relationships, and also about the institution of marriage in the Children of God. The stories are told in roughly the order in which the persons joined the Children of God, and thus represent different stages in COG's recruitment and history. The choice of six out of the twenty or more life stories I could have told was difficult. I chose these six disciples partly because they had a relatively wide range of backgrounds. The heterogeneity in the whole of COG is much greater than among these six, whc are all white U.S. citizens. COG also included many Canadians and Europeans, some non-white North Americans, and an unknown number of converts native to the 80-some countries in which disciples lived, but I had insufficient material on most of these, or didn't write abcut them for other reasons. Even so, these six cases will be helpful in providing illustrations in depth of many of the points about background, class, parents' political views, etc. which I discuss in other chapters. In addition these cases challenge some of the sterectypes of "Jesus freaks" in

the popular mind and perhaps even within CCG itself. For example, only one of these disciples came from a small town. Four of them were religious before meeting COG, and in fact several had been "saved" by a group other than COG. As far as disciples being reformed drug addicts and "revolutionaries," COG was advertising itself falsely, as these cases show. None of the six were revolutionaries, though most had opposed the war in Vietnam. The three who had used drugs heavily had not been using heroin, and the other three had never touched drugs. These three who did not use drugs were "saved" in a very different sense: COG for them was a way of life, a way of being religious, and a way of getting away from home. In Chapter 7, a survey of more disciples substantiates these same generalizations.

Material for these stories was drawn from interviews and observations, plus information which came via the COG grapevine. Very little has been changed, except the names, and the disciples are probably recognizable to other disciples who have known them. For that reason I left out a few incidents which I thought those concerned might not want revealed. Gideon and Abigail, the second couple in this chapter, were also included in the sample surveyed at Staten Island. In general, I have written what the people told me, trying to give some of the flavor of their testimonies and personalities, but have written it in the third person and added interpretations and information of my own.

4.1 SARAH

One of the Children of God who made the deepest impression on me was Sarah. The depth of her commitment, her sincerity and emotional honesty, created an immediate empathy between us. She was older and more "worldly-wise" than many of the other COGs I had met, and I felt that we had a lot in common.

Sarah was one of the original Children of God, from when the group was called Teens for Christ. If her testimony is to be believed, she was one of the hippie converts who had been disappointed with drugs. Sarah was from Orange County, from Huntington Beach itself, probably. Unfortunately I know little about her family background, though I think that her mother was on welfare, there was no father in the home, and the family had little religious interest.

Like many other Children of God, Sarah hated school. At the age of 13 she was in juvenile court for truancy. But then she began to use marijuana, and started to deal drugs--grass, speed, and downers (pills). "Now I saw a reason to go to school," Sarah told me with a laugh. What she meant was that she went to school to sell drugs. Drugs became a passion, a cause, for Sarah. She distributed them with evangelistic fervor. The first march in which she participated (at age 16) had to do with the legal status of LSD. Like Timothy Leary, Ken Kesey, and many others, she believed

that acid (LSD) was "the answer," that it would "open people's eyes." Sometimes she gave it away free. She told me that even a person conditioned to seeing things the "official" way would, on acid, "catch the irony" of the news on TV. The truth would come from within the person.

For three years Sarah lived with two like-minded young women. "Then it started to be a whole system thing." By that she meant that the cause began to fade and everything they tried became a dead end. There also emerged an unforeseen underside to the drug scene. One of her friends was shot. Several other friends took too much and ended up in mental institutions. There were, of course, some problems with the police. Sarah said that she and her roommates began to develop a tolerance for LSD, so that to achieve the desired effect they had to inject it into their veins. When they were 17 they were dreaming of getting away. Sarah and one of her friends shared the dream common to much of the generation--going to live on a farm and smoke dope (marijuana). Another friend got away in quite another manner. She moved into the Light Club with the Berg family and started talking about Jesus. This new convert's friends were not interested and never accepted her invitations to visit the Light Club. At that time there were no Jesus Freaks, according to Sarah, though some "Systemites" were passing out tracts, and she ignored them. The situation of Sarah and her friends deteriorated. None of their plans were working

out. Sarah began to despair deeply. Finally, in late 1968, while the politically-oriented youth movement was crescendoing in other parts of the country, and while Nixon was being elected President, Sarah decided to give up. She shot up an overdose of STP (a powerful hallucinogen), intending "to say fuck it." But she didn't die! Instead, her mind began to race so fast that she was unable to talk. Her sister and her friends did not know what to do with her. She sat in front of the TV and watched "in utter agony." Finally[72] her sister took her over to the Light Club, where she saw her friend. Still unable to talk, and at the end of her rope, Sarah looked at her friend, who said, "Pray!" So Sarah got down on the floor.

While she was in that condition she began to hear something that made sense to her. David Berg was speaking,

> [He was] saying 'To hell with the System' with all his heart. And it's in the Bible? [This was what] I had been dying to hear someone say for so long. I can't express to you the ecstasy. This is it!

The result of this dramatic conversion experience[73] was that she was able to talk and function again.

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[72] This may have continued for several days. My notes do not indicate how long Sarah said she remained in this state.

[73] Of course we must remember that Sarah had told this testimony to countless persons over the course of almost ten years. She <u>may</u> have embellished it somewhat, though I was certainly convinced of her sincerity when she told me all this.

> That was the end of '68 and I haven't wavered since. 'Cause I can really say that I was at the end.

Neither she nor we can know whether she would have recovered without Berg's help as the drug were off.

Thus began a long career as a Child of God. Shortly after Sarah was "saved" her sister and her mother were "saved" too. Though her sister was only 16, and a straight-A student, Sarah's mother allowed both girls to drop out of school and join the Berg group. Others she knew also joined, but there were very few Teens for Christ at that time. She remembered that Paul (Aaron) Berg was always singing and had a "spaced out" look. David Berg was very special. She lived with him for a few years--"Then you know it's God."

Sarah had vivid memories of their really "doing it"--dropping out--on the road. She slept with the women crowded in vans, endured rough conditions, ate all sorts of strange combinations of provisioned food, but "it was working!" Finally her dream of living on a farm came true, though they didn't smoke dope. The group settled in at the Texas Soul Clinic. It was probably there that she married Abraham. It <u>may</u> have been an arranged marriage.

Though Sarah's politics had been completely enmeshed with the LSD experience, she also identified with the more politically-oriented youth movement. "I always hated capital-

ism." In COG she had the opportunity to redistribute wealth, not only by the sharing within the group, but by giving away food. COG had a friend who owned the largest refrigerator warehouse in Dallas. His son used to fly them around in his jet.[74] Sarah's favorite job was taking a van-load of food from that warehouse and giving it out to the poor, both black and white, in Dallas.

Sarah had little in common with the evangelists and church people who helped the Berg group in the beginning. She was very relieved when Linda Meissner brought printing equipment from the Jesus People's Army of the Pacific. Now COG could print its own literature, mostly Mo Letters, and distribute them in exchange for donations. At last they had an independent source of income and had to compromise less with the church people, such as Jordan.

In 1971 many of the disciples "fled" overseas. Sarah and Abraham went to Europe, where they remained until late 1975, when they returned to the New York area. I'm not clear when it was, but Sarah said that she worked with Mo in Cyprus printing COG literature, and later moved to Germany. The couple had three children in rapid succession.

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[74] I have heard that a rich man's son and some COG disciples died in a private airplane crash, and, if so, perhaps this benefactor was the person involved.

When I met Sarah and Abe, in 1976, they were living with another small family and a few single men in an apartment in the New York area. It was called a "family colony." They were on a strict budget and always had trouble making ends meet. The children, however, were well-fed, well-loved, and seemed very happy. There was even a little school for them in the apartment.

Sarah was worried about the children getting older and being forced, by law, to go to "System schools." They were waiting for Abe's inheritance, and also trying to earn money litnessing, so that they could migrate to Hawaii and from there to Australia or somewhere in the Pacific. The idea was to keep the children in COG schools. The litnessing was not good in Australia (nor in Hawaii), she said, but it was "a good refuge for children." In early 1976 Sarah's sister was taking a group including 25 children and their parents from Hawaii to Australia. Sarah's oldest child was three, and she hoped to be out of the U.S. permanently by the time he was five.

Things did not work out according to plan. Several months later the couple was still around, living out of a van in order to save money, expecting to start the long drive to California any day. During that summer they stayed at my apartment a few times, or came by to take showers. Once a few of the group slept in my apartment while others

slept in the van, parked right on the street in my upper Manhattan neighborhood. They even slept in the van when they went down to the big house in Staten Island.

Finally Sarah and Abe rented another apartment with some other disciples. The last time I saw them they were still waiting for the inheritance. It was Christmastime and Sarah had taken the two older children on a bus to visit her mother in California, while Abe remained at the colony with the baby.

Once Abe's colony showed me how literally disciples might take Mo's advice, particularly in the presence of their shepherd. Some of the men had breakfast at my apartment. While one ran out and bought a half-gallon of orange juice, I made them a treat--caffe latte, coffee with hot milk. None of them drank the orange juice. The reason must have been a letter in which Mo advised against mixing milk with fruit, since that combination used to upset his family's stomachs.

About a year later I heard that Sarah and the children (or some of the children) were living in one colony in Los Angeles, and Abe was living in another colony nearby.

The next news came in Fall 1978. Abraham had finally received his inheritance. He had gone to Europe, not Australia, and had gone with another woman, not Sarah. He took

the oldest child, and the other woman's children. Sarah meanwhile was living near, but not in, another COG home, which she and the younger two children (now aged five and four) visited regularly. Her hope that the oldest child would get out of the U.S. before he had to attend System schools had been partially fulfilled. He was enrolled in kindergarten in Austria.

The marriage had lasted nine years, through rough times, many changes, and many thousands of miles. I did not know either of them well enough to know if they had been happy nor why they broke up. Yet they seemed to have important differences in background and in political ideology, and these differences may have played a role. Sarah's mother apparently did not have a clear-cut ideology. "If you find the answer," she told her daughters in 1968, "tell me."

Sarah was more a hippy than a revolutionary. All the same, she had some understanding of the political ideology of the youth movement and was definitely a sympathizer. She had favored the youth revolution but didn't think it would work. Something she had read had talked about how the System would water everything down to make it a fad. (Some people called that "cooptation.") Sarah felt that the youth movement and also the Jesus Revolution (excluding COG, of course) had been coopted.

Sarah's political perspective was formed not only during a specific historical time, but also in a particular location--Orange County, California, one of the most politically conservative places in the world. Many residents were rich and ultra-conservative. If a Left existed, it wasn't very visible. Those youth who identified with the youth revolution, or even with the hippy movement, suffered persecution from the police and much of the general public. It is no wonder that Sarah believed a critique of American culture and politics came from within the individual (while watching TV news stoned on acid, for example). After the masses failed to "catch the irony" and revolt, she and her friends began to dream of escape. The conflict over the Vietnam war and the draft was intense at this time, and Sarah and her friends were in "enemy territory." I think they were unaware of how unique their situation was living in Orange County. They universalized their particular situation and believed that there was a permanent and fundamental alienation between them and most other people. When David Berg said "to hell with the System," drop out, join the Jesus Revolution and change the world by changing people's hearts, it appealed to her sense of alienation and also to her political theories of how change would come about. Struggle in Orange County was impossible. Perhaps that made it easier to identify with the peaceful martyr Jesus.

In different surroundings Sarah felt different. In Germany, for example, she was happy, because TV was educational, and all the students were communists. Sarah was not anti-communist like so many Americans, including many Children of God. She thought communism was a much better deal for the people than capitalism. However, communism would hinder the work of the Children of God. In Yugoslavia, for example, all the nuns or religious personnel had to have a "regular" job, too, because, according to Sarah, the communists considered people doing what COG was doing "useless."

Returning to the U.S., Sarah suffered culture shock. She had been in Europe for at least five years. One thing that particularly bothered her was the omnipresence of the red, white, and blue. As we were talking about it, we noticed that the nearby park benches were painted in those colors. Sarah said it felt to her as if she were seeing swastikas plastered everywhere. People in Europe, she said, were not nearly so preoccupied with patriotism.

Talking with Sarah, I couldn't help but be reminded that the National Socialists had at first included many socialists, whom Hitler had eliminated as his party gained more power. The mystery to me was why she had stayed with COG all these years even after learning so much about politics in Germany. Two reasons may have been important. The first was that it was more practical for a mother of three to stay

with the group that cared for the children, and to stay with the children's father. The second reason was that she seemed to feel a deep on-going sense of existential crisis. After we had discussed many things, including the possibility of my writing a book about the Children of God, Sarah told me that I really ought to read the book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible. Its message is "all is vanity," that is, everything is useless and meaningless. The books have all been written. She had been good at drafting, she said, but should she rejoin the System and make buildings? What for?[75] COG had been Sarah's only way out of her original existential crisis, and it remained the only possibility she could see, or at least the only one she was willing to trust. Sarah exemplified the religious position of profound pessimism concerning the world and profound trust in God. There was little I could say in response. I could wonder, however, what it meant that in America one could not offer a person like Sarah a real alternative to the Children of God.

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[75] The popular film The Graduate, which came out in the early 1970s, reflected this crisis of meaning in a somewhat milder form, as the college graduate could find no reason to follow the various careers urged on him by his parents' affluent friends. (Who can forget the immortal line, "I've got just one word for you, Benjamin--'Plastics!'"?)

4.2 ABRAHAM

Sarah's husband was rather a different kind of person, even in appearance. Like her, he came from Orange County, California. His father started out poor, according to Abe. Abe's father had worked as a quality control engineer in a factory making missile parts until he lost his job after the war. Before retirement his earnings had been between $10,000 and $20,000. In 1976, however, he was living off property values from renting apartments, in addition to veterans' compensation, social security, and maybe even unemployment insurance. Abe's mother was deceased. As far as I could tell from our interview, she had worked as a housewife all her life. But her father was a millionaire. Perhaps it was from this maternal grandfather, or some other relative on his mother's side, that Abe's long-awaited inheritance was to come.

Abe's parents differed politically. His father was a Democrat cynical about the Vietnam war. His mother was a conservative Republican. His mother also had personal problems--addiction to diet pills and near-addiction to alcohol.

Abe's background was very religious, not entirely due to his parents' influence. One parent was Russian Orthodox, the other English Episcopalian. As a youth Abe was "saved" at a nondenominational summer camp run by Baptists. Apparently the main activities at the camp were memorizing Bible

verses (the same ones which comprised COG's first "set"!) and "getting saved" (the "born-again" experience). Abe liked the camp. He said it was a lot like COG, except that the camp was only two weeks in the summer, while with COG you only went home for two weeks and were "in the Lord the rest of the time." Even before the camp Abe had developed a religious outlook. As a tiny boy, he said, he had "freaked out and cried" when he saw on TV that Eisenhower had almost died. Thereupon he was "sentenced to ten years of Sunday school." Later, in high school, the most important groups in his life were a Methodist youth group and a track team which was like a family, centering around a father-figure/coach who was a Mormon.

In school, Abe really suffered from the Orange County ultra-conservatism. He knew instinctively (perhaps with a little help from his Democratic dad) that there must be another side to the story. But that side was not available. The county seemed all white. One of the teachers was rumored to be a "commie" because he assigned readings from Thoreau and Emerson. Abe knew very little, consequently. He had heard that Robert Kennedy was America's last chance. But how did Abe learn that "the U.S. was in Vietnam for its own national interest?" He said God told him. Abe felt that he was a minority in school. He went to college or junior college, and when there was a discussion of the Vietnam war less than 50 people showed up. There was even a

pro-war rally at the school. Abe said he had wanted to stand up against it but was afraid that the participants, football lettermen, would beat him up.[76]

During the period immediately prior to his joining COG, Abe was just beginning college. He told me that he was interested in political science and in television production and direction. He was running 25 miles (?!) per day. During the past summer he had worked at Disneyland, and hated it. Now he was working (as a golf course caddy, I think) 30 hours per week. He had a girlfriend, had taken an interest in hypnosis, Siddhartha, and the Beatles' guru (founder of Transcendental Meditation), and was taking too many drugs. It was obviously too intense a pace. Abe told me that he was "dependent on being high." He played amphetamines ("ups") off against various "downs". To top it all off, Abe didn't like school.

Things reached crisis proportions. Abraham wanted a way out. He told me he went down to the Navy recruiting office, to join the Navy and see the world, but they were closed that day. That someone who was supposedly opposed to the Vietnam war would have considered joining the Navy indicates not only how desperate Abe was, but also how little Orange County had to offer. And it is also a hint of the

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[76] This story rang a bell for me. The first anti-war demonstration at my college took place during a football game and the crowd stoned the marchers, of whom there were less than ten.

politics that came later, within COG.

Then Abe started dreaming of going to Europe, but could find no one to go with him. His girlfriend left him. Things got worse and worse.[77] He was also having trouble with his parents. Like Sarah, Abe "escaped" by taking too much--in this case, beer and drugs together. He said that the result was mental dissociation in which he became three different people. Somewhere in there he became involved with a woman, and that seemed to help, until he found that he couldn't talk to her the next day. He became very depressed.

It now occurred to Abe that he was like the character in the movie Alice B. Toklas who couldn't fit back into society after taking drugs too much. This was a terrible feeling, and the only remedy was that good old American standby, "getting saved". Before long he felt God calling to him on the golf course to give his life, and the decision was easy for him since he desperately wanted "to be set free" from the "system patterns".

But how to give his life to God? He met Dave Wilkerson's Teen Challenge crowd, but they turned him off with their short hair, nice clothes, and preaching against drugs, long hair, and hippies. Despite that, he liked what they said

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[77] Even more than with Sarah, the reader must be aware that this is the testimony of a professional testimony-teller.

about Jesus and freedom, so he went up for the altar call. He knew exactly what to do, since he'd been "saved" at the youth camp. But this time was much better; he slumped over a table and was filled with the Holy Spirit. When he stood up he felt "anointed". He volunteered to work with them. But they told him he would have to go to Bible College[78] first. Then they said to look out for the "longhair hippies with Bibles" outside. He perked up--that sounded more like his crowd. When Abe saw the Teens for Christ he thought they looked like he felt--"stoned in the Spirit." One of them suggested he drop out of school, and he did. He had always wanted to drop out of school, anyway.

Teens for Christ had a two-week trial period. There were about 30 of them, then. Abe hitchhiked with some of them or with a friend to Florida, witnessing, and stayed with his grandmother there. This part of the story never became clear to me. Apparently he got a haircut and worked as a busboy. Then he returned to California in a driveaway car and went straight to the Light Club. A friend who had said he also would drop out returned to school[79] instead. Berg was preaching that night at the Light Club, when in barged

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[78] This was a complaint I heard from several disciples who had been interested in other groups of Jesus People. One young woman had tried to join Love Inn in upstate New York, and had been told to go to Bible College. She told me, "There was no room in the Inn."

[79] Lots of disciples told me that their friend or friends had been about to join but didn't at the last moment.

Abraham's parents. They attacked Berg verbally and Abe physically. The "brothers" advised Abe to go home with his parents. But that night in his bed, he said, he felt that the Teens for Christ were praying for him and "I joined in my heart." Eventually his parents yielded and he joined in reality.

After that Abe went around with Teens for Christ to various churches and worked with churches. "We did what they talked about doing." The churches were "too hung up on doctrine," an assessment common among evangelically-oriented people with Abe's "non-denominational" background. The Black Pentecostals "received" them, but wouldn't "drop out." The Black youth were not in the churches and were not receptive to Teens for Christ in their homes. Abe was disappointed with the relationship with the churches. The churches took offerings for them and gave them room and board for a little while, as if they were a troupe of travelling revivalists. Now and then the church people would join them witnessing in the streets to the youth, but it only lasted a few days. The Teens for Christ's "drop out" message fell on unreceptive ears.

In June 1969 the Berg group received the prophecy, "follow the early church." According to Abe, the hippies said "yes" and the church said "no." Since the church was unreformable, "let the dead bury their dead." The old bride of

Christ (the Church) was dead and needed to be buried and a new bride (themselves) was needed.[80] The Teens for Christ broke with the church system and followed new rules.

The spiritual excitement on the road ran high. Yet one incident perhaps illustrates how religious Abe's orientation was, in contrast to the predominantly hippie orientation of Sarah. The story was told me by another informant. Apparently Abe and another brother prayed that their eyes would be healed and threw their glasses in Niagara Falls. Very disappointed afterwards, they asked Uncle Dave (Berg) why it hadn't worked.[81] Berg said that they had not had enough faith! More amazing, to me, than the original act was their acceptance of Berg's doubletalk. Abraham was clearly a young man who wanted to believe.[82]

Most of the rest of the story has been told in the last section, for Abraham's life was joined to Sarah's for many years. They lived in Cyprus, then were important in printing in Germany. When they returned to the U.S. they had trouble finding the COG colonies, and when they did there was no one who had known them or realized that they'd had a

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[80] The metaphor of the Church as the bride of Christ is commonly used in Christianity.

[81] For much more on faith and healing, read a book written by an evangelist known for her skill in this area (Kuhlman 1969).

[82] An interesting psychological study of this phenomenon is presented by Kopp (1978). He says it is very difficult for some people to give up illusions and fairy-tales.

relatively high status in COG. Finally Abe returned to California, about 1977, where I have heard he had some difficulties with leadership, and with Sarah. He received his inheritance and used much of it to help others in the Family, including Gideon (see next section), with necessities and overseas travel money. Then he went to Europe, possibly Switzerland. I heard from him in late 1978, from Austria. It was a form letter, and showed that at last he would be actualizing his dream of "reaching" the Eastern Bloc countries. From the Austrian border, Abe was coordinating a "pioneer team" to Yugoslavia. From shepherd of a small family colony he became leader of a pioneer team, though I could not tell at a distance how large that effort really was. Part of the RNP (see Chapter 3) was freedom of initiative for disciples, and Abe may have simply started this effort on his own. The old Abraham of the nondenominational youth camp and the Methodist youth group had reemerged. The tone of the letter could have been in part determined by the nature of the audience, as COGs have always been masters of "public relations," and I am sure that I am the exception on any COG mailing list. Yet the fact that Abe would appeal to an obviously Evangelical audience, and the fact that he was trying to convert the communists, with no discussion of why that might or might not be a good idea, indicated to me how ephemeral his affiliation with the anti-war movement really had been. The "Yugoslav Pioneers" were busy translating literature into Serbo-Croat (the language of Yugoslavia) and

distributing it in Austrian towns on the border where Yugoslavs came over to shop. Some of the "pioneers" were trying to find work or to enroll in school in Yugoslavia so that they would have an excuse to stay in that country. According to the form letter, Abe was now with another sister and her children, and his own oldest child was happily enrolled in an Austrian kindergarten. The first Yugoslav Pioneer Newsletter was enclosed, complete with a tear-off pledge section. We friends and relatives were asked to send money straight from our banks to the team's Austrian bank account, whose number was conveniently included. In return (to put it crassly, which he didn't), we would all surely share in a "heavenly reward." "Heaven"? What about the millenium? It wasn't mentioned. Abe knew how to sound exactly like a million other American Evangelicals.

It seemed in a way as if Abe had lived first the politics of his father, a liberal-to-moderate anti-war Democrat who started life poor, and then the politics of his deceased mother, an ultra-conservative Republican who started life rich. Yet perhaps his politics were more of an attempt at compromise. Abe's political liberalism or radicalism was always confused, as far as I could tell, and thoroughly polluted with mysticism. When I knew Abe, he was very concerned to stay informed and watched TV news and documentaries avidly. Yet he blamed Jews for a good share of the

world's problems. And, of course, in accord with COG teachings, he believed that action in the political arena would come to naught.

There had been little opportunity for Abe to learn about other types of political groups, besides the Evangelical ones, as he was growing up. Neither parent had ever belonged to a labor union, and the more liberal of the two had ended up owning real estate. They had attended night classes and belonged to organizations like bridge clubs, women's clubs, and the Rotary Club, not to overtly political organizations. Abe's parents' ambition for him was that he "make it in the world." His own ambition was to be President and change the world(!). In some ways Abe was among the "disinherited," for though his mother's family was rich he had had to work in menial teenage jobs and wait many years for his inheritance. But even in Abe's brief stay in the working class, the union to which he belonged--Hotel and Restaurant Workers--did not involve him in any way beyond collecting his dues. Add to all that the political climate of Orange County, plus the confusion that must have resulted from the clashing political views of his parents, and you can begin to see why Abe always viewed politics and the secular arena through the religious glasses he had put on as a boy when he was "saved" the first time. Besides his parents, the most important "role model" in his youth was his track coach, a Mormon. And after high school he "adopted" another role

model, "Uncle Dave," who directed him right back into saving the world by saving souls.

4.3 GIDEON

Gideon was an "all-American Joe." That is why he is included here, though I did not know him as well as I knew some other people. There was no confusion in Gideon's childhood as to what class he belonged to. He grew up in New York City and later a beach resort town in New Jersey, the son of a longshoreman turned bartender. Both parents were "moderate" Democrats, and nominal Roman Catholics. All they expected of Gideon was that he finish high school. His father left[83] the family when Gideon was 14, and later died. The mother and eight children lived on welfare for some time. Eventually she began to work as a secretary, but of course made little money at it. Even in 1976 their household income was under $10,000/year.

Gideon studied liberal arts and mechanical drawing in high school. He was shy and not involved in many activities throughout his childhood and youth, though he participated in Cub Scouts and a gymnastics group. Like his shy future wife Abigail, and several other disciples who have told me the same thing, he liked animals. Gideon looked forward to

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[83] He may have been an alcoholic.

"being patriotic" and "helping people" when he grew up.

After graduation Gideon started what he considered a "good job" operating a forklift in a perfume factory. It was probably a union job. He also joined the Coast Guard reserve, most likely during 1967 or 1968, and may have done so partly to avoid being drafted to fight in Vietnam. Gideon was in the Coast Guard for six years and "hated it." Part of the reason for that was that

> [I joined] to save lives....[but] ended up towing in rich people who were too lazy to keep gas in it [their yachts].

The Vietnam war was tough on such a patriotic kid. He lost his vision of God and the all-American life. He hated the war and the whole idea of politics.[84] But he did nothing about it. Instead of becoming involved in the anti-war movement, Gideon became depressed and escaped through drugs. He had tried almost every one of the more than a dozen drugs on my questionnaire list. Gideon said he "lost all morals." For two years he didn't work but sold drugs for a living.

The only good thing about drugs, from Gideon's point of view, was that LSD reintroduced him to the spiritual

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[84] Like many disciples, Gideon seemed to use the word "politics" to refer to "electoral politics."

[85] See Smith (1966) for a discussion of this phenomenon. Smith claims that 1/4 to 1/3 of the general population have religious experiences if they take certain drugs in a setting where the researcher does not try to influence the direction of the experience. Furthermore, he says,

world.[85] However, as COGs were quick to point out, there were two sides to the spiritual world. Gideon's friends became interested in witchcraft. They liked weird record albums, full of symbols like "dead babies," "Black Sabbath," and "weasels tearing my flesh," and they thought it was "cool" to have a hangman's noose dangling in the cellar. The Manson Family murders took place in the summer of 1969, and it was widely understood after that that LSD-use could also be associated with demonism and other horrors (Sanders 1971). Gideon was frightened. He "really cried out to God"[86] to give him something different to believe in.

Like Sarah, like Abraham, Gideon finally reached the point where he had to get away. It was 1970 or 1971. He sold all his possessions for $150 and drove to Florida with three friends. They ran out of money in Georgia and were only able to reach Daytona Beach by picking up hitchhikers and asking them to buy gas.

The Children of God were strong in Florida at that time. A young woman witnessed to them in the car, handing him a warning tract and "set card" (a list of verses to memorize), and invited him to dinner. Though his friends laughed, Gideon went. A young man painting a "prophet sign" at the col-

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hallucinogens give rise to religious experiences among 3/4 of those with "strong religious inclinations" in a neutral setting, and to 90% of religious people in a religious setting.

[86] This phrase was ubiquitous in COG testimonies.

ony put his arm around Gideon, who "felt the love." Gideon asked Jesus intc his heart. Then the woman he'd met earlier told him about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and he experienced that too, and spoke in tongues. Though Gideon had not been particularly religious, and though the Catholics at that time had no tradition of speaking in tongues, he had probably been prepared for the experience by his years of using hallucinogens (see Goodman 1972 for more on speaking in tongues). Several other disciples have made that association in interviews. Gideon's friends "weren't as reprobrate as they made out to be" and after he took the first step they all asked Jesus into their hearts.

None of them joined the Children of God, however. Instead they all drove to Louisiana, where they stayed with an old friend and tried to scrape by without money. Gideon said that here was where he really saw police brutality against young people. Gideon returned to New Jersey, lived with his family, and worked as a plumber's helper and carpenter with his brother.

But COG remained in Gideon's dreams, and he kept seeing disciples litnessing on the corner near his home. He avoided joining for three years, mainly because he "thought it would be humbling to litness." But finally he became desperate. His teeth were rotting, he was over-doing the drugs, and he thought he would die one way or another. As

things stood, he felt, his life was worth nothing, so why not give it up and start over with a new life? With the moral support of the colony, he began witnessing and distributing Mo Letters in the Coast Guard. Then he wrote to his commander saying that he was a new creature and couldn't be in the Coast Guard anymore, but had to serve Jesus. He received an honorable discharge.[87]

During the two years Gideon was a disciple before I met him, he had lived in ten different homes. He had worked in the discotheque show in New York and as a colony shepherd or undershepherd. Though he was still shy when I met him, his inhibitions always vanished when he was surrounded by friends and under the bright stage lights. Gideon showed a genuine talent for comedy acting. And, of course, like most disciples, he could sing and play guitar.

In the Spring of 1975, Gideon was betrothed to Abigail, whom he obviously adored. They headed for California, where they intended to raise the funds to travel to Japan with the disco show and band. Apparently Gideon never left the U.S., though Abigail eventually went to Asia. In late 1978 other disciples told me that Gideon was travelling about the U.S.

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[87] Though I haven't systematic data on the topic, it seemed that most disciples who tried to get out of the military to "serve Jesus" had little difficulty. If that was so, some of the factors involved might have been the end of the Vietnam war, the annoyance witnessing caused on the boat or in the camp, and/or the feeling of officers that evangelism was a worthwhile undertaking.

with a different sister (who was the actual sister of another member of the disco show) and her two children, in a van bought for them by Abraham with some of his inheritance money.

4.4 ABIGAIL

The woman to whom Gideon was so briefly betrothed grew up in a suburb of Detroit in a family of nine children. Her father, who was suffering from cancer when I met her, was a designer of car parts. Her mother was a housewife. Their ethnic background was German, English, Dutch, and, said Abigail, Miami Indian.[88] Abigail's family was Presbyterian, but she had belonged to a Baptist church group when she was eight years old.

It's hard to say what led up to Abigail's conversion. She said she was a very shy girl, afraid of boys, so shy that she thought she would never get married. Her ambition as a child was to raise animals on a farm, and to get married. Her family was "all-American," and she seems to have been a "good kid," in the traditional sense, though she didn't care much for school and her parents didn't care much that she didn't. Abigail dropped out of high school, and just stayed at home. In sharp contrast to Gideon, Abigail

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[88] Four out of the 20 COGs in my sample claimed some American Indian genetic material. This claim is common among Americans.

had never tried any of the drugs on my questionnaire other than alcohol (and that, she claimed, only once). She had never belonged to any groups outside the home, never had had a job, and was close only to her brothers, sisters, and mother.

Into this scene came the Children of God. Her mother liked them and invited them to stay at their house when they were in town. I think some of her brothers and sisters liked them too. The Children of God were very friendly with Abigail and she overcame her shyness with them. Eventually she asked permission to travel with them a little. At age 18 she joined. That was 1973 or 1974. Some of her siblings, and for a brief time her mother, also joined.

After that Abigail moved around a lot, in typical COG fashion. When I interviewed her, she said she had lived at eight different addresses, in at least two cities, during the past two years. Abigail was in the disco show too, and usually played the role of a woman much desired by men. She sang with the band, but played no instrument other than the tambourine. Another job in COG was undershepherd, or perhaps some kind of "big sis" or counselor, for the female "babes" (new recruits).

Abigail said that she had had no political opinions before joining COG, and had never engaged in any political activities. I was unable to learn about her political opinions after joining COG because I never had the chance to

really get to know her. It is possible that she still had no opinions about politics in 1976. Her mother, however, was a liberal who worked for school desegregation and voted for McGovern. This may have caused tension between Abigail's mother and her father, who was conservative and voted at least once for Nixon. Abigail said she was closer emotionally to her mother than to her father.[89]

When I asked Abigail why she joined COG, she said that in the System she had been unable to be herself and other people were unable to be themselves. She had been bored with the world out there, she wanted love, and she wanted to serve God. For Abigail, who was shy and didn't like to study, my impression was that joining COG was the functional equivalent of going away to college, in the sense that it provided a protected social environment in which to make the break from home. Abigail was successful in COG and seemed on her way to a leadership position. She managed to reach Asia, and then I lost track of her.

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[89] The fact that her mother ran away from home to join COG, briefly, indicates that there may well have been tension or something missing in Abigail's household.

4.5 SAMUEL

According to Gypsy, his mate, Samuel was not a typical Child of God. For one thing, he was successful and popular in high school, and, for another, he was much more imaginative and independent in his thinking than most of the other brothers. That was why she liked him. The story of Sam's conversion has none of the tragedy and drama of Sarah's, Abe's, or Gideon's. He had never taken too many drugs, he had never been too shy to cope with the world, he had never considered suicide. In fact, Sam had always been a "winner." He was good-looking, athletic, charming, and intelligent, and perhaps that was why I managed to learn a great deal about him.

Sam was born and raised in a small town of 3000 in the central part of Texas. When I met him I thought he was the quintessential Jesus Freak, a small-town Southern Baptist boy lost in the hip world of the Big City. I asked him endless questions about Texas and the Southern Baptists. Not many people ever move out of that part of Texas. Besides Sam and the three friends who joined COG with him, only a few he knew in high school had moved away. Sam's whole family stemmed from central Texas. His mother's family lived in a tiny Norwegian Lutheran farming community nearby. Her father was relatively affluent, having owned several hundred acres. Before he died he sold out to Kentucky Fried Chicken, who were ranching chickens there in 1978. Sam's mother

worked as a teller for 15 years in a bank, until her second son was born, and again after he grew older. On the paternal side, Sam's family (of Irish and German descent) was not as affluent. His father's father managed a ranch owned by someone else until he was forced to retire. Samuel and his father sometimes helped him working with the animals. When Sam's father reached the age of 21, he was already married and the father of a son. In the early years he often had to drive great distances to work, where he could find it. He had worked for 12 years in a factory, but when it moved to another town he lost his job. After that he became a licensed electrician, and, according to Sam, earned enough to stay in debt for all the latest commodities.

Sam's mother was raised a Lutheran, but converted to Southern Baptist when she married. Later she regretted the change, feeling it had something to do with Sam's conversion to COG. Neither parent seemed to have been overly concerned with religion and church attendance per se, though Sam reported that his mother was rather "puritanical." That fit right in with the social environment. It was the Bible Belt and very repressive. Sam's county was "dry," meaning liquor was not available for sale. That never stopped Sam's dad, however, who just bought it by the case in the next county and brought it back in his pick-up truck. Samuel said his dad was a pal as well as a father, and they drank together while working, hunting, or fishing, or just for fun. Danc-

ing, while considered sinful by the Baptists, took place under the auspices of other organizations, and the family loved dancing.

One thing which was rarely questioned around there was the existence of God. Spending time alone in the wide open spaces, Sam said, "country kids communicate with God a lot." But once while he was riding to work in the back of a truck, another worker began what became a standing debate about the existence of God. Sam rose to this atheist's challenge, and began to articulate why he believed in God.

His interest in "church" came more slowly. He first began to attend services because he fell in love with a girl who went to church. Later the church hired a youth worker who had been to COG's Texas Soul Clinic (see Chapter 3). This young man introduced a lot of innovations like singing around a campfire which interested many of the young people, and even Sam's father. Soon a catacombs colony of COG was formed, consisting of Sam and seven other high school juniors and seniors.

Ironically, COG became the issue which broke up Sam and his girlfriend. She had been the one who had convinced him to go to church and give up drinking, though she was not "puritanical" about sex. The problem was that her parents were very loyal to the Southern Baptist church. When they saw Sam and their daughter becoming interested in the Chil-

dren of God, they intervened. Sam argued with them for hours over passages in the Bible, but in the end his girlfriend chose the church and he chcse COG.

The actual events were dramatic. The ycuth leader had quit COG because of pressure from his own family, but in his outlook remained a disciple. (A few years after his stay in Sam's town, he rejoined COG, alonc with his sister.) After the eight catacombs disciples had been meeting for a while, the youth leader, himself only twenty years old, began giving them verses to learn about "idols." These verses defined "idols" as anything that a person put ahead of God. The young people agreed that they had made idols cut of many of their possessions, and one night they built a huge bonfire and burned their "idols." Sam burned record albums of some of his favorite groups, and some sports trophies and scrapbooks. This was too much for many of the parents and townsfolk. The youth leader began tc receive threatening phone calls. Someone told the owner cf the house rented by the youth leader that they were starting a commune there, and one night the landlord broke in and beat up the young man. Before long the sheriff and the whcle town arrived, and, "That was a big night for taking sides." Sam had never heard of the Children of God, but he knew where he stood in that conflict. That was the night he lost his girlfriend. Two weeks later the youth leader was fired and "run out of town" for failing to list his past membership in COG on the

application form. Sam said that the youth leader had some kind of certificate of training, I believe from the Texas Soul Clinic. (Apparently it took a while for the facts about COG to get around. And, as we can see, COG was not completely frank and open at this time.) Sam thought that people were afraid the youth leader was luring away their kids. And, of course, that is exactly what happened. Four of the original eight catacombs disciples joined COG after high school graduation. In all, about a dozen people (from various parts of the country) were brought to the Family by that youth leader.

In its early years, according to Sam, COG attracted many youth throughout the Bible Belt. The reason was that the Baptists try to stop you from sinning by stopping you from doing anything, he said. But for young people, if you take something away you have to replace it with something else. Young Baptists who joined COG got away from all the "shall-nots" and into some positive activities. Sam had liked COG and considered joining after high school, though he had some misgivings centered around a crucial "shall not," as we shall see.

Like Abraham, Sam became involved in evangelical activities at an early age. A doctor took a group to Mexico, where they supposedly gave out health care and religion. Sam went with that team several times and acquired a taste

for serving God, and, of course, for travelling. Yet he knew he could never be a Baptist preacher in a black suit and tie.

