

THE ANTI-CULT MOVEMENT: A NATIVISTIC RESPONSE

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Abstract

The anti-cult movement, or ACM, in the United States is a counter-movement to the wide variety of new religions which developed in the years following the Second World War. The anti-cult movement is opposed to new religions because it perceives in them a threat to the American family, traditional values and morals, and way of life which it is attempting to protect. This perception reflects a nativistic response to new religions. Nativism is understood to be a conscious attempt on the part of a society's members to protect that society's culture from the threat posed by contact with other cultures. The anti-cult movement is attempting to protect those elements of American culture which it perceives as being threatened by new religions. The sections of American society which feel most threatened, and which make up the body of the anti-cult movement, are family groups and Evangelical Christian and Jewish religious groups. The nature of the anti-cult movement, its methods, motivations, and possible implications of its existence, are all illuminated by the theory of nativism as it applies to the ACM.

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Introduction

"In the first three decades following the second world war, the United States and Canada witnessed the founding of more religious movements than at any other time in these nations' histories. By the end of this period as many as 5 percent of their adult populations had participated in some of the more esoteric of these movements; the number of local groups established as part of the new religions ranged in the thousands; virtually the entire public had become aware of the presence of new religious activity; vigorous anti-cult sentiment had appeared; and counter-movements were founded, both with the specific intent of combating the growth of cults and for the more general purpose of restoring traditional morality to the society."¹

It has been the practice of virtually all scholars of New Religions to open their articles, journal entries and books with a statement very similar to the one above, and in this respect this paper has proven to be no different. It is necessary to emphasize the extreme changes which occurred during the period following the second world war, and to emphasize even more the rapidity with which these changes occurred, before any analysis of specific aspects within the study of New Religions can be conducted. All throughout the religious history of mankind there have been new and different religious movements emerging, and counter-

movements developing to oppose them. The situation of the 1950's- 1980's differs if at all only in degree: the sheer numbers of new religions emerging during this time outstripped any previous example in modern times. Consequently, the challenge posed by the new religions to the traditional moral and religious environment is perceived as greater than in previous times. In addition, particularly in North America, this same period also saw an increasing decline in mainstream religious affiliation. Ironically, the increasing secularization of North American society made the threat of new religions as perceived by the counter-movements which arose to combat them even greater. The 'loss' of traditional morality and the challenge to 'orthodox' society combined to produce the perception that new religions represented a clear and present danger to traditional and orthodox ways. This perception gave rise to a number of counter-movements, which we shall collectively refer to as the Anti-cult movement, or ACM. This term is the normal term used to describe the various groups opposed to new religions, and does not necessarily imply a structured movement by its use of the word movement in the title.

The perception of a clear and present danger is vital to an understanding of the ACM, for this is the core around which the ACM is organized. The threat which the ACM perceives in new religions is a threat to the very beliefs

and way of life which its members are trying to defend. Since the ACM is an amalgam of various interest groups, the tendency has been to focus primarily on the various segments within the body of the movement. The most important of these segments are the family groups, and the church and religious groups.

The assumption in most scholarship on the ACM is that a variety of people oppose new religions for a variety of unconnected and independent reasons. Or, conversely, it is assumed that there is no need to ask why these various groups all oppose new religions because the necessity to oppose them is self-evident in the clear and present danger which the new religions represent. However, it is possible to suggest a different motivation, one which acknowledges a commonality amongst the different elements within the ACM without claiming that the reasons for opposition are self-evident. The ACM can be viewed as an example within the dominant culture of the United States of a nativistic response to a perceived threat. By looking at the ACM as a nativistic movement one can easily understand the fervency of the ACM.

Nativism as a concept is employed within the disciplines of history and anthropology and both disciplines have something to offer to this discussion. In historical usage, nativism is equated with prejudice and protective nationalism. The outbreaks of anti-catholic sentiment in

America in the 18th and 19th centuries are the primary examples of nativism within this sense. Indeed, it was within this context that the term 'nativism' was coined.² A survey of historical accounts of nativism within this context will provide a useful starting point for analyzing the ACM in this light. Specifically, it will be fruitful to look at those historians in the field - Ray Allen Billington, John Higham, Richard Hofstadter, and Barbara Welter - who have largely defined the historical approach to nativism. This approach can then be used as the foundation upon which to develop an understanding of nativism in the ACM. Anthropological usage differs somewhat from the historical in that its terminology and approach are much less value-laden and judgmental. The anthropological usage of the term nativism is purely descriptive: it is used to denote observed types of cultural movements within a society. It does not touch on the positive or negative implications of those movements. Anthropological studies of nativism have generally been within non-western or at least ethnic minority groups. The cargo-cult studies of Melanesia and the Ghost-dance movement in North America are much more representative examples of the application of anthropological theories of nativism and revitalization to cultural movements than is an attempt to apply them to the ACM. The contributions of certain anthropologists - namely Ralph Linton, Anthony Wallace, Kenelm Burridge, and others-

provide an excellent introduction to anthropological theories and study of nativism.

The usefulness and applicability of historical and anthropological works aside, it will be necessary to distinguish the nativistic elements of the ACM from the nativism of such movements as the Ghost dance movement or the numerous cargo cult movements of Melanesia. Primarily, the nativistic response of the ACM follows the historical brand of nativism very closely. The anthropological theory provides a framework within which to understand this nativism. Anthropological theory on its own presents nativism as a somewhat coherent movement, with a fully coordinated organization and structure. Historical theory presents nativism as an irrational and prejudicial movement with little rationale. For our purposes, the ACM can best be approached through the concept of a 'nativistic response' as opposed to 'nativistic movement', for this allows the contributions of both historical theory and anthropological theory to be accepted, and yet distances our study from the frameworks which have arisen out of studies conducted largely in non-western or non-20th century areas.

The ACM is open to being viewed as a nativistic response because it manifests a variety of phenomena which are clearly nativistic in nature. Fear of new religions is a fear predicated on reaction to the changing norms and values of society. The attempt to maintain or revive

'traditional values' reflects this wider fear, which is directed against new religions as a visible sign of this change. The sweeping generalizations made by the ACM reflect a biased or 'selective-blindness' approach which cannot be understood as anything other than prejudice. The 'traditional values' are carefully chosen elements from the wider society which the ACM claims to defend, elements which reflect the utopian vision of the ACM. Ultimately, the goal of the ACM is to prevent or reverse changes in their society. The fear of change which prompts them to do this is the core of the nativistic response of the ACM.

It is essential to look at the structure of the ACM itself to understand those areas of society which feel most threatened. As has been mentioned, the ACM is a loose association of special interest groups whose individual motivations and methods vary considerably and do not always coincide. These groups can be categorized in a number of ways, the most common of which is to speak of the Family, the Government, and the Church.³ For our purposes it will be most interesting to look the structure and rhetoric of the family based associations and the religious groups within the ACM. Government anti-cultism is not very direct or dominant in the ACM and except for a brief mention of it within this introduction, will not be dealt with here. It is possible to identify these separate groups within the ACM because their motivations, methods and rhetoric distinguish

them from one another. We shall examine these sections of the ACM individually so that an understanding of the ACM can be gained in greater depth, and so that the ultimate commonality of their fear and their vision can be shown.

Family based associations are the core of the ACM. The primary concern of family associations is to remove the young people from the influence of the religious group that they have joined, and to educate others as to the dangers of the new religions. Because of the high turn-over of membership within new religions, turn-over is also high with family members within the ACM. Family members tend to become inactive in the ACM once their loved one has left the religious group. It can be assumed from this that the motivation behind family involvement in the ACM is the loss of the child or family member. It shall be useful to look at the theory of relative deprivation in conjunction with family involvement as a result. The theory of relative deprivation is normally applied to those who join new religions, not those who oppose them, but as we shall see the distinctions between the two are not as great as they seem.

The rhetoric of family based associations takes two forms. The danger to the members of the new religions is the first argument which is presented, either the danger of physical abuse (i.e. malnutrition), or mental abuse (i.e. brainwashing). Generally, both of these forms of the

argument are made. The second line of argument is that new religions present a danger to society, either a financial danger (i.e. fraud) or a political danger (i.e. subversion), or more often both. The methods of family based associations and members fall into three groups: lobbying, information dispersal, and deprogramming, both coercive and what has been called reevaluative. Deprogramming is accepted as a means of dealing with new religions by the family segment of the ACM, as well as those members of the psychiatric profession who belong within the ACM. The church and government segments oppose it, the latter because technically deprogramming violates a number of criminal laws, and the former because of the implications for wider religious freedom or the lack thereof. As a result, deprogrammers can be viewed as a sub-genre of the family segment of the ACM. Deprogrammers must be analyzed with both their stated ideology and their possible financial motivation in mind. Apostates are another sub-genre of the family segment of the ACM. Apostates, or ex-members of the new religions, fulfil two functions. They supply a ready source of atrocity stories about new religions, and they symbolize the possibility for ACM triumph over new religions. The family segment of the ACM, therefore, encompasses a variety of members and rhetorical approaches, but can be viewed as a coherent segment of the ACM nonetheless. Its primary purpose is to remove members of

new religions from the influence of the new religion, and to resocialize that individual to acceptable norms.

The religious response to new religions within the ACM comes primarily from two sources: evangelical Christianity and what might be called the 'activist' segment of the Jewish community. Mainline Christian denominations can also be found opposing specific 'cults', but generally the mainline response is one of neutral forbearance. The reasons for evangelical Christian opposition are primarily doctrinal. The challenge posed by new religions to the evangelical understanding of Biblical Truth is responded to vigorously and often vehemently. This response follows a reasonably set pattern, and we shall examine this pattern and the reasons for it in chapter two. New religions also present a competition for members, and this too is a motivating factor behind both evangelical and mainline response.

Jewish motivation is somewhat different than the evangelical Christian, although like the evangelical response it stems from the very nature of the religion itself. The Jewish opposition stems from the conviction that a person who is born Jewish remains Jewish for the rest of his or her life. Conversion to a different faith is to reject one's judaism, and consequently to reject one's very birth. Thus, a jewish convert to any other religion, be it new or established, is 'dead' to his or her jewish

relatives. It will in fact be useful to examine the Jewish response as more closely related to the family response than the religious one. The theory of relative deprivation can also be applied here to good effect.

The rhetoric of the two groups is similar: false teachings, misguided followers. Their methods are essentially similar also. Both groups actively engage in information dispersal and reevaluative deprogramming. Evangelical groups engage in proselytization. Jewish groups sometimes support coercive deprogramming as well. Mainline churches also engage in information dispersal, but tend to avoid confrontationalist positions. The primary purpose of the religious segment of the ACM is defensive and preventative: it wishes to maintain its hold upon its members, and to prevent members and the wider public from becoming 'ensnared' by new religions.

The legal and societal response to new religions is primarily a reactive response initiated by the pressure of lobby groups such as family or church groups, and the media. Neither the government nor the media appear to have any innate reason for opposition to new religions. The governmental method is to initiate study groups, hearings and occasionally legislation to examine both the nature of legitimate religion and the nature of sanity. Both of these questions are problematic for government, especially for the American government, which has the separation of Church and

State ensconced within the Constitution of the country. This might well explain the overall lack of governmental activity within the ACM, despite urgent lobbying on the part of the ACM. Another possibility is that, as religious influence on politics has waned since the founding of the United States, legislators simply do not find it politically necessary to bow to the pressure applied by such groups.