From the above, one might conclude that Samuel was a "goody-goody church kid." But actually he was popular in both the athletic and the "intellectual" crowds in school, and already as a freshman was able to hang out with the older boys and date the older girls. He was a leader not only in "respectable" activities, but in drinking, dancing, and making out. He and his pals used to disguise liquor (putting it in Listerine bottles in their lockers, for example) and drink all day long at school. At night, on the weekends, they would hang out at the pool halls in the white section of town until closing time, and then move on up to "nigger hill[90]" and hang out and play pool with the Black youth they knew from sports in school. Many of Sam's pals used to take their white girlfriends home by 11:00 or 11:30 and then try to "score" with the Black girls on the hill. After joining CCG, Sam gave up drinking, "cussing," and other wild behavior, and became very "self-righteous" about sex. He witnessed to his friends at school, and lost a lot of friends because of it.

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[90] When Sam told me about this, and about their attitudes to the Black girls, he was embarrassed and apologetic. That's just how things were in the South, he tried to explain.

Though Sam gave up much of his social life for COG, he remained a star athlete throughout his senior year, while he was also active in the catacombs colony. His high school was known for its football teams, and the coach taught them how to tackle in such a way that the opponent's helmet would come off when he hit the ground. The players actually could earn stars and stripes on their own helmets by putting opponents out of the game (injuring them), and Sam had a well-decorated helmet by the end of each season. It was a small school and a small town, and he played most of the other sports, too.

But in the long run, Samuel was more interested in studies. The "intellectuals" turned out to be better friends, he believed, and he took some abuse from other students for earning straight A's. A spelling and slide-rule whiz, he even entered several state-wide competitions. Everyone thought he should go to Texas A & M and become an engineer. He would have rather gone into photo-journalism, but in a small town there was no way to pursue those interests.

As high school graduation neared, Sam had to make a choice. He could get a job, go to college, or join the Children of God. Though his parents would have liked him to stay near home, he wanted to get away. Everyone expected him to be upwardly mobile. One possibility was to go into professional rodeo performing. He liked being a cowboy and

was good at roping calves. But he knew there were drawbacks--the travel expenses ate up a large part of the prize money, and those who did not become famous had to work on a ranch[91] in addition to make ends meet. Sam seemed to have a taste for travel, and for a more intellectually fulfilling kind of life, and knew that rodeo performing and ranch work wouldn't satisfy him.

Many young people with Samuel's hopes go to college. Sam was interested in college, but he needed a four-year scholarship. Actually, he had been high school valedictorian, and received a scholarship to one or more schools, but it was only guaranteed for one year. Baylor Baptist gave him a religious scholarship, again for one year. He even received a football scholarship. However, he knew from the bitter experience of his young uncle that football scholarships in Texas, from the big schools, at least, were virtually nothing more than an invitation to the team try-outs. Sam would never have made the team at Texas A & M his first year--he was not big enough. The only way he could have gotten a college education out of football would have been to start at a junior college where he could have played, and then to have moved on to a big school from there.

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[91] It was not that Sam was opposed to ranch work. During high school he had applied for a summer job at the giant King ranch in southern Texas.

Football in Texas was and is a big business, and a brutal one. Though it was not Sam's favorite sport, it was the only one which led to college offers. Meanwhile, COG had begun to convince him that violence and competitiveness were not the way to live. And he had to know that the chronic neck injury that sent him to a chiropractor after every high school football game would surely be worsened if a 250-pound tackle ever did unto him as he'd done unto his high school opponents. Sam had always loved sports--for four years it had been his life. He even dreamed about it. What he liked was the passing and running, the strategy, the competition. The violence, on the other hand, scared him. Sam told me that most of the players were afraid before every game, especially if the opponents were bigger than they were. But the social pressure was so great that they rarely admitted it. Sam even told me the story of a young man who had the misfortune to be built big and not want to play football. Not even his parents or girlfriend stood behind him in his decision not to play. Eventually that young man, a student in Sam's school, killed himself. Sam and I talked a lot about football, reviving happy, or painful, memories from our high school years. He still remembered specific plays, how much the team members and the opponents weighed, etc. Once I asked him, "Where does a football hero go after high school graduation?" His answer: "That's it. Nowhere."

The time came for Sam to go to college, and his parents wanted him to enroll. He went down to Texas A & M, moved into a friend's brother's apartment, and registered. Though he hadn't slept for 30 hours, he said, he took an 8-hour qualifying test for engineering, and passed. Then, without writing his parents, he began to hitchhike around Texas, and after five or six months, during the "Forty Days" (in January 1974), he joined the Children of God in Houston. His mother, having read negative press reports about COG, became upset when she learned he had joined. She gained weight and began taking tranquilizers. She didn't recover until he visited her eight months later, obviously unharmed.

Sam was hitchhiking in November 1973 when Moses David prophesied that the Comet Kohoutek would signal the destruction of America. He was in Dallas at the time the letter appeared. It caused a great rush of excitement. At the time, Sam didn't think much about America being evil, though he did believe destruction was coming. He also did not agree that Moses David was a prophet. But he wanted to join anyway because he could see that only COGs were serving the Lord full-time. There was a big drawback, however. Celibacy was the rule for unmarried disciples, and nothing had been said about masturbation, a big taboo in the Baptist church (and many other churches). David Berg, however, had suffered a great deal from guilt over masturbation when he was a youth, and in 1973 he wrote two long letters assuring

his young disciples, male and female, that almost everyone masturbates and God doesn't mind at all. These letters, "Revolutionary Sex" and "Revolutionary Women," rid Sam of his confusion and guilt feelings, and cleared the way for him to make a long-term commitment to the Children of God. He sold his $200 12-string guitar for $50 and bought a backpack. He hitched to the Mexican border, intending to join COG down there, where he knew some people and would be out of America when it "fell." But the border officials wouldn't let a longhaired hitchhiker with no money into Mexico, so he hitched back to Houston and joined there.

Samuel had a long and flourishing career in COG, though he never, up until the time of this writing, had reached a high leadership position or been able to travel abroad. He said that he preferred not to have all the responsibilities of leadership. Yet he always had many responsibilities. He ran print shops and darkrooms, trained others in those skills, went provisioning, made the arrangements for hundreds of disciples to fly to Europe and South America, held the positions of colony shepherd, district shepherd, and regional shepherd. Every time he had made plans to leave the U.S., leaders above him had pressured him to stay, even when he had planned to go abroad to get married to a particular person. Of course, leaving the U.S. would have caused his parents much grief, and this could have been a factor, too. Most important, undoubtedly, was the fact that Sam was a

valuable worker. And at least one leader didn't like him. "They never let me out of the print shop. I made them nervous."

During the first several years of Sam's discipleship, COG had strict rules against sexual intercourse outside of marriage. There was a lot of kissing and hugging, and a lot of talk about sex and love, but that was all. Comical situations resulted. For example, Sam had to stay overnight in a motel with a young female witnessing partner. They had first met that morning and were unable to get a ride back to the colony. Since disciples always chose the cheapest accommodations, they ended up with a room with only one bed. He offered to sleep on the floor, she graciously offered to share the bed, and they managed to obey the COG rules. Another time, when he was a colony shepherd, it was his responsibility to keep a 32-year-old divorced woman and her 4-year-old child happy, and to prevent them from leaving the Family. He was "substitute dad" for about 6 months, and that included disciplining the child as well as loving it. But when the woman came to his room late at night complaining about how lonely she was, he was only allowed to comfort her with <u>words</u>. She tried to quit several times, then tried to get him to marry her. Finally she married someone else. For the first few years Sam didn't mind the sexual restrictions, because they enabled him to get to know young women as friends and as real people, "in their bathrobes and

curlers." He always had felt that he'd missed something by not having a sister.

Then came flirty-fishing. Sam said that Mo heard from some disciples who had been in America that the flirty-fishing letters were being "spiritualized," and that disciples were suffering from sexual abstinence in the U.S. Mo deposed the leaders responsible and told everyone to share sexually, with each other and with potential converts. Sam was practicing that for a few months in early 1977, living with two women disciples and trying to "share" with both and keep them from becoming jealous. These sisters were also trying to flirty-fish with men they met in bars and clubs, but Sam never "F-F-ed" women outside the Family. He was not jealous of the "fish" (other men). In fact, he envied Moses David for having access to so many beautiful women. He would have liked to put himself into the "scandalous" TIME magazine photo of Mo with his "harem." (Gypsy, during the interview in which Sam expressed these wishes, interjected that Mo slept with Maria almost every night.)

Since disciples did not believe in birth control, Gypsy was soon pregnant. They were not sure that Sam was the biological father, but he said that he didn't care, though his relatives might, and that he would not leave her "high and dry." After the baby was born, they had a blood test done which established that he was the father. The young

couple travelled twice across the U.S. and Canada, hitching or in an old van, and visited both sets of parents. Sometimes they would go into a restaurant and Sam would approach the manager. "Listen, my wife is pregnant and we don't have any money. Can you help us out with something for her to eat?" Usually, they both got a free meal that way. At that time Sam told me that living with and taking care of a "pregnant girl" was difficult and that if it weren't for all the Mo Letters which said how important it was to care for mothers and babies he would probably have left her. He even had to take a System job. He worked the "graveyard shift" at Jack-in-the-Box (a fast-food restaurant) earning only $100/week. Witnessing was not bringing in enough money. But as delivery day approached Sam became more and more excited, attending physical examinations and natural childbirth classes with Gypsy. After the baby was born he slept in her hospital room on the window sill, shivering, every night. They had no money so he ate only what a friendly nurse (or anthropologist) gave him. It was amusing to see him in a hospital jacket explaining all the physiological details. He criticized the other fathers for not being there. I loaned him a camera so he could take the archetypical COG "nursing mother" and other baby pictures. Sam chose a name with a nice meaning from a book, because the Bible was no longer the only source for COG names. He signed the birth certificate. He negotiated with the hospi-

tal and the clinic about the huge medical bills they had accrued, and worried about it, hoping they would get Medicaid.

Three weeks later Sam and Gypsy were living alone in a run-down rooming house in a neighborhood known for fires. It was a Family rule that a newborn was not to go outside for the first six weeks, and they observed that rule. During the days Sam litnessed and/or sold his blood plasma to support them. At night he did everything Gypsy did for the baby, except nursing it. They each hoped to get the baby if they would ever split up.

Sam was trying to figure out how to support this little family, and one idea he had was to go to bartending school. That way he could meet people (to witness to them?) and also earn good money. Nothing came of that idea, however, and eventually they went to Texas, where he took regular System jobs for a year or more, and where they had another baby. Social pressure finally forced them to get legally married. The last I heard from Sam and Gypsy, in 1981, they were living in a trailer park with another young couple and their children, trying to raise money and pledges to become missionaries in Mexico. It was taking them a long time to raise enough money.

As the younger generation of a certain social group, Sam showed both continuities and discontinuities with the political outlook of his parents. Though he told me in 1978 that

he was a "liberal," he harbored sentiments and ideas about Jews, communists, homosexuals, women, and, of course, religion, which are commonly associated with political conservatives. Both Sam and Gypsy considered his parents very conservative.

It is interesting to note the areas in which Sam had and had not rebelled. Perhaps the most important arena of youthful rebellion in the Bible Belt is sex, though drinking and dancing were also "sins" which many Southerners, including Sam and his father and his friends, embraced almost too heartily. Samuel rejected both the Southern Baptist sexual repression and the hypocrisy about sex. He refused to conform to even the appearance of sexual repression, as he and his friends had during high school. Perhaps out of fear, Sam never warned his mother that his "friend" Gypsy would arrive for a visit seven months pregnant. He said he had hoped his mother would think some other man was the father. Yet he refused to deny responsibility. Later he made a big issue out of refusing to marry just for the sake of appearances, or to be jealous or sexually exclusive. Sam, taking his lead from Mc, spoke openly about sex, and loved to torture members of the Unification Church (or other "cults" or Jesus People) by asking them if they were allowed to masturbate. Unfortunately, Sam was sexually liberated by a patriarchal figure, and hence he retained sexual stereotypes about women, always called "girls" in COG literature and by

disciples. He insisted that COG was not sexist, because it held "girls" in high regard. Of course this high regard was based on their sexual attractiveness, their role as mothers, and their economic importance as flirty-fishers. Further, repeating after Mo, Sam believed that men's sex drives were stronger than women's, and that women were more "intuitive" than men. He thought of himself as the provider, though Gypsy had litnessed nearly as much as he had until it was physically impossible for her. He was definitely more assertive and seemed to be taking the lead when they were together. However, it was my impression that the relationship was much more egalitarian than his words would have led one to expect. Sam rejected three of the most important parts of male dominance: violence, the double standard, and the relegation to the woman of all housework and childcare.

Sam rebelled also against Southern provincialism. His parents almost disowned him during 1978 because he'd "gone Yankee." That is, he had lost much of his accent, had lived up North too long, and had become involved with a Yankee woman. They claimed that they didn't know how to talk to Gypsy because they'd never talked to a Yankee before. (According to Gypsy, the real problem was that she was pregnant.) Even after he'd been with COG for five years, they still urged him to go to college and move back to his home town. He criticized his parents for spending their money on a new pickup truck every two years and on unnecessary improvements

and commodities for their home. Why didn't they save their money and travel, he wanted to know. But he knew the reason--social pressures. The farthest his parents had ever gone was Colorado, and then they had complained about all the driving. Now and then they went down to fish in the Gulf of Mexico. Their son Sam had crossed the North American continent at least six times. After a few years in COG Sam was bored visiting his home town--nothing ever changed there. Though Sam had escaped the provincial South geographically, he took quite a lot of it with him, and retained it with the help of COG. He was still unsophisticated in many ways, about religion, politics, and what people from other countries were really like. He retained a Southern outlook on national politics. Jimmy Carter, he thought, was a good guy who was being persecuted by various Jews and other important Northerners.

Around and between these two big areas of rebellion were scattered bits of a nascent rebellion against the power of big capital in the South. When Sam joined COG he rejected football, engineering, and the Southern Baptist Church. The first two are powerful symbols, and institutions, of violence and wealth in Texas--big oil, big armaments industries, and big men playing on big football teams. The Southern Baptist church upheld these institutions, as became clear during the Vietnam war. Baylor Baptist University was dominated by the conservative evangelical Campus Crusade for

Christ, Texas A & M was dominated by ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps.), and both schools were obsessed with football. Sam was rejecting all of that, and commodities besides, when he joined the Children of God rather than going to college. Most of Sam's political education came through Mo Letters and through contact with disciples who had been anti-war. It was because of the youth movement in the U.S., in this case including COG, that Sam, who was such a brute in high school football, was able to reject violence. He even believed that violence on TV was propaganda building toward the establishment of a police state in America. Like other disciples I have asked, he thought TV violence was frightening to children and a bad influence on them. If Samuel had gone to college, he would have preferred to go to the University of Texas in Austin. The environment in Austin was and is more liberal than the rest of the state.[92] Years later Sam and Gypsy lived in Austin for a while, before getting back to the idea of missionary work.

The youth movement in the 1960s was much less clear about wealth and power in the U.S. than it was about war and violence. Consequently Sam, who had received the ideology of the youth movement second- or third-hand, had given little

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[92] Even in country music Austin stood up to the Establishment, according to Sam. Willie Nelson and Van Morrison came to Austin after Nashville's country music establishment rejected them. An excellent article about music and counter culture in Austin appeared in Mother Jones magazine in 1981 (Northcott).

thought to wealth and power in Texas. He described the King ranch to me as a gigantic tract of land owned by one family--you couldn't drive across the ranch in one day. The King family required references from job applicants, but when it hired someone the job could be for life. Houses were built for the workers right on the ranch. While it sounded like a feudal estate to me, Sam simply said, "What's wrong with that, if you like the work?" He had never heard the expression "agribusiness," though he liked natural foods and had observed the process of local land being bought up by outsiders. Kentucky Fried Chicken, for instance, bought his grandfather's ranch. While small farmers were on strike in 1978 (and camped in Washington D.C.), Sam knew nothing about it. Yet many of his friends had taken jobs on ranches and farms after high school. Samuel probably knew more about the plight of the Palestinians than he did about the farmers and farm workers of his own homeland.

Sam lacked class consciousness and experience of political protest. Most of his battles against the System took place in the ideological realm, in fact, within a subset of the ideological realm, the theological. COG articulated his criticisms and his discontent, and helped him escape the forces that were most oppressive to him personally, his local social surroundings, including his family, other people's expectations vis a vis school and jobs, and the Southern Baptist church. In return, Sam gave COG his talents,

his energies, and his loyalty. A trained athlete, he fought for his Team, and spent little time worrying about the rest of the world, or even the future. It seemed that he had never questioned the assumption he grew up with, that it was good and right, and enough, to bring the world to Jesus. Moses David had put that ancient Protestant assumption together with the criticisms of America which grew out of the counterculture and the Vietnam War, and Sam seemed satisfied with Mo's program.

The story of Sam, or of the other disciples, for that matter, is not over with the writing of this thesis. Since the colonies broke up Sam spent his time by necessity "becoming one" with the poor and the working class in the New York metropolitan area and in Texas. His political and social ideas, and Gypsy's, surely began to develop through these contacts and experiences. One of the last notes I received from them asked, "How do you like Reagan?" It was clear that they didn't.

4.6 GYPSY

The "Yankee" that upset Sam's parents grew up in Seattle, Washington. Her father had immigrated from Norway, her mother from England. Before marriage, her father had spent 35 years in the merchant marines. At the age of 19, her mother had married a "father figure" (said Gypsy). By the

time I met Gypsy, her father was in his 70s and beginning to suffer from cancer. He had worked at lumbering and other trades, and finally as a janitor until he was forced to retire at 65. Gypsy's mother had spent most of her life as a housewife and mother. After her own children were grown she had raised some of her grandchildren. Both Sam and Gypsy thought she was wonderful with children.

Because her father was Norwegian, Gypsy was baptized a Lutheran. However, her family rarely attended church. Gypsy began to go to church herself at a young age because she was looking for alternatives to the unhappiness and arguing she saw at home.

There was no story of overdosing on drugs, of being lost and desperate and crying out to God, in Gypsy's life. In fact, she had never tried drugs, alcohol, or sex until she met COG. She was very "straight." Besides the family problems, the only problem I could detect was a shortage of self-confidence. In Seattle, according to Gypsy, there were rich high schools and poor high schools, and hers was a poor one. Many of the students were Black and Oriental. Her high school had a reputation for being full of weird people and troublemakers. Students were even bused there from other areas, she thought, because the other schools wanted to get rid of them. The lockers were full of liquor (some of it in Listerine bottles).

In this kind of social setting, Gypsy's teenage years must have been a little difficult. She said she was not in the "popular crowd" at school, though her older brother had been. Her friends were the straight-A students. She wished her father hadn't given her a Norwegian name, because the other kids had trouble pronouncing it. For a while she participated in a "women's lib" group, who, she explained with a giggle, "sat around the table and talked about how women are exploited.[93] Planned Parenthood came to her seventh grade (?) class and offered them all birth control pills or IUD's, Gypsy told me. In high school she felt "out of it" because she was just about the only girl not taking the pill. Though her friends thought marriage and motherhood were oppressive, that was never Gypsy's opinion. Until she met COG her plan had been to travel a while, then go to college and become a nurse, meet the "right guy," get married and have children.

All of that changed when she met COG. She agreed with what they said and she was attracted to their lifestyle. All of her school friends were "into something crazy." She was open to new ideas but had not paid attention when they talked about politics. When COG talked about America and the Vietnam war she was shocked at first, but came to agree.

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[93] Women's liberation was very popular in Seattle, as were many other kinds of groups, including the charismatic movement (small religious support groups who speak in tongues) and the Jesus Movement.

At the same time, the people at the colony seemed to be happy, and they were the only people she knew who were. Most of her friends were having abortions or bad side-effects from the pill. They were using drugs and alcohol. Her parents and her brother and sister were all unhappy. When she looked around she felt that she wanted to live differently. That was why she became a catacombs disciple. Like Sam, she was very fervent for the first few months, and lost a lot of friends. Later, she thought some of her friends were going to join with her, but in the end one of them became a "socialist" and the other an alcoholic. Gypsy said that the COG leaders had been very physical with her girlfriends, kissing them romantically and trying to get them to join COG.

The Children of God came into Gypsy's life in the spring of 1973, when she was 16. In the winter Moses David prophesied the fall of America and urged his followers to flee the country during the "Forty Days." Gypsy quit high school and went to Norway, where she stayed with relatives because she was too young to live with COG. After she had left, her father read in the newspaper that the Children of God were leaving America, and suddenly realized why Gypsy had gone to Norway. He called her long distance, very upset. The Norwegian relatives, with whom she lived for a year, were overprotective. After she returned to Seattle, surprised that nothing had happened to the U.S., she finished high school and then joined the Family in January 1975.

Her plan for her life had been to travel after high school, and she had already been to Norway. Now she hitchhiked and travelled by van across the United States and Canada several times. One of the reasons Gypsy liked Sam was because he too loved to travel. Gypsy was proud that her son had crossed the continent four times before he was even born. She had barely recovered from a Caesarean section when she began planning to travel to Europe.

Gypsy's history in COG illustrates many of my points. Several times she was thinking of getting married and could not get permission from the leaders. One young man proposed the first time he met her, and after a while she grew to like him and agreed. The next thing she knew, she was told that she was needed in another colony hundreds of miles away. The young man, left alone, ended up sleeping with another sister and getting into trouble with leadership. Later, Gypsy was travelling with one of the leaders, probably as a secretary, during the time that flirty-fishing was first introduced to the United States. The leader wanted to marry her, but she didn't want to marry him. She moved into the Chicago colony and worked in the "mail ministry" (answering letters, sending out Mo Letters to those who requested them, forwarding disciples' mail, etc.). Gypsy worked diligently because, she said, she wanted to make a good impression and become a big leader. Rather than share responsibility, and admit she wasn't extraordinary, she

would work late, often getting only 5 hours sleep/night. I saw the same pattern among other veteran disciples and lower-level leaders. But even in the colony the people began pressuring her to marry the leader. To avoid it, she agreed to marry a different man, whom she did not like any better. Sam observed this developing situation and admired her for resisting pressure. He felt sorry for her, too. Sam had his own differences with the same leader.

Meanwhile, some of the senior disciples, including Gypsy, began flirty-fishing. They did not sleep with the "fish" at first, and were supposed to ask permission for everything they did. But Gypsy decided it was time to find out about sex, so she avoided asking permission and went off with a fish she liked, a junior executive. She said she enjoyed herself that time, but later became annoyed with him because he expected sex every time he saw her or any of the sisters. The fact that he did not convert did not bother her, nor the fact that all he wanted in life was to become rich and that he assumed Moses David was similarly motivated. Disciples believed that "you never know when it might pay off," even years later. Not all the flirty-fishing was enjoyable; sometimes it was a "sacrifice." This phase of Gypsy's life only lasted a few months. Gradually more of the disciples began flirty-fishing, and they all enjoyed going out to clubs and drinking and dancing. Once Sam and Gypsy bought suits and fancy dresses from a second-hand store, and went to an expensive club to meet rich "fish."

One night Sam and Gypsy were cut in a bar and she began to cry. She told him about her predicament--being pressured to marry one or another man she didn't like. She wanted to run away and hide. Sam decided to help her. He rented a hotel room and hid her there. Thcugh leaders over them disapproved of this subterfuge when they found out later, they did not discipline the two. Gypsy and Sam agreed that there would be no sex between them, since Sam was still planning to marry someone else. Gypsy was open to other developments, she told me, because she liked and respected Sam, even though she believed she wasn't his "type."

That arrangement didn't last long, and they rented an apartment, added another woman, and began sexual sharing in earnest. After a few months they began travelling together, aware now that Gypsy was pregnant. I met Gypsy when they reached the East Coast. Sam told me that some truck drivers had offered him money for Gypsy, and he'd just said, "That's up to her." Trucks were a good ride because a lot of drivers let the happy young couple use the bed behind the cab. While she was pregnant they visited Gypsy's parents in Seattle, who treated them well and allowed them to sleep together, and Sam's parents in Texas, who depressed them.

When Gypsy was 7 1/2 months pregnant they arrived in New York in the middle of the night and called me on the phone--no place to stay, the typical COG predicament. They and an-

other brother lived with me for a week. The reason they had returned to New York was that litnessing was bad all over the country, and the men knew good litnessing spots in New Jersey. They had both lived at the Staten Island colony in the past. Sam and Gypsy were afraid to call their parents. They had told them they were going to settle in the Southeast. The parents thought New York was dangerous. The other brother was eager to send for his wife and baby.

The week was very interesting for me. I had a chance to learn much more about COG and about the backgrounds of these individuals. They played me a lot of COG music I had not heard before, some of it rather political. We had a chance to argue about women's lib and homosexuality and other controversial topics. And they came back a few times with boxes of vegetables they had "provisioned" at the Hunts Point Market, where some of the dealers remembered them from when they had lived at Staten Island. The main concern of the men was to get financially settled, and the three of them spent hours car litnessing (handing lit to drivers at stop signs) in New Jersey and even at the New York entrance to the Holland Tunnel. They were not as successful as they had been in the past, however, and all began to worry. Gypsy was more worried about finding a midwife than she was about money. She had been on the road and had not been examined for two months. Now she was afraid there would be no place to go if the baby came prematurely. Gypsy didn't like doc-

tors. Midwives, she felt, were nicer, and were willing to answer questions. When it turned out that the delivery, even in a midwife program rather than a hospital, might cost over $500, Sam became very upset. But Gypsy had faith: "We'll provision it."

In the end, the lack of a much smaller amount of cash almost killed Gypsy. Complications developed and the local police and ambulance service were only willing to take her to the local hospital. She had a terrible time arguing with policemen who only wanted to know if her water had broken yet and if the contractions were five minutes apart.[94] Meanwhile the midwife was telling her on the phone to rush to the hospital because her symptoms were dangerous, and finally paid out of her own pocket for a cab to bring Gypsy to the town where the birth center was located. Ironically, it was a male doctor who reassured Gypsy and performed a Ceasarean section to save mother and child.

The Children of God, through all this, were not much help to Gypsy. Her life prior to delivery was too strenuous. She had been riding in a bumpy van, litnessing in the cold for hours, etc. During the last few weeks she began to stay home and the others--who now included the other sister and her baby--supported her. But no one was available and she had no cash when she needed a ride to the hospital. After

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[94] Both Gypsy and I agreed that these points must be in the police manual.

the delivery, ostensibly because of engine trouble, it was several days before anyone other than Sam and I visited or phoned her in the hospital. Shortly after she returned home the other couple went off on their own and stopped contributing to her support. Luckily, she had Sam, and a mother who sent her money, baby clothes, and who even came East to visit them. COG found out about the birth very soon, and sent them a baby book. It was a sort of scrapbook in which to write the "birth testimony" and paste pictures. COG friends wrote their congratulations. Meanwhile they were eating peanut butter, tunafish, and pizza, if anything, and she was alone all day with the newborn in a rundown roach-infested rooming house. Gypsy applied for welfare and Medicaid and earned a little cash babysitting. Sam began looking for a job, with little success. He could not list his years in COG as "job experience." That was when he started to sell blood plasma, lying to Gypsy about how safe and painless it was.

Though COG was doing nothing materially for them, Gypsy and Sam continued to try to obey the Letters. They stored water in bottles, put up COG posters, kept the baby indoors for the first six weeks, and sent a dollar along with letters to friends (see Jane Berg, "Giving"). Sam was lobbying for a polygamous Home, but Mary was not obedient to that extent.

Not long afterwards they moved to Texas. Gypsy hoped to move to a farm in the country where they would be prepared to survive the Crash when it came. Sam worked in System jobs, including a lime quarry ($4.50/hour + overtime), and she stayed home and had another baby. They called all the way to a women's group in Boston to find the name of a doctor who would try to let her deliver the second child naturally, rather than insisting on a Caesarean because her first had been by Caesarean. Then, despite the intense objections of Sam's mother, the young couple went down to Dallas to wait for the baby near a hospital where such a doctor worked. In the end the hospital used regulations about how fast dilation had to occur and forced her to have another Caesarean. She was depressed for a long time after that.

Gypsy came from the working class, the non-unionized working class. Her parents were immigrants and relatively poor, compared with Sam's family, for example. Her brother fought in Vietnam, and lost most of his buddies there. When he came back he didn't like to talk about it. Seemingly no one in her family had a political vehicle to express and channel their discontent. The only political ideology which seems to have been available, and which made some sense to her, was that of women's liberation. She did say, however, that her friends were more politically-oriented than she, so a certain amount of personal predisposition was clearly involved. Gypsy's older siblings achieved some upward mobili-

ty, though her sister's was endangered when she was left to care for small children without a husband. Furtunately, Gypsy's mother was available to raise those children. Both Gypsy's siblings experienced perscnal problems typical, in my view, of patriarchy. Her brother's teenaged girlfriend was forced by her parents to give up her baby rather than to marry its father, Gypsy's brother. Her sister's husband was a dope addict and unable to help with the children.

Like her brother and sister before her, Gypsy was trying to rise out of poverty. The route was education--though she was no more than an average student--and the dream was a good job and a good husband. Yet she doubted that it could solve the personal kinds of problems she saw around her. The lives of even straight-A students were full of trouble. She felt that being a wife and mother in the System was too difficult: a woman needed help with the work and responsibi-ty of children. When she met COG she saw it as an attrac-tive alternative. They did not tell her the name of their group or of their prophet at first, probably for fear that she'd heard negative publicity and would be frightened away. COG provided assistance to wives and mothers, companionship besides that of one man, meaning in life and work, the op-portunity to travel and have adventure (as her father had done in his youth), and the possibility of happiness.

Gypsy was less politically naive than many other COGs I had met. Perhaps this was because she went to a large Northern urban high school, where she was exposed to all kinds of ideas. Like many other COGs, she was interested in the topics of American imperialism and the oppression of youth. Gypsy once surprised me by saying that she took it for granted that the FBI kept files on members of COG because they were so radical. Unlike many other disciples, Gypsy also knew what tenant organizations were, and seemed favorable to them and to women's liberation. She was opposed to birth control, however, partly for health reasons, and very opposed to abortion. Despite the women's liberation, it was difficult to coax Gypsy to express herself, especially in the presence of highly articulate brothers. Yet she sometimes differed with the men and sometimes even agreed with me when we had group discussions in my living room that week. However, when her friends in Seattle told her that COG exploited women, she answered that women in COG were not required to marry (though, she should have added, they were pressured to do so) or to have children[95] and that some did not. Gypsy accepted Mo's portrayal of women as sexual objects, though she pointed out that that was not all he saw in women. And she accepted the role in flirty-fishing of satisfying men's sexual needs, though I thought I de-

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[95] Gypsy's women's lib group did not go very deeply into the concept of exploitation, it seems, if she thought that forced marriage and motherhood were the only manifestations of exploitation.

tected a little resentment.

When I tried to understand what in Gypsy's background had led her to take such an extreme step as joining the Children of God, I had to conclude that the prime motivations were positive reasons rather than negative. That is, she was looking for a different life-style, an alternative type of family, a new and better model of a man and of the male-female relationship, a way to travel, and, possibly, a short-cut to a career. The pattern she had established early in life of looking to the church and religion for an alternative set her up for COG.

One thing that seemed important was that Gypsy had a rather low opinion of men. She thought that the main reason her father had married, and one of the main reasons her brother married, was to have sons to carry on the family name. Though she was not married when her first son was born, she said she had no desire to give him her father's name. Gypsy was rather firmly convinced that Mo was right when he said men's main motivation in life was their sexual needs-- her experiences flirty-fishing and hitchhiking confirmed that. She didn't like the double standard, but thought that it was a fact of life. Furthermore, she was perfectly prepared to raise her children without a father if necessary; she didn't feel that she could depend on a relationship with a man lasting forever. Given these low expec-

tations, Moses David was an acceptable father-husband model for her. He was loving and responsible for children. He communicated well with women, appreciated them, and also allowed them freedom. When she had a chance to live with a real-live man (Sam), Gypsy was a little surprised at the devotion and skill that he brought to his new role as father.

I was a little surprised that the two of them didn't just forget about Moses David once they had found each other. But Sam had once said, "I don't understand why anyone would want to be independent." He meant that the communal, interdependent life was far more efficient, satisfying, etc. than the life of an isolated individual or a nuclear family. As soon as their first baby was born they made every effort to hook up with other people. The only people with whom that would really work would be Children of God, or ex-Children of God. Furthermore, "independence" was very difficult for them, financially and psychologically. They never got ahead of their bills and couldn't even afford to send in their tithe and report to World Services for some time. Gypsy was lonely in an apartment with two babies and no one to talk to but a mother-in-law with whom she had many disagreements. And Sam was slowly destroying his lungs in a limestone quarry. Travelling to Mexico in trailers with another young family was certainly a much more appealing alternative, especially given Gypsy and Sam's longstanding interest in travel and evangelism.

Chapter V

SYNCRETIC IDEOLOGY

> The equipment, uniform and appearance of a revolutionary depend largely on the field of battle. "To the Jew as a Jew, the Greek as a Greek, the Roman as a Roman"--or the hippie as a hippie! (Children of God application form)

The Children of God is a syncretic cult. It arose in particular historical circumstances from the coalition of two segments of society which normally would not have joined forces. The merger was between persons of a Pentecostal background and persons who had been involved with the "counter culture" of the late 1960s/early 1970s.

In this chapter we will discuss COG's ideology. It is important to remember that, just as there is no authentic version of a myth, so there was no one COG ideology. Different people believed different things, or interpreted the same written texts differently. Additionally, the prophet, who sometimes wrote as many as three "Mo Letters" in a week, was not always consistent in his views. Often he simply responded to something he had read or seen, or dreamed, or to things he heard about internal COG affairs. In addition, the prophet's views changed over time, as did the Children of God. There were some core ideas of the prophet, however, which had a determining influence, and these shall be pointed out below.

"Syncretisms" or "syncretic cults or religions" are phrases frequently used for "socic-religious movements," according to a survey of the literature (Lanternari 1974:486). But can we really use the concept of syncretism here? "Syncretism" is defined by the linguist Uriel Weinreich as "unified entities of bicultural derivation" (1974:49 n31). There is no way that the Children of God's origins can be described as "bicultural," at least not in the usual anthropolcgical sense of the word "culture." Hippies and preachers are not separable "cultures". Both are drawn from that great population known vaguely as the "American middle class." Members of COG came from the middle classes, the lower middle classes, and the (usually unorganized) working class in the United States. Some had even been rich. Furthermore, it was not only the Pentecostals or the related evangelicals who were religious; many of the "hippies" had also had a religious upbringing, as Table 2 indicates. According to Herskovits, syncretism implies the fusion of two groups. It also implies a process of acculturation in which one group was the donor and one the recipient (1941:1-10). Certain cultural syncretisms are the result of contact between two groups who have some similarities, due either to convergence or historical relaticnship, and that is what happened in the case of COG. Though it is not usual for anthropologists to talk about syncretism except between separate societies and cultures, the concept has also been used

to describe the merger of two "traditions" within the same society.

> Whereas "sects" call for a return to the original, pure religion, cults build their key doctrines de novo; they claim a new revelation or insight. They employ new terminology and symbols, and often emphasize mystical and esoteric themes. Many times the unique element of the cult is a syncretism, an attempt to combine or reconcile beliefs from differing traditions so that neither of the forebears is willing to claim the offspring. Cults are quite often, perhaps inevitably, religious mutants (Metz 1979:34).

TABLE 2

Childhood Religious Training of Disciples, Staten Island Sample (N=20)

	Attended church nearly once/week	Infrequent church attendance
Parochial school	3?	?
Offspring of clergy	2	0
Other religious education or group participation	4	?
Total	12	8

The hippies met the Pentecostalists in a way that is similar to the way the indigenous people of much of the world met the Christians--that is, by being subjected to missionary activity. Berg defined the hippies of Huntington Beach as his "field" and set out to win them for the Lord. When

Christian missionaries tried to convert Africans, or American Indians, or other indigenous peoples to Christianity, they usually found that they had to accomodate themselves and their Christianity to local cultural traditions and practices. Thus new syncretic forms of "Christian" religion grew up in the European colonial territories. The same thing happened when the Pentecostal missionaries tried to convert the hippies. Pentecostalism, Christianity, and the Berg family themselves, had to change.

> And we didn't preach church! We just preached Jesus and the Endtime and the Warning Message. It was just geared for the hippie generation & the message they wanted to hear and needed! They wanted to hear Bible Prophecy. After all, here's the atom age & they're scared, & they want to know what's going to happen, & we could tell 'em! TG! [Thank God]
>
> That's when I began to come down & teach in my dark glasses, beret, baggy pants, old torn jacket & tennis shoes, looking more like an old beatnik instead of a hippie! I was teaching the classes, & things were just booming! (Berg 1979:87)

The Children of God's ideology contained elements which appealed to both the Evangelicals and the persons oriented toward counter culture. COG proposed a utopian community of youth, modeled on the early Christians, protesting the lack of true Christian values in American society. When they had sackcloth vigils, they focused on issues that would appeal to both, or alternated sites. For example, they mourned the death of Senator Dirksen in Washington, because he had advocated prayer in the public schools, and they also stood

about on Washington D.C. street corners warning America of impending doom. They picketed expensive church buildings, a perfect target for the Pentecostals who were oriented toward mission work rather than toward buildings, and also a good symbolic target for the hippies, who despised the conspicuous wealth of the middle classes and rich in America. They even stopped in at a site which was attracting New Left pilgrims--the Chicago Conspiracy Trial. The Children of God did not take a firm pro or con position when they demonstrated at the trial, but proposed that religious revolution was the better way, and again gave their prophecies of doom.

To a greater or lesser degree, everyone who joined COG had been steeped from early childhood in the dominant worldview of capitalist society. That worldview influenced COG's ideology too. Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" helps us understand why people who joined CCG took certain things for granted in their perception of reality.

> Gramsci wrote...about...the hegemony of a class--"the hegemony of a social group over the entire national society exercised through so-called private organizations, such as the Church, the municipalities, the schools, etc."....Class power might now be seen, not merely as scarcely disguised dictatorship but in far more subtle, pervasive, and therefore compulsive forms (Thompson 1980:283).

One of the most notable aspects of "capitalist" or "bourgeois" ideology is its denial of class conflict. If America was being "torn apart", it must have been because of racial conflict, or generational conflict, or because of conflict

between those influenced by evil spirits and those influenced by God. The average COG convert had probably never taken time to question the conventional portrayal of Northern Ireland's problems as religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics, or of the Middle East's problems as conflict between Jews and Moslems. Naturally then, it was easy to accept COG's simplification of America's problems as due to dominance of the hypocrites over the true Christians. Furthermore, in a country in which it was always "us" vs. "the Russians" (or the "Japs" or whomever in old war movies), it was easy to comprehend Mo's explanation of how America would "Fall." Mo said that now America was at war with the Third World, and that before too long America would perish at the hands of the Soviet Union, because, probably, of a war in the Middle East. Like their school history books, Children of God converts assigned a determining role in history to individuals (Moses David, Rasputin, Ghadaffi, Archbishop Makarios, Jimmy Carter, etc.), to ideas, and to mystical forces such as prophecy or God's will. (Fate and destiny would be the secular counterparts.)

Very few American school children in the 1950s and 1960s read anything about socialism or communism, or anything by Marxist scholars. What they knew about communism was what their teachers and religious leaders, the media, and politicians said about communism, which was that it was bad and/or wouldn't work. One of my COG informants, for example, told

me his teacher was fired for "not teaching the 'cons'" in a discussion of communism in a political science course. There has been some information available, however, about utopian socialist communities in the United States, such as the Bruderhof, the Oneida Community, etc. So the Children of God thought that they were practicing socialism.[96]

5.1 THE PENTECOSTAL AND EVANGELICAL ROOTS OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

The Children of God were founded by Pentecostalists, and for most of the group's history it resembled Pentecostalism more than any other religious tradition.

5.1.1 Pentecostal Founders

Most of the names that came up in the early history of the Children of God were Pentecostalist, starting with the Berg family. Virginia Brandt Berg was a friend of the Pentecostalist preacher Amy Semple McPherson. David Berg had been ordained by and given a congregation within the Christian and Missionary Alliance, which has a strong Pentecostal tendency (Ahlstrom 1972: 812 n5). Leaders Arnold and Arthur Dietrich (Joshua and Caleb) were members of the Assemblies of God, the largest association of white Pentecostal congregations. Jane Berg (Mother Eve) had a Holiness Pentecostal

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[96] See Engels 1969 for the distinction between "scientific" and "utopian socialism."

background ("Your two-year-old can receive Jesus," p. 6). He (Jonathan Berg) had worked for the Full Gospel Businessmen, an important Pentecostal organization which owned the Light Club where Teens for Christ got its start. Leader Linda Meissner had worked with Teen Challenge, the organization which had started the Light Club. Teen Challenge was associated with the Assemblies of God. COG's first big supporter was Fred Jordan, another Pentecostalist. According to Peterson and Mauss (1973 also [Time] 1970, Ruppert 1971), there was evidence that the whole Jesus People movement was started by young Pentecostal "missionaries" with the backing of Pentecostal organizations.

5.1.2 History of Pentecostalism and Fundamentalism

The Pentecostal Movement started in the early 20th Century. Frequently named as originator was a Black minister, William J. Seymour. The Pentecostal Movement spread among the converts to the Holiness Movement, which had preceded it, and among Baptists and Methodists. All of these had previously been exposed to some of the ecstatic possibilities of Christianity in the revivals of the past, starting in colonial days with Jonathan Edwards. Revivalism and evangelism are the same tradition, and Pentecostalism draws from it. After the initial enthusiasm the white and black converts formed separate fellowships. The largest white as-

sociation of Pentecostal congregations is the Assemblies of God. By 1969 there were over 1.5 million Pentecostalists in the United States, and many more overseas. Both the Assemblies of God and the Christian and Missionary Alliance are very missions-conscious, and the latter group has more members and churches abroad than in the U.S. (Ahlstrom 1972:812 n5
820f). Pentecostals in 1973 claimed 20 million members worldwide (|Time| 1973).

Pentecostalism gets its name from its emphasis on the Pentecost, the time when in Christian doctrine the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the fcllowers of Jesus after his death. According to the biblical account, the disciples spoke in tongues, their faces shown brightly, and they manifested other spiritual gifts. Pentecostalists feel that Christianity without these gifts of the Spirit is "dead." They are not satisfied with a religion that appeals primarily to the mind. According to their teachings, if Jesus is alive today people should be able to communicate with him. The other church bodies engage in prayer which goes in only one direction--from believer to God--with little indication of whether or nct God is interested in the prayer. For the Pentecostalist, God's answer ccmes in the experience of glossolalia, when God speaks thrcugh the believer in an unknown language. Frequently another member cf the congregation gives an interpretation or "translation" of the glosso-

lalia, feeling that the interpretation was also inspired by the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals "hear from God" in various other ways, including prophecies, dreams, and a voice within. Divine healing is a doctrine and practice which follows logically from this emphasis on continual two-way communication, through the Holy Spirit, between the believers and an all-powerful God. Pentecostalists distrust medical care, and prefer to ask God for healing through prayer and various group practices mentioned in the Bible, such as laying on of hands and anointing with oil. It is felt that God will respond more favorably if these rituals are performed, if a group prays for the sick person, and if the group and/or the sick person have a strong faith that God will heal. Some Pentecostalists put confidence in a person who is thought to be a good channel for the transmission of the Holy Spirit--called by outsiders a "faith healer."

Pentecostalism shares many features with a wider movement known as Fundamentalism. Chief among these are a doctrine of scriptural infallibility, "an extremely Puritanic code of personal behavior," and a doctrine known as dispensational premillennialism (Ahlstrom 1972:820f). Scriptural infallibility is particularly important to Pentecostalists because the Bible is another way in which they believe God can speak to them. They want every word to be true and eternally applicable, so that they can read the Bible as they would read a letter from a friend.

Dispensational premillennialism has a long and interesting history, and is relevant to our study of the Children of God since COG emphasized the millenium. Dispensational premillennialism is, briefly, the belief that Christ will return to earth before the millenium and rescue all true believers from the destruction which would precede the millenium. This outlook was promoted by the Plymouth Brethren (the group to which Kenneth Frampton belonged) in England already in the early 19th Century. One of their converts, John Nelson Darby, elaborated the doctrine and had a widespread influence. He told believers to

> ...separate from ecclesiastical 'systems' and worldly pretensions and to carry on in simplicity while awaiting Christ's secret return. Darby believed that Christ would rescue all true Christians before the Tribulation soon to befall the earth, including apostate Christendom, just prior to His Coming in glory to establish His Israelitish Millennial Kingdom (Ahlstrom 1972:809).

Darby's ideas caught on in the U.S. in the 1870s and after. This was also the period of an eccnomic depression. The end of the century saw the rise of several millenialist movements in the U.S., with the early Russellites (now Jehovah's Witnesses) proclaiming, "Millions now living will never die" (Ahlstrom 1972:809, 807).[97]

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[97] Their first date for Armageddon was 1914--not a bad guess, as history showed, for World War I broke out that year.

Two Americans were influenced by dispensationalism, and through them the Bible Colleges and Fundamentalism as a whole. The first was Dwight Moody, who founded the lay and student volunteer movements. He wanted to prepare "'gapmen' to fill the breach between the laboring poor and the organized church...." Moody was training laymen to "'reach the masses'" (Ahlstrom 1972:812 n5). The second was Cyrus Scofield, who wrote the Scofield Reference Bible, the source for conservative Christians, and also wrote part of The Fundamentals, a series of booklets which began appearing in 1910 and served as a common theological source for many American churches. Three million of these booklets had been distributed by World War I.[98] The first Bible College was founded in 1882 by A.P. Simpson, who also founded the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Dispensational premillennialism was the common theory of the Bible Colleges and Bible study institutes that trained evangelists (Ahlstrom 1972:812).

The Fundamentalist movement was launched in 1910 when the series called The Fundamentals began appearing. It put forward five main points, which had become a consensus among

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[98] My father, part of a line of Lutheran clergy going back to the founding of the denomination, maintains that the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod was not originally Fundamentalist in doctrine. During the First World War the pastors began preaching in English rather than German because of the anti-German feeling in the U.S. They had no time to translate their own materials, and therefore came to rely on The Fundamentals. Many Lutheran pastors had a poor grasp of English, he says.

some church people by the turn of the century (Ahlstrom 1972):

1. Biblical inerrancy, that is, that there are no errors in the Bible and that every word has been literally inspired by God;
2. The Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ;
3. The "Satisfaction Theory" of Atonement, that is, that Christ suffered the punishment for the sins of humanity, so that people would not have to "pay the price" themselves;
4. The Resurrection of the dead, "with the same body";
5. The miracles of Jesus.

During the 1960s the Pentecostalists began making inroads among members of the large Christian denominations. The charismatic movement in the Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran and other denominations was directly and indirectly influenced by the Pentecostal movement. A Catholic prayer group at a Midwestern college invited members of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship and of the Assemblies of God Tabernacle to teach them how to speak in tongues (McGuire 1967). Other charismatics imitated some of the style of the Pentecostals and began to form ties with local Assemblies of God (Bennett 1970; Von Trapp 1972). The charismatic movement had great appeal for people who were already religious and who wanted a more meaningful and fulfilling religious experience (McGuire 1967). Several of the Children of God

told me that their own movement was similar to the Catholic charismatics.[99]

Premillenialism contrasts sharply with postmillenialism. The latter doctrine has human beings perfecting the world and creating our own millenium, after which Christ will return. Martin E. Marty (1970) divided the churches along this doctrinal line into the politically conservative (premillennialists) and the liberals or "social gospel" tradition (postmillenialists). The postmillenialists, Marty pointed out, put a great deal more responsibility upon humanity for how history turns out. Their views are seen as dangerous heresy by many premillennialists:

> The second coming of Christ as the final event of world history does not govern the thinking of the World Council of Churches....In this way the social outlook of the ecumenical movement risks becoming identified with the optimism of evolutionary secular humanism....But human history does not simply evolve into the kingdom of glory; it is heading toward a radical discontinuity, toward divine judgment...(B. Beach 1972:14f).

Within the premillennialist camp also there are differences. Though we cannot review them all here, it is important to note that Berg did not believe in the usual dispensational premillennialist doctrine that Christ would come

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[99] A Lutheran charismatic, a seminary student, told me that he had never met a charismatic who supported the Vietnam War. At least in some circles the charismatic or Pentecostal movement seemed to have represented a political and religious reform movement. However, I have not studied it and am hesitant to make that kind of generalization.

before the Great Tribulation and save the true believers. In 1960 Berg wrote a fantasy in which he was one of a small band of persecuted Christians broadcasting from a basement after the Russian takeover of America. In his fantasy broadcast, Berg complained about the false preachers who had told them they would not have to suffer, and hence lulled them into a feeling of security so that they did not prepare for the Great Tribulation which they were now undergoing ("The End-Time Whispering Vision").

American Protestantism was particularly marked by evangelism, that is, by missionary activity. Evangelism often took the form of revivals and camp meetings. Revivalism was intricately tied up with the processes of forming a new American culture and of organizing the pioneers and settlers on the frontier. Camp meetings drew frontierfolk from miles around, and were often marked by religious excitement--people losing consciousness, jerking, or barking, for example. (See Sweet 1944, Weisberger 1958, and Smith 1957 for descriptions of American revivalism.) Evangelical Protestantism thus early came to feel that the decisive Christian experience was that of conversion, which had to take place after a person was old enough to know what he/she was doing.

During the latter part of the 19th century the mainstream of evangelical Protestantism became less concerned with conversionism, and some segments began to break away from the

mainstream. Among these were Fundamentalism, which was particularly critical of the mainstream's liberalism and relaxation of Puritan morality, and the Holiness and Pentecostal movements, which sought a rebirth of the life of the Spirit. The conversion experience was kept alive by these movements, and its ecstasy "institutionalized" by the Holiness and Pentecostal movements. Other major sects also formed during this period, including the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses. These breakaway groups may have appealed basically to those who did not share in the prosperity of many in the mainstream. In any case, the similarities between Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism, and the other groups mentioned, are due in part to their common parentage in revivalism.

5.1.3 The Pentecostal Doctrines and Practices of the Children of God

The chief similarity between the COG doctrine and the Pentecostal movement is the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, usually indicated by speaking in tongues (see Goodman 1972). COG believed in all five of the Fundamentalist points, but added the Pentecostal notion that a person is not really saved until he/she has "received" or "accepted" Jesus. In "It's so simple!" Berg explained how to "receive Jesus":

1. Confess your sins;
2. Believe in Jesus as your Savior from sin;

3. Ask Jesus to come into your heart;

4. Confess Jesus Christ before others.

After doing these four things, said Berg, a person really can be sure of having eternal life. Faith or belief on a mental level alone does not give eternal life. You must put your faith in the Bible. It was because of their notion of how to have eternal life that Children of God felt justified in missionizing in areas where most people were already Christians. Some other church bodies feel that the evangelicals engage in "sheep-stealing" when they try to convert the already-churched. But Berg agreed on these four points with many other evangelists, such as Billy Graham, who saw no contradiction in people being "saved" repeatedly, whenever there was a revival service.

The Children of God believed in the other elements of Pentecostalism too, including divine healing. Like the other Pentecostalists, they did not accept the Calvinist notion of predestination. Obviously they were dispensational premillennialists, and like other Pentecostalists, they believed that the glossolalia and other spiritual manifestations are signs that these are the Last Days. The doctrine of scriptural infallibility led the Children of God into that same fight with the theory of evolution that has been characteristic of American Fundamentalism for many years. Some COG disciples practiced a form of "divination" using the Bible. (It was also used by some charismatics [Bennett

1970].) They would pray about something and then open their Bible quickly and point to a verse at random. The verse was considered to be God's answer to their prayer.

It is important to understand that Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism are not always in complete agreement. The latter emphasizes ecstatic religious experience and individual communication with God in a way that the former often criticizes. Thus a Fundamentalist might criticize a Child of God for saying he had received a prophecy from God, while a Pentecostalist might be interested to know what God had to say.

Children of God believed in the importance of the conversion experience and they sought the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, signified by speaking in tongues (see Goodman 1972; Samarin 1972). The conversion experience, called "getting saved," was accomplished by asking Jesus into one's heart. Ideally,[100] the person should feel wonderful, and various converts told me about the ecstasy, the "rush," etc. that they felt at that moment. In practice, COG disciples required only that the person say the words, "Jesus come into my heart," before the person's "soul" could be counted as

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[100] There was a tendency among some, including Mo, to deemphasize ecstasy. Children as young as two or three were supposedly able to receive Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, but were not expected to "feel" anything ("Your two-year-old can receive Jesus"). Likewise, "fish" who prayed in bed with a "flirty-fishy" to receive Jesus were not likely to have a religious experience.

part of that week's "scores." Conversion was something like spirit possession, for Jesus was supposedly filling the person's "vessel" and taking over the person's life. He was said to "live within" the convert. From this point on a person began a new life, hence the concept of being "born again."

Children of God shared with all of evangelical Protestantism and its offshoots the desire to tell everyone in the world about Jesus before the end of the world. Like most Pentecostalists, COGs expected the End (the Second Coming of Jesus) very soon, and they were therefore frantic in their efforts to reach the world quickly. In 1978 ("More lit laws"), Mo said that if they didn't hurry and warn the whole world, then God would have to postpone the Second Coming.

The Children of God were often accused of anti-Semitism, and always denied it, saying Berg himself was part Jewish, and many of the disciples were Jewish. Actually, Berg's "Jewishness" would only be recognized by racist anti-Semites such as the Nazis, for it was only one of his ancestors, several generations back, who had been Jewish before converting to Christianity. The Children of God were usually accused of anti-Semitism because of their vocal opposition to Israel. Of course, it is possible to oppose Israel, or Israeli policies, without being anti-Semitic. And it is possible to be anti-Semitic and support Israel, as some Fun-

damentalists have shown. However, COG combined opposition to Israel with a desire to convert the Jews, and an anger at Jews for refusing, for 2000 years, to accept Jesus as Messiah.

Pentecostalism is based on an extreme dichotomy between soul and body. The body is nothing but a vessel (COG used the words "vessel," "bottle," and "holy hole" for the body) which can be filled with either a good or an evil spirit. The soul is considered to be the only thing of importance. It is no exaggeration to say that a Pentecostalist would think a suffering, dying man with Jesus Christ in his heart was infinitely better off than a healthy, happy nonbeliever. "The flesh" must be kept in its place! From this outlook flow mass missionizing practices which seem bizarre by humanist or secular standards. Pentecostalist missionaries are attracted to disaster areas, where they have been successful at "winning souls." Pentecostalism won adherents in Timor, Indonesia, especially after the bloody repression of "communists" in 1965. Perhaps, Time magazine (1973) quoted one scholar, "at least some simply wanted to avoid suspicion of being Communist atheists." But in general, "Asian Pentecostalism has prospered most spectacularly in the aftermath of turmoil." Dr. Philip Hogan, foreign missions director for the Assemblies of God, called Bangladesh the "Christian opportunity of this age" (Time 1973).

Precisely the same logic was expressed by Children of God in response to earthquakes in Italy and in Guatemala in 1976. They rushed to the scene hoping to win souls for Jesus. Bringing people the conversion experience, and hence salvation, was considered the best way to help them. Disciples wrote glowing reports on their activities for the New Nation News (NNN 7, No. 9, summer 1976). They gave the numbers of souls saved, but they did not express, in these reports at least, any agony at the sight of the injured, orphaned, homeless, and dying. In Udine, Italy:

> Over 200 people, many only minutes before death, prayed with them, asking Jesus to fill their hearts with faith and give them eternal life!

Near Gemona, Italy:

> Matthew, Magdalena and their little team...were able to share God's message of love and hope not only with the many homeless and injured of this area, but also with 20,000,000 others, as a special programme was broadcast all over Spain, showing the work of God's Children amongst the needy....

The Bambini di Dio "Gypsy Band" performed several large benefit concerts, in Rome and Florence, for the earthquake victims. Though one disciple mentioned to me that they might take food to the area for the homeless people, the NNN report said absolutely nothing about any material aid whatsoever which the Children of God gave, or intended to give, to the "needy."

A few months earlier, 25,000 people died in an earthquake in Guatemala. A COG colony was in the stricken area, and

the disciples wrote about, first, how they had used Mo's advice on surviving earthquakes, and, second, how they had adapted their missionizing techniques afterwards. The colony decided that their usual litnessing would not be welcome under the circumstances, so, after prayer, they decided to sing in the hospitals and refugee camps.

> We found that the vast majority of people were much more humble and open and hungry and thirsty for the Spirit of God which they now knew was more important than all their material world!....As to the question of "why it happened?", we'll leave that up to you. All we can say is, "whereas many before were blind, now they see!"

The Pentecostal Evangel, official voice of the Assemblies of God, urged members to take in foster children as a way of converting them.

> You can have a ministry that will reach young minds with the gospel while they are still receptive to it (3/18/79, p. 9).

The Children of God also saw children, including their own children, as a mission field. For example, a COG colony in India provisioned equipment for a Christian orphanage there, and taught the children religion. They reported the number of children who had asked Jesus into their hearts (NNN 1, No. 1, July 1977). Around the mid-1970s disciples began to talk about their own children getting saved as early as age two. It was possible, said Mo, for children that young to know what they were doing when they asked Jesus into their hearts. Why COG should have been interested in lowering the "age of consent" will be discussed in the next chapter.

There has been a great deal of disagreement among Christians about what a person must do to be saved, whether it is infant baptism, faith alone, faith plus good works, whether there is nothing the individual can do since God has predestined some to salvation and some to damnation, or whether, in the tradition from which COG arose, salvation comes by the conversion experience. Despite these disagreements, most Christians, at least the Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants, agree that people are in need of salvation, and that what they must be saved from is sin. We are all sinners, they agree, and most of them add that we are born that way, with original sin.[101] All of the Christian passion about salvation is based on the doctrines of heaven and hell. Unforgiven sin leads directly to hell. If one thinks a conversion experience is necessary to give eternal life in heaven, then it is legitimate to proselytize among not only non-Christians but also among Christians who have not had such an experience. COG's theology was actually contradictory on this very point, for though they talked about reaching and saving the whole world, they also said that the "unsaved" were not really going to go to hell, at least not for very long. But that is already introducing the syncretic aspect of their theology, the topic of a subsection below.

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[101] This doctrine is reminiscent of the real-life situation of the infant born addicted to heroin because its mother was an addict during pregnancy.

5.1.4 Parallels between COG and Assemblies of God

Because of the Pentecostal origins of much of the leadership and because of the importance of Teen Challenge as a model for COG, I attended an Assembly of God worship service one Sunday morning to see how similar they really were. The parallels were striking. Much of the vocabulary was the same, and many COG practices were exactly the same:

1. When the congregation prayed, they all prayed in their own words at the same time. The room was filled with a great wave of sound and emotion.

2. Glossolalia was practiced by many people, but without much excitement. No one fell on the floor or shouted. At the end of the service, when the minister in some churches would pronounce the benediction, the Pentecostal preacher spoke in tongues, in what seemed a ritualized performance.

3. The gesture of looking up and extending the arms and hands up and out was very common in prayer.

4. In both the congregation I visited and in COG colonies, there was racial integration.

5. People often referred to each other as "brother" or "sister."

6. The service was more casual and spontaneous than any other I had seen held in a church building.

7. People asked others to pray for them, and the leader and elders and other members practiced the "laying on of hands."

8. The cross was deemphasized as a symbol, and the Bible was given much more prominent display.

9. Members were very friendly to strangers.

10. Records, especially of attendance, were posted as if it were a contest.

11. The bulletin board emphasized missions, including foreign missions.

12. A notice of a coming youth convention featured a photo of a young woman with guitar.

In the Assemblies of God congregation and in the Pentecostal Evangel I found much of the same vocabulary as used by the Children of God. The words and expressions which follow had the same definitions for both groups, and were used in the same general types of contexts:

scores	on the [mission] field	reach
tithe	get the victory	souls
share	Baptism of the Holy Spirit	burden
ministry	indigenous (means native)	

Members of both groups frequently interjected "Thank you Jesus" and "Hallelujah." (A favorite expression of the Assemblies of God congregegation I visited was "Praise His Name," which I never heard from a Child of God for some reason.)

The Children of God shared some scheduling features with Pentecostals. The schedule for Teen Challenge when they started in Brocklyn was 7 a.m. till midnight (Wilkerson 1973:129). COG also scheduled a very full day, and in Staten Island one schedule I saw was broken down into 30-minute periods. After being criticized by the press and parents for subjecting converts to sleep deprivation, COG was rigorous about scheduling exactly 8 hours sleep for new recruits, an hour more than Wilkerson had allowed his converts. Pentecostals also seem tolerant of very long services and long sermons. Berg joked once about how a Pentecostal service could easily go on for four hours (Berg 1979:45). Interest-

ingly, one of his converts wrote that "Father David" had talked for three hours to a group of visitors one Sunday in Tenerife, and this young man had been so fascinated he had taken notes ("Epistle from a modern apostle").

5.1.5 Other Religious Roots of COG

The Children of God drew from other religious sources besides the Pentecostal movement and the Fundamentalists. One of these was the Seventh Day Adventists, the best known group to actually set a date for the Second Coming in the U.S. Many thousands were disappointed when March 1843 and March 1844 (a second guess) passed. A comet had increased the excitement then, like it did for COG, but Jesus didn't return. A prolific prophetess, Mrs. Ellen (Harmon) White, saved the movement with her writings about healthful foods and theology (Ahlstrom 1972:478-481). Herbert Armstrong, of the Worldwide Church of God, also is concerned with diet, and one COG disciple told me his parents followed the Armstrong diet. A late-1981 issue of Armstrong's Plain Truth recommended natural childbirth and warned against doctors who push Cesarean sections. Perhaps there was also some influence from Judaism in the matter of making diet a religious concern.

The Roman Catholic influence in COG was great, especially after the group moved into Catholic countries. Disciples

sought friends in the Catholic church and among religious orders. In Rome they had their first disco in a club lent them by the Vatican, but had to close it because soldiers and prostitutes were using the club as a place to meet (Salvatori 1976). Yet in various places disciples reported working well with Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, and Little Sisters of Mary (or of Jesus?). Mo also suggested they try to work with the Maryknollers ("The Maryknoll fathers"). A former president of the Catholic Youth Organization was a Child of God. The structure of the Children of God was somewhat like that of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. COG had bishops and archbishops, and Mo was much like a Pope. All officers were appointed by leaders above them, and power, doctrine, and rules of living mostly flowed from the top down. By 1976 a large part of the membership were converts from Catholicism, both in the U.S. and abroad. This is clearly indicated in Table 3, which shows a Roman Catholic background for 40% of the disciples interviewed in Staten Island in 1976. When filmmaker Franco Zeffirelli made "Brother Sun, Sister Moon" and later "The Life of Jesus," Children of God identified with the films. The first was about St. Francis, and disciples and Mo (in "Brother Sun") compared the youth who forsook all to St. Francis. Zeffirelli drew parallels between the second film and the COG in a TV interview (reported in NNN 8, No. 9, fall 1976, p. 5). David Berg stopped calling himself Moses David and became Father David, or Padre David, in the late 1970s. Faith Berg

went even further. She said her father was like a pope that people could see and talk to. Early issues of the New Nation News usually featured pictures of a nursing mother. Perhaps this symbolism was related to the Catholic emphasis on the Virgin Mary.

TABLE 3

Denominational Backgrounds of Staten Island Disciples (N=20)

	Number	%-age
Roman Catholic	8	40%
Baptist (Southern, Wesleyan, etc.)	5	25%
Methodist	2	10%
Presbyterian or Episcopalian with some Baptist experience	2	10%
German Protestant	1	5%
Church of God--Holiness	1	5%
Conservative Judaism	1	5%
Total	20	100%

Judaism made a contribution to COG too, in members and in other ways. The colony at the Texas Soul Clinic did Hebrew folk dances, raised their children in nurseries away from the parents (imitating a kibbutz), and divided themselves

into the Hebrew "tribes." Moses David, Joshua, Aaron, and most of the other Bible names chosen came from the Old Testament, and the Children of God identified with the Children of Israel in the Bible. Berg even claimed to be Jewish, though he wrote in "Survival" (1972) that it was one of his ancestors who was a German Jew converted to Christianity. Yet several journalists received the impression that Berg was Jewish (Salvatori 1976).

In its emphasis on publishing, its talk about the imminent Second Coming and the imminent destruction of the world, and its mass distribution of literature by members the Children of God is most similar to the Jehovah's Witnesses. They were well aware of this, and several told me that the only thing which made them better than Jehovah's Witnesses was that they worked for the Lord full-time. Both COG and Jehovah's Witnesses call their travelling missionaries "pioneers." The Children of God also compared themselves to Mormons and to various utopian socialist communities, in the matter of sexual and family relations, for example. Two of the new recruits I met in Staten Island had been interested in other sects. One young man said that for him it was a question of joining either COG or the Jehovah's Witnesses. The latter had several disadvantages in his eyes. It emphasized the Law and tradition too much, and its relationship with God was not very personal--they called God Jehovah, never Father, and they didn't pray to Jesus. A

young woman told me that she had been interested in Bahai and in the Mormons. The latter were good in that they had group farms, strong family ties, and kept one year's provisions, all things she believed she had now found in the Children of God.

Among the most important sources and influences on COG were the nondenominational and interdenominational evangelical organizations, which were usually Fundamentalist. There are a number of such organizations dedicated to the conversion and training of youth, and they had a key role in the formation of the Jesus People, according to one observer (Spoo 1972). These groups included Campus Crusade for Christ, Teen Challenge, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, Christian World Liberation Front, and the Billy Graham organization. Campus Crusade had a similar vision to COG's. "Explo '72," held in Dallas, was intended, according to its organizer, Bill Bright:

> ...to train 500,000 young people for a "spiritual explosion" [a word also used by COG]....around the world." "The saturation of the entire world with the gospel will be possible by 1980" (quoted in W. Beach 1972).

5.2 THE COUNTER CULTURAL ROOTS OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

What made the Children of God more than just another religious sect or a new missionary society was something that happened outside the religious realm in the years prior to COG's formation. During the 1960s and early 1970s there was a mass defection of Western youth from the major institutions and values of Western society. To a greater or lesser extent, an increasing proportion of youth was shifting its loyalty to the construction of alternatives, of a counter culture.

5.2.1 Bohemianism

David Berg sometimes referred to himself as looking or acting like an old beatnik or a bohemian. Children of God were able to draw on a tradition of bohemianism in the U.S. and Europe, in addition to their own experiences with the counterculture of their own generation. Bennett Berger (1967) argued that hippie morality was based on the bohemian doctrine going back to the mid-nineteenth century. He said that in Exile's Return Malcolm Cowley spelled out the main points of that doctrine:

1. Salvation by the child--a new, free generation will save the world;
2. Self-expression;

3. Paganism, eroticism, the belief that the body is not unclean;
4. Living for the moment;
5. Liberty;
6. Female equality;
7. Mind expansion, including experimentation with drugs and mysticism;
8. A romantic love of the exotic and of travel.

David and Jane Berg, and their parents, were undoubtedly exposed to some of these bohemian values and practices in their own youths. Perhaps that is one reason they seemed to understand the hippies so well and were able to speak their thoughts as well as they did.

5.2.2 Counterculture

Musgrove traced the values of the counterculture further back than to bohemianism. He said the contemporary counterculture was a "rebirth of Dionysian culture" (1974:19). Both had to do with openness and experimentation.

Musgrove's Nine Countercultural Values

Musgrove defined for himself the "alternative" which was the subject of his research. Though it was perhaps a narrower definition than the one studied by American writers such as Roszak (1972), there are some advantages to examin-

ing the key traits Musgrove identified (1974:86ff). His "alternative" was that of committed, older individuals, rather than of persons following the latest fad. Musgrove said that the British "alternative" did not contain teenagers. Furthermore, the fact that he studied the British is useful for our work on the Children of God, since COG had many European converts and were headquartered in Europe longer than in the U.S. Thus through Musgrove we can perhaps identify some of the "universal" or at least international values of the "counter culture."

1. Criticism of power as corrupting, especially power on the large scale.
2. Rejection or questioning of boundaries and social roles, "an attack on fixed order in favor of openness, mutability and flux" (Musgrove 1974:86).
3. Purity and sincerity, an attack on hypocrisy, pretentiousness, and pollution.
4. Naturalism.

Sometimes this involved a preference for natural over synthetic materials, and foods, and sometimes it included vegetarianism. The counter culture always was conservationist and nature-loving, and often disliked urban life.

5. Open and free communication, including the use of obscenities, bright colors, and the sense of touch.
6. Aestheticism.

Artistic values are prized while science and technology "are seen as threatening to the deepest human values and purposes" (p. 87). Sensation, heightened awareness, and mystical experience supercede "scientific rationality."

7. Expressive, caring human relationships rather than instrumental, manipulative ones.

Sometimes a contradiction appears between the concern with personal self-awareness and the concern for relationships.

8. A sense of community and sharing, especially in a commune, which "is an attempt to establish community without power--especially exploitative power" (p. 88).

9. A rejection of the "work ethic."

It is okay to beg. You are someone independent of your job. Ambition and success are a trap. "A shifting, fluid life is the ideal. The only essential property is a sleeping bag" (p. 88).

Perhaps Musgrove should have added a tenth value, the "anti-Christian attitudes of student activists" in Britain and the U.S. He described the counterculture as unChristian in another place in the same book (p. 123). All the same, some observers have felt that Jesus was taken over by the counterculture, via "the Jesus-as-hippie motif" (Petersen and Mauss 1973:264).

The second and ninth of Musgrcve's values are very similar to what Victor Turner called "liminality"-- the "limbo," statusless, portion of a rite of passage (Turner 1967:102-107, 112f, 116). Turner noted symbcls of childhood or liminality in the youth movement, such as long hair, nudity, and "foolishness." When "transition has become a permanent condition," said Turner, you may find the "institutionalization of liminality" (1967:107).

COG Traits Borrowed from the Counter Culture

Hippies didn't stop being hippies, at least not entirely, when they joined COG. In fact, said Abraham, COG was a way of making the hippie life "work."

> "We are the alternative that the hippies didn't find." We dropped out but we dropped into something. Ccmmunal farms can't support kids so they end up doing what they never wanted to do--getting a job and punching a clock.

Abraham said that many of the Children of God were the same people. "God gave us an alternative and we took it." Berg was grateful that his converts were hippies, for they taught his little group how to provision.

> We didn't know how to suppcrt ourselves but the hippies taught us! They were used to scrounging and procuring and provisioning, & they established the sandwich routes and food shops where we had regular pickups. We ate Kentucky Fried Chicken and sandwiches & everything you could possibly imagine! It fed everybody down at the mission & everybody at the house too! (Berg 1979:87, 93).

Many disciples talked about how wasteful American culture was. This was something they learned from provisioning and from the counter culture.

One major focus of the counter culture was on natural foods. Though several religious sects in the U.S. have had an emphasis on healthful diet, it seems clear to me that COG's concern with natural foods was derived primarily from the counter culture. Recipes for natural foods, along with nutritional information, were exchanged via the New Nation News, and were also printed up by central COG staff. A little newsletter called "Pork 'n' Beans" was published by a subsistence farm colony in Torino, Italy, and it included information about storing and cooking with natural grains and other foods. The June 1978 Family News (Vol. 4, No. 2), for example, included four pages on nutrition. Part of this was details about eliminating refined foods from the kitchen. The Children of God were reading many of the same books I was about nutrition, including Adele Davis. In an earlier issue there was a recipe for "God's Good Grain Breakfast Cereal," a granola (NNN 7, No. 12, 1976).

Other elements taken straight from the counter culture were a desire for communal living and collective child-rearing, the use of "dirty words," open hatred of parents and people over thirty ("old bottles"), and an emphasis on youth's legal rights. Like their contemporaries, COG disci-

ples in the U.S. wore Earth Shoes and down jackets in 1976, hitchhiked, and enjoyed pop music and dancing. The emphasis on sex (which always caused COG so much trouble with the press) came at least in part from the counter culture--certainly nudity, "skinny dipping," and trial marriages were not derived from the practices of the Southern Baptists. The counter culture valued ecstasy, often achieved through drugs, and COG valued religious ecstasy. Of course COGs were seeking the gifts of the Spirit like other Pentecostals, but many disciples were only interested because the counter culture had raised the issue of ecstasy. Some of the political stands taken by disciples or by COG as a whole were derived from the counter culture, too. For example, the identification with the Third World and the condemnation of American imperialism had that source. Likewise, the anti-draft, anti-war, anti-weapon, pro-peace positions were strong within COG. Generally disciples were aware of and opposed to pollution, and thought they were pro-socialist.

5.3 SYNCRETISM: REVOLUTION--FOR JESUS

Like the early Christian missionaries in Africa and Latin America, the Berg family found that the people in their mission field already had customs and values, to which the new teaching had to adapt. But since all this was happening in America, not in Africa, the "missionaries" to American youth were not able to escape the scrutiny of their supporters in

the "mother church." Thus the Bergs were soon forced to choose between their converts and the orthodoxy required by the churches. Berg criticized the Jesus People for remaining too respectable in the eyes of the churches, and hence attracting only "church kids" ("Jesus People?--or revolution?"). One of these Jesus People felt Berg was right. In 1971 David Hoyt, who said he had spent many years in prisons and in experimentation with meditation, vegetarianism, and Krishna Consciousness before starting Jesus People communes, wrote that he joined COG to get away from

> ...the temptation not to offend anyone and make sure we pledge allegiance to our blessed and holy country....In reality when you choose to follow God all the way an immediate break is made with being a nice respectable citizen because when a person follows God they instantly become a stranger and a pilgrim walking on a foreign soil and bearing a much greater hope than that of physical comforts or worldly acceptance (Hoyt letter to Meissner, Griggs, etc., 1971, quoted in Enroth et al. 1972:48-52).

Many of the young people who joined COG had been using drugs, thus signifying their rejection of the values and authority of the larger society. One relatively conservative young woman who was temporarily caught in COG's net was aghast at the number of draft resisters, mothers of "illegitimate children," and "very messed-up kids" she had met among the converts, including one who told her he had made bombs, intending to blow up the world (Enroth et al. 1972:45f). Berg met these young people at a time when the prospects for success of the youth movement did not seem

good in southern California. "The Death of Hippie" was proclaimed in San Francisco in 1968. In May 1969, People's Park, Berkeley, was violently destroyed by the National Guard. The next spring, student protestors were shot to death by the National Guard at Jackson State and Kent State.

> Like black radicals in 1965, white radicals in 1969 must find ways to cope with an oppression greater than they had supposed to exist (Lynd 1969:11).

Every year the military draft caught more young men. (By the end of the Vietnam War 58,000 had died.) Nixon had abolished many draft deferments in 1970, and there were 163,500 involuntary conscriptions that year. In 1970, also, 14,000 college graduates requested conscientious objector status. During the first two months of 1971, 34,000 were drafted. Some young men[102] looked to religion as a way out. In my small 1968 college graduating class at <u>least</u> one man went to the seminary and another joined the newly organized (Lutheran) Prince of Peace Volunteers, in hopes of draft deferments. (The deferment for graduate students had just been cancelled.) In the 1967 class, an agnostic suddenly became attracted to the Quakers, one of the few religious groups recognized by draft boards as having an official doctrine against participation in war.

> The view that conscientious objection to a particular war was doctrinally wrong was so ingrained that it took three conventions of the [Lutheran Church--Missouri] Synod, climaxing in 1969, to

---

[102] Including Muhammad Ali.

> pass a resolution in relief of the consciences of Missourians on that score (Danker 1977:11).

Soon rumors reached New York that young men in California were joining the Jesus Freaks and applying for ministerial deferments.[103] The influx of such young people, with the kind of concerns they had, made important changes in Berg's new little Pentecostal youth group.

5.3.1 Syncretic Theology

> You gotta be a baby
> You gotta be a baby
> You gotta be a baby to go to heaven.
>
> Except a man be converted
> And become as a child
> He cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.
>
> Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings
> Hast thou ordained strength
> That thou mightest stem the enemy and the avenger.
>
> Suffer little children to come unto me
> For such is the kingdom of heaven.
> (COG theme song, by Amminadab. COG 1975:40)

Though the Children of God quoted verses from the Bible in their theme song, the counter culture's themes of youthfulness, foolishness, and the moral superiority of the young gave the words of Jesus a new twist. God prefers, said this syncretic cult, the Children of God.

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[103] Perhaps New Yorkers had fewer Jesus Freaks in part because there were many psychiatrists in New York City who were willing to certify young men as unfit for military service.