The method used by the media is to report an endless series of atrocity tales and apostate testimonials. Media stories are critical in forming wider societal opinion, and although media motivation is more often an attempt to sell papers or attract viewers than to oppose new religions, the influence on public opinion remains the same.

The rhetoric of governmental and legal groups depends heavily upon the assumption that new religions restrict individual freedoms, for the response is to present the legal system as the defender of individual rights - both through legislation and constitutional enforcement. The media presents new religions as morally, sexually, financially and even occasionally politically corrupt, in keeping with the atrocity-tale format. Presented with very little positive data on new religions, the general public holds a passive anti-cult sentiment. The legal/societal segment of the ACM is thus generally passive and reactive, and as such does not require in-depth analysis at this time. Its primary purpose is to maintain the institution of

government, church and family. Consequently, it will be of more value to focus of church and family segments of the ACM.

In making the claim that the ACM represents a nativistic response to new religions, there still remains the question of motivations to be considered. A number of different motivations have been suggested for ACM beliefs and existence. Scholars of new religions such as David Bromley and Anson Shupe, Robert Bellah, Willa Appel, and others have investigated this question at length. Bromley and Shupe suggest that the motivations underlying the family segment of the ACM are twofold: they are attempting to assert familial or parental control over offspring, and they are attempting to avoid societal shame or loss of prestige.⁴ James Beckford reports that this appears to be a valid observation, in a study he conducted on familial responses to cultic conversion. Beckford reports that the primary response to such a conversion is anger, largely as a result of disrupted goals and expectations.⁵ The refrain of disrupted plans, shifting expectations, unexpected changes, and uncertain futures is one which is heard all throughout study of the ACM. Clearly, the ACM reveals much more about its own insecure footing than it does about new religions.

It is unfortunately the case that any discussion of the ACM requires a discussion also of prejudice, intolerance and hatred. As we shall see, the ACM is forced into using

stereotypes and deliberately antagonistic metaphors in order to evoke public sympathy and bolster its own position. Nativistic fears often lead to intolerance and hatred, and the intolerance which the ACM fosters for new religions is yet another example of how well the ACM fits the nativistic mold. The final section will offer a definition of prejudice which, unfortunately, the ACM as presented in these pages fits with little difficulty. It is the very great danger connected with nativism that, in drawing its boundaries so tightly and reacting so strongly to exclude all unwanted foreign things, that pain and hostility are the results. The effects of this can be very dangerous. It will become evident in the final section that, no matter what the motivations of the ACM, the ramifications of its existence and rhetoric are frightening. Robert Bellah suggests that Americans are prone to distinguishing between 'us' and 'them', and to equating 'us' with 'good', and 'them' with 'bad'.⁶ When the 'good' is considered to be able to do only good, and the 'bad' is considered to be fully evil, then it is here that the frightening aspects of the ACM emerge. As we shall see, the motivations of and possible explanations for the ACM carry these wider implications for American society.

Endnotes

1. Robert Wuthnow, Religious movements and counter-movements in North America, in New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change, James A. Beckford, ed. (London: Sage Publications/ Unesco, 1986) p . 1.
2. John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925 (New York: Atheneum, 1965).
3. For example, see Bromley and Shupe's text Strange Gods The great American Cult Scare (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), particularly chapters 3, 7 & 8.
4. Bromley and Shupe, Strange Gods, p. 213.
5. James Beckford, A Typology of Family Responses to a New Religious Movement, in Cults and the Family, Florence Kaslow and Marvin B. Sussman, Ed.s. (New York: Haworth Press, 1982), p. 41.
6. Robert Bellah, Evil and the American Ethos, in Sanctions for Evil Ed. Nevitt Sanford and Craig Comstock. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1971), p.184.

Nativism

Nativism is studied within those disciplines having to do with the study of culture. It is, therefore, the domain of historians and anthropologists. Both history and anthropology are devoted to the study of a culture's interaction with other groups, both internal groupings and external contacts. This similarity in subject matter does not mean, however, that the two disciplines approach a topic such as nativism from the same intellectual viewpoint. Moreover, there is no set understanding of the term nativism even within the two separate fields, for not all anthropologists understand the same thing when they use the same word, and the same can be said for historians. It is perhaps even preferable that there is not one commonly accepted understanding of the term. A loosely defined term with commonly understood root characteristics allows this term to be applied in cases where historians and anthropologists might not think to apply it. This is the case with applying the term nativism to the ACM.

Within the discipline of anthropology, Anthony Wallace has suggested that nativism, along with a wide number of other phenomena, is best understood as a sub-genre of what he terms 'revitalization movements'. According to Wallace, a revitalization movement can be understood as "any conscious, organized effort by members of a society to

construct a more satisfying culture."1 Wallace distinguishes this 'conscious' effort at change from other sorts of cultural change, such as evolution, acculturation or historical change. In a revitalization movement, the intent of those persons involved is of primary importance. As he states,

the persons involved in the process of revitalization must perceive their culture, or some major areas of it, as a system (whether accurately or not); they must feel that this cultural system is unsatisfactory; and they must innovate not merely discrete items, but a new cultural system, specifying new relationships as well as, in some cases, new traits.²

Perception, then, is crucial in Wallace's revitalization theory. As we shall see, understanding that the perception of a given situation exists is of primary importance when studying the ACM, independent of whether the situation which is perceived by the anti-cult movement exists or can be independently corroborated or not.

Central to Wallace's conception of nativism as a manifestation of a revitalization movement is what he idiosyncratically calls a 'mazeway', or a mental image which a person holds which integrates, for that individual, all the aspects of that individual's existence. When this mental image gets too far out of relation to the world which surrounds the individual, stress results. Too much stress, according to Wallace, forces the individual to either reorder his 'mazeway', or to attempt to reorder the world

around him or her, so that it coincides more closely to the mental ideal image. This suggestion by Wallace is fascinating in the light of what Festinger et al have termed cognitive dissonance. The theory of cognitive dissonance suggests that when a person or group of people hold two conflicting ideas to be true, he or she will do one of three things: abandon one or the other of the conflicting ideas, rationalize away the discrepancy, or attempt to bring one idea more closely in line with the other by changing the situation in which one or the other idea is a 'truth'.³

The choice of options is apparently dictated by the peer group surrounding the individual. Peer support leads to an attempt to rationalize or change the situation, lack of support leads to the abandonment of one or the other conflicting ideas. The ACM appears to be attempting to change their environment to bring their conflicting 'facts' more closely into line. With regards to Wallace's suggestion regarding revitalization, he writes "the effort to work a change in the maze and the 'real' system together is the effort at revitalization; and the collaboration of a number of persons in such an effort is called a revitalization movement."⁴

In an article in *American Anthropologist* in 1956, Anthony Wallace outlined the five stages of development of a revitalization movement. It is not necessary to go into great detail, except to indicate the four variations

which he identifies in the revitalization model. Very briefly, the five developmental stages are as follows: **Steady State:** Individuals in a given society experience no serious upset. **Increased Stress:** A section of society experiences a change which results in stress. **Cultural Distortion:** Stress increases as the mental image becomes increasingly out of phase with the 'real' world. **Revitalization:** Adaptation, organization of like-minded individuals, and an attempt to transform society to more closely resemble the mazeway. **New Steady State:** Society is again balanced in the new state.

The four variations of which Wallace speaks are choice of identification, choice of secular or religious means, nativism and success-failure. Nativism, for Wallace, is "a dimension of variation rather than an elemental property of revitalization movements."⁵ Consequently, it becomes necessary to look beyond Wallace's preliminary look at revitalization and nativism and investigate a more detailed anthropological study of nativism. Ralph Linton provides this more detailed look at nativism in his 1943 paper titled simply **Nativistic Movements**.

Linton provides a theoretical analysis of the nature of nativism as distinct from those other cultural movements with which Wallace groups it. Linton's paper, while preceding Wallace by three years in publication, can for our

purposes provide an expansion upon the ideas introduced through Wallace's revitalization theory.

Like Wallace, Linton stresses the conscious element of nativistic movements. This is central to the whole concept of an organized, cultural movement, and will be important when studying the ACM. According to Linton, a nativistic movement is the conscious attempt to protect or revive certain aspects of a culture by its members. This can only occur once certain members become cognizant of a threat to that culture. As Linton states,

Conscious, organized efforts to perpetuate a culture can arise only when a society becomes conscious that there are cultures other than its own and that the existence of its own culture is threatened.⁶

Linton identifies four possible types of nativism. The first of these is revivalistic nativism, whereby the goal is to revive extinct or moribund aspects of a culture. Perpetuative nativism is the attempt to perpetuate current aspects of a culture. Magical nativism, which usually manifests itself in charismatic, apocalyptic movements, is the attempt to bring about the desired state by acting it out, using symbols to represent desired goals. Finally, rational nativism uses psychological as opposed to magical symbols, choosing elements which are easy to perpetuate and which can realistically be maintained. Linton's fourfold typology of nativistic movements is as follows:

1. Revivalistic - magical.

2. Revivalistic - rational.
3. Perpetuative - magical.
4. Perpetuative - rational.⁷

The dynamics of contact situations are also central in Linton's analysis. Nativism is primarily an outgrowth of contact between two cultures. Anthropology, focussing as it has primarily on non-western cultures, is most familiar with those cultures for which contact has involved meeting with a culture technologically more complex. This situation of inequality, often accompanied by actual dominance by the more advanced culture, has suggested the following breakdown of possible contact situations:

1. Dominant - superior.
2. Dominant - inferior.
3. Dominated - superior.
4. Dominated - inferior.⁸

According to Linton, situations in which each culture considers itself superior, or situations in which each culture admits superiority of some aspects and inferiority in others, are unlikely to result in the development of nativism. In the first situation contact is minimized and the danger of assimilation is not present. In the latter situation, assimilation occurs without evoking nativistic responses.

Perhaps the most important contribution which Linton makes for the purposes of our study of the ACM is his

assertion that nativistic movements can in fact occur not only within the dominated or 'inferior' culture, but within the dominant or 'superior' culture also. In the areas with which anthropology is most familiar, this is most often seen initially amongst those Europeans who make their homes within the subordinate culture. For example, colonial administrators and colonists tend to exhibit these symptoms while members of their society not in such close contact do not. This expression of nativism is usually unconscious. Linton provides the examples of the practice of sending children back to Europe for schooling, and the dressing for dinner by an Englishmen "even when alone in a remote outpost of empire."⁹ When this nativistic tendency does become conscious amongst members of the dominant culture, Linton believes that it will almost invariably be of the perpetuative-rational type. He states:

Dominant-superior groups tend to initiate perpetuative-rational forms of nativism as soon as they achieve power and to adhere to them with varying intensity as long as they remain in power.¹⁰

A perpetuative-rational nativism is an attempt to maintain the status quo. This assertion by Linton is interesting in the light of our discussion in that certain groups within the ACM, as will become evident, evidence what Linton would call rational-revivalistic nativistic tendencies, as opposed to the perpetuative type. This, according to Linton, would be unusual, for, he states, "revivalistic rational forms of

nativism will not arise in a dominant-superior group...although this form of nativism might develop with respect to cultural elements which had fallen into neglect during the period of power.¹¹

Understanding the importance of this claim is vital to an understanding of the ACM, for it helps to illustrate the nature of the ACM tendency to contrast the present with the idealized past. There is a strong strain of nostalgia in much of the anti-cult rhetoric by all of the various segments. Linton characterizes rational revivalistic nativistic movements as follows:

Almost without exception [rational revivalistic nativistic movements are] associated with frustrating situations and are primarily attempts to compensate for the frustrations of society's members. The elements revived become symbols of a period when the society was free or, in retrospect, happy or great.¹²

Wallace and Linton are in agreement on this point, for both suggest that dissatisfaction by a culture's members can result in an attempt to 'bring back' the perceived time of utopia. The specific aspects which the ACM attempts to maintain or revive will be analyzed later. For now it is sufficient to suggest that the search for a kind of utopia is integral to both the anthropological understanding of nativism and to the ACM.