COG made a number of innovations in the area of theology, and I will discuss here those which seemed to indicate syncretism between the Pentecostal tradition and the counter culture.

The Children of God decided that this was the End Time. Based on prophecies in the Bible and dreams and visions of David Berg and his mother, an exact time-table was set. Berg's claim to be Jewish, like a similar claim of Tony and Susan Alamo, leaders of another Jesus Freak group, appealed to the common premillennialist assumption that the conversion of Jews would be a sign of the End Time (Enroth et al. 1972:183). Berg predicted that there would be a war in the Middle East, and that the Soviet Union would invade Israel. It would quickly become a world war, and America would be virtually destroyed by nuclear weapons. Then, the Anti-Christ, possibly Ghaddafi, would set up a one-world communist government. This should happen by about 1985/6. For the first 3 1/2 years, the Anti-Christ would rule justly and with mercy, and the "meek would inherit the earth." Starvation and poverty would be ended, and Israel would be reduced to a graveyard for the weapons of war and the many who had been slaughtered there. The prediction that a world leader would come out of Egypt (which COG took to include Libya) was made by Jeanne Dixon in 1962, and later by Virginia Berg (Mo's mother) in "The Warning Prophecy." Then the Anti-Christ would start to think that he was a god and try to

force people tc worship him. Everyone who wanted to buy food, etc., would have to have the number 666 written on their foreheads or marking them some other way. (This idea comes from the Revelations of St. John). The Children of God would refuse to accept the "mark of the beast" and would be persecuted, and many would be martyred. They would flee to the hills, using the survival skills Mo had taught them (see COG: The Emergency Survival Manual). Finally after 3 1/2 almost unbearable years of the Great Tribulation, Jesus Christ would return, on clouds with horses, and would, with the help of the remaining Children of God, defeat the Anti-Christ. Then God would "angelize" the Children of God, and they would all rule over a new world government, which only had one city, and consisted otherwise of self-sufficient villages. Unfortunately, some people, presumably devil-inspired, would rebel against God, and he would have to destroy them, and the world. Then he would create a new heaven and new earth, and once again rule over it with the help of the Children of God. After these two battles, the way I understand it, Satan and perhaps other incorrigibles would be cast into the fiery lake. However, when God created the new earth, he would let most of them out, since they would have learned their lesson and been purified ("Heavenly Homes").

Moses David was God's End-Time Prophet, and the Children of God were God's End-Time Children, a "new nation." Many

Bible verses are used to substantiate these claims, for the Old Testament does talk about a prophet or king of a new nation who would be named David. New cults or sects almost have to make such a claim, since they are introducing new doctrines and predictions and want to give them legitimacy. Some of these passages (Jer. 30:8,9; Isaiah 55:3-5; Ho. 3:4,5; and especially Ezekiel 34:23-25) were interpreted by other denominations as prophecies about Jesus. However, said COG, they could not be referring to Jesus since Jesus' name was not "David." Mo, Don David, Moses David, Father David, Dad--whatever the name, he was taking on a mythological status while still living, breathing, and writing letters. Whether it be called a gradual process of deification, or whether it be called charisma, it was clear that David Berg was more than a man and a leader to the disciples. Letters to the Family News (FN 4, No. 10, 7/78, for example) and some other letters among disciples which I saw in 1976 were signed "Love in Jesus and David." In 1974 disciples marched around the living room in Staten Island singing about "King David." A letter referred to "our true shepherds, Jesus, MO and Maria" (FN 4, No. 10, 7/78). Another disciple confessed that "...we were...looking too much to the flesh rather than to the ever-living Spirit of David" (FN 6, No. 9, 11/78). The RNR was "time to overflow the water to refresh the people with the Spirit of my Father David" (FN 1, No. 7, 2/78). The theory of an end-time and

an end-time prophet fit well with the dispensationalist view of history. According to dispensationalism, history is divided, by God, into periods, and God gives a new set of rules for each age.

God is a God of Love, and hence would not be so cruel as to damn anyone forever, except perhaps Satan. At the time of the creation of the new heavens and new earth, God would give the former rebels in the fiery lake and everyone in hell another chance to accept Jesus. He would be going back to the original Creation. Now having destroyed Satan's power, God could expect that man would not fall into sin and ruin everything again.

Since no one was to be damned forever, why did the Children of God follow the Evangelical practice of trying to convert the world before the Second Coming? This was an obvious contradiction. Some Children of God were, like Mo, dyed-in-the-wool evangelicals, and had never questioned the necessity of converting everyone. Others did it simply because that is what COG did, and they were members of COG. Some disciples felt that the Children of God had the "answer," and they wanted to tell the world about it. That "answer" had to do with Jesus, but with Jesus as a symbol of a new life outside the System, and a new life of love. Some disciples just wanted to tell youth to drop out and build "heavenly homes." Others wanted to bring a second chance to people whose lives so far had been miserable, and the act of

asking Jesus into their hearts would help them to commence this new life, as Jesus would guide them in the living of a new life.

A two-year old, according to COG, could receive Jesus. That meant that the conversion experience which became so important in the revivalist tradition could occur at an extremely early age, an age when most people think a child is too young to understand such abstractions or to make a choice of its own free will. The children, however, were being accelerated through life, for Mo said they were the last generation and would have to be prophets at a young age during the Great Tribulation.

David Berg made a lot of changes in the Pentecostal rules about sex. He said that he was basing them on the Bible, although in one case he said that during the End Time, "God can break his own rules if he wants to" ("The FF explosion"). In any case, as we pointed out in the last chapter, Berg said that masturbation for men and women was perfectly normal. He also stressed the importance of sex and of sexual happiness, and went into great detail on how to do it, including his own experiences. God would not have created sex and commanded people to "be fruitful and multiply" if he thought sex was dirty, said Berg. Female homosexuality was not wrong, because it was not forbidden anywhere in the Bible. Male homosexuality, however, was forbidden, and God

hated it, according to Berg. By 1979 or 1980, however, he had softened his position on male homosexuality, because some of the disciples who were gay had written to him about it. Polygamy was practiced by all the great leaders in the Old Testament, so it could not be wrong. Divorce or taking a new mate was also not wrong, if it was done to further God's work ("One Wife"). Berg said that Jesus used to go to prostitutes, like Mary Magdalene, and that God was sexy. In later years, when sex came to really dominate COG writing, the Holy Spirit apparently was portrayed as a a sexy woman, the female member of the Trinity (Hopkins 1980:8).

The Children of God were very aware of the "spirit world," where they said a lot was going on. They could have spirit helpers or guides. The first was a disciple named Abner who died. They said that he was going to "stand in the gap" for them and help them from the spirit world. Berg had a number of spirit helpers, the most important of which was Abrahim the Gypsy King. When Berg had visions or gave prophecies, it was sometimes Abrahim speaking through him in broken English. An outraged Christian reported that Berg had dozens of "these counselors," including Rasputin, the Pied Piper, Joan of Arc, Oliver Cromwell, Merlin the Magician, Wiliam Jennings Bryan, Martin Luther, and so forth (Carruth 1980:6). Disciples had spirit helpers too. Becky, the leader who married "King Arthur," believed that Pocahontas was her spirit helper (FN 4, No. 6, June 1978). After a young couple's baby died, they reported that it was helping

them and their other child from the spirit world (FN 7, No. 8, Nov. 1978). Even little children could have spirit helpers. One small boy was too shy to sing in public, a tragedy for a COG child. After seeing a TV show about Elvis Presley he prayed that Elvis would help him, "in the spirit." The parents wrote that Elvis did help, and the little boy became a good performer (FN 10, No. 3, 2/79).

The counter cultural input to this syncretic theology can be seen in the emphasis on the occult, in the definition of hypocrisy (rich, war-mongering, sexually-repressed church people), in the prediction that America and Israel would be destroyed, in the fact that God chose predominantly youth as his End-Time Children, and in the permissiveness regarding sex. Another clearly counter-cultural touch came from a long-time disciple and draft resister I met in Europe. He told me that he had had a lot of experience with drugs and with writing under the influence of various drugs. He read the book of Revelations once while tripping (on mescaline, I think), and was fascinated. He was sure that "St. John was a head!", that is, that St. John had seen these visions under the influence of mescaline or some other hallucinogen. Whether other disciples thought the same, I don't know. Many of them did feel free to have their own prophecies or to interpret the Scriptures (and the Mo Letters) their own ways, however. One Black disciple I knew had his own individual apocalytic scenario worked out, in which Stokely Carmichael and the African state of Guinea would play a key

role. Mo's prophecies, however, were the ones which usually got into writing, and were therefore the ones on which COG was judged by outsiders, as we will explain shortly.

5.3.2 Syncretic Politics: War of the Spirit

> We have declared War of the Spirit on the System's Godless schools, Christless churches & heartless Mammon! We hope to stop the pollution and destruction of the Earth by the world's worst rebels of all time, the generation that produced us; our parents--who taught us rebellion against God and His Laws--and we long to return to the Truth, Love, Peace and Beauty of our Ancients in dress, customs, appearance, and the simple life of True Happiness in God and love for fellow man!--and in the peaceful, natural, beautiful and unspoiled, unpolluted surroundings of God's Creation! (COG application form, and song).

The Children of God sang this every weekend night in their New York Disco. On the word "war" they raised their fists. It expressed their "hopes" and "longings," but didn't say what they really would do. The dream of a return to a simpler life, away from the cruelties of the System and its institutions, was shared by most disciples I met. (Yet the reality was that most disciples lived in cities and spent their time "car-witnessing" at stop lights.)

COG's vision of a perfect world government was similar to feudalism:

> But even God's government is going to be based on the small village plan, each one circular with radial streets like the spokes of a wheel centering at the hub of God's local administration by you and me, ruling in love over the villagers of this world who will till the surrounding land, grow their own crops...make what few necessities they need...right there in their own little

> villages!....Even then it will take supernatural administrators to run it, the angelic saints we will then be with superhuman bodies and miraculous powers to use when necessary to enforce God's Will upon any who would dare to defy His wise, loving and caring angelic administration! God is going to show the world <u>again</u> how it <u>used</u> to be run in its <u>earliest</u> days of <u>theocracy</u> under the direct control of God and His holy agents, the prophets themselves!

According to this vision, laid out in "Heavenly Homes," there would be one great city ("Space City"?) headquarters, in which the disciples would live with Jesus until the day when God would destroy and recreate the new heavens and new earth.

The Children of God's political ideology was complex, syncretic, mystical, self-contradictory, and it would be difficult to explain it in a few pages. Sometimes they seemed liberal or radical. Berg, for example, said that he was too liberal and integrationist for the Christian and Missionary Alliance (Berg 1972). Dave Wilkerson's book (1973) was liberal in many social areas, too. Some Mo Letters and some disciples sounded very radical politically. Once a Trotskyist acquaintance of mine was talking to a Child of God, and afterwards said to me, "What happened to the Children of God I knew and hated?" COG felt that capitalism and communism were both bad, and talked about uniting with the Third World and the independent communists and socialists.

> Europe must demand the removal of the American bases if she does not want to suffer the retaliation which America and the Jews will suffer

> ("Israel invaded," quoted in "The political system").

From the counter culture came such ideas as anti-Americanism and anti-imperialism, and sympathy for the Palestinians. "Rich man, poor man" and several other Mo Letters gave a nearly Marxist analysis of capitalism. Mo frequently talked about the ordinary people and the poor, and how the rich and the war-mongers were oppressing them. After the battle in which Christ would defeat the Anti-Christ:

> Then the meek and the poor and the persecuted and down-trodden shall inherit the earth, and God's righteousness and peace and plenty shall cover the earth....("Heavenly Homes").

In 1974, Samson Warner and the Editorial Dept. compiled Mo's statements on politics ("The political system").

> We agree with 95% of the radical revolutionaries' goals, but their goal of utopia they cannot reach, while we have reached it already.

This compilation implied what several disciples told me--that when the communists took over they would probably look favorably upon the Children of God, since the latter had been persecuted by and had opposed Western capitalism.

> God has given us definite hints that we may actually have to cooperate with the coming world government--even world communism, <u>until</u> they break the Holy Covenant and refuse to give us our religious liberty.

The themes of anti-Americanism, godly socialism, the concept that God would care for the poor, and the political identification with the Arabs were illustrated in a skit called "rich man poor man" which was performed at the Rome

Disco on April 24, 1976. Two little boys, some of the sons of Ho (Jonathan Berg)) and Esther, were the very competent stars. A disciple named Stefano played the guitar and narrated. The following is as much of the script as I could jot down in the dark:

Narrator: In the beginning everyone shared.
No one was rich
So no one was poor.
To give to the rich you must steal from the poor.
That is what education is for.

One day the rich man found oil
In the poor man's soil.

Rich boy: Gimme oil for my toys and things.

Poor boy: But you have only paid me in peanuts.

(Rich boy whipped poor boy.)

Rich boy: It's the Arabs' fault.
To get peace you must make war.
That is what weapons are for.

(Poor boy talked to other poor boys.)

Poor boy: Come on, let's get together.
This time we'll win.
Let's watch rich man suffer for his sin.
Let's give to the poor.
That's what riches are for.

Narrator: Not to decorate a dying whore--America.

(Narrator, as God of the Poor, shook the rich man off the earth.)

However, for all this sympathy, nothing was to be done. A disciple told me right after the Iranian Revolution that he had met an Iranian on the street in New York who was excited "like a little kid." The disciple said, "Poor guy, he

doesn't realize that it won't make any difference." Actually, Mo wrote to Ghaddafi that he was very happy about the Iranian Revolution ("Dear Mo'Ammar"). But in general, COG taught that revolutions don't work, or they make things worse. They might even bring anarchy, which would be the worst of all. The youth revolution is over, disciples told me. That is why God gave us the Jesus Revolution. Disciples felt generally powerless to affect the political process, except as it concerned their own group. Once I got into a long discussion with a relatively "radical" disciple, and asked him how he could accept so calmly their prediction of the coming of a nuclear war. He said that it was inevitable. I said he talked about war as if it were a natural event, like a rainstorm. "And if you know it's going to rain," he quickly added, "wouldn't it be smart to get out your umbrella?"

"Survival" was the watchword of the 1970s, according to Christopher Lasch (1976). The Children of God chose "Survival" as the title of their official history, and published an Emergency Survival Manual and a little tale about "How to survive war," written by disciples who were caught in the war in Cyprus. In their basements, colonies kept "survival stores," and they prepared some "refuge farms" in the countryside. The Children of God expected <u>God</u> to <u>do everything</u>--destroying America, the Anti-Christ, Satan, etc. They would just try to survive.

Like many Americans, including part of the counter culture and part of the New Left, the Children of God were anti-communist, and associated communism with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. There were several reasons for COG anti-communism. First, David Berg was anti-communist. His "End-time whispering vision" reads like a hysterical McCarthy-era propaganda piece. Berg talked about communist infiltration into American life, and about the Russians bombing and then occupying the U.S., burning all the Bibles and shooting Christians. Every stereotype from the 1950s was included. Of course Berg wrote this in 1960, not after he founded the Children of God. But he, and COG, thought fit to publish it and include it in a collection of Mo Letters (COG:1976). Berg's anti-communism was in part the automatic response of most Americans, particularly of those who accept God as a fact of life and therefore oppose "godless communism" almost automatically. Nevertheless the theological underpinning of Berg's anti-communism is instructive. It is based on the notion of original sin.

> All attempts at changes for the better, whether violent or non-violent, by unregenerate and sinful men will only bring more unregenerate and sinful governments, economics, pollutions, educations, religions and wars resulting from man's sinful heart ("The political system").

The man who claims to have trained "virtually all the youth in [the] New Right" spoke about it in an interview given by him and his wife:

> Morton Blackwell: Guy Farley is the theologian, but I'll tell you something people in the New

> Right are fond of saying: "Don't let them immanatize the eschaton."
>
> Narrator: What?
>
> Blackwell: (Laughs.) In other words, No Heaven on Earth....
>
> Helen Blackwell: You know, the Utopian heresy, the belief that perfection can be found on earth. It's impossible...
>
> M. Blackwell: ...because man is inherently evil (Shorris 1980).

There was another anti-communist in COC's top leadership--Duke Emanuele Canevaro. He wrote in his family history ("Giuseppe Canevaro") that his father had been a supporter of Mussolini and had been very afraid of communists after the war. In fact, he'd tried to take his investments to Peru so that they wouldn't be taken over if the communists gained power in Italy. Emanuele did not seem apologetic or embarrassed about his father's fascist history, at least not in writing. His views on Italian politics came out in a story he wrote for the New Nation News about Franco Zeffirelli:

> [Zeffirelli was on a TV] debate show in which he was ferociously attacked by the communist moderator of the show and a leader of the Italian women's liberation movement, so ferociously in fact that he came out as a "lamb to the slaughter" and exposed their perfidities [sic] and lies to 20 million TV viewers.
>
> During the show he testified as a flaming witness of faith in Jesus and used scriptures for answers. So great was his success in exposing them that those howling dogs had since even threatened his personal security...(NNN 1, No. 1, July 1977, p. 4).

Emanuele's views must have had great influence, for in 1976 (and presumably in 1977) the headquarters of the Children of God was in Italy, many disciples lived on the Canevaro family's estate, and he and his wife Rachel were the KCs (King's Counselors), the top position under Mo himself.

> When the communists call you fascists and the fascists call you communists, it's quite obvious that the truth must lie somewhere in between ("The anti-God War!"; a similar view was expressed in COG, "Las verdaderas...", a letter to Oiga, 1977).

Mo tried to portray the Children of God as a middle alternative, between fascism and communism. The cover drawing on "The anti-God war!" identifies COG with "Growing Third World Godly Socialism." A baby, so labelled, is being nailed to a cross by a vicious-looking wolf labelled "anti-God communism" and "red-rag smear." The "red-rag" is Interviu, which exposed the "prostitution ring" in the Canary Islands (1977). The baby's other hand holds a sign that reads, "The real answer:--God's love!" At that side of the cross is a sleeping figure resembling Nixon, labelled "Dying capitalism." The baby's legs are labelled "Children of God" and "The alternative." Below the wolf is the comment, "It's the hit dog that howls." By that Mo meant that the communists (and/or fascists) were attacking COG because COG was exposing them.

Berg and Emanuele notwithstanding, the fact was that many of the disciples did not share these extreme feelings about communism. After all, many had resisted the draft because

they felt the war in Vietnam was morally wrong, though the war was a war to "stop communism." Table 4 summarizes the political attitudes of the Staten Island sample before they joined COG. For many disciples I talked to, communism was not an evil, but rather a lost cause, because people were selfish and incapable of making a better world without God. Of course, disciples repeated the things they had read in Mo Letters about how communism was an "imitation millenium" and how the Devil wanted people to worship him instead of Christ. But Sarah, you may remember (Ch. 4), felt communism was a better system for the people, though it made religious proselytizing difficult.

TABLE 4

Pre-COG Political Views of Staten Island Sample & Parents (N=20)

	Disciple Liberal or Anti-War	Disciple Ignorant of or Opposed to Politics	Total
At least one parent (or live-in grandparent) conservative or racist, by disciple's account	5	7	12
Parents not conservative	5	3	8
Total	10	10	20

Almost none of the Children of God had graduated from college, and many had dropped out from high school. Few had been active in left-wing political groups. Again and again disciples told me that they had learned most of what they knew about politics and imperialism from Moses David. I think that was true. Table 5 shows that only four of the 20 disciples at Staten Island had ever attended a demonstration (and some of them may have been counting demonstrations held by COG). Of course, this sample was a young group, many of whom had joined after the Vietnam War was over. Yet, even among those who joined in the early 1970s, most had had experience with something they considered "countercultural," or with nothing. Only a few had ever even been interested enough to vote.

TABLE 5

Political Experience of Staten Island Disciples (N=20)

TYPE OF EXPERIENCE	NO. OF DISCIPLES
Were in military	4
Ever attended a demonstration	4
Said had been afraid to attend demonstrations	2
Ever voted*	5
Had direct experience of counter culture	9

*The median age was 23.5. Only 5 were 21 or younger.

Compared with European youth, the Children of God had little understanding of political economics. To them communism = Russia = totalitarianism + suppression of religion, and socialism = utopian socialist communities = sharing. They believed that they were "Godly communists" and were living socialistically. But they knew that the only reason they shared with each other was because they had been reborn and had Jesus in their hearts.

> The purportedly unselfish goals of socialism and communism can never be achieved without the love of God in the hearts of man, as in the pure Christian communism of the Early Church, effected only by the power of the Spirit of God ("The political system").

"Man without God in his heart is destined to blow it," one young woman told me. The idea of human frailty and treachery made sense to many disciples because of personal experiences. This disciple and many others had been disappointed in one or both parents and had had unhappy relationships with at least some peers.

> You cannot save the world by destroying evil men (such as the bourgeois ruling class), because all men are evil including you! We can only save the world by letting God destroy the evil in our own hearts ("The political system").

Even the new world created in the End by God would depend for its happiness on a change in human hearts.

> It will be a better world then with better people who have learned their lessons of the law of God and will be happier than ever before because at last they will be purged and purified of their sins of rebellion against Him and healed by the leaves of the Trees of Life which we shall minister to them from where they grow by the River of Life within the City! ("Heavenly Homes").

Thus the circle of their logic was completed: to bring a better world they had to change people. To change people they had to help people get Jesus into their hearts. They could do this by their missionary work, as instructed by Mo, and also by setting a good example of the "heavenly homes" godly socialistic communities. They said their lives and their communities were a "sample." Sometimes I thought the less evangelically-oriented among the Children of God might have had the idea that if all youth in the world joined COG and set up communes, the world would have become socialist.

Since COG was trying to change the world by changing hearts, one by one (see "Change the world"), their top priority became mission work. Their pro-Third World sentiments became transformed into a desire to bring the knowledge of Christ to the Third World. Even their pro-Arab political stance was accompanied by efforts to convert Arabs. Mother Eve and Stephen actually handed out salvation tracts in Tripoli when they were the guests of Ghaddafi. Ho and Faith, on the other hand, and Mo in several letters, said that Moslems worshipped the same God and were COG's brothers.

Before long, COG began to evaluate countries and governments according to how "receptive" they were to evangelizing by COG. Those who opposed COG were bad, those who supported them were good. Ferdinand Marcos was good because he gave COG complete freedom. Argentina was bad because it deported

them. Zimbabwe/Rhodesia was a "Black hole" because the Patriotic Front had reportedly murdered some missionaries. Patriotic Front guerrillas were "savages" and the Organization for African Unity, which supported the Patriotic Front, was "a bunch of reds" (see "Black holes"). Perhaps the best example of how all these elements could be put together can be shown from the note written to the Family News by a woman who was invited by a Saudi who "knew the Family" to help him entertain visitors at a hotel in Geneva.

> Staying at this luxury hotel, one of the most exclusive in Geneva, where the majority of the clientele is composed of rich Arabs, Japanese, Latin Americans and Africans, really gave me a Third World FF vision! (FN 4, No. 11, July 1978).

Deciphered, that meant the writer realized that contacts could be made in Third World countries by offering sex to visitors from those countries at international hotels. No one questioned the value of contacts, since contacts could help disciples get visa extensions, housing, access to TV and radio, cash, and all the other things needed to bring the message of Jesus to the masses of the Third World, and thereby to "save" them.

Saving the Filipinos

The example of the Children of God in the Philippines is particularly interesting. During the late 1970s many Children of God went there, in part, implied Mo, because of the nice climate and the fact that the Filipinos spoke English.

COG published a "Special Philippines edition" of the New Nation News (Vol. 1, No. 1, 1977) around Christmastime, 1977. On the front cover it said it was "Approved by the Philippine Council for Print Media." The issue consistently referred to the group as the "Children of God Missionaries." This issue was different from the usual NNN or FN in that it contained no nude or semi-nude photos of female disciples, no mention of FF-ing, and no sexy cartoons. The issue talked about the benefit concerts the band would be giving, and showed pictures of COG children distributing Christmas presents to hospital patients and poor people.

In August of 1977 there was a conference in Manila entitled World Peace Through Law. Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists boycotted the conference, because they felt that it was inappropriate to hold a conference on human rights in a country which was under martial law (Luce 1977). Faith Berg, however, attended the conference and tried to submit a paper. The paper was written by Don Guillermo Padilla Castro, an elderly Costa Rican lawyer whose son, I have heard, had joined the Children of God. Faithy presented herself as the delegate from Costa Rica. Her report for the New Nation News, which featured a colored cover photo of her beside President Marcos, giving him a packet of COG literature including the Padilla paper, shows how COG made political decisions:

> At 10:30 a.m. President Marcos and his very charming wife walked in. They have a very sweet look

> and very gentle faces. Our opinion of them changed immediately, since we[104] had been a little bit influenced by what the Western press has said about the Philippines, which is mostly negative.
>
> The President gave a beautiful speech welcoming the delegates and started answering all the attacks the Philippines had been receiving from the Western press....Afterwards, Faithy ran over... to say a few words to the President: "God bless you and thank you for what you are doing for your country" (NNN 1, No. 3, 12/77, p. 8).

She detailed an incident in which a Palestinian lawyer confronted the Chief Justice of Israel. Faith agreed with the Palestinian that either Jews or American Jews seemed to be controlling the whole conference. Faithy went on to talk about her difficulties entering the Padilla paper or getting a microphone, and assumed that it was because of the Americans, who were the same ones opposing the Palestinian and handing out leaflets criticizing Marcos. She said that a paper by Peter Weiss, USA, which talked about human rights abuses under Marcos, "violated the standing rule of the Conference, that no political attack could be made against any specific country."

> The main benefit of the Conference was that it was held in the Philippines, enabling this country to present to the world the truth of what its government and people <u>really</u> are, to counteract the lies of the Western press! (NNN 1, No. 3, 12/77, p. 10).

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[104] The "we" refers to Faith and her "fish," Juan Carlos, whom COG said was the son of one of the richest families in Peru and even in South America.

Don Luce, co-director of Clergy and Laity Concerned, attended the same conference, and wrote an article about it for the National Catholic Reporter (Luce 1977). According to Luce, "3,000 of the 4,000 delegates were Filipinos...[who attended] with the government covering their expenses." Attempts made by Filipino lawyers to question the legality of martial law were squelched, and the rules of the conference made criticism impossible. Don Luce (along with Ramsey Clark and others) went to the conference as part of a Human Rights Investigating Team sponsored by The Friends of the Filipino People, a U.S. group. Most of Luce's report consisted of quotations from Catholic parishioners describing gruesome tortures to which they had been subjected by the Philippine police. He said that many Catholic nuns and priests had been organizing the poor, and were considered enemies by the government. During the period of the World Peace Through Law convention, Luce joined a march of Catholic nuns protesting various aspects of human rights violations. The group included nuns, priests, religious students, and laity--a group of about 5000. Military police broke up the march with fire hoses and clubbed nuns and others. The irony of such an event during a Human Rights conference was not missed by the New York Times, who covered the story (8/26/77). The Children of God, however, didn't mention it, even though Luce, a veteran of the anti-Vietnam War movement, said the purpose of his group's protest was to criticize the U.S.:

> Why should an American like me talk about oppression in your country?....It's because the guns and bullets used by your Government to terrify your people come from my country (quoted in N.Y. Times, 8/26/77).

Early the next year, the Philippine COG team wrote a report on the country for disciples who might be considering coming there. They said conditions were good. The country was open. There were no restrictions on witnessing and the Family was recognized and had no legal problems. Good visa terms were available.

> Liberal or conservative? The influence of the Catholic Church makes people seem outwardly conservative, but on a personal level we have found that most people are very open-minded and liberal and very tolerant.
>
> Politial situation: "This is a country ruled by a fairly benevolent dictatorship" (FN 3, No. 3, 2/23/78).

I spoke to two Filipino students in the U.S. about all this. They said simply that their country was under martial law, and no one could hand out leaflets without government tolerance. Of the NNN article by Faithy, they said it presented the "line" of the Marcos regime. For example, Marcos liked to say he was being persecuted by the "Western press."

The End of "The End of Allende"

In the July 1979 Family News (vol. 4, no. 9), the COG team in Chile sent out a call for "girls" for flirty fishing. They said they had met the editor of "a very important and influential political magazine" and his crowd, "who live

in these huge expensive apartment houses on the weekends and work in the city during the week." The disciples reported that they had been making a living teaching English to the many professionals who were going to have to emigrate to find work. The report went on to describe how the "very potential city" in which they lived had a high standard of living, and how they were getting free fruits and vegetables. In the November 1978 Family News (vol 7, no. 6), the team went into more detail:

> The tremendous trials that the country passed through as a result of being the world's first democracy to elect a Marxist President, followed by the military coup of '73, has only served to make the Chileams hungry for something non-political and idealistic. They are some of the few of the world's population who've lived under different systems and are basically fed up with them both.
>
> Political situation: Chile is one of the few Latin countries used to living under a democracy, but the last five years of military dictatorship has generally been accepted as the only means of restoring order and stability to this peace-loving people. The military is still very much in control although not very popular, and because of this their presence is not very visible and things have generally normalized.

In 1973 a Mo Letter came cut called "The end of Allende?--communism's greatest victory?" (9/26/73, GP 272). Mo said that the overthrow of Allende, which he blamed on the U.S., would only prove to communists the world over that communism must use force and violence to get into power, since peaceful means would never be allowed to succeed. He seemed to assume that some communists somewhere really had been waiting for this chance to take over countries by vio-

lence. Yet a few months later he wrote ("Kennedy," 12/22/73) that the Right Wing had killed Kennedy because he really wanted to make peace with the Russians. Because COG had taken a stand that could be interpreted as anti-Pinochet, the case of Chile contrasts with the case of the Philippines. The COG team which wrote the analysis of Chile from a COG point of view in 1978 had not entirely forgotten "The End of Allende." They mentioned that there was strict censorship and that they always pasted magazine pictures over cartoons and photos in COG literature which might seem offensive. And they added, "Please do not bring Letter No. 272 in any way, shape or form."

Feeding the Body and Winning the Soul

Not all Children of God were as opportunistic in their pursuit of souls as the ones I've described above. Some COGs in India joined a parade sponsored by some actors to raise money for flood relief. They rode on a truck and played their guitars and sung. Of course they did not miss the opportunity to hand out Mo Letters (NNN 6, No. 10, 1975). A group "re-pioneering" the North of Brazil also learned an important lesson.

> We could clearly see that the reason the work in the North had failed is because we weren't meeting the people's needs but rather going out litnessing, etc. to get their money and giving practically nothing in return. Lord help us! (FN 7, No. 12, Nov. 1978).

When they went back they FFed some rich people, rented a good house, made contacts in the media, began visitng prisons and orphanages, and started "giving out free food regularly."

Some of the counter culture's fascination with the Third World was expressed in the desire to travel and "become one" with people in the Third World. Some was expressed through the pro-Palestinian Letters. Some was expressed sexually. Mother Eve wrote in that she had finally been able to FF a Libyan man. It was not just sex, however, for from the very beginning racially and ethnically mixed marriages were frequent among disciples. The view that the soul rather than the body is what is important helped disciples to oppose racial prejudice, for every soul is equal in the eyes of God. The need to get better visas and to establish a firm native base in the various mission fields also contributed to the tendency of the "missionaries" to marry their converts (see "The re-organization nationalization revolution," in which Mo says the colonies should "nationalize," by marriage if necessary). Mo in "Dear Mo'Ammar" sets the paradigm for COG relationships to Third World leaders. He gives the impression that Ghaddafi had asked him to come to Libya for consultations, as if the young Colonel needed the old preacher's advice. A young woman dreamed twice that she had witnessed to Fidel Castro, and was trying to pioneer Cuba (FN 6, No. 3, Sept. 1978). A Black disciple dreamed that he

was giving a speech about politics and the future of the world, and Stokely Carmichael and Angela Davis were in the audience and were asking him questions. This same disciple, who was also in a Black nationalist political group at the same time as he was a disciple of COG, was beginning by 1979 to find some of Moses David's political ideas a little bit racist and ignorant. He still thought about going as a missionary to Africa, however.

In the early years, during the Vietnam War especially, the Children of God were very critical of the extreme Right Wing. Mo wrote a number of letters in which he saw the youth persecuted by the Right Wing, who would establish a dictatorship in America and scapegoat youth for the economic and political problems of the country. These letters included "The school" (a dream about totalitarian thought control), "The emergency" (about the rightist takeover), "The Amerikan way," "America the whore", and, of course, "Nitler." "Bye bye pie!", based on Don McLean's popular song, "Bye bye Miss American pie," talked about how the U.S. had hurt and rejected its youth. But while he was writing all this material which expressed the reason so many of his converts had been eager to "flee America," he was also putting out the "communism won't work because it's godless" analysis in "Ask any communist" and "War and peace." One of these featured a cartoon in which the old labor song about "pie in the sky" was reversed in intent. On this Mo Letter a commu-

nist was on a scapbcx, and he was promising the crowd pie in the sky (the cartoon showed him smiling and pointing to a piece of pie in the sky) if they followed communism. But it was actually the Children of God who talked about rewards in the sky:

> Oh, in the sky, in the sky, in the sky,
> Jesus gonna come and take us way up high.
> Oh, one day, one day, one day,
> Jesus gonna come and take us all away.
> (Song, sung at TSC, COG 1975:31)

5.3.3 Syncretic Symbolism: Gospel Gypsy Pirates

Following are excerpts from the "40 Days" prophecy, which was based on current events and Bible passages: "40 Days!--and Ninevah shall be destroyed!" (Jonah 3:4), and "For when they shall cry 'Peace, peace!'--then cometh sudden destruction!" (I Thess. 5:3). Some of the prophecy was supposedly "dictated" or "inspired" by Abrahim the Gypsy King, one of Mo's spirit helpers, whose "accent" appears in sections.

> 1) There is going to be 40 days of warning, then Ninevah shall be destroyed! The Comet [Kohoutek] will be at its brightest and most visible for 40 days. But the puzzle is, when does the 40 days begin? It's giving a 40 day warning of something, whatever it is, then comes the destruction, unless the people repent....
>
> 13)....He gives us 40 days like prophet Jonah, you know?--and then He gives Ninevah 40 days.--and that's the end! Either January 11 or January 21 or January 31. Somewhere in there God's going to destroy modern Ninevah, modern Babylon and its king, King Richard--the Last!--King Richard the Last! (King Richard the Lyin'-Hearted!)

> 15) After 80 days peace, cometh sudden destruction! When peace signed? [Vietnam war peace treaty]--Yesterday the 11th!--From 11th to 21st December is 40 days....January 31st must be the day or close to the day....
>
> 19) God makes things so simple for his little baby child, the prophet! He makes so simple for his little baby child Prophet. So simple nobody believe....("40 Days," 11/12/73).

Moses David was a prolific writer, often turning out several Mo Letters per week. They were usually repetitious, frequently containing one image or idea which was then elaborated and repeated with variations. One pattern (for example, the "40 Days" prophecy), was a letter in which the first part was a literal transcription of a tape recording. Mo mumbled, sipped wine, kissed Maria (or the air), spoke in tongues, etc., and described a vision or dream. Sometimes Maria's comments and questions were interspersed. The last part of the Letter would then be an interpretation, in which Mo would try to figure out the meaning, and then make some connections of the dream to the various themes he usually wanted to talk about. Since a preacher has to write a 20 minute or longer sermon at least once/week during his/her working life, Mo was trained to turn out some kind of piece on a regular basis. This particular method of composition made the Mo Letters chatty and extemporaneous, like a little visit with "Dad."

The Children of God, partly through the Mo Letters but even more through the efforts of their artists and musicians

and in the course of their life together, developed many unique expressions and symbols. One disciple told me that a key COG artist, Barkos Doodler, had previously worked for Zap Comics. One man joked that they were a new nation and even had their own language, adding, "PTL, [Praise the Lord], Doesn't that just break your bottle? GBY [God bless you]." Many of these expressions and symbols were syncretic, containing a blend of elements drawn from the counter-culture and from the Pentecostal movement and Christianity in general. Table 6 gives some of these syncretic symbols, and the aspects of the counter culture and of Pentecostalism/Christianity which they combine.

Some of these COG symbols and expressions require further elaboration. "Spoiling Egypt" referred to the process of getting money and other material things from America before leaving. New bottles were what people became when they were "born again," and youth and children were assumed to be new bottles because they were receptive to the new teachings of Mo (new wine). The image was first used by Jesus, who said the new wine of his teachings would burst old wineskins.[105] An old bottle would break when exposed to new wine, like Jesus said an old wineskin would burst. When "Systemites" were shocked by outlandish COG behavior or ideas, COG was "breaking their bottles." Even a disciple could have an old

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[105] The newsletter of a group who consider themselves "progressive Lutherans" is called the "New Wine Exchange."

TABLE 6

COG Syncretic Symbols and their Roots

COG SYMBOLS	COUNTER CULTURE	CHRISTIANITY
Ghaddafi	Third World, youth, sex appeal, socialism	Anti-Christ, Bible prophecies--War in Mideast
New bottles, old bottles, new wine	Youth, "Don't trust anyone over thirty	Images used by Jesus: new wine, old, new wineskins
Colony	Commune	Pioneer, evangelize
Spoiling Egypt	Ripping off the system, "liberating" things	Story of Moses
Revolution for Jesus	Revolution	Jesus, Revivalism
Gypsies of the Lord; Gospel Gypsy Pirates	Gypsies, a "cause" for British "alternative" (Musgrove 1974:131)	The Lord
Drop-outs	Hippie drop-outs	Sect formation; full-time religious vocation
Space City	Utopian city-architects such as Paolo Solari in Arizona	Heaven; City of God
Don Quixote, the Crazy Crusader	Foolishness, gladness, madness	Christian Crusades
Flirty-fishing	Sexuality	Conversionism ("fishers of men")
Share	Communalism, socialism	Witnessing
War of the Spirit	Fist raised in Black Panther salute	Spiritual

COG SYMBOLS	COUNTER CULTURE	CHRISTIANITY
Slogan--Holy Ghost Power	Black Power, Power to the People	Holy Ghost
The System	The Establishment	Darby's "System"
COG hand signal--three fingers	"Peace sign"--two fingers ("Victory sign")	Jesus People sign--one finger ("One Way--Jesus")
"Sexy God"	Sex	God
Nursing-mother photos	Naturalism: lifting of sexual repression	Motherhood; Virgin Mary
Yoke	Nuclear war	Omega (Greek letter); God's yoke

pattern or idea changed suddenly--"that broke my bottle." "BBB's" were the youngest children in the schools, "Benjamin Bottle Breakers."

The huge wooden yokes worn around the necks of the early COG demonstrators symbolized their willingness to serve Jesus, who had said, "Take my yoke upon you." After a few years disciples wore a necklace with a small wooden yoke having a metal cross-pin. In 1974 a disciple told me it had many meanings. It was the yoke or burden of God. It symbolized the Greek letter Omega, in reference to Christ's statement that he was the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Omega represented, therefore, the end of the world. By 1976 disciples were wearing "love yokes" made of

metal, a symbol that an observer might easily take as a little decoration. By 1978 a new symbol, incorporating the "harp of David," the yoke, and other symbols, was replacing the simple yoke on many disciples' necks. It was called "Our Symbol."

Syncretic symbolism can be seen in the taking of Bible names. The new names were justified on the basis of being "born again," and, at first, were usually chosen from the Bible. However, other "born again Christians have not usually taken new names, and the fact that COG disciples have done so is symbolic of their rejection of the System, and of the System names which their parents and the System gave them. Some names were drawn from Mo Letters: Rasputin, Heidi, Ovitch Toilet. Many names showed the countercultural element of "foolishness": Zebedee Doo-Dah, Ukal Ayly, Cayman Through-the-Bathroom-Window. Some of the second names were tribe names from the early days (Joshua Levi) while others indicated where the person had joined: Joel Vancouver, Martha Kentucky Farm. The main point was to symbolize that they had really "dropped out," and were citizens of a "new nation." The names Moses David, Joshua, Jethro, Aaron, and some others were deliberately chosen to fit the COG syncretic myth. The new Children of Israel, they were "fleeing Babylon," and Egypt, and in need of a Moses to lead them through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Since they were a new nation, they needed a King David--thus the

two names of their leader--Moses David. (Aaron etc. were the names of Moses' associates in that Old Testament story.)

Some of the old "radicals" were living in Europe when I visited Italy in 1976. Perhaps it was their influence that resulted in a skit called "Rebirth." The skit seemed to illustrate the Marxist concept of the "fetishism of commodities," or at the very least, the concept of "alienation." The skit was performed in pantomime, with the players all in whiteface. Below is a synopsis.

> A young man and young woman, dressed in leotards, are smelling flowers and singing about love, when in comes the Devil, dressed in a black tophat and a black coat with tails. The Devil puts a mirror into the girl's hands. She begins to look at herself in it and ignore the boy. They begin to fight.
>
> The boy works all day building a road. The Devil drives up in a car (pantomime) and sells the boy the car, taking his last penny. This means that the boy must go back to work for more money. The boy drives around the stage, delighted.
>
> The girl starts spending money on jewelry, and on the mirror. Four new players are introduced. A man is doing repetitive factory work. A woman is writing in a book. The Devil gives another man a watch and briefcase, and shows him how to look at the watch and rush off with his briefcase importantly. The Devil gives another man a machine gun and shows him how to shoot it.
>
> Now the devil begins to orchestrate the people in the motions he has taught them, with the commodities he has given them. Meanwhile, the band plays and sings a song about "Devil's work." The pantomimed activities on stage move faster and faster till the people wear out and are frozen in their positions.
>
> A clown (the Child of God) comes in. Upset by their captivity, he prays to God. Then he frees

them one by one by taking away their commodities and implements. They smile and hug each other.

5.4 EVIDENCE THAT COG WAS/IS SYNCRETIC

I have argued that COG was a syncretic cult, coming out of an unlikely coalition between some persons involved in the counter culture and some Pentecostal missionaries. Further confirmation of this model came with my sample survey, and from the reactions of segments of both the Fundamentalist camp and the counter culture, neither of which recognized COG as one of their own.

5.4.1 Backgrounds of Members

The sample survey I conducted in Staten Island in Spring 1976 illustrates the coalition between counterculture and evangelicals. Four persons in the sample had joined before 1972, though none had joined as early as 1969. One of the four was the son of a Wesleyan Baptist minister. His father had seen the NBC special about the Texas Soul Clinic and phoned the Children of God. Both Jezreel and his older brother Jehoshaphat joined at once. Jezreel dropped out of high school to join. He'd never had any opinions about politics, he told me, had never tried any drugs, and had never had a job. I asked if he'd had any experience with the counter culture, and he said he had visited some Jesus People groups in search of something to join.

Two of the other pre-1972 members of my sample had been raised Roman Catholic and had identified with the anti-war and hippie movements. They came from conservative regions, suburban Los Angeles and Dallas. One had dropped out of high school right before graduation; the other had dropped out of college after 1 1/2 months. Sara, the first, had spent a few days in jail for possession of marijuana. Her boyfriend was in Vietnam and the people around her were hawkish Republicans. She said she had thought about joining the Peace Corps, but balked at the two-year commitment. Jeremiah had been a surfer. He lived on the beach with his girlfriend for several years, playing guitar for cash. He was a conscientious objector. He applied to VISTA but had been turned down. Like Sara, he had enjoyed the "hippy drugs"--marijuana, LSD, and hashish.

The fourth man who'd joined before 1972 was an exception. He was anti-war, though he'd been in the army. He had felt that he just didn't fit in the System. He didn't fit too well in COG either, and had been in and out of the "Family" twice before I met him. He was Jewish.

The sample of twenty showed a large number of people who had strong religious roots, and several whose roots were in the counterculture, or the fringes of the counterculture, instead. Two out of twenty were the offspring of clergy. At least three had attended parochial schools. Twelve had

attended church nearly once/week as children. There was only 15% overlap between the heavy users of "hippie drugs" and the frequent childhood church attenders. (See Table 2.) On the other hand, three or four had lived in communes or had thought of themselves as hippies, and 6-10, or 30-50%, had been frequent users of the "hippie drugs," marijuana, hashish, and hallucinogens.

The pattern illustrated in my sample was repeated in most of the colonies I visited. There were always a few people who seemed like hippies or radicals, like Sarah in Chapter 4, and others who seemed like "church kids," as Mo put it. Most of the membership, of course, joined after the syncretic ideology and life-style had already been formed. In the Canary Islands, the two strongest early converts were Catholic seminary drop-outs, attracted by the combination of religion and sex (see "Epistle from a modern apostle").

5.4.2 Rejection of COG by Fundamentalists

Ted Patrick took a ride, out of curiosity, on one of COG's "prophet buses" to the colony near San Diego. In terms of religion, he was not impressed (Patrick 1976:48):

> For a black boy raised in the South who over the years had heard some of the best when it came to conning people from the pulpit, this was pretty feeble stuff. But not many of the middle-class white kids in the room had any experience at all with real evangelical preaching, and they gobbled it up like it was the Holy Ghost talking to them (Patrick 1976:48).

It was clear from COG's history (Ch. 3) that many Evangelicals rejected COG. Frampton's decision to quit funding them because Berg claimed to be a prophet was the typical pattern. Metz (1979:43) argued that "the designation of a religious group as a cult helps to mark the limits of permissible religious behavior for a society." Metz also said that a "cult" was a "religious mutant," rejected by its forbears. The Pentecostal movement was the chief inspiration for COG, as explained above. I do not know how the Pentecostals have reacted to COG over the years, however. One ex-disciple I spoke to at an Assemblies of God congregation said that though many people criticized the group, he thought the methods may have been justified since it was "profitable" (this meant that COG won souls, I think). Most of my information is about the reaction of the Evangelicals and other Fundamentalists, not exactly COG's forebears, but relatives in any case. The Roman Catholic church in Rome had helped COG at first, but cut off relations when there was a hint of sexual impropriety (Salvatori 1976). Yet, throughout its history, COG managed to relate to at least some religious people and institutions. Abraham explained to me that in the mission fields the various missionary groups often cooperated, and their sectarian differences didn't seem as great as the goals they had in common. Rex Davis of the World Council of Churches told me that he was trying to show COG how to cooperate with the various mis-

sionary groups in the countries to which they were going. This was a problem, for COG was thrown out of Korea, at the instigation of missionaries, according to a disciple who had been there. In any case, it may well have been that in many countries COG ccoperated with the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal and even other missionaries, while in Western countries they clashed with these same groups. In Chile and in India the disciples had jobs teaching in Christian schools.

The deprogrammers and the founders of FREECOG seemed at first to be predominantly Evangelicals. Ted Patrick was a member of the African Methodist Episcopal church, and argued over Bible passages with the disciples he deprogrammed. Mrs. Ila Meece, "of a well-known evangelical church....denied that mainstream Jesus People are targets. 'In fact, we use Jesus People as deprogrammers'" (Plowman 1973). Many of the Jesus People who joined COG later dropped out, and some of them then worked against COG. Russ Griggs and David Hoyt were among the more well-known, but I also met a few religious young people who left COG or didn't join it after investigating, because of its sexual mores and/or its teachings. The Danish Jesus people did not allow the Children of God to participate from the platform in a Jesus festival in summer 1972 (Plowman 1973). The Danish Lutherans menticned COG as one of the cults or sects it wanted to "probe" and "counteract" (Missouri in Perspective,

3/12/79). Christianity Today published a very negative article about COG in 1973 (Ericson and MacPherson 1973), charging the group with "deception."

By the late 1970s a group had been formed by Evangelicals called the "Spiritual Counterfeits Project." The Children of God were high on their list of "spiritual counterfeits." In a 1980 issue of their newsletter, an article is reprinted from United Evangelical Action, the offical publication of the National Association of Evangelicals. It is by Ronald Enroth, who earlier (Enroth et al. 1972) had withheld judgement about COG. This time he listed them among the "pseudo-'Christian' groups [which] represent the greatest direct threat to mainstream evangelicalism..." (Enroth 1980). In the same issue, Joseph Carruth spelled out exactly what was "wrong" with COG:

> It is important to realize that the COG's sexual emphasis and their infantile hatred of the "system" (defined as any organization other than the Children of God/Family of Love) do not merely stem from a misinterpretation of the Bible. A recent critique of COG (published in Europe) stresses that: "The COG are not just an aberrant Jesus-movement offshoot. They are a movement very deeply motivated by spiritual personages not of God." The real spiritual allegiance of Moses David is to his "familiar spirits"....
>
> This kind of invitation to spiritual, as well as physical debauchery is a guiding principle in the Family of Love....In addition, Mo has now declared that homosexual relations between men are permissible.... (Carruth 1980, p. 6).

That there be no doubt COG/FOL preached false doctrine, the Spiritual Counterfeits Project presented a chart listing the

teachings and practices of COG contrasted with the Bible quotes showing how heretical they were. There were 11 points, including the charge that Berg said Jesus had sexual relations with prostitutes, and criticisms of Berg for calling himself a prophet and naming the date of the Second Coming (Hopkins 1980). The Bible's last word on the subject came from Jude 4, as quoted by Hopkins:

> For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

5.4.3 Rejection of COG by Counter Culture

Despite what some evangelicals may have thought, the Children of God were not wallowing in the degradation of the counter culture. I know from numerous contacts with people who identified with the counter culture, in the U.S. and to some extent in Mexico and Italy, that the Children of God were never accepted. Feelings were generally negative, and ranged from boredom and annoyance to suspicion that they worked for the CIA. This was particularly true of the "New Left"; some less political parts of the counter culture, such as the commune movement or the consciousness-expansion and meditation movements, may have been more tolerant. A little Italian book entitled Guru Cola (Contracultura/11 1975) went into some detail. It said that CCG used "un falso linguaggio rivoluzionario." It said the atmosphere in

COG's Rome disco was nauseating, that COG was friendly with the reactionary and clerical press. They compared Mo with "Generale Patton" (see also Salvatori 1976), and concluded, "CIA o non CIA," Il Bambini di Dio should go home (Contracultura/11 1975:47).

The English counter culture was, according to Musgrove (1974:123) "as unChristian[106] as Nietzsche would have wished." Thus when Musgrove asked a member of the "alternative" about Jesus Freaks, the informant replied, "There's thousands of the bastards." More specifically, the informant disliked and felt "paranoia" about the Children of God, whose "Moses" was really "sinister."

> Communal living with sexual segregation! I don't call that very revolutionary. They've been doing that in the British army for years (quoted in Musgrove 1974: 139f).

The Children of God once disrupted a speech by Jerry Rubin, at that time an important Yippie and youth movement leader. Before he could say anything, the Children of God began to bang their staves on the ground and call out "Doom, doom, doom." According to Drakeford (1972), "Rubin never had a chance."

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[106] The London "alternative guide" Time Out in 1973 reviewed a play by the Jesus Family, which Frampton sponsored after denouncing COG. The play sounded a great deal like COG's play "Johnny Walters." The reviewer concluded that the play "read like a joint effort by the CIA and Moral Re-Armament" (quoted in Corry 1973:29).

The "Movement" in the U.S. had made up its mind about the Jesus Movement by August 1971, when Ramparts magazine published "Jesus Now: Hogwash and Holy Water" (Nolan 1971).

> Suddenly, Jesus is everywhere....Jesus is even more popular than John Lennon.

Nolan understood the need of high school kids from Kansas to come down off acid (LSD) and maybe even find a way back to Kansas, but he did not think of the Jesus movement as part of the peace movement. He pointed out how the Christian World Liberation Front had disrupted radical rallies and stormed left-wing underground churches; the latter were part of the anti-war movement. Nolan grouped the Children of God with the rest of the Jesus movement, unaware that COG recruits did not go back to high school or get jobs as a result of their conversion. His conclusions, however, apply to COG as well as to the others:

> In an age of choose-your-apocalypse--ecological, political, thermonuclear, social, famine, overpopulation, natural disaster (experts say it's all about to happen) this doomsday-preaching has an infantile appeal. It is the chief drawing card of the hippie-evangelist as he whips out his Book of Revelation and rattles through a cookbook account of how it all will come to pass. "I'll be so disappointed if the world doesn't end soon," one Jesus person told me with a look of gleeful death-obsession on his face (Nolan 1971).

In Peru, a "New Left" magazine named Oiga discussed the Niños de Dios twice during Sept. 1977. The first article called COG a multinational organization making millions of dollars off the exploitation of the young, all for a man

they have never seen. It criticized the blend of obedience and docility (Eisenmenger 1977). The following week, Oiga presented a translation, with the infamous picture, of the Time magazine article about the Family of Love in the Canary Islands. On the facing page they printed a picture of Rasputin surrounded by female supporters. COG's reply to the previous week's article was dutifully printed. The two pictures, strikingly similar except that in one the bearded man surrounded by women was David Berg and in the other it was Rasputin, presented Oiga's opinion clearly, and no article or comment was considered necessary.

Around that same time an American who identified with the New Left and the counter culture was in Peru. It was August 1977, a period of street fighting, strikes, and curfews. He wrote:

> Interestingly, even with all the control over presses, etc., [Los Hijos de Dios, that is, COG]...are multiplying here like crazy....No one else hands out pamphlets on the street (for very long--at times leftist groups hand out fliers done on clandestine presses but the police bring them in pretty fast)....No one else is allowed to propagandize. At all! (Anonymous, 8/77).

Another American, also involved in New Left and feminist causes, was touring Europe in 1974 and met the Children of God in several countries. She wrote in her journal:

> May 5 [1974]--The Children of God are marching--and it is a depressing sight....They have such strength in their idealism, in their sense of community and the strength they give and seek from one another, and yet they attribute this strength to a god rather than to themselves. They do not

> want even the responsiblity of thinking it is their own decisions, their own actions that are effective, for then they might have to plan the future, instead of just letting things happen as "the will of God"....
>
> In a room of perhaps 30-35 adults were at least six infants less than a year old--I have never seen people so positive towards children, though of course this has its negative side in the role-importance of motherhood. These children have not thrown over the ways of their parents yet--and do not even see what they perpetuate.
>
> The four boys played the electric guitars and drums and sang, the two girls did go-go dancing--in briefs and without bras, but with decorated paper pasties on their nipples. And I seemed to be the only one outraged that there were no naked men! And the guy who has already fathered three children by the ripe age of 21 asked me how old I was, and when I replied 30, he asked if I had children. I said no, and he said "Shame on you"....Only one man held an infant--all the others were held and looked after by their mothers....A woman did lead the prayer-song session at the beginning...but that was the only spotlighted female, except of course for the go-go girls! Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose (Dinerstein 1974).

5.5 MISCELLANEOUS SOURCES OF IDEOLOGY

Not all of CCG's ideology could be traced to roots in the Pentecostal movement or the counter culture. There were also pragmatic considerations, individual quirks of certain leaders, and structural causes. Outside influences and pressures affected the ideology over the years, and for all we know unseen groups may have dictated some of the policies. Though we cannot analyze all these factors, we can present a quick overview of some of them. Since the group

formed around a charismatic leader, who quickly absented himself from most of his "children," we can expect that his personality and wishes would have a great effect on the group. This was seen in small incidents such as (Chapter 4) when disciples didn't drink orange juice and milk together at the same meal because Mo had said he used to get upset stomachs from combining fruit and milk. It was also apparent in the turn to flirty-fishing. Mo was projecting his own personal situation--he was an aging man living with a beautiful young woman--onto the entire organization. If Maria began to get involved with other men, and Mo found a way to use her sexuality to attract certain men to COG, then other men should do the same with their wives, he reasoned. If he liked certain parts of a woman's body, and disliked other parts, then that must be how God wants men to feel, and cartoons reflected Mo's tastes. Other key leaders, such as Emanuele, also had an effect, especially if they were able to get their writings published by COG. It was probably some of these top people who shifted the emphasis of the group to "big fish," that is, to making contacts with rich and powerful people.

Organizational considerations helped to dictate a policy of strict obedience and of sacrifice.

> The discipline of Jesus' revolutionaries must be absolute "obedience to them that have the rule over them, for they care for their souls, as they that must themselves give account"....You must obey implicitly, quickly and without question your officers in the Lord, if you wish to remain a mem-

> ber of this Team, "giving cheerfully as unto the Lord," "without murmuring", remembering that "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (COG application form).

Some of the leaders, including Joshua and several others at lower levels whom I have met, had been in the military. A military hierarchy was a convenient way to organize a group of people. It was also a convenient way to get them to do things they might not want to do, such as litnessing for hours at street corners, or "forsaking" their accumulated "shiners rewards" for a purpose specified by a leader. Youth who wanted to give themselves to and for a cause were filled with the ideology of "sacrifice," and told to "die daily" and "forsake all" constantly, or they would not be true revolutionaries. The leaders who had responsibility for telling people how and what to sacrifice benefited directly from this ideology. But there was a less cynical aspect, too. As Faith Berg put it in an interview in the NNN, obedience was the key to unity. A group scattered in hundreds of colonies in 70-80 countries needed a very good organization in order to stay united. The Mo Letters, and the ideology of obedience to the Letters and to the "Chain of Cooperation" (leadership hierarchy), provided that organization. In later years Mo sometimes raged about how people "disobeyed," including his daughter Deborah and his ex-wife. Like much of his sexual writing, this "tantrum" about disobedience should probably be understood more as a revelation about Berg's personality than about the Children of God.

What it does reveal about COG, however, is how unchallenged the patriarchal model remained even up to 1980.

Chapter VI

SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN AND RECRUITS

The Children of God were trying to reproduce a new and deviant social organization. Therefore socialization of new members was of crucial importance. The ritual that defined the moment a person became a member was "forsaking all," and among the things to be forsaken were social ties with the outside world. For children born into the group, the same separation was maintained by keeping the youngsters out of System schools. That necessitated establishment of COG schools. In many ways children and new recruits were considered similar. Both were called "new bottles" and "new disciples"; having babies was considered an important method of increasing membership; recruits were called "babes." The contribution of births to membership growth is shown in Table 7. The birth rate of the Children of God was ten times the growth rate of the United States in 1975, 6% for the former, compared with .6% for the latter. Some reasons this was so, besides the ideology, will be discussed in Chapter 7.

The Children of God started marrying and having babies when they were "on the road." The large number of pregnant women, babies, and children in their communities was noticed by many observers. In Dec. 1978 there were 1741 children and approximately 5000 adults in the Children of God. At

TABLE 7

COG Growth by Births, 1972-75, 1978

Year	Total Disciples	Births	Births as % of Total Disciples	Net Yearly Growth	Births as % of Net Yearly Growth
1971	1475	?			
1972	2123	108	5.09%	648	16.6%
1973	2244	120	5.34%	121	99.1%
1974	3031	206	6.79%	787	26.1%
1975	4215*	258	6.12%	1184	21.7%
1978	5000*	611	12.22%		

*The total for 1975 does not include catacombs disciples; the total for 1978 is approximate.

(Sources: NNN 7, No. 1, 1/76; "Knew Disciples," 3/79.)

the time of my visit to Bassettc, there were almost 900 children up to age 12 in the Family (Keros 1976: personal communication). There were about five schools in Italy, and a few in other countries. Most of the children in Jan. 1977 (NNN 9, no. 9, 3/77) were in the U.S.A., France, Italy, Mexico, and Brasil. In those countries (Jan. 1977), children were approximately one-fourth of the total membership. The adult/child ratios in those countries are given in Table 8. By December 1978 there were 1741 children, one-third of the total membership. It was difficult to determine how many of the children were attending the special COG schools. My impression in 1976 was that there were only about six COG

TABLE 8

Adult/Child Ratios in 5 Countries, Jan. 1977

COUNTRY	OF ADULTS	OF CHILDREN	ADULTS/CHILDREN
France	307	104	3/1
U.S.A.	295	137	2/1
Italy	281	86	3.1/1
Brasil	269	75	3.6/1
Mexico	234	84	2.8/1

schools, mostly in Italy, and that parents in the rest of the world did not benefit from the schools. Many of the parents, however, had assistance from one or more childcare workers. After the Reorganization Nationalization Revolution (Feb. 1978), most of the schools disbanded and many of the childcare workers abandoned their posts. (We shall discuss this more in the next chapter.) While there was talk about the parents educating the children with childcare educational materials published by CCG, many parents were having difficulty in simply caring for the children. Berg asked, "Are your children becoming one [with the people in the mission field]?", and the parents registered the children in System schools.

The Children of God classified their children into five groups: babies, toddlers, junior BBB's (Benjamin Bottle Breakers), senior BBB's, and high school. Youngsters finished high school by age 13. CCG's educational philosophy was that the children should learn to read, and then they could teach themselves whatever they needed to know by looking in reference books. At Bassetto they had a set of 70 MacDonalds Books on Natural Science, which seemed an excellent series. The COG education stopped when the children had learned the "3 Rs" (readin', 'riting, and 'rithmetic). Actually, "high school" was unlike most outside high schools in more than the age range (10-13). At Firenze, the high school students seemed to spend most of their time litnessing and taking care of the Firenze disco--good training for adult life in CCG. Sara Davidito, the child-care worker for Mo and Maria's son, wrote a series of letters after the RNR. In the Family News someone summarized her philosophy:

> Sara has the vision about training the children for discipleship and not as scholastically high qualified people (FN 5, No. 9, 9/78).

Sara herself spelled out what she considered the most important things for the children to be learning:

> witnessing, the Word, music, learning languages and then the other scholastic things (Ibid.).

This chapter describes the Children of God's childrearing practices and indoctrination of new members during 1975-76 in Italy and the U.S., and analyzes some of the contradic-

tions in these practices in terms of the internal class structure of COG, the conflicting philosophies influencing the group, and practical considerations.

6.1 CHILDCARE WORKERS

When David Berg was a child, his family had a full-time childcare worker who travelled with them (Berg 1979:cover photo and caption). When Maria had a baby, they had three childcare workers for little Davidito. It was common for families, especially of leaders, to have help with raising their children. In the next chapter I will discuss the role of child-care workers in the internal class structure of COG. Basically, my argument is that they were a subservient "class" who worked for the married people, invariably leaders during this time period, and made it possible for these married couples to have children and fulfill their roles as leaders.

In Staten Island, New York, in October and November 1975, I observed the roles of the childcare workers, three teenaged girls in the big house, and another one or two with the Band colony. One of them had her little charge for a week, because his parents were "on the road." She had no one to help her except the other childcare worker, and no time off. The other worker, assigned to a little girl named Rain, said that she had two days off per week, one to go litnessing and

one as a free day, on Sunday, which was family day when the fathers were supposed to be with their children. One of these workers said she hadn't been outside the house for a week, and hadn't been to the disco for a month. But the parents for whom she worked, Susanna and Micah, recognized the problem and were trying to give her more time off. In practical terms, that meant that Susanna took care of Rain while the child-care worker went to the disco. Micah told me that in the South there were some very big families, with five and six children, and that it was mostly the mothers who cared for them. He said COG was trying to get away from such dependence on childcare workers.

The childcare workers in Staten Island were very quiet and almost subservient. One young woman rarely spoke unless spoken to. They were clearly working <u>for</u> the mothers and fathers, like nurses or nannies. The children in Staten Island, as well as in some colonies in Italy, spent more time with the childcare workers than with their parents. Rain had her own little room, and Mary, her childcare worker, slept there on the floor beside Rain's little bed. The school at Velletri, near Rome, took care of the children day and night four days per week. If the parents were travelling, one of the childcare workers would take the child on the road for the long weekend too. Bassetto school, on Duke Emanuele Canevaro's estate, was a full-time childcare facility too, though some of the staff there were also parents of

the students. It seemed that in several colonies and schools I visited, there was always one quiet little child who hadn't seen its parents for a week, or more. One child at Bassetto, who was staying there with his mother as they travelled through Italy on COG business, showed great anxiety that his mother might go off and leave him there alone. The staff reassured the boy that his mother loved him and couldn't forget him. Yet a few years later I read a letter in the Family News by the childcare worker for this woman's second baby. This worker said the mother virtually abandoned the baby, trying to get various other people to take it. The fact that such a letter was printed, though this mother was in a clique that was being criticized at the time, indicated that COG was aware of the problem. Even earlier there had been admonishments in the literature about the practice of dumping the youngsters off at the schools.

Besides contributing labor, the childcare workers and teachers paid most of the expenses of the school facilities and of their own upkeep. The staff paid the rent for the little school at Velletri, for example. The staff's own parents sometimes contributed money and clothes to help them. One teacher lived on such a bare subsistence level that she asked me if I could send her some clothes, since her mother wasn't able to help her. The Children of God organization bought the school equipment, and the parents paid for their own youngsters' food and clothing.

6.2 PHILOSOPHICAL CONFLICT

The Children of God had philosophical roots in two different, and often opposing, traditions--Fundamentalism (or conservative Catholicism) and the 1960s counter culture. In terms of childrearing, these two traditions were in nearly complete conflict. The only points of agreement were natural childbirth, breastfeeding, good nutrition for expectant mother and children, and a collective interest in the next generation. Even in those areas the conservative religious tradition added its own touch. For example, in 1976 no one I met in COG would admit to using birth control or to practicing "pre-marital sex." They felt they were supposed to have as many children as God wanted to give them. One mother of three, however, told an unmarried younger woman that she was going to "pray God to give me a little break" before her next baby. I was also told that nursing mothers tried to get their babies onto a feeding schedule as soon as possible.

The philosophical and methodological conflict became apparent in the area of pre-school education. The Children of God said that they used the Montessori method, and asked for donations for their Montessori schools. (Later, after the RNR [see Ch. 3], they said they no longer used this method, partly because of the expense of the equipment, and partly because they had found it unnecessary for their way of

life.) Yet I found that COG had altered the Montessori method in keeping with a more coercive theory drawn from their conservative religious roots. The changes also enabled COG to train their children for very practical tasks which COG required of children.

6.2.1 Conservative Religious Childrearing Philosophy

The religions from which COG arose saw the child as an empty vessel, and as polluted by original sin. It was therefore necessary to raise the child against its own (sinful) inclinations, and it was legitimate to fill the child with the personality, knowledge, etc. determined by the religion. A child became what the parents and teachers made of her/him.

An extreme example of this philosophy in practice came from the autobiography of a former child evangelist, Marjoe (Gaines 1973). His mother was an evangelist who had not wanted a child. To compensate herself for his birth, she decided that she "had produced a Miracle Child, and now she had to find a way to make the rest of the world believe it too" (Gaines 1973:13). By the time he was 9 months old she had trained him to shout "glory" into the microphone. At two, she started him on baton-twirling and music lessons. Meanwhile, she isolated him from other children and told him he was different and special. At three she forced him to

march in a Christmas parade twirling his baton (Gaines 1973:13ff). Marjoe, whom we must remember was a trained liar from the age of 3, said that all his mother wanted from him was that he get headlines so she could become rich and famous. He said she used not only positive reinforcement--love (and the withholding of love)--to train him in the various "miraculous" tasks required, but also cruelty. When she was trying to get him to memcrize a sermon, at age 3, she poured cold water over his head or smothered him with a pillow when his attention wandered.

> After the first day, punishments were no longer necessary, and she trained him five hours a day for four weeks. Finally the child had perfectly memorized his first sermon. Her future sat before her. Her way out (Gaines 1973:1f).

The child wonder, child star, child prodigy, precocious child, was and is the parent's ticket to wealth and fame in other fields, too. In music in recent years, the usual practice has been to shield genuine child prodigies from early exposure, and train them tc be competent and emotionally mature adult artists (Winn 1979). But as we can see from the case of Marjoe, child wonders could be manufactured and put "on the market" early by ambitious parents. The four Berg children, incidentally, learned early to recite verses and sing publicly.

A key figure on the Fundamentalist side cf the split in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod wrote a Christmas Letter

in his Christian News in 1978, after the denomination split. In it, he brags[107] about his six children, and also explains how he was raising them:

> They leave the house every morning with Dad and jog into town shortly before six and return most evenings a little after five....We've found this daily routine to be a wonderful time to be together with the children and to memorize scripture and sing hymns while jogging back and forth....
>
> Evenings the three older children are supposed to practive their piano and guitar lessons and Miriam and Timothy also their flute and trombone. The three of them feed their 4-H steers and dairy animals before they leave for school and again when they return....
>
> Dad does very little to help them with their heifers and steers. They have to pay for their own feed and keep a record of all their expenses....
>
> Ruth [age 5] wants to go into the chicken business to have eggs to sell to the family....This year Ruth joined the older children in swimming their daily "laps"...(Otten 1978).

6.2.2 The Montessori Method

A contrasting philosophy of child-rearing can be seen in the work of Maria Montessori (1870-1952). She believed that very young children are already beginning to learn from their surroundings, and have active minds. She taught that they must be provided with many types of stimulation and helped to learn during "sensitive periods" when they are "particularly receptive to particular stimuli" (Hainstock 1976:8). Children are not empty vessels whose impulses are

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[107] This is the opinion of my mother, who was very familiar with Otten and with this tradition of childrearing.

a sign of original sin. Montessori learned from her work with Italian children who were "culturally deprived" or retarded that each child is an individual, whose privacy, personality, and individual pace of learning must be respected. "The environment should reveal the child, not mold him," Montessori said. The Montessori philosophy was to...

> awaken the child's spontaneous interest in learning....to instill in your child a sense of discovery and awareness, as opposed to mere surface learning (Hainstock 1976:7).

Montessori thought children were not naturally "naughty," but just curious, and said it was the job of parents and teachers to provide a stimulating, never boring, child-sized environment. She said that "discipline must come through liberty," and that "the educated hand is a free hand" (Hainstock 1976:10). The ultimate goal of a Montessori education was a free, independent child who grew into an adult capable of thinking for him- or herself (Hainstock 1976:12).

Montessori developed a set of teaching materials and techniques which were very successful in accelerating and improving the learning of pre-school children. Some of these methods could be used in the home (Hainstock 1976), and the method has been used in many schools.

Though Montessori's method seems free compared to that of the Fundamentalists discussed in the previous section, it has been criticized by some educators within the "progressive movement."[108] These educators say that the materials themselves contradict the philosophy. There are a limited

number of materials and the tasks are too structured. There is only one correct way to perform a Montessori task, while progressive movement teachers prefer to give open-ended tasks and to teach children to be creative, to realize that there is more than one way to do something. One of the most important criticisms of the Montessori method, at least of the method as it is usually seen in practice, is that it leaves out play. Yet "play" may well be one of the most important ways that children learn.

> The child's play is the infantile form of the human ability to deal with experience by creating model situations and to master reality by experimenting and planning (Erikson 1950:195).

Putting spindles in the compartments of a number box, squeezing sponges, picking up paper clips with tweezers, matching colors, matching sound bottles, placing a series of graduated wooden cylinders into the appropriate holes in a block, pouring rice, and tracing letter and number insets---all are no doubt excellent ways to develop sensorimotor skills and may prepare children for writing and reading. However, they leave no room for the exercise of the child's imagination. "The child should be an experimenter and explorer, the creator of its own learning," (Kathleen Holz 1981: personal communication).

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[10] I am indebted to Kathleen Holz, of the Bank Street College and of City and Country School, New York City, for much of this discussion.

6.3 MONTESSORI ACCORDING TO MO

So the Children of God chose a method that was relatively disciplined compared to some of the other methods being taught at the time. There may have been a historical rather than philosophical reason for this. The Montessori method was known to the lay public, and disciples found it convenient and accessible. Without having to go to college they could gain accreditation for themselves and their nursery schools through correspondence courses. Part of the Montessori educational theory is that the teacher should be well trained. Disciples could take a nine-month correspondence course and afterwards a two-week workshop. Then, if they passed the exam, they were certified. In 1976 they were still hoping their children would never have to attend "System schools." Yet COG's educational goals were not the same as Montessori's. They were not trying to help their children to become free, independent, self-confident, and capable of thinking for themselves. The Children of God wanted to fill their "new bottles" with the words of Mo and of the Bible, and to get them out onto the street litnessing, witnessing, singing, and generally serving the organization as soon as possible. In sum, COG removed the heart from Montessori's philosophy, and what remained was a method for creating hundreds of miracle children.

Yet it was nct always that bad. The effects of the counterculture, and the fact that many children were not in the COG schools and had no schools in their homes, mediated to some degree. Also, the parents and childcare workers usually loved their children and wanted them to be happy, even if the little ones didn't serve the Lord quite so faithfully. At Bassetto, the best equipped COG "Montessori school," some of the children were bored and did not want to do the tasks. And some of the teachers were aware that it wasn't enough; they did other things like taking them hiking and making them an "ant farm."

6.3.1 Children are the Keys to People's Hearts

The author of Teaching Montesscri in the Home warned parents not to push the children toc hard or fast.

> Always take your lead from the child....Remember, this is not a contest. You are not doinc this to impress friends or relatives with Johnny's remarkable skills, but rather to help give ycur child a better foundation on which to base his future learning (Hainstock 1976:4).

But for the Children of God it was a contest! They were doing it to impress people. They always told me that their children were their best witness to the world, that the schools were their "sample," and that "children are the key to people's hearts."[109] The tour I took with Poy Wallis

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[109] With children they could get a place to stay, food, anything. Disciples told me that sometimes people cried because the children were "different," they "had so much love to give."

through COG colonies in Italy featured the schools, which they also showed to reporters (Serra 1976). Once in a table prayer at Bassetto school someone said that they knew the world was watching their school, and they prayed God to help them perform well.

The contradiction became apparent on my visit to the school near Rome. The teacher, Zipporah, told us that she wanted to make learning exciting and creative for the children, never boring, coercive, or too difficult. She showed us the Montessori equipment--some standard, some COG innovations. The reports written on the children for the parents, which I was not supposed to see, told a different story. The teachers reported on how the children behaved litnessing and witnessing--how eager, sweet, aggressive, how much money they received, etc. Their health was discussed, and so was their spiritual growth and progress toward the types of behavior COG expected of them. For example, little Tomaso, it said, always liked to be nice to the smaller or weaker children. The reports talked about discipline and the children's temoers, and whether they were willing to share. A favorite story one teacher told me was that one child saw a man walking by outside and said, "He looks like he needs love. I'm going to give him a Mo Letter." The children were expected tc develop a certain kind of personality and to represent COG to the world.

Teaching Babies to Read

One of the trained Montessori teachers in COG told me that COG did not practice the method as it was taught in the Montessori training course. She said that COG started at earlier ages than Montessori, and didn't wait for the Montessori age limits. This was a particularly important modification because one of the things Maria Montessori was known for was her discovery of "sensitive periods" when children were best able to learn certain kinds of sensorimotor tasks and sensory discriminations. The COG teacher told me that the Montessori method starts children reading at age 4, but COG was starting them at 2 1/2, or 2, "when they are ready." The technique they were using was based on a book, Teach Your Baby to Read (Doman n.d.). According to disciples I talked to in Italy, the four-year-olds read words with letters 2 inches tall, and younger children read even bigger print. I was told about a 2-year-old who could read 15 words. A little girl aged 1 1/2 could read 5 words and "knows what they mean but can't say them because she can't talk." COG published special little Mo books for teaching reading, using materials from the Mo Letters.

Why did COG feel it was necessary to teach children that young to recognize or respond to a printed word? Children can learn to read quite well starting at later ages. In fact, at least two progressive schools of which I have

knowledge do not teach reading until age 7 or 8. They say that the children's eyes, and minds, are not ready for reading before that. These schools let children learn by playing and other tasks for which they are suited at earlier ages, and learn to read when they have larger vocabularies and can understand what they read. One possible answer, besides the obvious fact that COG was accelerating the children, was that many disciples had had difficulty in school themselves. Perhaps some of them were afraid that their children would not be able to learn to read unless unusual educational methods were employed.

Your 2-Year-Old Can Receive Jesus

Another thing that was going on in Europe while I was there (1976) was child conversions. The conversion experience, to most Evangelicals, involves a "decision for Christ," and some sort of religious ecstasy or special feeling. It normally happens among Evangelicals at puberty or anytime thereafter. Children of God had previously accelerated their children, waiting only until they were five to have them ask Jesus into their hearts. By 1976, however, some of the children were "getting saved" younger. A mother whose little boy "got saved at 2 1/2" told me what it meant:

> His life changed. He was a better little boy. The ones that get saved younger are more tender and open to what you have to teach them and are more humble and easier to handle.

She added that children can get the baptism of the Holy Spirit at that age too, and that Dad's (Mo's) kids were saved when they were about three. The children have to be led or called by the Holy Spirit. Her boy asked questions, so she asked him if he wanted to ask Jesus into his heart. The children see other people asking Jesus into their hearts, and hear people talking about salvation, so they are curious. She said that it was possible to tell the children that the Holy Spirit could give them boldness to talk to other people about God.

> Kids that are filled [with the Holy Spirit] have a different prayer life. They sincerely talk to God. The younger children do parrot prayers [just repeat words they have heard, without meaning it].