The usefulness of Linton for our purposes here can be seen in one final point. He suggests that in those

dominant-superior cultures which are class-differentiated, nativistic tendencies will first appear amongst the upper classes. The nativistic tendencies will be strongest, he suggests, "in those classes or individuals who occupy a favoured position and who feel this position threatened by cultural change."¹³ When one takes this statement in conjunction with Robert Wuthnow's findings from a 1981 Gallup poll, this statement gains even more significance. Wuthnow's study showed that, unlike nearly all other studies of intolerance done to that date, negative sentiments towards cults ran higher among the better educated than among the less educated.¹⁴ While level of education is no sure sign of income level or social status, some correlation can be assumed.

Intolerance will be a major theme later in this discussion. When one does assume some correlation between education and economic and social status, the issue of intolerance and nativism as it relates to Americans becomes a much more specific concern. It is simply interesting to note here the correlation between the theory of anthropologist Ralph Linton, and the actual responses of Americans in 1981.

Wallace suggested that nativism was only one aspect of what he called revitalization movements. Linton, while presenting a much more detailed analysis of nativism, does not imply that nativism can or must operate independently

from other cultural phenomena. It is important to recognize that something can be nativistic without having to be wholly or solely nativistic. This is a strong point in Wallace. However, even Wallace succumbs to the temptation of labels- to speak of revitalization movements can perhaps be as constraining as to speak solely of nativistic ones. This is a problem which Kenelm Burridge addresses in his study of millenarianism. In New Heaven, New Earth, Burridge attempts to address the problems raised by the scholarly inclination towards name-giving. He writes,

[The terms] 'nativistic' and 'syncretic' are useful if impressionistic and subjective characterizations of particular aspects of the kinds of activities we have been discussing. But they are nothing more. Consider some of the better known descriptive terms which have been suggested as having analytical value....Can we say that these descriptive terms, which refer to particular emphases as the investigators saw them, also refer to types of activities that are mutually exclusive?15

This question forces some consideration of the value of applying terms to cultural phenomena and, in the process, delineating boundaries around something which cannot, in all fairness, be confined. For the purposes of our discussion, it would be more appropriate, not to mention more accurate, to understand analytic terms to refer to tendencies or directions rather than specific classes of cultural phenomena. Consequently, the ACM shall be analyzed with the intention of perceiving within it certain qualities and

tendencies which are nativistic. This by no means is intended to imply any exclusivity with regards to other types of theoretical approaches to the ACM. The ACM is a counter-movement to the large numbers of new religions, and as such is a reactionary movement: it exists as a reaction to something, in this case the perceived threat of new religions. This response is a nativistic response. Similarly, the anti-catholic, anti-radical and white supremacist movements in North America in the past three centuries were nativistic responses. It is through studies of anti-catholicism in North America that the historian's view of nativism is expressed.

The examples of historical works on anti-catholicism provide two useful contributions to this discussion. Firstly, they provide a source from which to pull out the nature of the historian's approach to nativism. Secondly, they illustrate an example of nativism within the dominant white North American context, thereby indicating that not only can nativism occur within a dominant culture (the protestants were, after all, dominant across all of North America with few exceptions) but that it can occur within North American culture, a culture theoretically devoted to religious freedom and equality. In this way, anti-catholicism can point to the nativistic tendencies of the ACM by providing an earlier example of nativism to act as a comparison. It is not the intention of the paper to provide

a treatise on anti-catholicism. However, those aspects of anti-catholicism which are mentioned can be understood as an introduction to the kind of rhetoric which is employed by the ACM against new religions in our contemporary times.

John Higham is one of the best known historians of North American nativism. His book, titled Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925 is considered a classic in the field. In it, Higham identifies four periods of nativism in North America. The first of these fell in the 1790's with the passing of the 'notorious' Alien Acts. The second occurred following the breakup of the party system in the 1850's. The rapid influx of immigrants between 1886-96 was partially responsible for the third. The fourth occurred around the years of World War One.¹⁶

The most significant point which can be drawn from Higham's analysis is his link between periods of anti-catholic sentiment, and nativism. The most striking feature of Higham and other historians' approaches is this implicit connection between what is presented as a very negative phenomenon, and the use of the term nativism to encompass it. Higham claims to have adopted the concept of nativism as the one concept best suited to unite nationalism and ethnic prejudice into one field of study. A portion of what Higham intends by the term nativism can be seen in the following statement:

Nativism as a habit of mind illuminates darkly some of the large contours of the

American past; it has mirrored our national anxieties and marked out the bounds of tolerance.¹⁷

Nativism for Higham is equated with intolerance, a curious divergence from the anthropological understanding. Anthropologists present nativism as primarily defensive and protective of what a culture holds to be important and unique. Higham appears to see things in a different light. Indeed, Higham sees the term and perhaps the phenomena as being peculiarly American. The term itself was coined, according to Higham, in 1840, to refer to the American anti-catholic movement present at the time. He defines the term as follows:

Nativism, therefore, should be defined as intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e. 'un-American') connections.... While drawing on much broader cultural antipathies and ethnocentric judgments, nativism translates them into a zeal to destroy the enemies of a distinctly American way of life.¹⁸

The negative connotations associated with the term by Higham are evident throughout his work. He distinguishes between anti-radical, anti-catholic and racial nativism. The first two, he states, "declared what America was not, more clearly than what it was or should be; they aimed from the outset to define the nation's enemies rather than its essence."¹⁹ Racial nativism attempted to define how America should be; that is, a country belonging to the Anglo-saxon race. As we shall see, both of these tendencies can be seen in the ACM.

As in previous American history, however, the effort to define the enemies is often stronger than the attempts to define the nature of the nation. Attempts to define the essence of America is a more difficult proposition than are attempts to define America's enemies.

Higham's choice of terminology clearly indicates his perception of nativism. He discusses 'xenophobia', 'Protestant hatred of Rome', 'hostility' and 'prejudice'. Higham himself refers to this understanding of nativism in a later work. He writes:

Nativism, of course, commonly qualifies as prejudice; and students regard it not only as a state of mind, but as one which badly distorts the true nature of things. A good historian will certainly not consider nativism entirely as a set of prejudices; but since no one writes about it unless he shares the current revulsion against ethnic injustice, the subjective irrationality of nativism leaps to the historian's eye. He wants to know how we have mistaken one another and, perhaps too, he wishes to assure us that the mistakes were, indeed, mistakes in the sense that they arose from no compelling social need.²⁰

Higham's perception of nativism as a primarily negative phenomena is echoed by other historians. Ray Allen Billington opens his work The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism with the following statement:

These upheavals could never have occurred had not the American people been so steeped in anti-papal prejudice that they were unable to resist the nativistic forces of their day.²¹

That nativism is something to be resisted is an interesting concept, quite different from those suggested by anthropology. If one views nativism from a strictly anthropological perspective, one sees the emphasis put on the effect of nativism on the culture experiencing the nativistic movement. Viewed from the perspective of American historians, one can see the emphasis placed on the effects of nativism on the group being reacted to, or discriminated against. This is an interesting distinction. Historians have as their source books the books and pamphlets written at the time, such as Maria Monk's amazingly inaccurate but titillating and inflammatory work *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery*. With hindsight it is easy for the historian to pick out the inaccuracies and prejudices he sees there, and to therefore view the nativism thus revealed as a negative force. Barbara Welter attempts to break with the tradition of her discipline by showing how a nativistic movement could be useful to a culture. She suggests that:

these popular writings be re-examined, not as embarrassing blots on the national copybook of rights or as the ravings of a lunatic fringe of un-American Americans. I suggest that these two documents (and others of the same vein) be taken seriously as the expression of serious concern on the part of perfectly rational Americans.²²

Welter admits that she is the exception to the rule as far as the historical approach to nativism is concerned.

According to Welter, historians of nativism are uniform in their condemnation of it. "They disagree," she writes, "only as to whether its source is primarily religious or ethnic; most of the Protestant historians accept the latter interpretation, and the Catholic historians the former."²³

To do justice to the topic of the ACM as a nativistic response to the perceived threat posed by new religions, it is necessary to find some middle ground between the anthropological understanding of the term, and the historical understanding. It is essential to approach any analysis of the ACM with an impartial eye. At the same time, it is essential that some recognition of the antagonistic nature of their opposition be made. It is possible that at some point in the future, the ACM and the new religions will reach what Wallace would term a new Steady State, and the counter-movement will no longer be necessary. Until that time, however, the ACM remains antagonistic towards the new religions, and some means of accounting for this antagonism must be sought. Anthropological understandings of nativism allow us to perceive the ACM as an integral whole, and to approach it without reference to the movements they oppose. We can therefore analyze the motivations and goals of the various elements that make up the ACM without recourse to data which would support or deny the convictions of the movement. However, it is also essential to look at the anti-cult

accusations being made against new religions and, like the historian, admit that many of them are unconnected to any sort of unbiased reality. The accusations of the ACM, like those of the anti-catholic movements before them, reveal a great deal about the ACM itself. If nativism is to be viewed as an attempt to protect or revive certain aspects of culture, ACM allegations can reveal much about just what aspects the ACM is attempting to protect. As is evident, therefore, both historians and anthropologists can contribute to an understanding of nativism useful for analyzing the ACM.

For the purposes of this discussion, Linton's brief definition of nativism can act as a basis for our understanding. Nativism is, then, the "conscious, organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture."²⁴ We must go beyond Linton, however, to distinguish between 'nativism' and the 'nativistic response' which is evidenced by the ACM. Despite the insight of Kenelm Burridge, it is easy to read into the term nativism the implication of a fully coordinated, coherent movement. Nativism in this sense, similar to Wallace's Revitalization movements, implies some organization, structure, leadership, cohesion and focus. The ACM is much too amorphous to be categorized as such a movement. Consequently, the ACM is best understood as revealing nativistic tendencies, for this

allows the knowledge gained through anthropology and history to apply to the ACM, and yet insulates our understanding of the ACM from inaccurate perceptions of a highly structured movement.

Higham's conclusion that nativism and prejudice are interrelated cannot be ignored. It will become necessary at a later point to enter into a discussion of the prejudicial aspects of the ACM. The sweeping generalizations made by the ACM, such as their tendency to group such dissimilar movements as Fundamental Christian sects and devotional Hindu movements together, clearly implies a tendency to generalize and a refusal to acknowledge that 'different' does not necessarily mean 'wrong'. Consequently, our understanding of nativism and nativistic response must also include the concept of prejudice as an integral part. In this there is no attempt to be judgmental. Rather, it is simply an attempt to acknowledge that, in their accusations against new religions, the ACM sometimes outsteps the bounds of what can be independently corroborated.

Similarly, our understanding of nativism and nativistic response must include an awareness that, no matter the claims of the ACM to be upholding the entire 'American way of life', they do in fact centre on a few specific elements. Linton makes an observation which touches upon this issue when he discusses the general characteristics of nativistic movements as follows:

The avowed purpose of a nativistic movement may be either to revive the past culture or to perpetuate the current one, but it never really attempts to do either....What really happens in all nativistic movements is that certain current or remembered elements of culture are selected for emphasis and given symbolic value. The more distinctive such elements are with respect to other cultures with which the society is in contact the greater their potential value as symbols of the society's unique character.²⁵

As we will see in the following chapter, three of these chosen elements would be the sanctity of the family, the right to freedom of thought and expression (life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness), and the Judeo-Christian heritage of the New World. Thus, our concept of nativism must include the idea that nativism can be and is in fact usually selective in its defense of culture. The situation is not one of 'all or nothing' - although it may well be expressed this manner.

It is also necessary to introduce the idea of futility to our understanding of nativism. By its very nature, nativism is an attempt to stop or reverse change. While this attempt might succeed for a time, it should be suggested that, ultimately, any attempt to prevent change is doomed to failure. Cultures change, and elements within those cultures react negatively to that change. This is one of the observable constants when studying cultures. This is why Wallace is able to write about revitalization, Linton about nativism, and historians about historical process.

The search for Utopia is perhaps an understandable human trait, but it also carries with it all of the futility with which Thomas More first invested that fictional land. The ACM may well be attempting to protect or revive the 'good times' of America, but the outcome of their endeavour, the outcome of all such nativistic trends, is ultimately to be failure.

Having outlined the theories of nativism, it now remains to investigate the ACM while keeping this material in mind. Chapter two will attempt to analyze the nature of the ACM, its make-up and its motivations. It should become evident that the ACM, as presented in the following chapter, clearly represents an example of the kind of nativistic response which we have been discussing here.

Endnotes

1. Anthony Wallace, Religion: An Anthropological View (New York: Random House, Inc., 1966), p. 30.
2. Wallace, p. 422.
3. See Leon Festinger et al., A theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).
4. Ibid., p. 423.
- 5.5. Ibid., p.428.
6. Ralph Linton, Nativistic Movements, Reader in Comparative Religion, 4th Ed., William Lessa and Evon Vogt, ed.s. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1979), p.416.
7. Linton, p. 417.
8. The words 'superior' and 'inferior' are Linton's own, and do not represent any judgement on the value of the particular culture. The terms are simply indicative of the status of a particular culture in reference to the other culture(s) with which it comes into contact. See Linton, p. 419.
9. Linton, p. 419.
10. Linton, p. 420.
11. The ACM expresses a desire to uphold the institutions of the Family, the Church and what might almost be called the 'American way', and yet the ideals which they claim to be protecting do not appear to be those to which most of America adhere. It is for this reason that I suggest that the ACM, while believing that it is attempting to maintain the status quo, is in fact attempting to revive real or

imagined virtues from the history of the United States. This is why the ACM seems to embody a more revivalistic than perpetuative type of nativism within Linton's theoretical framework. See Linton, p. 420, for further details on the distinction between the various types of nativism.

12. Linton, p. 417. It is interesting to recall here Wallace's suggestion that a Revitalization movement has the 'choice' of how it will express itself, for example in either religious or secular means. Taking Linton's observation at this point, one can suggest that the movements in the United States which are co-existent with the ACM can also be understood as rational revivalistic nativistic movements. For example, the white supremacist movements, and the ultra-right wing conservative movements which advocate a return to the Gold standard, can be seen to also express this desire to return to a time when society was 'free, happy and great'.

13. Linton, p. 421.

14. Robert Wuthnow, Religious Movements and Counter-Movements in North America, in New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change, p.17.

15. Kenelm Burridge, New Heaven, New Earth (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1969) pp. 102-103.

16. John Higham Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925.

17. Higham, p. i.

18. Higham, p. 4.

19. Ibid., p. 9

20. John Higham, Another Look at Nativism, in Conspiracy: The fear of Subversion in American History Richard Curry and Thomas Brown, ed.s. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1972) p.278.

21. Ray Allen Billington, The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964) p. 1.

22. Barbara Welter, From Maria Monk to Paul Blanshard: A Century of Protestant Anti-Catholicism, in Uncivil Religion: Interreligious Hostility in America Robert Bellah & Frederick Greenspahn, ed.s. (New York: Crossroads Pub. Co., 1987) p. 44.

23. Ibid., p. 58n.

24. Linton, p. 415.

25. Linton, p. 416.

The Anti-Cult Movement

The family component of the ACM as defined here consists of three distinct groups: family members of converts to the new religions, ex-converts or apostates, and deprogrammers. These three are closely interrelated, because apostate testimonials are the primary source of information which family members use to formulate their conceptions of what new religions are essentially like, and are also the primary form of information which family-based ACM associations disperse to others. Deprogrammers are a sort of 'procurement' division of the family segment, providing two essential ingredients: a steady source of apostates, and a self-perpetuating closed-loop rationale for why people join new religions to begin with. The argument holds that deprogrammers can isolate a convert and, given concerted effort, 'free' their mind from the grip of brainwashing. This is seen as proof that the individual was in fact brainwashed. However, should the deprogrammer fail to deprogram the individual, this too is seen as proof of brainwashing, since anyone capable of free choice would obviously have abandoned the teachings of the new religion. Either way, both the individual and the family are thereby absolved of responsibility. According to Bromley and Shupe in Strange Gods, this is what Hans Toch has called "The Seduction Premise":

...my (son, daughter, family member) has embraced a "strange" religion; only inherently "strange" people would be voluntarily attracted to such a religion; my (son, daughter, family member) is obviously not an inherently "strange" person; hence he or she must have been hoodwinked or brainwashed into participating.¹

The family component of the ACM focusses its protest around the 'hoodwinking' and 'brainwashing' premises. Unlike the religious component of the ACM, whose critique of new religions is primarily doctrinal, the family component's critique might well be termed 'moral', for it centers around the 'dishonest' and 'unnatural' practices of new religions. These practices are especially condemned when they are perceived as impinging upon what is often called 'the sanctity of the family.'

Sociologists Brock Kilbourne and James T. Richardson have identified a number of core beliefs relating to new religions and the family that are held by family members and various professionals such as clergy, educators, and social workers who deal with family problems.² The first of these is the fundamental belief that "membership in newer religions leads to reduced commitment to and communication with the family." Parents of an ISKCON member expressed this perception clearly:

He has abandoned his entire past life; has no interest in his former friends, nor in any of his family. His calls and letters are very few and far between, despite our numerous attempts to communicate with him....There have been

serious illnesses within our family, but his responses have been negative, completely devoid of emotion.³

The second commonly held belief is that "parents may be redefined as the incarnation of evil and as the agents of Satan." The parents of a Unification Church convert wrote:

The cults practice and preach 'Heavenly Deception'. If you are not with them, you are against them, and therefore, a part of Satan. They feel perfectly justified in using any deceptive techniques to win over Satan in the name of God.⁴

The third belief is that cults cause the detrimental reinterpretation of the biological family in favour of surrogate parents. As another pair of Unification Church member parents wrote, "she didn't even send her father a birthday card...she said she didn't even consider us her real parents, only physical parents. Moon and his wife were her real parents."⁵

The fourth belief is the belief that the parent-child bond is generally weakened or broken entirely. This is a more general expression of perceptions already expressed above. The fifth commonly held belief is that "church elders are often responsible for mate selection." According to Ronald Enroth, a Christian Evangelical sociologist, marriages in ISKCON

are arranged by the temple president. He reportedly can order a devotee to marry or can refuse a request for marriage. Lisa states, "I've known people who really wanted to get married and the leaders wouldn't let them. When a

person said 'I'm leaving because I want to get married, it was interesting that the leaders immediately agreed to arrange the marriage.'⁶

The sixth commonly held belief, according to Kilbourne and Richardson, is that children may be raised communally and not by their biological parents. The anti-cult sociologist Willa Appel writes, in a broad generalization typical of anti-cult statements, that "as a way of handling the conflicts created by the presence of children, some cults maintained that children are communal property."⁷ This belief is closely linked to all sorts of beliefs regarding the raising of children inside a new religion. Enroth reports that in The Love Family, members

were taught that Satan works really hard in the children because they are weaker vessels. Therefore the children were to be disciplined severely, because you weren't hurting the children, you were just getting Satan out of their temples.⁸

The seventh commonly held belief is that cult members will not have access to health care and proper education. Enroth quotes an excerpt from an account by an ex-convert to The Alamo Christian Foundation as follows:

One member of the witnessing team was a Mexican-American who happened to be an epileptic. He had stopped taking his medication, Bilantin, when he joined the Foundation because 'epilepsy was just an affliction of the devil'. And now that he was saved, God had healed him and he didn't need it anymore. Well, he had a grand mal seizure on the bus on the freeway and had to be held down. He was thrashing all about and making a bloody

mess. It was horrible! One guy finally got his belt off and put it in his mouth. Everybody was praying out loud, 'The blood of Jesus against you, Satan!' We believed that Satan was literally trying to get into his body.⁹

The eighth and final commonly held belief identified by Kilbourne and Richardson is that cults sometimes engage in strange sexual behaviour. Willa Appel writes, again without specific references to support her claims, that

In other cults, sex is perverted. Because marriages are potential threats to a messiah's domination over followers, messiahs frequently encourage sexual philandering within the flock. Some have even required members to play sexual musical chairs.¹⁰

As is evident in the preceding references, apostate testimonials are a primary source of information for the ACM, especially with regards to the family component. They are also the greatest source of atrocity stories, since they combine the two elements of first hand experience and broken loyalty ties to the cult group. Apostate testimonials provided over 40% of the atrocity stories in a study of newspaper stories on new religions conducted by Bromley and Shupe and Ventimiglia of the years 1974-1977.¹¹ In the same study, Bromley, Shupe and Ventimiglia found that the two most commonly alleged atrocities were the restriction of free thought and the restriction of contact with family and friends.¹² Unless the apostate becomes actively involved with a religious group which condemns new religions, apostate criticisms almost invariable center around the

'moral' concerns of the family as opposed to the 'doctrinal' concerns of religious groups. This close connection between apostates and family ACM members is one reason for the heavy reliance on apostates by the ACM. The ready supply of atrocity tales by reputedly 'trustworthy' sources is another. Of course, the true trustworthiness of apostate testimonials must be brought into question, as the apostate has a vested interest in making the religion to which he no longer gives his allegiance look bad, so as to alleviate any guilt he might have for both joining in the first place, and leaving it in the end. There is also a third reason, which highlights the essentially 'good vs evil' or 'us vs them' mentality of the ACM, a mentality which is, essentially, nativistic in nature. This third reason is expressed best by Richard Hofstadter. Where Hofstadter writes the word 'paranoid', one should read 'anti-cultist':

I think there is a deeper eschatological significance attached to the person of the renegade: in the spiritual wrestling match between good and evil which is the paranoid's archetypal model of the world struggle, the renegade is living proof that all the conversions are not made by the wrong side. He brings with him the promise of redemption and victory.¹³

It is often the case that apostates are ex-cult members who have been deprogrammed rather than those who left the new religion by voluntary decision. Deprogrammers encourage the new ex-member to participate in deprogramming others as a means of reinforcing their own deprogramming.¹⁴ The link

then between apostates, family members and deprogrammers is clear. All three groups have vested interests in protecting their idealized concept of the family and in asserting their conviction that cults are archetypally evil.