Mo debated the doctrinality of 2-year-old conversions with his former wife, in "Your two-year-old can receive Jesus." Mother Eve (Jane Berg) said that the children couldn't understand salvation at that age, that they didn't mean the words they said, and that most of them wouldn't feel anything special. She said the words alone were not enough. Eve wrote:

> I was visiting a Family Home where there were a number of small children and one of the mothers told me, 'Tonight we're having a birthday party, and after the presents, cake and ice cream all the children are going to get saved!' That's like a church communion, everybody's got to put on a white dress and go down the aisle. That is really bad because then maybe some don't get saved....First Holy Communion without a real experience of salvation can even stumble people.

Mo responded that that was that same old Holiness Pentecostal stuff that he had been trying to break her of for years. He said that all the child had tc do was obey and trust its parents, say the words, and the Holy Ghost would help the child believe and Jesus would come into its heart. He said the child didn't have to feel anything special to be saved. Mo's doctrine was more practical for COG than Mother Eve's, for two reasons:

1. It justified the practice of expecting a great deal from their children at an early age;
2. It justified including in COG's "scores" the souls of children whom they "saved" en masse, for example, by asking a kindergarten class or the children on a school bus to raise their hands if they wanted to have Jesus in their hearts. (Mo said that raising their hands was enough of a sign of their decision, and they didn't even have to say the words.)

Fill the Space with Bible Verses

Some educational methods have treated the child as an empty vessel, as a virtual spiritual and mental nonentity to be filled up with knowledge in order to be made into an adult. Such methods depended heavily on memorization and recitation. The child was considered to have learned something if it could recite it. Maria Montessori had rebelled against that view. Her doctrine was that the child had an

internal desire and capacity to learn and tc discover, and had a personality to be revealed. COG subscribed to the empty vessel, "new bottle," "holy hole" school of thought. Children of twc were memorizing Bible verses and passages from Mo Letters. The parents claimed that the children understood what they were reciting, or at least that they "got the spirit." This is unlikely. A child of two is not always certain who is "you" and who is "I," and even five-year-olds can be confused by the contrast between "deep" and "shallow" (De Villiers 1979:69). The conditional and the passive are learned late by children in all languages, because the thinking involved is too complex for those younger than five (De Villiers 1979:76-79, 135). Of course children love to memorize and repeat things they hear. But COG children memorized much more than the phrases and songs they liked and chose. They were assigned verses and pitted against each other in little contests.

One of David Berg's criticisms of System schools was that they didn't use memorization anymcre. (He also was offended by the new math and the idea that things were relative, as he wrote in "There are absolutes.") Adult disciples were always memorizing verses too. Much of the training at the "Babes Ranches," such as the one I visited in Staten Island, was memorization. On the daily "sword sharpening reports," disciples were to list what verses they had memorized and what verses they had reviewed that day. In the NBC film

about the Texas Soul Clinic, the women working in the kitchen were reciting verses in unison. (When I worked in the Staten Island babes ranch kitchen, the disciples usually played tapes, of Simon Peter reading Mo Letters, for example.) One leader was described by a long-time friend as "such a faithful brother" because he had memorized so many verses.

COG has two important reasons for memorizing verses. The first is that they expect that the communists and/or anti-Christ will destroy all the Bibles during the Great Tribulation, and that they will then be happy that they have the Bible stored in their heads. The other reason is that Bible verses are an important part of the language in which they speak to each other, and in which God speaks to them! Disciples told me that when they pray to God to give them an answer to a problem or a question, a verse often "comes" to them. Prophecies also may take that form, in which case they would say that they "got" such and such a verse.

6.4 THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF CHILDREN

These memorized verses were for the Children of God (as they were for Marjoe) tools of the trade. Sam (Ch. 4) took a little 7-year-old girl along provisioning. She was a real asset, for she would quote verses and that would often charm the businessman into donating the materials Sam requested.

Part of the pre-school curriculum in COG was preparing for public appearances. The Bassette school children performed at the Firenze (Florence) disco perhaps as often as once/ week. The Velletri children appeared at local bars (cafes). Roy Wallis and I were treated to one of their skits. Zipporah, their teacher, sang the words, and the kids did a skit about how nobody could help the lonely hippy, etc. Some of the children were very confused and couldn't remember which part they were playing; they just walked around.

The Children of God used music right from the beginning, and their bands were very important in opening up "the work" in new countries. Consequently music was an important part of the school curriculum. Shelomith, a member of the Rome band, came out to Velletri regularly to give the tots music lessons. She started by having them beat sticks to learn rhythm. Her father gave all the children little flutes. A big part of colony life was singing the COG songs, and the children were encouraged to sing along. One couple wrote that their children had learned to sing even though they both (the parents) were incapable of carrying a tune. Some COG children were semi-professional show troupes. The "Ho Family" which performed in China was a group of little blonde children whom I had seen at the Rome disco (see Ch. 5). They were the offspring of Ho (Jonathan Berg) and Esther. The children of Deb and Jeth also performed in a show group, as did the children of Singin' Sam (also known as Amminadab) and Shiloh, two of COG's premier singers. These

professional children were able to get radio and TV appearances and other media attention in Third World countries. The Children of the Children of God sang the first song for the COG album recorded in Peru. Many other parents who could sing and play guitar integrated their children into their acts. Pictures of such little performing teams were frequent in the New Nation News. Men often talked about "working with" or "training" their children, rather than about "taking care of" or "playing with" them. Mothers sometimes complained that their husbands weren't "real fathers" to the kids. One father I met had taught his two little children to play ukeleles. He was a very good guitarist himself. The three of them would play and sing on the streets and the wife or another disciple would go around litnessing and asking for donations. That was the most important source of income for their colony. When he came to New York to retrieve his wife and youngest child (the wife was being deprogrammed), he spoke of his worry that they would no longer be able to support themselves without the two children. While waiting for a court date, this young father used up his cash and began to consider sending for the other son so that he could perform on the street and get some donations in New York City.

During the years when I studied the Children of God, litnessing seemed to be the main source of income for the rank and file. Quotas were set for the number of pieces to be

distributed, and for the amount of money people were to bring in. "Stats" and "scores" were tabulated for individuals, colonies, regions, and COG as a whole. In the July 1976 New Nation News (vol. 8, no. 3), "stats" and "scores" were listed for children as well as adults. One child, for example, aged 7, distributed 70 pieces of literature in 45 minutes and won two souls. Another, aged 3 1/2, passed out 100 pieces in 1/2 hour. Age 4 was not too young to be expected to distribute 40-50/hour. A baby of 1 1/2 held in someone's arms or a backpack could speak a few words in Spanish to passersby and hand them Mo Letters. Noah, aged 3, helped his family earn their fares from Los Angeles to Mexico, by selling 18 "love buttons" for $20.

Where the children couldn't litness, they could witness or sing. They hugged beggars and gave them a coin in Turkey, saying "Praise God" in Turkish; the parents then could witness to the crowd (or perhaps just count them) (NNN, June 1977). In Tokyo a parent discovered that people were hesitant to close the door when disciples went door to door witnessing with their children. To encourage the children to win souls, a COG "home" in Tokyo made a pretty wall chart for them. It was a big, pretty spider web; the children would put stickers in for every soul[110] saved (NNN 10, No. 5).

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[110] "Do you want to go to heaven?" said the spider to the fly.

6.5 DISCIPLINE

The "mission" and economic contingencies of the Children of God dictated a mold into which they wanted to force the children as early as possible. The Montessori method helped the children to become "early achievers." The memorization, music lessons, and learning of skits were immediately applied in performances. A lot was asked of the children, and discipline was necessary to all this training.

6.5.1 More Discipline than Montessori

Three different COG educators in three different locations told me that they had altered the Montessori method because it did not provide enough discipline.

> The Montessori method does not have enough discipline for our way of life. So in the past two or so years we have revised this method and have a set curriculum. We do not just let them do whatever they want (Bassetto, 4/20/76).

Contrast this with Hainstock's advice for Montessori teaching:

> The child should be permitted to choose what he wants to work with and to repeat or stop as he pleases (1976:18).

The Montessori method aims to instill self-discipline by teaching the child not to return a material to its place until the task has been completed (Hainstock 1976:18). At Bassetto the self-discipline and perseverence were carried to such an extent that the atmosphere, at least the day I

observed, was stifling. There were six little boys who were to go into the Montessori classrocm. The teacher told them not to run into the classroom, and to be quiet. He lead them in a prayer which asked Jesus to help them to be quiet and good and not to hurt the equipment. One boy broke out of the quiet grcup and ran to get his toy. The teacher made him wait until last to choose a toy. On two consecutive days (April 20 and 21, 1976), I heard children saying they didn't want to do the Montessori tasks anymore.

6.5.2 "Lashes of Love"

> I used to tell Mom that the time to stop spanking is not when they're screaming, it's when they stop screaming and beg for mercy! I usually used a fly swatter....only I usually used the handle end, and it does sting, I'll tell you! Sometimes it leaves little red lines too, stripes, but by their stripes they are healed! ("Lashes of Love")

Mo also said that they should make the punishment fit the crime, that Dr. Spock was sorry now, that you shouldn't be too harsh or cruel and discourage the child, and that when it was over you should forgive them and love them up.

Most of the Children of God whom I asked told me they spanked their children, or the children for whom they were responsible. A lot of this was slapping them on the hand, it seemed. In the early days there was a practice of counting to three and if the child didn't stop crying, it would be spanked. I saw this method used once in Italy, but it seemed rare. Sam told me he spanked the four-year-old for

whom he was substitute father, and when I asked how often, he said, "Whenever he needed it." A father told me that he spanked his little girl so often that the neighbors complained about all the howling. Another member of the same colony, however, assured me that it wasn't that bad--he just slapped her hand and father and daughter loved each other dearly.

In October, 1975, a mother named Grace told me that they took most of their information about caring for young babies from the Better Homes and Gardens Baby Book. The big difference between that book and what COG practiced, she said, was discipline, and having faith. COG would have to write its own book to include these. Grace told me that these baby books didn't give the babies enough credit. Even a tiny baby could learn discipline; it could learn to pull back its hand if slapped.

Susanna, the mother of little Rain and a woman very involved in childcare for COG as a whole, told me the three things she considered important in child-rearing: diligence in discipline, consistency, and doing it out of love. While I was interviewing her, Rain became upset to hear the word "spanking." She was only 2 years old. Susanna explained that COG believed in spanking and scolding for rebelliousness, murmuring, and outright disobedience. It seemed to me that the Family expected children to be in a good mood at

all times. When Rain continued to be upset, Susanna took her out. They came back and Rain recited John 3:16 for me. Susanna said she hadn't spanked her, but that when she spanked, she did it out of love, explained it to Rain, prayed with her, and "loved her up" afterwards. A child, said Susanna, is not a possession but a real spiritual being that you are responsible to raise. It is a human being. Susanna's mother was very religious, and Susanna said she was raising Rain the same way. That night the little girl became ill, and her mother was up until 3 a.m. with her.

Two other examples of disciplining children took place during my visits to Staten Island. One was an incident in which Rain was told to stop whining. Her father made her look at him while he told her. The other incident was the sound of rythmic slapping, interspersed with the words, "Stop crying." That was a two-year-old boy.

After Maria had a baby, Davidito, a new series of child-care letters came out. Gypsy (Ch. 4), who had a new baby, said that the new letters represented a new revolution in childcare. People were supposed to pay more attention to children, not push them aside. Parents should put themselves in the child's place and try to understand: "How would you like it to sit in a docdoo diaper for two hours?" one letter asked. In "The handicapped child--Davidito," Mo criticized Davidito's child-care workers for pressuring him

too much, and never leaving him alone. He said that no one wanted to admit that the little boy stammered so badly he couldn't communicate. The end of the letter reported that after prayer, and a more relaxed approach, Davidito learned to talk. But the incident revealed the kind of pressure put on many COG children, who were expected not only to be miracle children, but to be the last generation of God's prophets, and great leaders, within less than a decade.

> Our children will be going places and accomplishing tasks that you have not even dreamed of.... They are our future and God is mightily concerned with how they are being raised (Esther David, quoted in NNN 11, No. 5, Dec. 1977, p. 4).

6.5.3 Bible Study

Several COG homes and schools had religious educational materials put out by other publishers, such as Concordia Publishing House (Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod), Pioneer Publishers (Spain), and Arch Books of Bible stories. The materials were similar to what many denominations use in Sunday School. In keeping with the standard materials, one Bible study class resembled a Sunday School class. This was at Bassetto (April 1976), the so-called Montessori school. The class consisted of six boys aged 3 and 4. A young European man was teaching them the story of Joseph and the famine in Egypt. He was using a Bible story book with big pictures. The children were fidgeting. One boy sat on my lap and said he loved me, which seemed a little strange

since we had just met. The teacher asked them questions, insensitive to the fact that they did not understand the story. For example:

> Teacher: Why did Joseph's brothers go to Egypt?
> Boys: They wanted to kill Jesus.

He kept asking the same question, they kept repeating the same answer, and he greeted their errors with disapproval. It seemed that the real lesson of this class was to sit quietly in a circle and be good, for a very long time. The boys kept asking to go to the bathroom, and looked to me for some break in the monotony.

6.6 READING--STRICTLY NON-FICTION

One mother told me that they had no fiction in their classrooms, because the children would get confused if one day they read them a Bible story and the next day a fairy tale, which wasn't "true." In addition, "We don't believe in new math or abstract sciences." Actually, I saw several works of fiction, such as Black Beauty, on the bookshelves, even in the schools. Further, the educational materials COG published were full of fantasy, including cartoons. One informant told me that they should not have confused the children by portraying Mo as "Papa Lion," a kindly figure with a lion's head. A little boy he knew started crying when he saw a photo of the actual, human, Mo in a magazine article. This dislike of fiction indicated to me that the Children of God were uncomfortable with the free play of the children's

imaginations, and also that they were insecure about whether the children would believe the message which COG was preaching to the world. (Very few adults outside COG believed their message.)

The Children of God put out many of their own educational materials, and by 1980 they were even talking about selling them to a wider market. When I visited Bassetto, I found a young worker from Australia making 50 sets of boxes with Montessori red and blue number rods. These were for parents to take with them when they went to mission fields like India, where there would not be encugh COG children to set up a school.

COG had to write its own reading materials for several reasons. For one thing, they had specialized vocabulary ("litnessing," etc.) which the children had to learn to read. In addition, they wanted to instill their philosophy and their religious ideas in the children, and use the images and verses they wanted the children to learn. Lastly, it was difficult for these children to relate to many of the educational materials used in cutside schools. As one mother put it, how could the children understand stories in which "Daddy goes to work," etc. One disciple told me that he was hoping eventually COG would start publishing materials that Black children could relate to as well.

6.7 NEW RECRUITS--ADULT "BABES"

The colonies where new recruits ("babes") were trained were called "babes ranches." The philosophy of indoctrination for new members was that they had just been "born again," and were therefore like newborn babies. They were treated like children in many ways, and their shepherds and shepherdesses played a parent role toward them. A disciple once told me that such and such another disciple was his "little baby," because he had "brought her to the Lord" (and to the Family). In the days before I observed COG (that is, before 1975/76) new recruits were often assigned a "big brother" or "big sis."

Some of the imagery of childhood used with the "babes" included instructions by one shepherdess that a young man should "toddle off to bed." Also, the Mo Letters given to babes at first were described as "milky." Much imagery of the babies needing a lot of milk--simple religious instruction--was used. The feeling of being a child totally dependent on and trusting one's parents was fostered by a particular practice. Babes were never told anything about what they would be doing in the future, even later that same day. Every minute was scheduled, and even "free time" wasn't really free, for their shepherdess suggested how they should spend the time. If she left them alone for a few minutes she would say something like, "Now why don't you just share

for a little while." That meant they should talk to each other. If she had said nothing they would probably have talked anyway, but her instructions kept up the feeling of dependence.

6.7.1 Life at the Staten Island Babes Ranch

On the bulletin board I observed the schedule for one Thursday. It included at least 14 items, with time slots averaging 1/2 hour. Part of the schedule was:

5:30 class
7:00 TV news
7:30 eat
8:15 clean-up

Another day at the Staten Island babes ranch began with the shepherdess coming into the boys room and girls room at 7 a.m. and singing one of COG's songs. One man who had just joined the day before said he was so shocked he thought he was in heaven listening to an angel singing. Babes then got showers or washed up. In general, the women had showers one day, and the men the next, because there was only one shower. Someone made coffee, tea, and hot chocolate, and a few babes had some. At 8 a.m. they met for a Bible class. The first reading was "Don Quixote, the Crazy Crusader." Then came something from the Bible, I Cor. 13, I believe, and then another Mo Letter. A rousing song, "Here's to old Don Quixote," got everyone excited and ready for the work period which followed. Tasks were assigned or babes could volun-

teer for them. Most of the tasks were basic housekeeping and maintenance. Generally, people would work in pairs or groups rather than alone. After the babes finished their tasks, they had some free study time. Some had another cup of coffee.

At 11 a.m. a hearty breakfast was served. A regular disciple (the food deacon) who was in charge of the kitchen had prepared it with help assigned on a rotating basis. Before eating the disciples prayed. First they said "Thank you Lord" or other such phrases about seven/fifteen times. Then someone took over and said "Lord, we just really wanna thank you" for this and that, etc., "and just help us to" do this and that, etc. The pattern for the before meal prayer was always the same at that colony, and the person who led the prayer was usually the highest leader present, or someone asked by that leader to give the prayer. Each person had fruit cocktail, apple juice, flavored oatmeal, and two or three English muffins topped with hamburger, tomato paste, and bacon or cream cheese. After breakfast everyone but the cooks helped clean up. One reason there was usually a big breakfast at the large colonies was that the disciples often were out during the day and had only a light snack for lunch. Several times I was at a colony around midday, and the disciples would fix something casual, but substantial, and call it a "snack." COG only had two meals/day, officially, plus that "snack."

After breakfast on this particular day, some of the babes went out witnessing with a member of the band. When we got into the car they prayed, once again starting with a chorus of "Thank you Lord" repeated several times. When I rode in a car with babes, the prayer was always lengthy before the driver would turn the ignition. With members of the Band, however, it was only a few words. The babes read two Mo Letters while we drove, and then congratulated each other on how happy they all were in their new family. When we arrived at our destination they prayed before getting out of the car. There was some confusion before they finally found a location to do their skits and sing their songs, and at some point in the preparation they prayed again, and may have even read a Mo Letter. When it came time to sing, the fact that it was new recruits was obvious. Only the band member knew the words, or played the songs accurately on his instrument. After he and one other disciple instructed the Staten Island Community College students why Darwin was wrong, the group began individual witnessing to anyone who would talk to them. This witnessing consisted mostly of telling their testimonies, that is, how they had reached the point in their lives of asking Jesus into their hearts and joining COG. The response was polite but uninterested. One of the babes was too shy to witness, and just stood around near the others trying to look involved. After this activity, most of the babes car-litnessed for the rest of the day,

and ate their snacks and suppers out. That evening when they came back there was a discussion about their experiences. One babe contributed, "The Lord showed me that we have to learn the words to the songs."

Like the little children, the babes learned Bible verses, and had Bible classes and other classes. One of the sources for a class I attended was called "The Laws of Moses." It gave the prophecies about David from the Bible, and explained that they should obey their leaders if they believed that these were leaders chosen by God. At the babes ranch in Puerto Rico, I have been told, the recruits learned the history of the Children of God movement as well as the various Letters and the Bible. At all the classes I observed the babes took notes. They studied, probably more than some of them ever had in school, and they read their Bibles most of the time when they had nothing else to do.

6.7.2 Why "You Gotta Be a Baby to Go to (a) Heaven(ly Home)"

Like the little children, the babes were quickly sent out witnessing, witnessing, singing, and performing skits. And, like the little children, some of the babes didn't like this part of Family life. It was my impression that some of the babes had not been aware of the fact that they would have to witness. In the case I observed where a babe was shocked, only one or two days after being welcomed into his warm new

family, to be sent out to "beg in the streets" (his words), the group used love and encouragement to convince him that it was a good idea and consistent with his own goals and beliefs.

Discipline was also very much in the picture for babes. One of the classes I observed was all about obedience to leaders, and of obedience of wives to husbands. The instructor told them that the word "disciple" came from the same word as "discipline." Even if God's leader told you to jump in front of a car, he said, you should trust God and obey. When you find yourself questioning a leader, or murmuring, you should ask yourself why you would rather follow yourself instead of God's leaders, and why you want to fight against God. I asked the shepherdess at the babes ranch in Staten Island about all this obedience. She said that usually when a member couldn't get along with the leadership the member would just leave. It boils down, she said, to each person's individual communication with God. She also said it was like the army[111]-- you are commanded to obey.

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[111] This young woman knew something about the army, because she had been raised overseas in Army schools. In addition to this shepherdess I met other disciples who'd lived with the U.S. military as children. Several other leaders I met had been in the service or even had been "lifers" (career military men). COG was frequently compared, by Berg and others, to an army or an officers training school.

Leaders only told the sheep (babes and other disciples below leaders) what they "needed to know." This increased the sheep's dependence on their shepherds. Many "babes" seemed to enjoy the feeling of "living by faith," moment to moment, after the anxiety and insecurity they had experienced "in the world." Some treated the training period as a kind of "rebirthing" therapy. They felt they now had a chance to be reborn and re-experience early childhood in surroundings that were more supportive or were superior in some other way to the surroundings in their own families. They were young and often naive. At that same age other youth often submit to gross indignities as a part of sorority or fraternity hazing (initiation). On the other hand, the secrecy of leaders also meant that babes and other lower-level disciples had no opportunity to make decisions or even express opinions about many matters that affected them, such as COG policy or their own schedule of activities.

The Children of God modelled itself to a great extent on the Berg family. David Berg gave the impression of having been an intelligent, sensitive, affectionate, while also stern and demanding, father to his own children. Even before the Teens for Christ, he had expanded his own family by taking in other "sons and daughters" such as the Dietrich brothers, whom he seems to have treated much the same as his own children. The converts who were on the road or at TSC with Berg also spoke of the close father-son or father-

daughter relationships which they had with him. Administrative letters contain words of enccuragement from Berg to individual disciples who joined during that period, and many recruits who joined later longed for the same type of relationship with "Dad." As the group grew, Berg was unable to develop personal relationships with the newer members, though he tried to sound intimate in the Mo Letters and though he sometimes called disciples to come and live with him and Maria. (That happened tc several leaders after the RNR. He said he was trying to teach them the right way to run a home, including the sexual sharing.)

After Berg left, the father rcle in the colonies and local areas was taken over by young leaders, many of whom had not known Berg, and had to imitate him second-hand. Perhaps it should be no surprise that many among these leaders were more concerned about their own child-father relationships with Berg and with leaders above them than with being loving parents to the "sheep." These leaders' own needs, and the needs of the organization (which were often consonant), became determinant. That frequently resulted in an exaggerated "patriarchal" control and subjugation of both the children and the newer recruits, whose individuality and personal needs were liable to be forgotten in the process. What the needs of these leaders were, and how COG worked to meet them, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter VII

MIDDLE CLASS SURVIVAL

> The number of beggars in Scotland is reckoned at not less than 200,000. The only remedy that I, a republican on principle, can suggest, is to restore the old state of serfdom, to make slaves of all those who are unable to provide for their own subsistence (Fletcher of Saltoun, 1698, in the parliament of Scotland. Quoted in Marx 1967: 722, footnote).

The Children of God was one of those supposedly egalitarian societies where "some are more equal than others." The material as well as the less tangible benefits to leaders were greater than to followers. It was not just a question of uneven distribution of the group's collective income. There was also cut-and-out exploitation of the people at the lower levels. Despite the ideology of sharing and the wishes of most members, COG reproduced much of the pattern of class relations of the Western societies which had both spawned and spit out the movement. The context which made possible a group structured like COG was a socio-economic crisis that touched youth of both middle and working classes. Many factors were of course involved in the formation of COG and other movements of youth during the early 1970s. Some of these have been discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. This chapter, however, will focus on the socio-economic problems of youth and the way in which COG both addressed and took

advantage of those problems. I suggest that the leaders of the Children of God followed the suggestion of the Scotch parliamentarian quoted above, and found a way to both support and use the "surplus" youth of the 1970s. "I am a toilet," said Berg, and have found a way to absorb the dirty hippy dregs of society, reprocess them, and turn them into something useful. But what would Fletcher of Saltoun have made of Samuel's (see Ch. 4) favorite song, "David is the Beggars' King"? Did the hippies come out of the COG plumbing system as serfs or as beggars, or as a little bit of both?

7.1 MIDDLE CLASS BACKGROUNDS

Many but not all Children of God came from middle class backgrounds. I defined the middle classes as managers, small business owners, professionals, middle to upper level clerical and sales people, and clergy. Small business owners and upper-level clerical people have often been called the petite bourgeoisie. Some of these correspond to what two sociologists have called the managerial class, those who do not own the means of production, do not buy the labor power of others, but who supervise others' labor and sell their own labor (Wright and Perrone 1977). Even more fit into the Ehrenreichs' (1977a) "professional-managerial class." The function of the "PMC," they say, is "the reproduction of capitalist culture and capitalist class rela-

tions...the direct or indirect management and manipulation of working-class life" (1977b:7). Working class was defined as those who do not own the means of production, do not employ or supervise the labor of others, and who sell their own labor (Wright and Perrone 1977). The capitalist class was defined as those who own the means of production, buy the labor power of others, and do not sell their own labor power (Ibid.). While there were stories of the offspring of the presidents of some large companies joining COG, the only ones I knew about were Emanuele Canevaro, whose family owned an olive oil and a wine factory, and Juan Carlos, whose family was supposed to be one of the seven richest in Peru. The son of the vice president for public relations of the Flying Tiger Line in Los Angeles was reported to be a disciple (Time 1972). A Mexican observer told me that three sons of the president of Proctor and Gamble were Children of God. In Newsweek magazine (11/22/71) it was reported that the son of a Houston industrialist, M.J. DuPuy, was a disciple. Informants also told me that the son of an important Admiral in the U.S. Navy had been in COG and was deprogrammed.

Observers have often described the disciples as mostly middle class or wealthy. An anti-cult organizer said that all the disciples she met in Toronto had well-to-do parents. In Mexico, disciples told me that in North America it was mostly middle class and rich kids who joined, but that in Mexico it was the opposite. Pressed, they said Mexican recruits came not from among workers but from families who had

small grocery stores, etc. The parents of one Mexican disciple I interviewed owned an apartment building. A veteran disciple told me that "for some reason" most of the Children of God were "well-off." A neighbor of the Troy colony said "all the girls were well-to-do." On the other hand, a reporter in the Canary Islands (M.I.R. 1977) said that the "cultural level" of the women was low, while the men were mostly "intellectuals." That statement may refer to educational level, rather than to socio-economic class.

To gather systematic data on class backgrounds, I surveyed a sample of 20 disciples in Spring 1976. Some were working class, and some were "upper middle class" or "rich," but none came from the capitalist class, the owners of the chief means of production in the U.S. I divided the sample into two groups, "new recruits" and "regulars." The latter were further divided into "leaders" and "other regular disciples," or "rank & file." New recruits were defined as those who had belonged to COG for less than one year. Of the thirteen regular members, four were from working class and nine were from middle class backgrounds. Among the seven new recruits, four were from middle class and three from working class backgrounds. I assigned members to the middle or working class according to several criteria: family income, parents' occupations, and self-description by informants. The data are presented in Table 9.

TABLE 9

Class Backgrounds of COG Disciples, Staten Island, 3/76

INFORMANT	HOUSEHOLD INCOME	FATHER'S OCCUPATION	MOTHER'S OCCUPATION	CLASS
Leaders				
1	<$10,000*	Small plane pilot, instructor, treasurer of a company	Secretary; housewife	M
2	$20-30,000	Feed salesman	Accountant secretary	M
6	? ("middle class")	Insurance; law	Teacher	M
8	$10-20,000*	Architect	Real estate; Exec. secretary	M
16	>$30,000	Travelling cement salesman; inherited land	Dr./dentist's assistant; secretary	M
18	? ("upper middle")	Baptist minister	Church musician	M
Other Regular Disciples				
5	<$10,000* Canada	Farmer/carpenter (deceased)	Housewife	W
9	$20-30,000	Designer of car parts	Housewife	M
10	<$10,000*	Longshoreman; bartender	Welfare mother; secretary	W
11	$10-20,000	Musician (stepfather)	School music consultant & supervisor	W
15	$11,000	Auto factory	Laundry factory; housewife	W
19	$20-30,000*	Invalid	Travelling jewelry sales representative	M

21	$10-20,000	Factory manager	Office worker	M
New Recruits				
3	<$10,000 Germany	Postal worker	Housewife	W
7	<$10,000	Oil burner man; "had a restaurant"	Housewife	W
12	$20,000	Restaurant owner	Teaches needlepoint in school	M
13 c	>$30,000	Architect	Teaches nursing; wealthy family	M
14	$10-20,000	Maintenance; Holiness preacher	Housewife	W
17	$20-30,000	Assistant principal	School secretary	M
20	$20-30,000	Small business	Housewife	M

I.	HSEHLD INC.	F'S OCCUP.	M'S OCCUP.	CLASS

KEY:
- W Working class
- M Middle class.
- * Mother's wages only; father deceased, absent, or invalid.
- c Catacombs disciple--lives with parents

The COG sample also had a background of higher family incomes than the U.S. population as a whole. Computing the figures with a variety of different subsamples, eliminating two who had not reported a family income and two who came from outside the U.S., always revealed the same basic pattern. More of the disciples came from the upper income levels, and fewer from the lower levels, than the national av-

erages. For example, in Subsample A (N=12)--all of the regular members except one Canadian--17% came from families with incomes below the "low budget line" ($9,170) computed by Rose (1979) for March 1976. By contrast, 31% of U.S. households earned below that figure. Two persons then had to be dropped from the subsample because it was not clear whether their families earned more or less than $20,000. In Subsample B (N=10), 40% came from families earning above the high budget line ($22,500), compared with the national figure of 15% (Rose 1979). Including the "new recruits," Subsample C (N=16), but eliminating two working class members who were not from the U.S. and two middle class members for whom I had no exact income data, I found the same pattern. While 42.3% of U.S. households in March 1976 earned under $10,000 (Statistical Abstracts 1976), only 19% of Subsample C's families earned below $10,000. On the other hand, 50% of the disciples' families had earned over $20,000, while only 25.3% of U.S. households were earning over that amount. The median family income in the U.S. in 1976 was $15,000. The median family income for the COG sample was more difficult to determine because informants placed their families within an income range, rather than giving exact figures (see Table 9). For the whole sample (N=20) the median was $10-20,000, and for Subsample C (N=16) it was between $10-20,000 and $20,000. Such small samples and subsamples can be easily distorted by one or two exceptional cases, and

these statistical comparisons should be understood as merely supportive evidence. It is important to remember also that this sample is not necessarily representative of the Children of God as a whole.

While the new recruits were a relatively diverse group, the six leaders in the sample were a relatively homogeneous group. All were white and came from middle class Christian backgrounds. The regulars who were not leaders had a more diverse background. Four were working class, and of those four, one was Black and one was over 40. The three other regular non-leaders were white middle class, but younger than the leaders. Of the working class regulars, three had shown some dissatisfaction with COG. Gideon (see Ch. 4) had resisted joining for three years after meeting the Family. Uzziah and Philippi had both "backslid" (quit) at some time in the past. The other former "backslider" was white and middle class, but Jewish. The pattern therefore was that the core members, the most satisfied and long-term members, came from the white Christian middle class.

Another indication of the middle class backgrounds of many Children of God is the fact that at least four members of the sample, all white middle class and three of them leaders, had brothers or sisters in the Children of God. Many other leaders and old-time members I met had siblings in the Family; others joined with friends or brought in

friends afterwards. While the first convert in one of these families or "pre-existing friendship nets" (Lofland 1966:61) might have joined because of drug addiction or some other crisis, it is unlikely that the others did so. The fact that a person could convince a sibling to join COG, though the two would probably not live in the same colony, may indicate that there was some practical or other benefit in joining, something which would benefit two people from the same backgrounds.

Though there were members of the sample from the working class, few were from the organized working class, that part which belongs to labor unions. Out of the 17 who answered the question, 7 had at least one parent who was in a labor union. Three of those were teachers' unions. Only three of the disciples themselves seem to have belonged to unions, and only two articulated a pro-union, pro-labor stance. Those two were from working class families in Germany and in Canada. Though some of the disciples and some of their parents had attended college, I found none who could have been called intellectuals. The educated parents were designers, architects, and teachers, or managed businesses. The disciples who had attended college had been studying the arts or sciences, not the social sciences. The only social science major had been in a junior college police science program in a junior college. This is significant because Flora Lewis (1977) learned that Tunisian students divided into Marxists

and religious nationalists along the lines of their majors, with the humanities and social science students attracted to the former and the technical students to the latter.

7.2 DISINHERITANCE

The Children of God, like most other millenarian movements (see Ch. 2), was a movement of the disinherited, but of the relatively, not absolutely, disinherited. One of the first Mo Letters widely distributed was "Bye Bye American Pie," a commentary on a hit song of the same title by Don McLean. In the Letter, Berg said that American youth had lost faith in America. Both working class and middle class recruits would have faced a difficult time in the outside world achieving the American Dream, because of economic trends and/or because of individual factors. Furthermore, many felt that the whole generation had been rejected by the power structure in the U.S., who refused to bend to young peoples' demands and pleas that the war in Vietnam and the drafting of young men to die there be ended. Most likely some disciples, like so many other men their age, had been thrown out of their homes for refusing to be drafted. But symbolically the whole anti-war generation was being thrown out of the system, out of the country, or into jail. The feeling of disinheritance was very strong. However, in this chapter I will confine the discussion to socio-economic disinheritance, particularly of the middle class members.

7.2.1 Economic Trends

Several economic trends affected the generation which joined the Children of God. In 1970 and in 1974-75 there were economic recessions. Beginning in 1969 there has been a steady rise in unemployment, with youth unemployment leading the way. Teenage unemployment, according to one economist (David Gordon, personal communication) could be safely estimated as twice the national unemployment rate throughout the 1970s. By the middle of the decade, the "street scene" in San Francisco and other youth ghettoes had been taken over by "dropouts and pushouts from working class backgrounds." This new vagrancy was related to unemployment and psychological disorder, and social institutions were failing to help many of the young street people (Segal et al. 1977). White-collar unemployment was recognized as a problem during the 1970s. During the 1971 recession it was 3.6%, and in January 1975 it was 4.6%. (Blue-collar unemployment during January 1975 was 11%.) Young middle class people, and ambitious working class youths, would have been among the groups most affected by white-collar unemployment (Kilborn 1975). Youth unemployment was an international problem, affecting school drop-outs and school graduates alike in both "developed" countries and much of the Third World (Scully 1978). The U.S. had one of the highest rates of youth unemployment: 14% in 1976.

> University degrees are "fast becoming tickets to nowhere," according to a recent report from the

International Labor Office in Geneva (Scully 1978).

Certain occupations also were shrinking, some as short-term trends and some because of the long-term development of capitalism discussed in Chapter 2, that is, the gradual decline of the lower middle class. Teaching was a profession that was in serious decline during the 1970s. There was a large surplus of teachers seeking work in relation to teaching positions available. From 1971 to 1973, the years when two members of the Staten Island sample would have entered the market, "only about half of all applicants obtained teaching jobs" (Dillich 1981:36). This was due partly to demographic factors: many of the new teachers were part of the post-World War II "baby boom," while there had been a recent decline in the numbers of new children being born. Every year during the 1970s there was a surplus of at least 70,000 teachers (Dillich 1981:36f). Other occupations were also suffering decline. Among these were small business and small farming, and the type of social work and Great Society jobs created by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. With Nixon and the Republicans, government spending on social programs began to decline. The term "starving young artist" is almost a cliche, but true nonetheless. Many musicians, actors and actresses, writers, and visual artists cannot afford to practise their arts independently. Competition for grants or for positions in the paying orchestras,

etc., is so keen that most artists work in teaching or for large corporations, doing work such as advertising that they do not find artistically or spiritually fulfilling.

Half of the members of the sample had been unemployed for six months or more between the time they quit school and the time they joined the Children of God. Another one had been unemployed for one month, and a twelfth had been "underemployed," that is, had worked only part-time when he would have liked to work full-time. The reasons these young people had been unemployed were not always that they simply could not find a job because of the high rate of youth unemployment. I did meet disciples who had that kind of history, most notably a young worker from an industrial town in Canada who said he had gone around and around among the ten factories in the town, and finally had had to move to Toronto. The unemployment among this sample was caused mostly by job dissatisfaction and general malaise, in combination sometimes with health or emotional problems. Table 10 summarizes the work histories of the sample.

Inflation rose rapidly after the Vietnam War, partly as a result of that war. With problems of unemployment and/or the low wages young workers could command, young people were particularly unprepared to pay higher prices for the things they needed. As people reach adulthood they usually move out from their parents' homes into homes of their own, at

TABLE 10

Work Histories of Staten Island Disciples

	LEADERS (6)	RANK & FILE (7)	NEW RECRUITS (7)	TOTAL (20)
Never had a job	1	2	-	3
Joined COG immediately from school	3	2	-	5
Worked for unsatisfactory wages	1	-	4	5
"Good job"	2	4	4	10
Unemployed more than 6 mos. between school and COG	2	3	3	8
Work ambitions difficult to attain	5	6	2	13

least according to the ideal American pattern. Youth, therefore, are a large market for new housing. Close inspection of Table 11 will reveal the fact that most of the disciples living in colonies in Staten Island in 1976 had been in need of housing when they joined the Children of God in the first place. Some had no home and met the Family while travelling, a common occurrence, to judge by the many testimonies I heard in Europe and the U.S. Others were liv-

ing with their parents, a situation that could not last forever.[112] Others were in unstable living situations, such as staying temporarily with a sister or living with a commune which was about to lose the lease for their farm. But the cost of housing rose drastically during the 1970s. Between 1970 and 1976, the cost of a single-family new home rose 96%, and the maintenance costs rose 102%. "The poorer third of the population has been completely priced out of the market," concluded a joint MIT-Harvard study (Frieden and Solomon 1977). Rents rose, too, while construction of new housing and rehabilitation of existing housing decreased.

> Decent housing, that staple of "The American Dream," is becoming a luxury item reserved for the rich (Schaal 1977).

Another part of that American Dream is the nuclear family. But by the 1970s many young people could simply not afford to have children. The hospital costs alone were prohibitive, and even those youth with jobs were unlikely to have medical coverage for childbirth. One study concluded that the cost of raising a child born in 1976 (to age 17) would be $84,777 for a family in the moderate income group (Minge-Kalman n.d.). The cost of a child born in 1958 was only $27,578, by contrast. The $84,000 does not include the cost of college ($3680/student/year) or the foregone labor

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[112] Actually, many young adults failed to move out of their parents' homes during the 1970s because of the high cost of housing. It was a trend which some parents found difficult to handle (Fleming 1978).