It appears that anti-cultists, in order to protect the idealized concept of family that many of them hold, must locate the threat to that concept outside of the family unit itself. If the converts to the new religions were to be seen as in and of themselves responsible for rupturing the family unit, then the family could no longer be viewed as inviolate and sacrosanct. However, should the threat to the sanctity of the family come from outside, then the conflict becomes a moral one where the institution of the family is being assailed by evil forces and must be protected and defended against the outside enemy. Bromley and Shupe have identified two ways in which the family segment of the ACM tends to conceptualize this threat: the brainwashing metaphor, and the deception metaphor.

According to Bromley and Shupe, "the locus of evil in the brainwashing metaphor was found...in inherently evil, anti-social, anti-democratic ideologies and systems such as Nazism and Communism."¹⁵ Willa Appel, in her previously cited work Cults in America, has continual references to Nazism interspersed with her discussion on cults.¹⁶ The outwardly manifest signs of this 'evil' of brainwashing, as

identified from news and apostate accounts by Bromley and Shupe, are as follows:

1. Linguistic changes (e.g. truncated vocabulary due to compulsive repetition of group cliches.)
2. Monotonic, inflection-free voice.
3. Fixed, permanent smile ("with the mouth only".)
4. Glassy eyes and dilated pupils.
5. Hunched frame, bad posture.
6. Facial skin rash (due to vitamin A deficiency in diet.)
7. Body odour (due to neglect of daily hygiene.)
8. Ill-fitting, cheap out-of-style clothing.
9. Over-all physical debilitation (gaunt facial appearance, hollow eyes.)
10. Hyperactivity, extreme nervousness.¹⁷

These stigmata serve to identify those who have been victimized, but in the brainwashing metaphor everyone is considered a potential victim. Victims then become a potential danger themselves, because they could then turn their brainwashing capabilities - "(somehow transferred to them in the process of losing their own free will) to gain control over other innocents in a fashion reminiscent of vampires."¹⁸

Brainwashing itself occurs through application of a number of different methods. Ted Patrick claims that cults

ensnare new recruits "by on-the-spot hypnosis. Once they get them, they brainwash them."¹⁹ This brainwashing includes "a combination of fear, guilt, hatred, deception, poor diet and fatigue."²⁰ The end result is the total loss of the victim's free will and personality. Consequently, the victimized family often feels that the only viable option remaining to them is to forcibly remove their family member from the vicinity of the cult. The brainwashing metaphor is an invaluable bolster for those advocating the necessity of deprogramming.

The deception model is somewhat less extreme, relying more on a deprivationalist argument than a brainwashing argument. Anti-cultists who accept the deception metaphor do not stress the dangers to cult members and the danger from cults to the same degree as do people who hold the brainwashing metaphor. Rather, converts are seen as people who, in their idealism and emotional insecurity, become prime targets and succumb to the emotional manipulation of the cults. Therefore, the deception metaphor speaks more about zealots than zombies, about indoctrination rather than brainwashing. This understanding of indoctrination also involves sleep deprivation and emotional manipulation, but is understood to have been voluntarily entered into, and voluntarily adhered to by the convert. Consequently, according to the deception metaphor, deprogramming is not an acceptable option because there is no involuntary

programming believed to have taken place. Re-evaluative deprogramming, where family members attempt to convince the convert that they have made a mistake, and to leave the movement which they have joined, is perfectly acceptable under the deception metaphor, and is readily engaged in.

The religious component of the ACM is for all intents and purposes constituted solely from Christian evangelical and what might be called 'activist' Jewish groups. Their methods and rhetoric are similar to some degree, and yet diverge upon the central point or rationale as to why new religions represent something which must be opposed. The Christian religious response centers upon a doctrinal critique first and foremost, and from that critique it also condemns the loss of young people to the cult. 'Activist' Jewish responses condemn the loss of young people to a cult which is, by definition, doctrinally incorrect. It is a small but important distinction, for it highlights the different threat perceived by these two different groups within the religious component of the ACM. The Christian groups perceive a threat to the central Truth of their teachings, that is, a threat to the belief that the Way of Christ is the only one true Way for mankind. The success of new religions therefore poses a challenge to this belief, for how can an incorrect religious doctrine prosper while the revealed truth of Christ loses its attractiveness and many of its young adherents? The Christian Evangelical

response to this question remains firmly within the Christian tradition: the power of Satan flourishes upon the earth while good Christians fail in their work of bringing the Truth to the people of the world. The threat perceived by the Jewish anti-cult groups is the threat of potential loss of members of their community, a community chosen by God. The conflict here is not phrased as being between Good and Evil, but between the Jewish people and assimilation into non-Jewish groups. The rhetoric of evil is also employed, but it is the evil of men, and not the Cosmic evil of Satan, that these Jewish groups refer to when they use the term.

The Jewish anti-cult component can best be understood by first looking at demographic data. The threat which Jewish groups perceive stems from their perception that Jewish youths are particularly susceptible when it comes to being converted to new religions. This susceptibility was also noticed by perhaps the best known deprogrammer in the United States, Ted Patrick. He described the most common cult targets as "young, white, middle-class, Catholic or Jewish, intelligent, idealistic, sensitive, and basically naive."²¹ Why Catholic and Jewish youths should be the most susceptible to cult recruitment is not explained. One Jewish writer, M. Spero, estimates that fully 12% of Unification Church membership in the United States is Jewish.²² If correct, this figure would represent a huge

over-representation of Jewish youths in the movement, and as Teresa Donati Marciano points out in an article on cults and families, this over-representation coupled with low fertility rates and high degrees of secularism (as internally perceived) has led in some instances to fears in the Jewish community about religious and numeric survival.²³ James and Marcia Rudin, authors of a standard anti-cult work titled Prison or Paradise give an uncited estimate of 50% Jewish membership in the Unification Church. They go on to state that "observers estimate that perhaps 20 percent of Hare Krishna are Jewish. Jews constitute as much as 30% of Divine Light Mission membership and there are many Jews in Scientology."²⁴ None of these 'observers' are mentioned by name by James and Marcia Rudin, although they do cite Father James LeBar of the archdiocese of New York as claiming that 10-12% of the Unification Church membership is Jewish. They add that "since the Jewish community is less than 3 percent of the total American population, even LeBar's figure of 10 to 12 percent is a cause for deep concern among Jews."²⁵

This concern amongst certain elements of the Jewish community manifests itself in two areas. The first is the tendency to characterize cults as "subversive to the Jewish family".²⁶ James and Marcia Rudin make the blunt if more general statement that "cults are anti-woman, anti-child and anti-family."²⁷ Consequently, this aspect of the Jewish anti-cult segment does not differ from the 'family'

component already discussed. The second area of concern manifests itself in religious terms. According to a Toronto area Rabbi, Rabbi Schochet, Jews who join new religions "excommunicate themselves from the Jewish fold."²⁸ Consequently, much of the rhetoric centers around the idea of cults being 'soul-snatchers' who 'prey on Jewish youngsters'.²⁹ Interestingly, even this religiously motivated criticism of new religions takes a decidedly 'moral' as opposed to doctrinal approach. With reference to a Messianic Jewish congregation in Toronto, Rabbi Schochet wrote:

False claims, misleading advertising, heavenly or hellish deception...are an abuse of this freedom [of religion]....to use sacred articles and symbols of the Jewish tradition in order to seduce the unknowing and unwitting, is an affront to decency and morality.³⁰

This same tone of moral outrage can be seen in some of the slogans chanted by Jewish anti-cultists against the same Messianic Jewish congregation referred to above: "Jews don't Switch", "Missionaries are Spiritual Nazis", and "Take a Stand - Missionary cults must be Banned!"³¹ The tone of the criticism, that Jews are being especially singled out and threatened, reveals the primary concern of Jewish anti-cult groups: the submersion of Jewish religion and identity into the religious pluralism of the larger American society. Jewish anti-cultism is peculiar only to themselves, for as a minority group within the wider culture themselves, the

Jewish people involved with the ACM feel a need to defend against both the mainstream American culture, and the new religions. It is possible that, while having learned how to successfully defend against the cultural threat of mainstream America, and the religious threat of evangelizing Christianity, Jewish anti-cultists are uncertain as to how to defend against new religions. In this uncertainty, they take on the same rhetoric and reasoning as the family component of the ACM. In this respect, the Jewish religious response differs quite sharply from the evangelical Christian one, and might in fact best be considered more closely related to the previous family segment of the ACM than to the following one.

The Evangelical Christian doctrinal critique of new religions has a tendency to follow five discrete stages. Firstly, it establishes to its own satisfaction that the Bible is the sole authoritative source of God's revelation. Consequently, any attempt to add to, subtract from or interpret the Bible differently from the Evangelical accepted norm is condemned. Anthony Hoekema wrote his Evangelical anti-cult work titled The Four Major Cults based primarily around this criticism. In this work, Hoekema lists what he calls the distinctive traits of cults. The first of these is a reliance on extra-biblical sources of authority. He states, "whenever a cult raises a book or a set of books to the level of Scripture, it does violence to

the Word of God. God is no longer allowed to speak as He does in the Bible; He may now speak only as the sect deems proper. Thus the Word of God is brought under the yoke of man."³² Orville Swenson, another Evangelical Christian author, adds that by "placing some other religious or 'sacred' writings on an equal plane of authority... They (cults) thus add to, modify or distort what evangelical believers hold to be God's complete and final revelation of truth for this age."³³ It is interesting to note here that a major Evangelical criticism of new religions is that they adhere blindly and stubbornly to their particular set of beliefs and accepted authority and refuse to consider any other beliefs or the possibility of any other authority. Swenson writes that "the cultist thus shuts himself off from any teachings others might give him, and assumes that in his 'air tight' religious compartment he has all the facts, all the truth, he needs...the dogmatism of cults eliminates any possibility of their acceptance of any other authority. This unyielding, stubborn clinging to cultic authority is generally based on the founder's or subsequent leaders' claims to be receiving supernatural revelation from God."³⁴ The fact that there is an apparent discrepancy between the Evangelical insistence upon the truth and sole authority of the Bible, and their condemnation of new religions for their stubborn clinging to cultic authority, has apparently not occurred to the Evangelical writers, as none of them have

addressed this point. The Evangelical insistence on the sole authority of the Bible and their refusal to acknowledge the similarity between this insistence and that of new religions appears to be an excellent example of a nativistic attempt to protect an essential identity-defining aspect of a particular culture. As Ralph Linton states, "the more distinctive [elements of a culture chosen to be emphasized and given symbolic value] are with respect to other cultures ...the greater their potential value as symbols of the society's unique character."³⁵ The nature and teachings of Christianity require that the absolute authority of the Bible be emphasized. The perceived threat of new religions to Evangelical Christianity requires that this insistence be perceived as unique and distinct from the insistence of others. It is not necessary to assert that the nativistic insistence in any way varies from that within the teachings of Christianity itself, for it is possible to hold that the Evangelical doctrine stems from both a nativistic fear and from the Evangelical interpretation of the Gospels simultaneously.

The second stage of the Evangelical critique of new religions is to assert the primacy of Grace over Works. Both Hoekema and Swenson list the denial of justification by Grace alone as the second distinctive trait of cults. Hoekema writes that cults "definitely and deliberately reject the doctrine of justification by Grace alone.