TABLE 11

Housing Situation of Sample at Time of Recruitment

SITUATION	NO. OF PERSONS
Temporary or unstable living situation	6
Travelling	2
Living with parents: moved out to COG colony	4
Army or college; quit and moved to COG colony	2
Had own apartment but had job etc. problems	2
Catacombs disciple still living with parents and paying board and room	1
Had not lived with parents for at least two years: housing at time of recruitment to COG unknown	3
Total	20

of youth and mother. Added all together, a child's cost to its moderate income parents would be well over $150,000. No wonder the 1970s witnessed an increasing "resistance of the family to reproduce virtually unaided by the state" (Ibid.). The U.S. growth rate in 1970 was .9%, and by 1975 it had declined to .6%. The Children of God's birth rate in 1975, by contrast, was 6%, ten times higher. Minge-Kalman related the decline in the U.S. birth rate to the same economic trends we have been discussing:

> ...labor's value to capitalist industrial production does not increase as rapidly as the cost of reproducing it.

7.2.2 Downward Social Mobility

I found that most members of my sample had been affected by some of these economic trends, and/or by personal and family factors which resulted in decreased prospects for economic success. Most of the middle class members were, in my estimation, in real danger of becoming "proletarianized" at the time of their joining COG. I think they were at a point in their lives where they were asking themselves hard questions about their futures, and COG seemed to provide a kind of security and survival. A journalist wrote of the Children of God she'd met, "They fear the unknown, the deprivation they have never experienced" (Alexander 1974).

By going through some individual cases, we can see how various factors combined to hurt people's immediate or long-term chances at "success" or at "middle class survival." First, let's look at the six leaders. Abigail's family moved from middle to working class when her father left. But Abigail graduated from college, and should have been able to earn a good middle class salary herself. However, her field was teaching, and she graduated in 1972. Perhaps that was one reason she had wanted to switch to nursing, a switch which had also been considered by the German student in the sample. Peter had been studying education too, but he had quit school. He also had other problems; he had been experimenting with yoga and drugs and was becoming disoriented. He no longer wanted to teach. Jeremiah had also

"drooped out"--and when he tried to get back in by applying to VISTA, he was rejected. After several years of living on the beach and playing the guitar for donations, Jeremiah, who came from a large family, was not in a good position to get a new start. Sara also had experienced the sudden proletarianization that often comes with divorce, though her father may have contributed money to her upkeep after leaving. Sara had been very unhappy working as a secretary--the high-paid job she had gotten through a friend of her mother's turned out to have strings attached--she was supposed to have sex with the boss. In terms of looking for a new job, Sara had another problem--she had been arrested for possession of marijuana. Grace ran away with hippies, and was rejected by her family. While working as a migrant fruit-picker she had a dream that she would end up truly poor, on welfare, with children and no husband, like many of the women from Arkansas with whom she was working. If she had gone back to her family and to college, she would have had little chance of a satisfying job, since her field was art. The sixth leader, Jezreel, was the son of a Baptist minister. He said that he was upper middle class, that his father had made enough money to retire at 37. He was in high school when he saw the chance to find a secure position in the Children of God.

There were two teenagers in the sample. Both came from affluent families, but had dropped out or been kicked out of

school and were being economically pressured by their families to return to school. Milka's parents, who were rich, forced her to pay them half her wages--she worked at a fast-foods restaurant-- for room and board. Hezekiah's parents worked in schools, and he had been expelled. Like Milka, Hez did not want to go to college. He had worked for low wages for a year as a janitor-dishwasher, and supplemented his income by selling drugs, which he also took himself every day. Neither of these teens could have kept up the standard of living of their parents without attending college or finding some kind of independent business in which to invest.

Two men in the sample had worked in family businesses for their parents. Both seemed to have severe emotional problems. Timothy had trouble relating to people, and Zebedee had had a breakdown because of drugs and mysticism, among other things. Both had also been frustrated by their perceptions of the failure of the anti-war movement.

Art was another person with emotional problems. He had a breakdown involving physical symptoms that caused him to be hospitalized. His father was a factory manager, but Art had been a music major. His ambitions were somewhat unrealistic, separately or in combination: he wanted to be a composer and inventor. Both fields are very difficult to break into. In COG he could be an important member of the band working on original music.

To sum up, the general pattern among the middle class members of my sample was downward social mobility in relation to their own parents. The single most important immediate factor causing that was the inability or unwillingness of most of these, as of most other disciples I met, to go to college. At that time college was becoming a necessity for the preservation and/or justification of middle class status. Many jobs that the parents could have qualified for without advanced education now required college from the next generation. In the sample, six dropped out of high school and seven dropped out of college. Only one graduated from college. Their educational achievements are indicated in Table 12. This sample contrasts sharply with the Unification Church membership of 1981 (English 1981). The Moonies claimed that only 5% of their members were high school dropouts, and that 22% had college degrees. It must be remembered that there is a difference of five years involved, that the Staten Island group consisted of only 20 people from an organization with 4000 members, and that in 1981 the Unification Church was emphasizing education and trying to gain accreditation for its seminary. It is important to add that some of these people told me that they dropped out of school <u>in order to</u> join the Children of God, or that they had planned to join COG after high school graduation.

TABLE 12

Educational Achievements of Staten Island Sample

Grade Completed	Leaders	Rank & File	New Recruits	Total
16	1	-	-	1
13-15	2	2	2	6
12	1	3	2	6
9-11	2	1	3	6
8	-	1	-	1

In a competitive situation, those with the most self-confidence would have the best chance. Many of the Children of God came from families who could not give them a good emotional start in life. In all, ten of the twenty people had had problems relating to people, the kind of problems which might have led others to psychiatrists. Most of these ten had had problems relating to their parents, too. One young woman came from a family where mother and father had radically different political views, and she herself was so shy she could not relate to people or attend school. Another had an invalid father and a mother to whom she could not relate because the latter was always away travelling for her job. Out of 16 for whom I have information, 6 had lost a parent through divorce or death. Of the 14 who answered the

question, 6 had one or two parents with drinking or drug problems. The kinds of problems disciples had with their parents are outlined in Table 13.

TABLE 13

Problems with Parents, Staten Island Sample*

PARENT(S)	LEADERS	RANK & FILE	NEW RECRUITS	TOTAL
Deceased (N=16-19)	-	1	-	1
Divorced (N=16-19)	2	2	1	5
Disabled	-	1	-	1
Drug/alcohol addicted (N=14)	2	1	3	6
Politically conservative &/or racist	4	5	3	12
Relation poor with informant	2	4	5	11

*Figures are minimum numbers, based on those who answered the particular question.

There were other indications of imperfect emotional health. I asked a long series of questions about drug and alcohol use, and received answers from 19 people. Nine of them said that they had been heavy cigarette smokers. Four or five reported having been dependent on drugs or alcohol.

Ten had been heavy users of drugs, meaning they had used four or more drugs (including alcchol but not tobacco) "often." Fourteen had used marijuana and/or hashish often. Drug use was symbolic of the mutual rejection of young people and society, for most of the drugs which were important to the counter culture were illegal. It is thus highly significant that 80% (all but 4 out of 20) of the Children of God interviewed in Staten Island said they had tried or used at least one drug banned by U.S. law.

7.3 MIDDLE CLASS ASPIRATIONS

At first the Children of God recruits had a relatively low standard of living, by middle class standards, and prided themselves on that fact. They talked about how other people were slaves to their possessions and had many artificially created needs. Mo wrote a letter about "The Land of Not-Too-Much," and many disciples talked about how their vision was the simple rural subsistence portrayed in "Heavenly Homes." In 1976, two couples in the U.S. acted out their idea of transportation without oil--they took a long trip by covered wagon (NNN 7, No. 3, 1976). However, as we have seen, some people were not living the ascetic life. They might have talked about St. Francis of Assisi, but they did not really forsake all every day. When the press exposed the standard of living of the leaders, COG's response was to talk about raising the standard of living of all the mem-

bers. This change was accompanied by the emphasis on flirty-fishing for fund-raising and to gain influence in the System. Mo began to talk about dressing like the upper middle class, rather than like hippies, and the membership that stayed with COG went along with this change. In 1974, a future-leader's wife told me how her husband had tried to talk his father into letting him have his trust fund. The young man had said he wanted to invest the money in the Children of God. This statement, out of context, could be interpreted many ways. However, it certainly indicated that the disciple had a view of COG as something that would grow and change over time. Perhaps he, or other middle-class recruits, began to want to enjoy their investment after working hard for five or six years.

Though the Children of God forsook all, in the early years, they also provisioned all. Several people asked me for my camera or tape recorder. Further, they said that God said to provision nice things. A neighbor in Troy, N.Y., told me in 1976 that one day everyone in the colony had suddenly been wearing brand-new down jackets. Clearly, they were willing to look very middle class. The bands were well-equipped. A great deal of property--cars, stereos, furniture, cameras--passed through the hands of disciples as new recruits "forsook all." In Europe, I was told that many disciples liked to litness in Switzerland because they usually received a 2-franc piece ($.85) for a Mo Letter there.

So by a gradual process, disciples were drawn to recruits with nice possessions and large bank accounts, and to witnessing areas with high standards of living. This may have affected their own tastes. Even before the RNR, disciples who visited Saudi Arabia wrote that they had stayed in a palace with the Saudi royal family for seven weeks (NNN 7, No. 12, 1976), hardly the type of surroundings or companions that St. Francis would have chosen.

Part of the Reorganization Nationalization Revolution was that homes were to try to raise their standards of living. When the Visiting Servants came around they checked on things such as the number of sheets, quality of food, etc. (FN 4, No. 4, June 1978). Faithy wrote a report about the Homes in Japan that criticized them for sleeping on the floor and living at the level of "the poorer Japanese classes." The Visiting Servants for Japan responded, "The Japanese don't sleep on the floor, and neither do we." Disciples slept on mats, just like many of the middle class and even the rich Japanese (FN 4, No. 10, 7/78). In Dacca, disciples moved into a neighborhood of "the top foreign and Bengali people" and opened a nursery to which they hoped some of these rich people would send their children (FN 6, No. 5, 10/78). In northern Brazil, disciples who were very aware of the starvation in the area FF-ed rich people and rented "a very nice house in a good location for a good price" (FN 7, No. 12, 11/78). The Chilean team described

how high the standard of living was in the "very potential city" into which they had moved (FN 4, No. 9, 7/78). There were many more reports of this sort in the Family News after the RNR.

Much of it had to do with Flirty-fishing. Berg made what seemed a complete reversal in orientation. He said they hadn't ever really been poor, but had attracted rich kids ("Rags to Riches").

> God had to have the youth revolution first in order to have a beautiful young army that could attack the system in its weakest spot--sex!
>
> One night I got the girls together [in Tenerife, Canary Islands] and I said, "Listen, we're no longer hippies here! We've won our share of hippies, weirdos, beardies, revolutionaries, teenagers and banana pickers before! Here we're not after them. In this swanky club we are after the System, the top Systemites! We're attacking the System itself! We're going to win the leaders of the System!" ("The FF explosion," 4/77).

Disciples who had resisted the attempts of Fred Jordan and Kenneth Frampton, and often of their own parents, to buy them, now seemed to have succumbed to the influence of their own rich lovers, who gave them presents and never even asked them to change their religious beliefs. Berg admitted to having been cynical and opportunistic in founding COG:

> We first reached the kids with the cry of revolution! Sex was not our main approach to the U.S. kids at all. With them it was our revolutionary political and prophetic message which was really the bait for the U.S. kids....They were rebels without a cause and we just gave them a good cause to fight for! ("The FF explosion").

In mid-1978, disciples flirty-fished more than they litnessed ("Seek first"). The Bangladesh Home wrote:

> We have heard from many sources that since the war in Beirut, the "petro-Arabs" have been looking for another holiday-pleasure spot and that they made a proposition to the Bengalese President that if he agrees to build a centre with bars, hotels, dancing, etc. that they will come to Bangladesh to enjoy their free time.
>
> This pleasure centre is already in the works--in a town about 40 miles from our Home! So it looks like a bright future for our Ministry of Love! PTL! In the meantime, please pray for us and any financial help you can send will be a blessing, as this is a very poor country! (FN 7, No. 10, Nov. 1978)

7.4 HOW THE CHILDREN OF GOD WORKED

Veteran disciples told me they were committed to the Children of God in part because "it works." They had created something, and it worked. As Children of God they were willing to give up some of the privacy and comforts of middle class America in return for an economic and social security which made it possible tc out-reproduce their agemates in the System, and to fulfill many of their other ambitions as well.

Collectives and communes which provided subsistence without forcing people into wage labcr had a tremendous appeal to youth during the recession years. Of course the economic aspects of communal life were not the only inducement, but they were crucially important and were often ignored by peo-

ple discussing the phenomenon. Communes reduced the cost of living enough to make independence from parents possible. According to one survey, 30% of college youth in 1971 said that they would like to spend time in a communal or collective living situation (Yankelovich 1974:71).

For leaders in the Children of God, and for many other disciples as well, the communal life style made it possible to survive without a job, and to have as many children as they wanted. Sharing the rent and other subsistence costs, such as food, lowered the cost of living. Colonies or groups of colonies could often purchase food and other things in bulk to further reduce costs. COG colonies in the Rome area had a food coop, for example. The collective use of large appliances, cars, etc. was much more efficient than the usual American system according to which each nuclear family must buy its own wash machine, car, refrigerator, etc. Thus a young couple "just starting out" needed no money, no property, and no relatives, because they did not have to buy anything.

7.4.1 Going Where the Grass was Greener

The overseas migration also helped middle class survival. Maria wrote to her family in the U.S. that in her travels she had discovered that the U.S. was one of the less desirable places to live. This was a common assessment by disci-

ples. It was not only the Children of God who were migrating to Europe in the 1970s. Other Americans were also being lured to Europe by the lower cost of living there, the rich cultures, and the opportunities to live in pleasant cosmopolitan centers which had a lower incidence of violence than the American cities at the time (U.S. News 1971a). Overseas branches of American companies offered jobs which also attracted migrants. Among the employees of international firms the Children of God found friends, supporters, and "fish." In Latin America, the cost of living was so much lower that the Children of God could live in relative luxury. In December 1978, Berg noted that the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Greece and Turkey were nice places but didn't need so many Americans ("Knew disciples"). Earlier that year he had suggested that the African pioneers were just enjoying themselves touring Africa ("Black holes"). There had been a tendency of Children of God to congregate in large settlements ("blobs") in sites that were desirable for young people--Florida, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Paris, London, New York City. In Survival (1972), Berg even mentioned that they would set up a travel bureau enabling youth to tour the world, staying in COG colonies. That never happened, officially. But it seemed obvious to me from the beginning that many disciples were in it for the adventure. In the age of the jet set, many youth felt derrived if they hadn't been overseas. COG was one way to make the trip.

The cheap or free health care in many of the "social democracies" in Europe was an important factor for COGs. Since young married couples expected to have several babies, they were concerned about the cost of the delivery. Like their countercultural cousins, the Children of God believed in natural childbirth. Several disciples told me of the difficulties they had with doctors in hospitals, who tried to force them to use fetal monitors and to have Cesarean sections. Generally, disciples preferred to have their babies delivered by midwives, at home if possible. There were reports of a baby being born in a trailer when the early Children of God were on the road. Babies were born at TSC, delivered by disciples trained as midwives. Babies were also born in the big houses in Staten Island and Troy, NY. But midwives are scarce in the U.S., and often do not have hospital admitting privileges. In Italy, a midwife could come to the colony, and if anything went wrong, an ambulance would quickly take the mother to a hospital.

Another inducement to living outside the U.S. was that some countries gave maternity or child allowances. One disciple told me about receiving approximately $30/month in Australia for two children in the late 1970s.

7.4.2 Supporting the Reproduction of Leaders

Even those parents who lived in countries without child allowances had an easier time of it financially and in terms of labor than the usual young parents in the U.S. The ideology of the group, expressed by everyone from "babes" to top leaders, was that "our children" were a collective responsibility, a gift from God, and the future of the Children of God. "If anyone ate, the children ate," said one former colony shepherd. Items like baby clothes and cribs were shared, and passed down from one baby to the next.

Childcare was a respected "ministry," and in the colonies where the leaders were also parents, childcare was given a high priority. At TSC, the babies were moved into a collective house at six months (Drakeford 1972:64). In 1971, a "widow's colony" was set up in Knoxville, Tennessee, for mothers who had no husbands. At the widow's colony, and even at Bassetto school at times, the mothers did a lot of the childcare if no other childcare workers were available (Deborah Berg 1974). The high leaders, especially the Berg family themselves, always seemed to have a special school set up for their children. Deborah and Jethro particularly needed help, for by 1978 they had 10 childen. While Deborah scolded the other mothers for complaining about having to take turns in the nursery at Bassetto and miss meetings and other fun, she herself only visited her children at Bassetto

once a month (Deborah Berg 1974). At other times some of her children were "mothered" on weekends by another sister. Ho's children had a special tutor for academic subjects and another who led them in a little musical group. Families farther from the Bergs or farther from headquarters and major centers had childcare workers if they could get them. As long as their household included single people they had help with the housework, finances, and childcare.

The Children of God was a miniature class society when I studied it.[113] The Berg family and other leaders lived off the surplus produced by the followers. While there were a number of strata in COG, from catacombs disciples and babes up through the "chain of cooperation" to Berg, the organization can be roughly divided into leaders and followers. At Laurentide in 1969 the Teens for Christ had chosen about half of their members as leaders. Until 1978 a similar pattern persisted, with large numbers of people designated leaders or leadership trainees (almost all non-babes in 1976 were leadership trainees). Yet, not everyone became a leader, especially not a leader of high enough status to marry and have the other privileges to be discussed below. The Children of God was set up in a pyramid structure. Those who joined earlier were raised up on the shoulders of those

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[113] Peoples Temple had a black/white ratio of 4/1. Most of the black members were uneducated. Most leaders were white, upper middle class, idealist, and female (Winfrey 1979).

who joined afterwards. As long as recruitment was rapid, promotions were rapid. When recruitment slowed, privilege institutionalized itself, that is, leaders found ways to keep followers beneath them.

Babes, catacombs disciples, rank & file, and "mediocre leaders" (a term used by one low-level leader) litnessed, worked in the various COG ministries, helped the leaders with housework and childcare, etc. They contributed much more in cash and labor, not to mention their forsake-alls, than was needed for their own subsistence. Most disciples below the level of shepherd lived in dormitory-style rooms, and wore clothing from others' forsake-alls. Meals were provisioned, bought out of litnessing funds, or came out of the colony budget, which was made up of the income of the disciples. Transportation was by hitch-hiking. If they wanted to visit their parents, the parents were supposed to send them the transportation money. When the disciples wanted to "flee" America, they were allowed to keep most of the income they made litnessing, and accumulate a "flee fund" for their travel. Usually while they were getting up this flee fund they did not stay in a colony, but lived "on the road," provisioning meals and places to stay. Other personal belongings such as clothing or backpacks often came from their parents or were purchased out of the percentage they could keep from their litnessing incomes. That percentage was called the "shiner's reward." If the person

failed to meet the quota and bring in sufficient funds to the colony, the shiner's reward was not permitted. Sometimes people were not even allowed to return to the colonies until they had met their quotas. I never witnessed that, but I did see some babes kept out of the house when they were supposed to be on the road for several days. They had wanted to go back in to get some clean clothes. Catacombs disciples did not even receive the shiner's rewards, as far as I could tell from talking to them in Rome, and they certainly received no subsistence support, because they still lived with their parents or were in the army. The catacombs disciple I talked to in Rome told me they turned over 100% of the money they made car witnessing to their shepherd. In the U.S., one colony shepherd asked the catacombs disciples to do personal errands for him.

Leaders were able to force followers to forsake items and money. I saw this happen to a babe's boots, and heard about another disciple losing his guitar and a third his flee-fund to leaders. Mother Eve and Stephen were accused of holding "forced forsaking all sessions" (FN 4, No. 2, 6/78). The Visiting Servants' report for Northern Europe after the RNR gave the picture.

> I'd never seen so clearly how the old leaders would all too often blow in: 'Okay, now, here's your quota, you need to send 40% this month since you only sent 30% last time. Your schedule will be this and this, and you need to get a Church of Love this week and if you don't get a disciple you'll be reclassified, and I need your stereo for the AB and that nice suitcase you provisioned.

GBY. ILY. Now, I expect all these things done when I come back. Goodbye!'

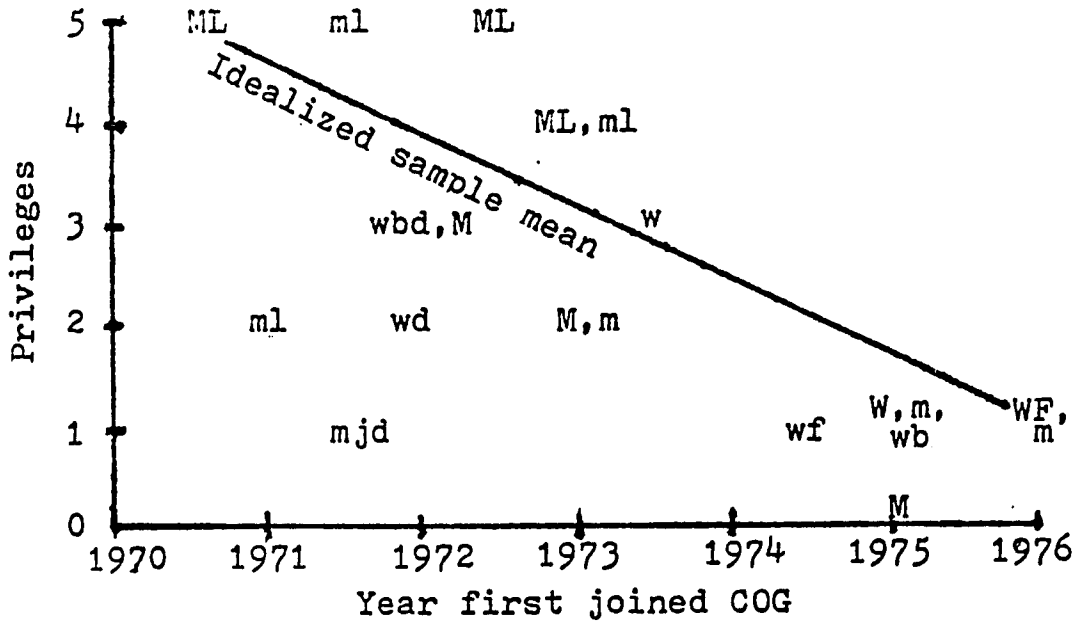
It was part of COG "security" that outsiders could not observe the living conditions of most of the higher COG leaders. For example, I could visit the Rome disco and the schools in Italy, but I could not visit Emanuele Canevaro's mansion at Poggio Secco nor the band's homes in Rome. The clothing of the Rome band members in 1976 was much more stylish and better-fitting than the clothing of the New York band members, an indication that they were not as dependent for subsistence on forsake-alls. The diet at the Rome disco and at Bassetto school was also superior to the New York or Chicago diet, though some of that may have been due to lower food prices and/or a greater emphasis on good food in Italy. It was also not evident that the Rome band members litnessed, though I did see a band members' wife litnessing at the railroad station once. Large quantities of toys and other children's things were being sent from New York to Rome for distribution in Europe and throughout the world. That was in a sense a subsidy of European parents by American single people who put in long hours litnessing. The Paris show troupe had tried to live off the litnessing surplus of other people a few years earlier. In August 1974, Berg wrote to them to quit asking the London headquarters for support, and to either get their costumes and support from their System contacts ("kings") or to start litnessing.

> And since when have we started giving long shopping lists on long distance telephone! For God's sake, the least they could do is get out and do their own shopping! They're beginning to act like a bunch of celebrities with a million-dollar income instead of the beggars we all oughta be! If St. Francis could do it, we can do it, and it's time paris woke up that I'm "King of the Beggars" and not some kind of movie star! ("Mo's worldwide newsletter no. 9")

A band member from London also indicated in 1975 that he and his friends there did much less litnessing than the disciples he was visiting in New York.

Leaders who lived in the colonies had extra privileges, though perhaps not as many as those leaders who travelled around and lived, like those in Rome, in "secret colonies." Figure 2 shows how the distribution of privileges related to tenure in COG in the Staten Island sample. Close inspection will also show that the working class recruits were less likely to achieve the higher levels of privilege as quickly as did their brother and sisters from the middle class. Some of the members of the Staten Island sample were travelling leaders, either temporarily in Staten Island, or residents of an "office colony" which was part of the big house in Staten Island.

In May 1978 some high leaders admitted they had never provisioned before (FN 3, No. 7). The colony where they had lived in 1976 had been partly supported by two single men who litnessed on the road full-time. These two men brought in over 1 million lire (about $1250) per month, and received



KEY:
L,l* leader
M middle class
W working class
D dropped out for some time
J Jewish
F foreigner
B Black
*upper case(L)=female
lower case(l)=male

Privilege Scale:
0 no material benefits
1 room, board, clothing
2 1-2 special privileges
3 3-4 special privileges
4 5-6 special privileges
5 7-8 special privileges

Special privileges included:
private room
personal clothing
use of car
could go out alone
permission to marry
living with spouse (and children)
had use of child-care worker(s)
independent travelling

Figure 2: Privileges in Relation to Year of Recruitment

nothing from the Children of God except the literature to distribute and a few meals each month when they reported back to the colony.

The way that leaders could move up in the hierarchy was to impress those above them. One way to do that was to make their areas "produce"--money, souls, disciples, and/or other "stats." "I know many times I did push and drive the sheep only for my own glory," one former leader confessed (FN 1, No. 5, 1/78). Thus even those leaders who received little material benefit from the surplus produced by those beneath them were still motivated to make sure a surplus was produced.

Higher leaders received the 10-45% that the colonies sent up the line. Mo and Mother Eve, and who knows who else, also received "gifts" from disciples and colonies. These gifts may have amounted to a substantial income, because many disciples I spoke to said they had sent one or both of these top leaders monetary gifts. Exactly how much income the top leaders received was a well-kept secret, and also the subject of much speculation by outsiders and opponents. After Jethro and Deborah left the Family, news items and letters concerning them appeared in the Family News. If these items are to be believed, Jethro was a hard, and greedy, task master. His successors said he was always pushing for high quotas and unreasonable minimum prices per

piece of lit. He wanted 10 cents/copy in Colombia, where the average could only be 1 cent. There was a home in Ecuador that had only four beds for twenty people, and the intermediate leaders suggested they be exempted from contributing money to COG leadership until they were able to fix up their home. Jethro, however, refused to give them that relief (FN 2, No. 6, 3/78). Meanwhile, Jeth and Deb and their 10 children were living quite nicely in Lima, Peru, in a house with a backyard swimming pool. Jethro was on salary. Even after they left the Family, they received $1000/month. Mo threatened that if they did not report, he would cut it back to $500/month (FN 7, No. 2, Nov. 1978). People also said they had received travel money when they left, had taken $20,000 in Family money, and had left a $700 phone bill (FN 10, No. 1, Feb. '79).

No one knew how much money the Children of God organization was making through literature sales and other means. Davis (1975) asked some of the top leaders, and they told him the gross income worldwide was $5 million. It went for printing, colony support, leader support, and missions, they said. Wallis (1976) calculated that during 1974/75, the litnessing income alone must have been between $2-8 million/year. At least 10% of that always went to World Services, the central headquarters. Another 35% in the affluent areas went to other leadership levels such as the archbishopric, prime ministry, and ministry. COG leaders and administration therefore had use of $1-2 million/year during 1974/75.

Berg himself reported ("Pickin' up the pieces") in June 1975 that the all-time high in the income of the total membership from litnessing was $625,000 for March, 1975. In April 1975 they brought in $425,000. That was the money brought into the colonies, not to Berg himself, he hastened to add. If these figures are correct, COG could have grossed $6 million in 1975 from litnessing alone. The March income was about $150 each for the approximately 4000 members, out of which they were to pay 10% to World Services. Berg complained that many colonies were not sending in their tithes. Whereas the World Services' share for May should have been $50,000, only $30,000 was received. Some of that 10% to World Services was supposed to be returned to the Prime Ministries to help with their printing and other services. This $30,000, then, must have been the official budget for the top 20-some leaders of COG (Mo and Maria, 4 King's Counsellorship couples and 6 Prime Ministry couples).

Berg wrote in March, 1975 ("More on 'How to'"), that the lower leaders should be supported by the colonies for which they were responsible, and that the higher leaders should live off printing and the contributions sent to COG in the mail. It was easier to observe the former leaders than the latter, both for the anthropologist and for the rank & file disciple. Berg's description of the financial arrangements gives some of the flavor of the flexibility COG tried to maintain:

> ...any officer who is not high enough that he has to operate a sprint centre and an office, if he is below that level, he'll have to get his income from the colonies and they'll have to take care of him.
>
> If he's on the bishopric, archbishopric, office and sprint centre level then he'll get his income from the printing and the mail. Won't that be about the way it will be? Of course a lot of this is going to be by trial and error to see how it works out.

After the RNR the method of supporting the leaders changed. Mo said that everything had to come out of the "tithes" (actually 11%) sent in by the Homes. The minimum a Home could send per month and still receive any literature at all was $20. If COG had 1685 homes, and each sent only that minimum, World Services would have had an income of $33,700/month (FN 7, No. 5, 3/21/80). That would only be about $400,000 per year. In one place Mo mentioned something about 300 leaders who remained in need of some support after the RNR. It is possible that the income of World Services was lower after the RNR and that the leaders' standard of living decreased. That certainly was what the disciples expected of the RNR. In comparing the $1-2 million of the earlier period to a $400,000 or more of the later period, it is important to calculate the amount of that income that went for printing. In the earlier period printing came out of the 35% sent up by each colony, while in the later period the homes bought their lit from "sprint centers" with money other than their tithes.

The question of finances has always been very difficult. No one in COG wanted to show anyone their books, or even to admit they had books. When the Attorney General's office of New York State subpoenaed COG's books, a leader brought in a pie-graph of the expenses of the Staten Island colony. Berg always wrote that he was living in a small apartment and scrimping and saving. Yet he told reporters that the 70 disciples in the Canary Islands received $200/month/person (that's $14,000/month) from Switzerland for their support. They lived in nice houses, with swimming pools, and there were Mercedes Benz cars parked in the driveways. When he was accused of receiving his income by exploiting the members, he responded,

> More than 99% of the income from the literature distribution goes directly to the colonies and the young people themselves to pay for their own personal living expenses, with only a small fraction going to the administrative expenses of their overseers ("Our answers! to Interviu's 202 lies," June 12, 1977).

In 1973 and 1974 there were quotas sometimes as high as 1000 pieces of lit/person/week (Rex Davis 1976: personal communication). COG was severely criticized for this, and by 1976 quotas were flexible, determined somewhat democratically, and were closer to 1000/person/month. It was interesting, however, that disciples I talked to felt the COG structure was more egalitarian than it really was. Several people told me that every single colony was "indigenous," that is, self-supporting. If that was the case, they were

unable to explain what the 10% to World Services was used for. Again, people said that all members of COG litnessed and had quotas, including Rachel and Emmanuele. One woman was convinced that everyone was distributing over 2000/pieces/month.

The area that was directly observable to me was not finances, but marriage and having children. These were not rights but privileges in the Children of God. Disciples could not marry without the apprcval of leadership. I was aware of several cases where people were not allowed to marry, were disciplined for sleeping together, or were sent to colonies hundreds of miles apart to prevent their marriage. Two married men I met were never allcwed to rejoin their estranged wives in Europe. On the other hand, since men outnumbered women two/one (see Table 14), the single men who became leaders pressured some of the new single women recruits into marrying them. One of the practical reasons for such control over marriage was that the group could only support a limited number of couples with children. Part of the whole package was a policy against birth control, so marriage almost automatically meant a child every one or two years. The only way to control the number of children was to control the number of marriages.

The patterns of single people supporting married people with children, of there being twice as many men as women,

and of the increasingly high proportion of children compared to adults, as well as the composition of a selection of colonies at different times and places, are illustrated in Table 14.

The Unification Church tried to limit the number of children by limiting sex within marriage. Converts were usually not allowed to marry for a certain period of time, a pattern also found in the Hare Krishna sect. However, the Moonies were bringing many Korean and other foreign disciples into the U.S., and marriages between them and American disciples had a practical benefit--allowing the foreigners to stay in the country. (COG also used this method to stay in some mission fields.) After marriage, Moonies were sometimes separated for three years. All couples had to abstain from sex for the first 40 days. But by 1981 there were only 22% single people in the Unification Church. The group was well aware that the single people had disproportionately been supporting the organization. They said that the number of children had grown so large and the number of single people so small, that they could no longer support themselves by sales of flowers and other items on the street (English 1981).

One of the leaders I met in the Children of God told me he had been married in the System, and that both he and his former wife had made "good money." Yet he had been afraid

Location	Date	Total Persons	Adults	Children	% Children (Children/Total)	Married People	% Married (Married/Adults)	Single Men	Single Women	% Women (Women/Adults)
Bear Creek Park, Houston, TX	12/69	95	85	10	10.5%	20	24%	45	20	35%
Staten Island, NY	4/74	10	8	2	20%	6	75%	1*	1	50%
Staten Island, NY	10/75	21	18	3	14%	6	33%	6	6	50%
Staten Island, NY	12/75	25	24	1	4%	4	17%	15	5	29%
Staten Island, NY	3/76	19?	17	2?	11% ?	4	24%	9	4	32% ?
Rome Disco colony	4/76	10	10	0	0%	2	20%	6	1	20%
Bassetto school, Italy	4/76	27	16	11	69%	4	25%	9	3	38%
Genova, Ital., 2 cols.	5/76	16	14	2	12.5%	2	14%	9	4*	28.5%
Torino Farm, Ital.	5/1/76	15	10	5	33%	4	40%	2	1	30%
Chicago office colony	1977?	8	6	2	25%	2	33%	3	1	33%
New Jersey family colony	1/77	10	7	3	33%	6 (4?)	86% (57%?)	1 (2?)	0 (1?)	43%
Philadelphia	7/78	12	6	6	50%	4	66%	2*	0	33%
Family of Love, total	12/78	5000**		1741	34%					

*plus one catacombs disciple
**estimate ("Knew disciples")

TABLE 14 Census of Selected COG Colonies

to have children. Now, he said, he didn't mind, since he knew "God would provide." "God," in this case, was the highly stratified COG organization, which supported him and his COG wife and child financially, did the housework, and took care of the baby. In the Soviet Union, the marriage rate and birth rate declined because of a shortage of housing and of grandparents willing to do childcare (Fried and Fried 1980: 181,222). The Children of God solved those problems very well for young couples. They also solved the problem of how to meet one's mate (see Fried and Fried pp. 22f), which was a serious worry to dislocated youth, particularly those who were very shy, like many disciples I interviewed.

The fact that it was mostly the leaders who were married can be seen for the one set of colonies I observed directly. Table 15 shows how this "privilege" was distributed among the different ranks in the sample.
Table 16 shows that most of the children were the children of leaders. In the Rank & File column is a man separated from his child and a couple who are moving up in the COG system, migrating with the band to Japan.

Given the unevenness of the entire COG structure, it should be no surprise to find that many of the new recruits left the Family. Table 17 shows that only about one-third of the people who joined COG during the period 1972/75 be-

TABLE 15

Married People in the Staten Island Sample

	LEADERS	RANK & FILE	BABES	TOTAL
Married, living together	5	2	-	7
Separated from COG spouse	-	1	-	1
Sep'd from System spouse	-	1	-	1
Never married	1	3	7	11
Total	6	7	7	20

TABLE 16

Staten Island Disciples Who Were Parents

	LEADERS	RANK & FILE	BABES	TOTAL
Parents living with children	3	-	-	3
Parents sep'd from child(ren)	-	1	-	1
Expect first child	2	2	-	4
Totals	5	3	0	8 (40%)

came permanent members. One disciple told me that she was

one of the three people who stayed out of her babes group of ten. Most of the growth in membership after 1971 came through births. In 1973, if we posit that all the families with new babies stayed in the Family, then virtually none of the membership gain could have been attributable to recruitment.

TABLE 17

COG Growth by Recruitment, 1972-1975

Year	Total Disciples (D)	Net Gain (G)	Births (B)	Net Gain Less Births (G-B)	New Recruits (R)	% Permanent Recruitment (G-B/R)	% Growth by Recruitment (G-B/D)
1971	1475						
1972	2123	648	108	540	2743	19.6%	25.4%
1973	2244	121	120	1	995	0.1%	0.1%
1974	3031	787	206	581	1251	46.4%	19.2%
1975	4215	1184	258	926	4420*	20.9%	22.0%

*1975 was a year of exaggerated statistics ("Knew disciples").

(Source: NNN 7, No. 1, 1/76.)

7.5 AFTER THE RNR--SHEPHERDS WITHOUT SHEEP TO SHEAR

The above analysis was confirmed by the changes that took place after the Reorganization Nationalization Revolution, which Mo called "breaking the chain of bondage," and which one disciple called "setting the captives free." After the RNR people were more willing to criticize leadership, in conversation and in letters to the Family News. Terrible things were said about even members of Mo's family, namely Deb and Jeth, and Mother Eve and Stephen. Mo had often criticized them over the years, but never so vehemently. Joshua, Rachel, Levit, and others wrote apologies for how they had disobeyed the Letters and mistreated the sheep. No longer could leaders force disciples to remain celibate, nor even to remain in any particular Home. Samuel and Gypsy, you will remember (Ch. 4), "eloped" after the RNR. In Spain, the formerly exploited catacombs disciples turned the tables. Some of the leaders wrote to Mo asking what to do about the teenaged catacombs couples who would come to the Home just for a place to have sexual relations. They would disappear into a bedroom, and afterwards would just leave. It seemed they were "pleasure-seeking" and not "really proving themselves in witnessing and litnessing" (FN 6, No. 3, Sept. 1978). (Mo put a stop to that with an injunction against "underage sexual activity" in the Homes.)

7.5.1 Caring for the Little Lambs

For the disciples over 18, or over 21, sex was now permitted, while birth control was still taboo. The result was that the birth rate went up--a record 611 babies during 1978 ("Knew disciples"). But the new freedom resulted in a decline in the number of child-care workers. In Spain there were 2.5 women/home, and 42% of them were pregnant or had newborns. After the 25 pregnant women delivered, there would be an average of 2.17 children/mother. Even before that, the 35 Homes in Spain were caring for 88 children, including 11 newborns. Child care help was needed because the pregnant mothers were "feeling a bit lost" (FN 5, No. 7, Aug. 1978). There were other cries for child-care helpers in 1978, such as one from the Pacific showing a picture of an adorable part-Asian child who needed a child-care worker:

> We needed you yesterday! Come today! (FN 6, No. 6, Oct. 1978)

One family with five or six children advertised twice for help before they got someone. The Family Care Servants suggested that people help out the parents in various ways, by coloring in the childcare materials, by playing with children or taking them on faith trips (FN 3, No. 7, 5/78; FN 6, No. 3, 9/78). Someone in the leadership summed up the result of the RNR for parents:

> Another sad result is that too often our parents lack the help they so desperately need with our children through this disorganization and everyone moving about so much (besides some people just not being willing to help!) (FN 6, No. 3, 9/78).

Chief among those unwilling to help were many of the men, including fathers. The RNR had released the childcare workers and other single people. As a result, the parents were having financial difficulties as well as increased childcare responsibilities. FF-ing was a needed source of income. One informant told me that after FF-ing began, the women, including the mothers, would go to bars without the men, since that was the best way, according to Mo, to have FF-ing "pay for itself." (If they went with escorts, the "fish" were less likely to pay for the women's drinks.) The men didn't like staying home and taking care of the children, and began to get involved with other women, inside and outside the Family. The mothers couldn't flirty-fish and also take care of the children, and the men's activities were increasing the number of pregnancies. There was jealousy, and some long-time marriages broke up. (I know of at least four such cases.) The RNR seemed to have broken down the "class" distinction between married and unmarried women. But it didn't break down the distinction between men and women. It seemed, from the letters to the Family News, that the married women had been reduced to the status of the former child-care workers. Not only women, but also some of the brothers, were concerned at what was happening. One man wrote that there had to be some changes made because the sisters were obeying the Letters and FF-ing but the brothers were not standing behind the PGs ("pregnant girls") (FN 6,

No. 6, 10/78). He said many of the women were afraid to get pregnant, afraid they were a burden. He said that he wanted to live "One Wife" and consider all the sisters his wives and help them through morning sickness, etc. Couldn't Mo please write something a little more specific to help in this area? Mo answered, "More love!" That was not very specific. It was clear from that and other statements that headquarters was cutting the disciples loose to fend for themselves (and send in their tithes [10% of income]).

Wallis (1977c) had said that it was easy for women with children to divorce and remarry because there were so many unmarried men in COG. But that was before the RNR. Afterwards, the new rules called for sexual sharing in the Homes, no enforced celibacy, and pregnancy was not to automatically mean marriage. The results for the women were often disastrous. In Chapter 4, I showed how Gypsy had no one but Samuel to depend on when she was pregnant, and had to get help from her own parents. In another case, a brother impregnated a disciple and took no responsibility. She did not feel welcome in any of the Homes. She finally went to live with her parents, who paid for the delivery and helped her for the baby's first year, after which she went away with a second Child of God and had another baby with him. A Mo Letter ("The advantages of having children") even discussed the case of a pregnant woman with three children and a "problem husband" who was sent out on the road by a shepherd who

didn't want to take responsibility. Mo said the selfish shepherd should be fired. Both women and men in COG were angry and upset about the way the mothers and children were being abandoned. Some blamed individuals, and some blamed the COG system:

> If these Letters on Davidito's training are for us, as Dad's prophecy certainly seems to indicate, and if "One Wife" is really God's vision for all of God's Family, and if these children we're having are really God's prophets of the future, then more than the leadership structure has got to change. And this is something that only you, Rachel, Dad and Maria can do. Please help us and your children all over the world! (FN 2, No. 9, March 1978).

Berg had suggested earlier, and apparently practiced this in the Canary Islands, a Home structure of group marriage. Instead of child-care workers, a couple could add another person to their marriage. One couple who had "lost our precious childcare worker" after the RNR raved about the new system of polygyny, after trying it for one month. The husband, two wives, and six children posed nude for the Family News (FN 4, No. 8, July 1978).

> To tell the truth, I've been waiting for this ever since I joined the Family 8 1/2 years ago--the time when we could all "share all things" together, especially the matters of the heart.

So said the husband. The wife was glad for the help, too.

> We all really want to follow the Letters, so there's no fear that I'll be put away or my children separated as happened to many couples in the past....we can all be one big, happy, loving family--free to do God's Will!

The childcare worker who became the second wife explained that she had always worked for leaders, either as a childcare worker or in offices. Yet she had been aware of the need of parents "on the field." Now her ambition was to make the Davidito Letters

> ...a reality in his [the newborn's] life, while at the same time Judea [first wife] and I are trying to take care of the other five, educate them, get them and ourselves witnessing and litnessing, FF, take care of Boaz [husband] and also the single brothers and at the same time keep the household running. I believe our only solution is to really live "One Wife" and be "one family," because these poor moms can't do it all! ...since we have started sharing more sexually with the brothers in the Home, they have begun to feel much more a part of the Family and have been helping much more and showing more interest.

It is too bad that there was no letter from one of the single brothers about how he felt about the "one big, happy family." Did these brothers feel they had just acquired two wives to "take care of" them? Did they feel they were now co-fathers of the six children? Did they feel that they might father a seventh or eighth child with one of these women? We have read what the women in this household did, but what did the men do? Did they have System jobs? Boaz was looking forward to spending more time with the children and training them. Overall he felt that the new system would lessen his burden, which had been severe before the RNP:

> Then every time we'd move from country to country, we'd have to hunt around for another childcare worker....The only thing that kept me was the thought that I could not bring these poor little children back into the system. I couldn't abandon them either, so I set my mind that it was going to be my "calvary"....

The second wife saw her new role as a "calvary," if we read between the lines. She wrote that more sisters were needed who were willing to give their lives, for weeks or years, to help the large families (FN 4, No. 8, July 1978).

Women were asked to sacrifice, not only in FF-ing (which Mo portrayed in a letter [with a particularly pornographic cartoon] as being nailed to the bed like Jesus to the Cross), but in sexual relations within the Homes. It became clear from a number of letters to the Family News (FN 5, No. 11, 9/78) that many of the brothers were using the sisters sexually. The leaders had made this possible, with letters such as "Male and female" (which stated that men's sexual needs were greater than women's) or "The girl who wouldn't" (which berated and condemned a sister who wouldn't sleep with a leader who was a lesbian), and with phrases such as "our system of having our girls help out some boys" (FN 5, No. 11, 9/78). Mo reminded the men to be more considerate, and also made a tape of himself making love, in which he murmurred all kinds of sweet, loving, sexy things and made sure the woman enjoyed herself, said disciples who heard the tape. One of the letters to Family News said that some of the women liked the "fish" better than the brothers, for the latter were very "cold" and "unappreciative." Some of the fish seemed to have been doing a better job of supporting the babies they fathered, too, and at least a few of the women were well aware of this (FN 5, No. 5, 8/78). Only one

month into the RNR, the childcare people around Mc were saying that no one would have schools any more, but that all the children would be educated by their own parents. (Mo's and Ho's children still had childcare workers. But, as Mo once said, some exceptions could be made for the "Royal Family.")

> Now with the new RNR, each parent in his own little heavenly home will be able to teach and train his children how he knows they should be taught, and meet the children's needs without all the heavy burdens of inflated quotas, 35%, etc. (FN 2, No. 9, 3/78).

Educational materials would be made up by the Family Care Servants and sent to all the parents. Of course, as Boaz pointed out, the parents could not educate the children themselves and also keep the household running. Some parents tried to solve their dilemma by putting the children in System schools (justified as the "children becoming one"). In May 1978, Mo mentioned that the officers (a group of perhaps 300) would still need nurseries, but that everyone else would take care of their own children ("The advantages of having children").

Unfortunately I have no knowledge of what happened to the group marriage experiment after 1978. One possibility that might have had some potential was polyandry, the marriage of one woman to more than one man. This system increased the adult/child ratio in the Home, without risk of an increase in the number of children nine months or more later.

> Paul & I have been married for 5 years now, & after asking for a childcare helper and getting desperate with the Lord for a brother or sister who would really like the kids and appreciate family life & us, He showed us His love & mercy & sent us Isaiah. Since I've been sharing [having sex] with Isaiah it has drawn Paul & I closer as we appreciate each other more.

Of course, that would only make a difference to the woman if one or both husbands took responsibility for some of the childcare.

7.5.2 Financial Crisis for World Services

Right after the RNR, World Services income fell 25%, according to Mo ("Will ye also go away?!"). Mo concluded that perhaps he had made a mistake by breaking the "chain of bondage"; perhaps the disciples needed tyrants and the whip to make them produce. The decrease was partly due to an immediate decrease of 17% in litnessing ("Do you want the letters or don'tcha?!"). By May, litnessing had dropped off 57% and soul-winning had decreased 80% ("Seek first"). In "Liberty," Berg said that

> Supporting yourselves is not the most important job you have to do--preaching the Gospel is your most important job, and winning souls.

One explanation of the drop-off in litnessing and witnessing is that those activities, unlike FFing, were unpleasant duties which many disciples quickly abandoned when there were no leaders over them, or when they lost the group support of the larger colonies. Another reason World Servi-

ces income dropped was that disciples only tithed their litnessing incomes, and many of them were supporting themselves more from System jobs or flirty-fishing than from litnessing. World Services also complained that many Homes were not reporting or not tithing at all, and a series of letters, threats, and new rules came out in an attempt to get more money out of the members.

The fact that disciples were paying more attention to their own survival than to supporting World Services is further evidence for what this chapter has argued--that survival was always an important motivation for members. When material survival resulted from preaching the Gospel, the young people were willing to define themselves as missionaries. But even then the tension between Mo and the "blobs" had indicated that missionizing was less important to many leaders than their own survival, privileges, and feelings of power, which were best secured through the communal lifestyle with its built-in stratification. The RNR seems to have reduced the size of the COG elite, transforming many former tax-collectors into tax- (tithe-) payers. Some of them left the Family when they realized that their status and lifestyle were no longer any better in COG than in the outside world.

Chapter VIII

BABYLONIANS IN EXILE

> The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appears (Antonio Gramsci, quoted in Cockburn 1978).

The Children of God was formed and was able to recruit thousands of young people because so many youth were desperate for an alternative--to the lives they were leading, to the futures or lack of futures before them, to the social relations they observed in the world. COG turned out to be only partially an alternative, while partially it was a parallel to the System they had left. For some, the Children of God "worked." For others, it was a confusing, guilt-inducing, or even embittering experience. Yet what would be the alternative to an alternative? Certainly it is not the old capitalist system. The young worldwide know instinctively that "the old is dying." That they desert one system in which they are exploited and mystified, only to run eagerly after a prophet who ends up exploiting and mystifying them in a different way, does not negate the accuracy of their instincts. Childhood, youth, joy, birth, a new world, becoming midwives--these are the symbols created by these instincts, by young song-writers and artists, not by a middle-aged evangelist. What the young people liked about

David Berg was that he told them, more or less, "Ditch the old System. I've lived in it all my life and it's no good. Close your eyes, ask Jesus into your heart, and when you open your eyes you'll be born again, in a new world." Of course it didn't work. But at least they tried!

8.1 WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD?

In the summer of 1981 a young couple in a small town in Michigan had a baby. A reporter found the story interesting enough to cover it for the local paper (Clarke 1981). The couple said they had had the baby at home, not at the hospital, because of their religious beliefs. The father delivered the baby, using four pages of instructions from a small booklet called "Emergency Survival Manual" (COG 1973) as his guide. They named the baby after one of the authors of that booklet, Abigail Warner. The mother "received mental checks" during the delivery process about what position to take, etc. The couple said they were trying to set a good example, to turn people on to a more natural lifestyle, and to expose greed and capitalism in the world. They said they were Children of God.

In November '81 a former informant now halfway around the world sent me a letter.

> Dear Ruth, ... What's happenin? You a doctor or anything yet? Got a book on us or anything? Should be interesting. Please send me one if you have....I bet you might be interested, since you view my faith from the "despair reaction" point of view....

and he goes on to recommend someone in New York I might like to interview. "What about ray gun, er Reagan," he asked. He didn't answer the same question which I had posed in an earlier letter about the "ray zheem" in the country where he was now thriving. He closed the letter, "I got three kids now. Easy as 1 - 2 - 3!"

Another disciple still in the U.S. seemed desperate during Fall 1981. He was challenging Mo's prophecies and interpretations of politics. This disciple was moving the Date forward a few years!

About the same time, I talked to a woman who had been deprogrammed after spending only a short time in the Children of God. Now she had a Master of Social Work degree, but found the job market glutted. In terms of work, she was frustrated. But she was happy that she'd met a nice man to marry, and that he had a nice family.

The Children of God/Family of Love was still around in December 1981. One of my Christmas cards was a black & white drawing by Jacob Sailor of young people and children gathered around the manger. The card was not attributed to the Children of God. It was from Gypsy and Samuel, who were now using their System names. They said they were living in a 25-foot travel trailer with another couple--that's four adults and four children. Gypsy was pregnant again.

8.2 THE "CULT" PHENOMENON--WHAT IT IS NOT

> Temperate press comment indicts abstractions: "society," "poverty," "ignorance," "alienation." Psychiatrists name "hunger for transcendence," or even "la grande crise libidinale...le nouveau mal du siecle." The rest of the country likes to think it's California that brings out these weird crimes, and the foreign press blames America itself, or capitalism. The many lawyers are plausibly blaming each other; and other convincing denunciations come from black leaders, who are blaming white people (Johnson 1979:3).

When I first began reading about the "Jesus freaks," my reaction was similar to Diane Johnson's estimation of "temperate press comment" on Jonestown. I knew it was a complex phenomenon and that most attempts at explanation were incomplete, simplistic, and often vaguely insulting. People were saying things like "the youth are searching" and "society has become too secular and materialistic [whatever that means] and now the pendulum is swinging back to religion." Naming it--"youth cult," "religious revival," "authoritarian sect," "a substitute for the family"--was not explaining it. Cliches were invoked as causes: "broken homes," "drug abuse," or that great catch-all "permissiveness." But "simplicity is really a virtue only if the simple explanation is the correct one" (Shaikh 1978:238). Burridge (1969:124) said that there were many explanations which considered millenarianism irrational. We might compare some of these explanations with that of a woman who wrote to Burridge and "was perfectly satisfied with her judgement on cargo movements that 'they only want something for nothing.'"

8.2.1 "Authoritarianism"

Everybody think's my
Head's full of nothing
Wants to put their
Own special stuff in
Fill the space with
Candy wrappers
Keep cut sex and
Revolution
But there's
No hole in my head.
Too bad.
(Malvina Reynolds)

The concepts "authority" and "authoritarian" are frequently used in discussions of sects like COG. But these words have more than one definition.[114] First, the appeal to a "higher authority," whether God or a prophet, or a book, over the heads of the secular or religious "established authorities," is a common feature of sects. The fact that sect members follow these higher orders literally, rather than obeying the law of the land and rather than accepting the majority definition of reality, brings down upon them scorn from the more educated and often persecution from the more powerful. But does it make them "authoritarian"?

More often when the word "authoritarian" is applied to groups like COG it refers to an internal political structure which is based on obedience to those above in a hierarchy. If we can establish that COG or some other group has that

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[114] In 1980, United States UN Ambassador Kirkpatrick distinguished between "friendly authoritarian" governments such as that of Ferdinand Marcos and "hostile totalitarian" governments such as that of Col. Ghaddafi or the USSR.

type of structure, we still have not explained why people join it. It is sometimes assumed that certain people "crave" authority, though the various reasons given for this craving are contradictory. One view is that children who are not punished sufficiently in early life will need to absorb extra authority later, as if we were talking about a vitamin deficiency. An opposing view is that too much rather than too little authority is the root of the problem. Wilhelm Reich, for example, argues that subjection to excessive authority creates an abnormal dependence upon authority, like an addiction to heroin or sweets (1970). Another view is that only some personality types crave authority. The social science classic The Authoritarian Personality (Adorno et al. 1950) describes a type of person who is only comfortable giving or following orders. However, that study was based on a questionnaire survey rather than direct observation, and betrayed a middle class bias. Overt and unsophisticated statements of anti-semitism or "intolerance"--such as would be more commonly heard from poor and working class bigots than from middle class bigots--were considered indicative of "authoritarianism." Then there are those who think it is not pathological, but rather "natural" and "instinctive" for all biological beings to line themselves up in "dominance hierarchies" (see discussion of more recent studies in Alland 1980:106-117).

"Let him who is without authoritarianism cast the first stone," Jesus Christ might have said. He also had a saying about tending to the beam in one's own eye before worrying about the mite in someone else's eye. The anti-cult and deprogramming movement belittles sect recruits, who were usually over 18, by calling them "kids"[115] and "children." Deprogramming itself is by nature coercive, and often it has been initiated by an act of violence, such as seizing the youth and forcing him/her into a car. The very words "programmed" and "deprogrammed" are dehumanizing and rife with totalitarian connotations. The implication is that young people are passive vessels--computers, machines--whose minds belong to the victor in a savage struggle between representatives of the status quo (primarily parents and clergy) and "subversive," "fanatical" leader/guru/prophets.

The deprogramming school of thought permits the cultist to be totally reintegrated into the dominant society. The theory is that the youth acted against his/her own free will because the cult deceived its victim. This is a similar view to that of cultures which hold that the now-reformed deviant had been possessed by an evil spirit and is therefore not responsible for acts performed while possessed.

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[115] I have since learned that many (white, at least) high school and college students refer to <u>themselves</u> as "kids." The COG leadership also used the words "kids," "boys," and "girls."

Concerning the issue of authoritarianism, I would like to suggest another possibility. Perhaps young people join and remain with such a group in spite of its heavy emphasis on obedience, simply because they feel they have no alternatives. Is it not possible that after joining they may chafe under the rules in the sect just as they chafed under the rules at home, school, work, or the military?[116] Most people who joined COG had previously experienced the suppression of dissent and of individual rights in the outside world. The society which likes to think of itself as tolerant and pluralistic had displayed bumper stickers demanding, "America--love it or leave it!" It was not unknown for parents to throw teenagers out of the house for refusing to join the army or even for adopting sexual and other habits the parents disliked. For many youth the act of joining COG and preaching its message was in itself an expression of the dissent which they believed the System never wanted to hear.

There definitely were/are young people who desire a strict, disciplined setting. "Seekers," for example, sometimes feel this is the best way to absorb the new knowledge

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[116] The difference between those institutions and the "authoritarian" religious group is that in some of the former it is easier to express dissatisfaction. In COG, at least, dissatisfaction ("murmurring") was considered to originate with the devil, so that the disciples became alienated from their own feelings. Further, it was very difficult to organize peers among whom one could express dissent and with whom one might protest and try to make changes. (Of course this is not to say that protesting in the army or the factory, or even many schools and families, is a simple matter.)

they have chosen to learn. Other youth want to test themselves by undergoing an ordeal, and the strict, ascetic group life appeals for that reason. And, for some people, an "authoritarian" group permits greater freedom of impulse and emotion than does a less structured life as an isolated individual (Slater 1970).

8.2.2 A "Pendulum"

Another popular school of thought on "cults" is that in the 1960s "the youth" had been interested in politics, but that had gone too far, and now in the 1970s they were "turning to religion."[117] Some of this, I believe, is wishful thinking on the part of the powers-that-be, for whom a religious ideology, no matter how unorthodox, is preferable to the political ideologies competing with it (see Ch. 2). This dissertation showed that the 1960s political activists and the 1970s religious zealots were not the same people, nor were they even older and younger siblings.

Most of the COG disciples whom I interviewed had never been active politically, though many had sympathized with the youth and the anti-war movements. A more accurate model would be of two groups, one religious and one political, which made up the cores of the respective movements, and of

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[117] Even Jonestown, where the believers who died were of all ages (and mostly black) did not unseat this way of thinking.

layers forming around these cores made up of unattached or unorganized segments of the population which might have gone either way.

8.3 A CRISIS FOR THE SYSTEM IS A CRISIS FOR YOUTH

To my eye, what is happening is that during the current phase of world history millions of young people in America and Western Europe are wandering around[118] unable to find their places or plan their futures.

> There's no future, no future, no future now.
> (The Sex Pistols, "God Save the Queen")

Youth suffer the economic crisis and the lack of adequate explanation for what is happening in a different way than do older people. And their nations and institutions are, on the whole, ignoring them. In summer 1981 youth in Britain rioted. Many of those interviewed said it was because of the unemployment. The top song in Britain at the time was "Ghost Town," which contained the line

> Youth on the shelf.
> ("Ghost Town")

Furthermore, the threat of nuclear annihilation seems very real to young people, who feel powerless to save themselves or the future. The Children of God said that they were the only ones trying to do anything, trying to reach the youth, to tell them the answer and give them hope. This was, in a way, not far from the truth, particularly in the U.S.A.

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[118] Or hanging around.

American society has been basically telling youth to "get lost."[119] Unfortunately, COG didn't have "the answer" to tell the youth. It could solve the problem of hopelessness, but only temporarily, and only by substituting hope based on blind faith for realistic thinking about the situation. Groups like the Freedom of Thought Foundation (deprogrammers and parents), having observed the phenomenon of blind faith in new converts, believed it was the problem. Their goal was to get the young people thinking again. But it may well have been thinking about their own and the world's problems, and not being able to think of a solution, that caused the young people to despair in the first place!

8.3.1 "Cults" are not the Answer

Many liberals, church people and others, recognize that there are serious problems in the world and that youth are struggling with these problems. Religious communities, "alternative lifestyles," utopian socialist communities seem the perfect solution. Such groups meet the subsistence needs of youth, keep them busy, and compensate for the alienation of "industrial society." And they are safe! They change none of the important social, political, and economic relations of the society which has been so good to the lib-

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[119] Or to join the Army. Former Attorney General Griffin Bell was reported (WBAI news, Aug. 1981) to favor a period of mandatory national service for youth as a method to reduce crime.

erals. These groups are a way of having "socialism" without really having socialism! The sect "keeps the kids off the street"[120] during an "economic downturn" when youth are not wanted in the labor force.

Intensive research concerning the U.S. government's attitude toward and involvement with "cults" would be a very worthwhile project. At this point, I have hypothesized that the Federal government has a hands-off policy toward both "cults" and "deprogrammers." The government doesn't even offer to mediate between them. Quite a few people, especially in other countries, think the U.S. government actively encourages "cults." The Fraser Subcommittee on International Organizations report states unambiguously that the Korean CIA established the Unification Church in the U.S. in the 1960s with the knowledge of the American CIA (see Stoner and Parke 1979:279-286, 291; Halloram 1977). Moreover, according to one investigator/deprogrammer, a federal law enforcement official told him that there was an unwritten understanding that the Moonies were to be given a free hand to recruit on campuses, because they were considered preferable to radical political groups (Galen Kelly 1979: personal communication). During that same period, the U.S. government was going out of its way to persecute entirely home-grown political organizations such as the Black Panther Party, the

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[120] It is ironic that "cult members" insist on making the presence of youth felt <u>on</u> the streets, begging.

Socialist Workers Party, and even the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (Williams 1976).

Since the state has been permitting sects such as COG to "do whatever they want," in the words of one angry parent, it seems the state has also felt it necessary to permit panicked relatives to interfere with the sects on an individual basis. So if a "cult" can get away with "false advertising" in its solicitation of funds and recruitment of members, can open disciples' mail, and can make a profit off virtual slave labor, then parents and deprogrammers can get away with forceful detention of selected converts. Generally it is middle and upper middle class parents who can afford to pay for deprogramming. The state apparently believes that in this case two wrongs make a right. Ted Patrick said (1976) that police and judges almost always took his side. In one case which I observed a young father obtained a writ of habeas corpus in a New York court for his son and wife, but the FBI refused to help him locate them. By default, the FBI had chosen to assist the wife's parents, who were deprogramming her in another state.

8.3.2 Destroying "Cults" is not the Answer

The fact that what the Children of God call "the System" cannot meet the needs of many young people is clearly illustrated by what happens after a person is removed from a cult through deprogramming. Sometimes the person is put in a

half-way house, which may take on some of the characteristics of a "cult" itself. A Child of God spent some time in a community of people who had left the Children of God, and wrote about it for the Family News (FN 5, No. 8, 9/7)).

> They founded a community intended to be an alternative to us, for people who want to leave the Family and have no place else to go...Actually, she tries to imitate the Family.

The founder of that community had been a member of COG for two weeks, before becoming one of COG's "enemies." Sometimes the deprogrammee becomes an assistant deprogrammer, writes a book about cults, and/or accepts speaking engagements with the anti-cult movement. Sometimes the person simply goes back to live with the parents, a short-term solution at best, even when the parents agree to family therapy. The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Philadelphia (1976) proposed beating the Moonies at their own game by offering better youth programs, outings, stronger campus organizations and education in Jewish thought. Stoner and Parke (1979) suggested that if youth wanted to volunteer for something they could work as volunteers in the national forests or VISTA.

These suggestions miss the point. The fact is that a high-paying job is necessary for a young person to obtain an independent living and start a family (outside a "cult," that is) and that high-paying jobs are rare or inaccessible, especially for people who can't get into a union or don't

like college. And that's just one of the more quantifiable of the many problems of youth today.

9.4 CHANGE THE WORLD

The suggestions of anti-cultists do not even begin to address the issue of making a better world. Yet many people who join "cults" give as one of their reasons a desire to change the world. Rabbi Maurice Davis of CERF (deprogramming group) told me that one of the things he does in trying to talk people into leaving the Moonies is to try to convince them that "the world isn't really so bad." "Bad," of course, is relative. Rabbi Davis' congregation is comparatively affluent, as are many of the people who join the Moonies. With a little help from their parents, perhaps combined with a little psychotherapy, some ex-Moonies can get back onto the path to the upper middle class. The only problem would be if they could not convince themselves that their desire for peace and justice in the world, and for community and meaning in their own lives, was just a passing phase.

There are people who believe their problems are not in themselves, but are collective problems with roots in the System. That was one of the most powerful ideas of the 1960s youth movement. Of course, among those who feel a change in the "System" must come, there are vast differences

as to what kind of world they want, what strategy to use, and in degree of optimism. Even among COGs there are varying visions of a good world and of how the millenium will come about. Most COGs, however, feel that human effort is to no avail. They concentrate on setting a good example and on trying to achieve some happiness themselves. Some believe that spreading the ideas of love, sharing, peace, and various aspects of the hippie life-style will help to bring the new world. Others feel that saving souls will somehow save the world. When it comes to overturning the current world system, COGs generally leave the job to forces much larger than themselves--God, Ghaddafi, and the Third World.

For some Children of God, to leave the group might mean coming to grips with reality and joining some politically-oriented group which shared their goals and had a strategy for bringing them about. Such groups are of course hard to find, especially for relatively uneducated youth like most Children of God, and even more so because the disciples have typically been out of the U.S. for several years. Perhaps these exiles are waiting for something "revolutionary" to happen back here in Babylon. If it does, maybe some of them will come back and join us. In the meantime, it is hard to tell whether they are "keeping the faith" of the "youth revolution" or slipping slowly into the ranks of the "counter-revolution." But one thing is sure: for many disciples, leaving the Children of God would mean accepting defeat and having to return to a life of "quiet desperation."

Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO 20 CHILDREN OF GOD, STATEN ISLAND, NY, MARCH 1976

1. Are you a full-time disciple, or catacombs, or something else? full___, cat___, other___

2. What colony are you now in? _____

3. Which sex? F M

4. How old are you now? ___

5. What is your citizenship status? U.S.__,Can.__, other__

6. What is your marital status? never married__
   engaged to be married__
   separated __
   divorced __
   widowed __
   Married (living with spouse) for 1st time__
   " " " " " 2nd time__
   " " " " " 3rd time__

7. How old were you the first time you got married? __

8. How old were you when you left home? ___

9. How old were you when you first joined the COG? ___

10. Since you first joined the Family, how much time have you lived apart from all of them?
    only short vacations __
    less than six months __
    btwn 6 mos. and 1 yr.__
    btwn 1 and 2 yrs. __
    more than 2 yrs. __

11. How long have you been in the COG?
    less than 3 mos. __
    btwn 3 and 6 mos.__
    btwn 6 mos. and 1 yr.__
    btwn 1 and 2 yrs.__
    " 2 and 3 yrs __
    " 3 and 4 yrs __
    " 4 and 5 yrs __
    " 5 and 6 yrs __
    more than 6 yrs __

12. How many children do you have (not incl. unborn)? __

13. How old were you when your first child was born? __

14. How many children live with you now? __

15. What is the name of you home town? (If you lived in a second place for more than 5 yrs. before age 15, put it in blank 2.) 1._____
2._____

16. What kind of area were you raised in most of the time up to age 15? (If moved during the time up to age 15 and lived at a second type of area more than 5 yrs, indicate order.) small farm __
large farm __
small rural town __
small "urban" town __
city __
suburbs __

17. What countries do most of your ancestors come from? List from 1 to 4. (exs: Sweden, Africa, France, Puerto Rico, China, etc.) _____

18. How would you describe your religious beliefs or affiliation during the time you were growing up? Please be as specific as possible. (example: American Baptist, atheist, Roman Catholic, Reform Judaism, 7th Day Adventist, agnostic, no religion, etc.)___

19. How often would you say you attended religious services, on the average, during the 5 years you were most active, up to age 15? no affil __
less than 1/yr __
once/yr or more __
nearly every week __

19. Sibs, spouse, close friends from World in Family? __

20. How would you describe the political opinions of yourself (before joining COG) and your parents? (For example, did, or do, any of you usually support a certain political party or express a particular political philosophy?) self_____
father_____
mother_____

21. Have you ever been involved in any of these political activities? voting ___
writing a letter to a public official ___
attending political meetings, speeches, or rallies__
taking part in demonstrations or marches, not just watching___

handing out leaflets, collecting signatures on petitions, or doing other work for a political candidate or cause _____

22. Suppose that the line drawn below shows the range of political opinion in the U.S. and Canada. Where would you say your father and mother stand politically on most issues? F____ M____

Radical Liberal Moderate Conservative Very Conserv.
1.....2.....3.....4...5...6.....7.....8.....9

23. Suppose that the line below shows the range of what some people call "moral standards" that parents can set for their children, having to do with dancing, dating, sex, honesty, drinking, etc. How "morally strict" would you say the standards were that your parents set for you? F___ M___

"anything goes" "permissive, modern" "old-fashioned" "puritanical"
1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

24. What is (or was) your father's occupation?
_____

25. What is (or was) your mother's occupation?
_____

26. Who did you live with most of the time you were growing up? _____

27. Who is living there now? _____

28. What is their total household income, do you think?

less than $5000 per year _____
btwn $5000 and $10,000/yr ____
" $10,000 and $20,000 _____
" $20,000 - $30,000 _____
" $30,000 - $40,000 ____
" $40,000 - $50,000 _____
" $50,000 - $100,000____
More than $100,000 _____
Don't know_____
Won't say _____

29. All things considered, do you think your parents are better off financially now than they were 5 years ago, or are they worse off now, or is their financial situation about the same as 5 years ago? better____
worse ___
same ___

30. As far as you know, did either of your parents (or guardians) ever belong to a labor union? yes__, no___
If so, do you happen to know the name(s) of the

union(s)?_____

31. As far as you know, did either of your parents attend one or more years of college? no___, yes___

32. What was the last year of regular school you attended?
some grade school (0-7th grade)
finished grade school (8)
some high school (1-3 yrs)
finished high school (4 yrs)
some junior college or trade school
finished junor college " " "
some college or university
finished college (4 yrs)
attended grad or professional school after college?

33. What were you studying in schcol? _____

34. After you left school, did you find a GOOD job? (interesting, decent pay) No___, Yes____
If yes, what was it? _____

35. Not counting the time you have been living with the COG, how much time do you think you have spent out of work since you left school? (Include time spent travelling.)
_____

36. If you had your choice, where would you like to go overseas, if at all? _____

37. Have you ever been involved in any of the following?
labor union__
Govt programs such as Job Corps, Vista, Work-Study____
Collecting unemployment insurance ___
On-the-job training or apprenticeship programs___
Travelling on your own more than 1 mo. and/or more than 500 miles____
Travelling over 4 mos. and/or 1500 mi (before COG)___
Travelling to foreign country ___
Armed forces ___
Prison or mental hospital ___
"Counter-cultural" or alternate institutions ___

38. Thinking back over your entire life, what organizations or groups can you remember belonging to (more than 2 mos.)? (exs: scouts, Campus Crusade for Christ, fraternity, motorcycle gang, Zen group, schcol clubs, Junior Achievement, commune, etc.)_____

39. Can you think of any organizations your parents were ever involved in? _____

40. How many times have you changed addresses in the past 2

years? ____

41. A number of people have mentioned using drugs before joining COG. Could you tell me a little about your own experience with drugs? For each item below, tell me whether you have ..... never tried it 0
tried it at least once 1
don't know if you've tried it 2
used it often 3
or used it so heavily that you felt you were dependent on it 4

alcohol
cigarettes
marijuana
hashish
heroin, morphine
mescaline, psilocybin, peyote
codeine (cough syrup, etc.)
cocaine
LSD
other hallucinogens
amphetamines, speed, ups
sopors, downs, quaaludes, barbiturates, reds
methadone
others (glue?)_____

42. In your opinion, did either of your parents (or guardians) have a drinking or drug problem?
no____, yes____

43. What were your parents' ambitions for you? ___

44. What were your ambitions for yourself (before meeting COG)?

45. Did you ever seek help with your problems, when you were an adolescent, from a school counselor, parents, clergyman, teacher, psychologist or psychiatrist, etc? What happened?

46. Testimony. Kinds of problems experienced before COG, benefits, etc.

NOTE: The original format of the questionnaire was slightly different, though the words were the same. It has been retyped for this thesis. Most questions were read by the researcher, with the disciple looking at the page at the same time if she/he desired. In cases where the disciple was rushed or uninterested, or ambivalent, only a subset of questions were asked. They were nos. 1-6, 11, 12, 15, 18,

19, 20, 21, 23-25, 28, 30, 32-37, 40, and 41. In cases where the disciple was interested, many questions became open-ended.

Appendix B

ORIGINAL SONGS OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD (COG 1975)

THREE CHEERS

Turned my eyes westward toward the heavens.
Saw an eagle fallin' from the sky.
And all the eggs that she was droppin',
were all in vain 'cause there's no stoppin'...

Chorus: Three cheers for the Red, White and Blue.
All your sins are coming right back down on you.
Three cheers for the Red, White and Blue.
You turned your back on God,
now He's turned His back on you.

Take a good whiff of the air.
It's really somethin' I do declare.
Your rivers and your streams are so full of
pollution,
and in your streets I hear the cry of revolution.

(Chorus)

La la la la la la la Jesus
La la la la la la la la
(repeat)

He brought them and He blessed them,
to eat the good of the land.
But they've all turned their eyes away
from the Son of Man.

(Chorus)

So here stand the Children of God,
shoutin' out their warnin'.
Turn away from your wickedness,
Cause you won't see the rain 'till
it starts stormin'.

(Chorus)

I ONCE WAS A LONELY HIPPIE

I once was a lonely hippie,
I had nc place to go.
But Jesus, He didn't talk a lot.
But to me His love He did show.

Chorus: I'm so happy! I'm so happy!
I'm so happy, Jesus saved my soul!

Not a sermon but a sample,
is what Jesus gave to me.
He didn't use a lot of fancy words,
but His love I did see. (Chorus)

Why don't you follow Jesus, Mary (or ___).
You gotta quit your job.
You can't work for Jesus and money too,
or you'll end up a great big slob. (Chorus)

GOSPEL GYPSY PIRATES

Chorus: We're pirates, we're pirates,
we're gospel gypsy pirates.
We're sailing, we're sailing
off to uncharted sea.
Majestic destiny.

ALL I WANT TO DO IS SERVE HIM

One day I took, I took an honest look.
I tried everything, I played every game in the book.
and I saw, there was nothing in this world
to live for anymore.
Then one day, one day I heard about,
a certain man, who could work things out;
so I came to Jesus,
You know He came in and He showed me the way.

Chorus: Now all I want to do is serve Him.
Now all I want to do is serve the King,
that others may know Him,
and the power of His love.

THE MESSAGE OF JEREMIAH

The message of Jeremiah
God has committed unto my hand.
The judgments of God are soon to be
poured cut upon this wicked land.
You better get right with God,
receive Jesus before it is too late.
If you don't intend to repent,
you better prepare to meet your coming fate.

Chorus: You better get right with God.
And don't be a hypocrite.
Quit doing your own thing (my friend).
For the Lord is tired of it.

BILLY (WATCH A BABY DIE)

Billy where you goin' boy,
don't you have a gun?
You can't kill no enemies and the
fightin's just begun.
Now don't be so afraid now Bill,
it's gonna be ok.
Just smile and pull the trigger till you
don't care anyway.

Chorus: Kill a man, watch a baby die once more.
I never used to feel this way before.
But God have mercy,
my head is such a mess,
sometimes I feel like runnin' out the door,
out the door,
sometimes I feel like runnin' out the door.

Hey Billy you're not tryin' hard.
You don't really have to cry.
That dirty, filthy communist
certainly deserved to die,
'cause they don't feel the way
that we do in the U.S.A.
Now they're just tryin' to cause trouble
and we gotta get 'em outa' the way. (Chorus)

Billy you know you're helpin'
folks to stay alive.
They're busy workin' makin' bullets,
punchin' in at a nine to five.
So you just keep on fightin' Bill,
and you will finally see,
that all those yellow men you're killin' will
help set your white brothers free. (Chorus)

Hey Jesus this is Billy,
don't ycu even care?
I already killed so many men
and my mind's kinda gettin' bare.
Now I just can't go on too much longer
livin' this way.
Hey Jesus what are we fightin' for,
is it just to collect our pay? (Chorus)

Hey Jesus this just don't seem right,
so tell me who is wrong.
The way that things are goin' now
somehow I don't feel I belong.
But my daddy said to be a man and
fight for liberty,
but what about the other side,
aren't they just like me? (Chorus)

Hey Jesus you gotta help me now,
my mind is so confused.
I know that someone has to be right,
so which side do I choose?
Now what's that thing you said about
lovin' everyone?
I think that's a whole lot better way
and a hell of a lot more fun!

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