'Though they may speak of the Grace of God, their theologies have no room for grace in the real sense of the word.'³⁶ Swenson writes that "cultic doctrine invariably rejects the truth of Ephesians 2:8,9 and calls upon the members to work for their acceptance with God."³⁷

The third stage of the doctrinal critique is to attack the leaders of new religions as messianic figures in opposition to Christ. This point is closely linked to the Evangelical rejection what they call 'extra-biblical sources', except where the one is a rejection of a perceived challenge to the given word of God, this is the rejection of the perceived threat to the Godhood of Christ himself: "while paying lip service to Jesus Christ as a great teacher, prophet and leader, scores of cults stop short of owning Him as the eternal Word made flesh, thus rejecting His intrinsic Deity, as God Incarnate. Then, in respect to His saving work, many view His death at Calvary as a noble act of self sacrifice, or as a partial dealing with man's sin, but again fall short of recognizing the true character of His death as a voluntary, substitutionary, atoning, propitiatory, redemptive act providing for the reconciliation of sinful man to God. His literal bodily resurrection is also denied, together with His ascension and present intercessory ministry at God's right hand."³⁸

The fourth step is to attack the exclusivity of cultic groups. According to Hoekema, a cult "absolutizes itself as

the exclusive community of the saved."³⁹ The threat which this perceived practice by cults poses is clear, for if the new religion is the one true community of the Saved, then "the church [defined of course as Evangelical and True] is either an apostate organization or an actual instrument of the devil."⁴⁰ Again, there is no recognition here that the inherent exclusivity of Evangelical Christianity's belief that only those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour is in any way similar to the elitism and exclusivity which the Evangelical anti-cultist deplore in new religions.

The final stage in the Evangelical doctrinal critique of new religions is to attack the eschatology of the new religions. According to Hoekema, whenever a cult has a developed eschatology, "it places itself in the center of it. The drama of the last things thus becomes the means where by the cult is glorified and all its enemies overwhelmingly defeated."⁴¹ The Evangelical writers reject the 'cultic' claims that the end times are upon us now, which is quite curious considering how widely accepted is the belief that the return of Christ is imminent amongst Evangelical believers. One might suggest that it is not so much the claim that the end times have arrived that outrage Evangelical writers, as it is the thought that some other group might consider themselves to be 'at the center of it'.

This suggestion is borne out by the following two statements by Swenson. Firstly, he writes that "the return of Jesus Christ to earth to establish His Messianic rule is still future, for as yet, none of the world-transforming events predicted to occur in association with His Second Coming have taken place."⁴² He also writes, however, that "the proliferation of cultic error is a sign of the end of the age, when "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (1 Tim. 4:1,2), fulfilling the Holy Spirit's prediction "that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy..."⁴³ The apparent contradiction between the two preceding statements is not explained. One might suggest that it is yet another example of the apparent need felt by the Evangelical anti-cultists to make a sharp distinction between their own beliefs and those held by followers of new religions, even when this distinction does not, to an outsider, appear to exist nearly as greatly as the Evangelical writers attempt to suggest.

The Evangelical response to new religions appears very clearly to be defensive and nativistic in that this doctrinal critique is uniformly applied not only to those Christian off shoots which might naturally challenge the Christian beliefs of more established groups, but also to non-Christian movements which do not directly threaten

evangelical Christianity. For example, Swenson refers to the Bhagavad Gita as an extra-biblical source when referring to ISKCON.⁴⁴ The unstated expectation, that a Hindu devotional movement should put the Judeo-Christian Holy Book prior to all other sacred writings, appears ludicrous unless understood in the context of a defensive or nativistic insistence upon an innate cultural/religious superiority which cannot even for a moment allow another belief system co-equal or independent existence. The teachings of all new religions are analyzed by Evangelicals under the determinedly Christian headings of Doctrine of God, Authority of Scripture, Doctrine of Christ, Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and Doctrine of Sin and Salvation. Swenson applies these categories even to new religions which do not necessarily have any conception of God, Salvation, Grace, Sin, or any of the other Christian concepts. Bromley, Shupe and Oliver claim that "the relatively uniform response to the motley assortment of new religions is important to demonstrate the socially constructed nature of religious deviance."⁴⁵ This is the central goal of religious anti-cultism: to define the new religions as invalid and thereby maintain the identity and security of the religions which have already withstood the test of time.

Paralleling the brainwashing/ deception metaphors discussed with reference to the family segment of the ACM, Bromley and Shupe identify a similar distinction within the

ideology of the religious component (specifically the Evangelical component) of the ACM. This distinction is between what they term the possession metaphor, and the deception metaphor.

The possession metaphor is more useful, according to Bromley and Shupe, for pointing out how religious language can be used to explain the more secular brainwashing argument, than it is for explaining the attitudes of specific religious anti-cult groups. According to the possession metaphor, demons, evil spirits or even Satan himself are understood to take control over a person's body and mind, and leave the individual incapable of controlling his or her own actions. Specific physiological traits accompany this possession. In a 1966 study on possession, T.K. Oesterreich noted the following 'symptoms': changes in appearance posture and gait, radical voice changes, speech of the possessed reflecting personality of possessor, extraordinary strength, nervous agitation and movement, and rage at being confronted with religious symbols and beliefs.⁴⁶ The similarity of these characteristics to those mentioned under the brainwashing section of the family segment should be obvious. Although not generally used to explain an individual's conversion to a new religion, overtones of the possession metaphor have seeped into other explanations. Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman are actually

proponents of the secular brainwashing metaphor, and yet they provide their readers with the following testimony:

In our interviews we heard many versions of the physical transformations of cult members' eyes. One mother in the Midwest swore to us - and observers confirmed - that during a confrontation with her daughter, who was in a Christian cult, she actually saw a beam of red light shoot out of the girl's eyes.⁴⁷

It is important to recognize that arguments of possession, in existence for centuries and a major part of the history of Christianity to explain the otherwise inexplicable, are still very much in use to explain conversion to new religions, and while there are not a great many who would publicly confess their belief that a loved one had been possessed by demons, the language remains in use within the brainwashing metaphor.

The religious version of the deception metaphor is widely used by evangelical anti-cultists today. It presupposes the implicit and explicit intervention of the anti-Christ in the new religions. Satan is not thought to possess the cultists, but to be exerting his influence through them. Ronald Enroth writes:

The so-called new-age cults represent the most recent manifestation of an age-old struggle - the battle between good and evil, between God and God's adversary, Satan. The phenomena described in this book [Youth, Brainwashing and the Extremist Cults] are neither random nor accidental: they are profoundly patterned. As simplistic as it may sound to some, they indicate a

demonic conspiracy to subvert the true gospel of Jesus Christ through human agents whose minds have been blinded by the evil one.⁴⁸

In the religious deception metaphor, cult leaders and members are understood to be the unwitting tools of Satan. Consequently, the Evangelical purpose is to teach them, not to deprogram them. While the danger to and from cultists is not necessarily perceived as any less than in any other explanatory model, the methods of treating them differs:

In the world of cults, hundreds of individuals have come to know harsh discipline and abject slavery to a loveless cultic organization, by means of the mind-bending and mind-controlling techniques of domineering cult leaders. They therefore know nothing of the experience of being loved with the unselfish love of a genuine Christian. Herein lies the plain duty of a born-again believer - to demonstrate that kind of loving compassion to a love-starved victim of cultism.⁴⁹

Since cult members are understood to be deceived and not in and of themselves evil, not only can they be successfully evangelized, but they can offer some valuable insight for genuine Christians. Most of the Evangelical writers couple Satan's power with an admitted laxness on the part of Christians when it comes to explaining the rise in cultism. From the cults Christians are urged to learn the necessity of zealous witnessing, to hold definite convictions of the faith, to have a strong commitment to Christ's Church, to develop a practical strategy to disseminate teachings, and the willingness to endure misunderstanding and even ridicule

for their faith.⁵⁰ However many redeeming features new religions might have, however, and no matter how many things Christians could learn from cult members, good Christian children are still warned by their Evangelical anti-cultist elders that "if you are stopped by a Moonie, don't walk; run until you are safely away."⁵¹

Endnotes

1. Bromley & Shupe, Strange Gods, p. 193.

2. Brock Kilbourne and James T. Richardson, Cults vs families; A Case of Misattribution of Cause, in Cults and the Family, p. 81. The following references are taken from this article unless otherwise stated.

3. Bromley and Shupe, Strange Gods, p. 87. Taken from the congressional hearings held by Senator Robert Dole and published by the National Ad Hoc Committee, p. 60.

4. Ben and Marie Hershell, Our Involvement with a Cult, in Cults and the Family, p. 133.

5. Bromley and Shupe, Strange Gods, p. 88. Taken from The Home News, New Brunswick, N.J., November 12, 1975.

6. Ronald Enroth, Youth, Brainwashing and the Extremist Cults, (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1977), p. 24.

7. Willa Appel, Cults in America: Programmed for Paradise, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1983), p. 108.

8. Enroth, p. 89.

9. Ibid., p. 72.

10. Appel, p. 110.

11. David Bromley, Anson Shupe and J.C. Ventimiglia, The Role of Anecdotal Atrocities in the Social Construction of Evil in The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy, David Bromley and James T. Richardson, Ed.s. (New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1983), p. 143.

12. Ibid., p. 143.
13. Richard Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style in American Politics, in The Paranoid Style in American Politics and other essays, (New York: Knopf Publishing, 1965), p. 35.
14. See for example the numerous examples of this in Ted Patrick's work Let our Children Go with Tom Dulack, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1976).
15. Bromley and Shupe, The New Vigilantes: Deprogrammers, Anti-Cultists and the New Religions, (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1980), p. 71.
16. See for example Appel's chapter titled "Breaking the Will, pp. 93 - 111.
17. Bromley and Shupe, Witches, Moonies and accusations of evil, in In Gods We Trust: New Patterns of Religious Pluralism, Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony, Eds., (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1981, p. 255.
18. Bromley and Shupe, The New Vigilantes, p. 72.
19. Ted Patrick, Let Our Children Go!, p. 20.
20. Patrick, quoted in Bromley and Shupe's The New Vigilantes, p. 73.
21. Ted Patrick, as paraphrased in Bromley and Shupe, The New Vigilantes, p.72.
22. M.H. Spero, Cults, Some Theoretical and Practical Perspectives, Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 1977, 53,pp. 330 - 338.
23. Theresa Marciano, Families and Cults, in Cults and the Family, p.101.

24. James and Marcia Rudin, Prison or Paradise, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 101.
25. James and Marcia Rudin, p. 101.
26. Ibid., p. 101.
27. Ibid., p. 101.
28. Rabbi Schochet, as quoted in the Toronto Star April 12, 1980 "Missionary group used deception, Rabbi Protests". Rabbi Schochet was speaking with specific reference to Jews who join Christian movements.
29. See for example David Rausch in Jews against Messianic Jews, New Religions and Mental Health, ed. Herbert Richardson, (New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1980), p. 41.
30. Toronto Star, "Missionary group used deception, Rabbi Protests".
31. Rausch, p. 45.
32. Anthony Hoekema, The Four Major Cults, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 379.
33. Orville Swenson, The Perilous Path of Cultism, (Caronport, SK.: Briercrest Books, 1987), p. 52. Swenson parallels Hoekema so closely in both his format and the content of what he writes, that it seems almost certain that Swenson must have read Hoekema's work prior to writing his own. In fact, Hoekema's work is the model upon which much of the Evangelical critique of new religions is based, despite the fact that Hoekema only addressed four Christian sects, not such obviously different movements as ISKCON or The Way.
34. Ibid., pp. 49-50.
35. Ralph Linton, p. 416.

36. Hoekema, p. 381.
37. Swenson, p.59.
38. Swenson, pp. 60-61.
39. Hoekema, p. 384.
40. Ibid., p.384.
41. Hoekema, p. 386.
42. Swenson, p. 243.
43. Swenson, p.140.
44. Swenson, p. 182.
45. Anson Shupe, David Bromley and Donna Oliver, The Anti-Cult Movement: A Bibliography and Historical Survey, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984), p. 9.
46. Bromley and Shupe, The New Vigilantes, p. 64.
47. Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, Snapping, (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1978), p. 159.
48. Ronald Enroth, Youth, Brainwashing and the Extremist Cults, p. 202.
49. Swenson, p. 106.
50. Taken from Swenson's recommendations to Evangelical Christians, pp. 133-139.
51. Bromley and Shupe, The New Vigilantes, quoted from anti-cultist author McBeth, p. 70.

Motivations

There are a number of possible ways to explain the anti-cult opposition to new religions without having recourse to the reasons proposed by the anti-cultists themselves. Some of these have been proposed by academics with specific reference to cults and anti-cultism. Bromley and Shupe, Willa Appel and Robert Bellah are examples of scholars who have attempted to find explanations for the fervency of cult opposition. Other possible explanations can be found by looking to the literature on the nature of hostility, intolerance and religious conflict. It has become evident in the previous pages that anti-cult sentiment is firmly held by a number of people and carefully rationalized by those who hold it. It should also have become evident that this anti-cult sentiment often leads to over-generalizations, haphazardly applied and seemingly irrefutable claims. This leads to the conclusion that the beliefs and emotions of members of the ACM with regards to new religions step beyond the bounds of hasty judgement and into the realm of prejudice. Gordon Allport defines prejudice as "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group."¹

The application of the label prejudice does not, however, help to explain the motivations behind anti-cultism. Allport provides an addendum to his definition of prejudice which is useful here. He states that while "much prejudice is a matter of blind conformity with prevailing folkways...in most cases prejudice seems to have some functional significance for the bearer."² The functional significance of anti-cultism must certainly vary from individual to individual and group to group within the ACM and yet, taken together, manifests itself as the nativistic response of the ACM. It is important to recognize that the acknowledged motivation or functional significance of anti-cult sentiment by anti-cultists differs quite strongly from that which can be attributed to them by others. The self expressed motivation is to prevent and reverse the spread of cultism because the dangers presented in cultism are numerous and obvious to all. Richard Hofstadter can provide an interesting observation on this self-perceived motivation of anti-cultists. Where Hofstadter writes 'paranoid', one should read 'anti-cultist':

The distinguishing thing about the paranoid style is not that its exponents see conspiracies ... in history, but that they regard a 'vast' or 'gigantic' conspiracy as the motive force in historical events....The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of this conspiracy in apocalyptic terms - he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values. He is always manning the barricades of civilization.³

Contrary to this view, Bromley and Shupe perceive a more self-serving and mundane motivating force behind anti-cultism. Bromley and Shupe state that "in the final analysis the campaign against the new religions is better understood as the product of the anti-cultists' interests rather than as a civic crusade to save the rest of us from a dark, evil conspiracy."⁴

Bromley and Shupe identify two primary motivating factors behind family involvement in the ACM: firstly, to extricate the family member from the new religion, and secondly, to seek an acceptable explanation for that family member's involvement, one which "will minimize their social embarrassment and relieve personal feelings that range from sorrow and disappointment to guilt and anger." In James Beckford's 1982 study on family responses to cultic conversion of a family member, he identifies three major types of response: incomprehension, anger, and ambivalence.⁵ According to Beckford, the second type of response, anger, "was statistically the most frequent [and] some echoes of it were also perceptible in the other two types of responses. Moreover, this particular response has virtually monopolized the accounts given in the mass-media of reactions to new religious movements; indeed, it has approximated to the status of a stereotype."⁶ Despite the strength and effectiveness of this and other media stereotypes in producing passive anti-cult sentiment in the general

population, Beckford insists that media coverage fails to capture the strength, persistence and intensity of this anger towards new religions. The 'snap-shot' approach of journalists, according to Beckford, "fails to capture the deeply-rooted character of the emotions which drove some family members not only to angry recrimination against new religious movements but also to an all-consuming and constant determination to suppress what they considered to be the evil activities of such movements."⁷

The anti-cultists invariably identify 'brainwashing' or some variant of it as the primary and most abhorrent 'evil' of cultism. Both Bromley and Shupe and Beckford correctly identify this element throughout the hostile response to new religions, and both identify the dangers of this element:

What was constant in this type of response, however, was an inner connection between hostile feelings towards the movement and various 'justifications' or pieces of 'evidence'. The most powerful element in their accounts was the conviction that recruits had been manipulated unfairly at all stages of the affiliation process and during subsequent involvement....It was equally clear from informants' accounts that the theory of manipulation had unambiguous implications for practical action. Above all, it was assumed to justify urgent and drastic action in defense of the ...'victims' and in prevention of further 'outrages' against human freedom of the will. Unconventional and even criminal actions were presented in this framework of thought as necessary, smaller and temporary evils whose

justification derived from the urgent necessity to counter an allegedly unnecessary, a greater and possibly long-term evil.⁸

The brainwashing premise allows for the formulation of number of anti-cult convictions. It allows new religions to be categorically labelled 'evil' - as they pervert the one essential and most important American virtue: free thought. It gives legitimation and justification to the anger and hurt felt when a family member seemingly abandons the family unit in favour of another. And it allows for a sharp distinction to be made between 'true' religion/beliefs and 'false' religion/beliefs. Taken together, these convictions can clearly be perceived as an attempt to assert the validity and meaningfulness of the dominant cultural belief-system in face of the defection of a member to a competing system. This, in turn, clearly reflects the nativistic nature of anti-cultism.

Bromley and Shupe identify the brainwashing premise as the single most useful explanation for family member 'defection' to new religions because it explains the seemingly inexplicable event without casting doubt or aspersions on either the family, the cult member, or the home environment, or on any of the accepted truths of the dominant culture. According to Bromley and Shupe, in order to support this explanation, anti-cultists resort to oversimplification and over generalization. Bromley and Shupe claim that the blatant use of stereotypes are evidence

of the seriousness with which the anti-cultists see their struggle:

The anti-cultists are forced to use simplistic stereotypes precisely because they seek to arouse righteous indignation in others that will provide confirmation of their own indignation and gain supporters. So for the diversity of new religions they substitute cults; for the diversity of motives individuals have for converting they substitute brainwashing....Inflamed rhetoric and stereotyping are typical of groups engaged in all-out conflict, and there is no doubt that the anti-cultists see this struggle in exactly those terms.⁹

This oversimplification and stereotyping provides a clear indication of the magnitude of the threat which the ACM perceives, and an even clearer indication of the nativistic fear which it expresses. The ACM believes its own generalizations and stereotypes, and therein lies its expression of nativistic fear, for it holds these beliefs as in direct opposition to the desired norms and values of the society which it is attempting to protect. One fascinating question about this is how the ACM reaches its conclusions regarding the nature of the threat which it perceives new religions as presenting. As Bromley and Shupe and others have shown, new religions are declining in numbers, have atrocious success rates at conversion, and terrible drop-out rates, are poor money makers and generally do not succeed in surviving beyond a few years time. For example, Marc Galanter has shown that of one hundred and four people first

invited to a two day Unification retreat , seventy-one percent opted not to return for a follow-up seven day session. Of the twenty-nine percent who did continue, forty percent of those elected not to continue to to the next twenty-one day session. Of these, only fifty per cent then elected to continue with the Unification Church. Four months later, thirty-three percent of those people had elected to leave. In all, of the original 104 people who attended a two day workshop, only six people, or six per cent, remained with the movement.¹⁰ These sorts of figures are very different from what anti-cultists suggest, and many of their other claims are equally open to question. Richard Hofstadter is again useful here in offering insight into this issue. Again, where Hofstadter writes 'paranoid', one should read anti-cultist:

What distinguishes the paranoid style is not, then, absence of verifiable facts (though it is occasionally true that in his extravagant passion for facts the paranoid occasionally manufactures them), but rather the curious leap in imagination that is always made at some critical point in the recital of events.¹¹

This leap in imagination allows the anti-cultist to perceive a threat, and to maintain that conviction in the face of any argument to the contrary. As Gordon Allport defines the term, this then places much of anti-cult belief within the realm of prejudice. "If a person is capable of rectifying his erroneous judgments in the light of new evidence, he is

not prejudiced....prejudgments become prejudices...if they are not reversible when exposed to new knowledge."¹²

Despite her evident anti-cultist slant, Willa Appel provides another possible explanation or identification of the functional significance of anti-cultism. She writes her work from the same sociological background and Bromley and Shupe, but relies more heavily upon millenarianism, and her discussion is on cults rather than anti-cultism. Appel, like many others, identifies rapid social change and shattered dreams as the impetus behind millenarian movements. While she appears in her book Cults in America: Programmed for Paradise to be passively anti-cultist herself, she is also a social scientist and as such as has a useful contribution to make. Appel writes:

Rapid social change disrupts traditional beliefs and values as well as the ability of a social system to meet the expectations of its members. The result is disorientation and alienation, for values do not just exist 'out there' but are internalized as part of an individual's identity. Contact with different social groups, whether through colonization, wars, or modernization, for example, often trigger a millenarian response. These movements represent both a reaction to frustration and the attempt to re-create reality, to reestablish a personal identity in situations where the old world view has lost meaning.¹³

Interestingly, Appel is writing with reference to the new religious movements themselves in the above quoted passage. Her insight applies equally as well, however, to the anti-

cult movement as well. According to Appel, people of high income and/or influence are unlikely to succumb to what she terms the 'millenarian fantasy'. This assertion would seem to contradict Linton's observation that nativistic movements (considered as a sub-genre of millenarian movements by Wallace) can and do take place within dominant cultures, and with dominant groups within those cultures. Appel's observation that people who find the 'millenarian fantasy' attractive are people who have had their confidence in their worldview shaken fits very well with what has already been discussed. She writes that millenarianists are "people whose world has suddenly overturned, who find themselves in familiar surroundings that no longer make sense. Even the ground underfoot has become suspect, liable to slide or lurch without warning."¹⁴ While Appel uses this argument to support her explanation of why people join new religions, it helps equally to explain why anti-cultists are so vehement in their defense of the American way of life. Anti-cultists do believe that they are, in Hofstadter's words, 'manning the barricades of civilization'. They believe that they are defending the American virtues of freedom of thought and expression, true religion, the institution of the family, and traditional values. Unfortunately for anti-cultists, contemporary North American society is a constantly changing milieu of beliefs and practices, and their attempt to define, maintain and protect certain isolated aspects seems

doomed to failure. Anti-cultists are unfortunate in that they are caught between the shifting values of their own culture and the proposed new values of new religions. They respond by attempting to assert what 'reality' is and should be. This assertion, however, leads equally to an insistence on how America should not be - and the intolerance and hostility which this results in is a recurring and unpleasant theme in the nativistic response of anti-cultism.

Another contribution to this discussion from the field of sociology comes with a discussion of relative deprivation as a possible means of illuminating the rationale behind anti-cultism. John Lofland and Rodney Stark used a deprivationalist explanation to explain why people were attracted to a little known and obscure Korean-Christian sect in California which would one day become known as the Unification Church. Charles Glock also used deprivation to explain religious adherence. Basically, the argument suggests that people who become involved with a religious movement (or any other type of voluntary movement), do so because they are lacking in some manner something which they feel is essential. Glock suggests five types of deprivation: economic, social, organismic, ethical and psychic.¹⁵ Economic deprivation is financial; social deprivation is lack of power, position or prestige; organismic deprivation is physical illness; ethical deprivation is lack of meaningful purpose; and psychic

deprivation is the lack of philosophical satisfaction from life.¹⁶ The usefulness for this explanation for our purposes is that it is very clear that the family segment of the ACM has experienced a loss; the family members very clearly experience a deprivation of sorts, that of being deprived of a loved one. They often also lose prestige and social position, or fear that they will. This is the one of the primary motivations suggested by Bromley and Shupe behind what they call Hans Toch's seduction premise. The deprivationalist explanation presupposes that only people who are in some manner lacking would join a voluntary association of any sort, particularly a religious one, and this conclusion is unpleasant in its connotations. However, it does have something to offer in the attempt to find explanations for the existence of the ACM.

Robert Bellah suggests another explanation for anti-cultism, one which again relates quite closely to the concept of nativism. According to Bellah, it is the very nature of societies to define themselves, to draw boundaries and, as a consequence, to exclude certain elements from within those boundaries. According to Bellah, "every society, every religious community and indeed, every person is defined by a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion."¹⁷ Uncertainty or conflict within a society (such as the rapidly changing social, economic and technological spheres within the United States) leads to an increased tendency to

exclude all elements which do not exactly correspond to a certain culture's self-definition. The result, according to Bellah, is a tendency to conceptualize the world in solely black and white terms. For Bellah, the entire history of the United States is an example of an 'us vs them' mentality. And, he adds, American history is full of examples of how this distinction between us and them is equated with the distinction between good and bad. "This position leads naturally to Richard Nixon's statement in his inaugural address that 'I know the heart of America is good'. By America we can be sure he meant the silent majority, and not the communists, criminals, hippies, student radicals, and black militants which he leaves to Agnew to attack."¹⁸ We can be equally as sure that the silent majority to which Bellah refers does not include members of the new religions.

The danger in the equation between evil and 'that which is different' is that it leads to persecution, intolerance and oppression. As Bellah notes,

Another consequence of this primitive form of splitting of good and evil to which Americans have been so prone is the notion that the good, being good, can do no evil. Any action taken against groups seen to be evil is justified, for the good can have only good ends in view.¹⁹

If this suggestion that mankind has a tendency to define 'different' as 'evil' has any validity, this can shed a great deal of light on the attitudes and actions of anti-

cultists. New religions are very obviously and self-admittedly distinct from and in some cases antithetical to the ways and beliefs of the 'silent majority' of which Bellah speaks. While this difference in and of itself cannot fully explain the opposition with which these movements are faced, if 'different' is defined as 'evil' it can explain the vehemence of some of that opposition. This idea also sheds light on the motivation or functional significance of the rhetoric employed by anti-cultists. Nevitt Sanford and Craig Comstock make the following observation:

Whether people are seen as devils or monster, germs or vermin, pigs or apes, as robots, or as abstract menaces, they are thus removed from the company of men and exposed to the defenses we employ against those threats.²⁰

As with Bromley and Shupe's observation that anti-cultists are forced to use stereotyping and generalizations in order to evoke sympathy and support for their goals, here we find a similar observation which, when applied to anti-cultists, reveals the necessity behind their rhetoric. If cultists were considered to be genuine religious seekers freely engaged in the pursuit of religious truth, the mass of public support and public sanctions against cult activities could not be brought to bear. By conceptualizing cultists as 'zombies' or 'robots', and cult leaders as 'devils' or 'monsters', anti-cultists achieve two goals. Firstly, the sympathy of the general public is engaged, for

no one wants to support monsters who turn children into zombies, and more importantly, a firm distinction is made between us - the moral, righteous, good - and them - the evil, corrupt, bad. This stress on the uniqueness and rightness of the ways of the silent majority over the foreign, strange and thereby 'evil' ways of the cults lends itself readily to the nativistic response explanation. Bellah suggests that the dominant culture's attempt to define it's boundaries more distinctly in response to new religions is a reflection of its realization that "all was not well in the loosely bounded [American] culture."²¹ Ultimately, however, Bellah is uncertain as to whether this attempt reflects a genuine conviction that America is more than a loose grouping of individualists, or is only a form of symbolic nostalgia. Nativism allows for both explanations, for revivalistic nativism can encompass both nostalgia and the attempt to define and thereby protect all that the group holds 'sacred'.

Having come full circle, the idea that anti-cultism represents a manifestation of a nativistic response must now be returned to. In our chapter on nativism, the historical understanding of the term was shown to have grown out of the study of anti-Catholic sentiment in the early history of the United States. The fear that Catholics were attempting to undermine the Protestant American way of life gave rise to a great number of fearful accusations and beliefs. These

accusations reflected the fears of the dominant culture. According to Barbara Welter, the nineteenth century stereotyped image of a Catholic was the "precise antithesis of American ideals, an inverted image of Jacksonian democracy."²² She goes on to suggest that 'Jacksonian democracy' was primarily myth, and as such desperately needed an opposing force to provide the impetus with which to keep that myth strong. "If the age had not produced Catholics," she writes, "it would have invented them as the necessary negative image of the proposed national virtue."²³ This suggestion captures the imagination with regard to the ACM. The rapid social change in the years since the second world war has made huge inroads into the utopian ideals of family, church and morality as upheld by the anti-cultists, if indeed these things ever existed in the forms which the ACM attempts to defend, and are not simply the kind of 'myth' which Welter suggests about Jacksonian democracy. A cause of this erosion which lies outside of the culture itself is vital to the ACM, and as a consequence anything different or strange is perceived as threatening and, ipso facto, the reason for the cultural erosion. The ideal that 'if new religions had not existed, nativists would have had to invent them' is a fascinating one. The hostility and antagonism directed against new religions is a direct reflection of this need for an enemy against which to fight, and a clear indication of the

unsteady ground upon which the ACM is built. Change is the hardest of all things against which to defend. If nativism is understood as a fearful response to change as represented (or perceived to be represented) by differing cultural values, then anti-cultism can and must be seen in this light. Cynthia Ozick observes, with reference to anti-semitism, that "anti-semitism is independent of its object. What Jews do or fail to do is not the determinant. The impetus comes out of the needs of the persecutors."²⁴ This statement applies with equal validity to anti-cultism. The need of anti-cultists is to assert some degree of constancy, validity and truth to their vision of America. And yet, like Margaret Atwood's pioneer in her poem *Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer*, the anti-cultist refuses to accept new religions as a reality. Like the pioneer, if the anti-cultist

had known unstructured
space is a deluge
and stocked his log house-
boat with all the animals

even the wolves,

he might have floated.

But obstinate he
stated, The land is solid
and stamped,

watching his foot sink
down through stone
up to the knee.²⁵

Endnotes

1. Gordon Allport, The Nature of Prejudice, (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1954), p. 9.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
3. Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style in American Politics and other essays, pp. 29-30.
4. Bromley and Shupe, Strange Gods, p. 213.
5. James Beckford, A Typology of Family Responses to a New Religious Movement in Cults and the Family, pp. 41-55.
6. Ibid., pp. 44-45.
7. Ibid., p. 45.
8. Beckford, pp. 45-46.
9. Bromley and Shupe, Strange Gods, p. 214.
10. Marc Galanter, Group Induction Techniques in a Charismatic Sect, in The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy, pp.184-186.
11. Hofstadter, p. 37.
12. Allport, p. 9.
13. Willa Appel, p. 19.
14. Ibid., p.27.

15. Charles Glock, The role of deprivation in the Origin and Evolution of Religious Groups, in Religion and Social Conflict, Robert Lee and Martin Marty, ed.s. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) p.27.

16. Ibid., p. 26-32.

17. Robert Bellah, Competing Visions of the Role of Religion in American Society in Uncivil Religion: Interreligious Hostility in America, p.219.

18. Robert Bellah, Evil and the American Ethos, in Sanctions for Evil, Nevitt Sanford and Craig Comstock, Ed.s (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1971), pp. 184-185.

19. Ibid., p. 185.

20. Nevitt Sanford and Craig Comstock, Sanctions for Evil, in Sanctions for Evil, p. 7.

21. Robert Bellah, Competing Visions of the Role of Religion in American Society, in Uncivil Religion, p. 225.

22. Barbara Welter, From Maria Monk to Paul Blanchard, in Uncivil Religion, p. 46. Taken from David Brion Davis, Some themes of Counter - subversion, Mississippi Historical Review 47 (1960) p. 208.

23. Ibid., p. 46.

24. John Murray Cuddihy, The Elephant and the Angels, or The Incivil Irritatingness of Jewish theodicy, in Uncivil Religion, p. 24. Taken from Cynthia Ozick, Debate: Ozick vs Schulweis.

25. Margaret Atwood, Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer, in 20th Century Poetry and Poetics, 2nd Ed. Gary Geddes, Ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 423-426.

Conclusions

The previous pages have attempted to suggest the rough outlines of the arguments used by the ACM, and the possible motivations and reasoning behind the existence of this movement. The theory of nativism as suggested by historians and anthropologists has provided a very useful means with which to begin to understand the ACM. Clearly, the ACM has a great many features which allow it to be perceived as a nativistic response. The ACM reacts both harshly and often times without cause to a threat which it perceives to their cherished way of life. The fact that the wider population of the United States does not respond in kind suggests that the threat which the ACM perceives is a threat to values and norms which are not so strongly held by the 'silent majority'. This suggests that Linton's Revivalistic, rationalistic form of nativism is being expressed here, for the ACM is attempting to protect and/or revive elements of a culture which do not hold such a high place of esteem for the wider population. It has been evident throughout this paper that there is a strong tone of nostalgia and the search for Utopia present in the ACM. This, also, places the ACM within the boundaries of a revivalistic rationalistic form of nativism.

The previous pages attempted to show the differences as well as the similarities between the different segments of

the ACM. The ACM is by no means a homogeneous whole. This is why it was necessary to distinguish between the nativistic response of the ACM and the nativism more generally discussed by historians and anthropologists. It is clear that the ACM is a movement distinct from these other types of movements, if only because it is a movement taking place within the dominant culture, or rather within a segment of that dominant culture. The anti-cult movement, like other reactionary movements such as the white supremacist movement in the United States, exists within the wider culture, and claims to represent that culture. In fact, however, the wider culture does not hold the same emotionally charged response to new religions as does the ACM. While the public does hold a passive anti-cult sentiment, this is largely due to misinformation and lack of information rather than to any perception of a dangerous threat to their way of life.

The ACM sees this threat as a very great danger, and responds with all the weapons which it has available. These weapons include using stereotypes and generalizations in an attempt to dehumanize cult members, and to evoke sympathy and support from the wider population. These methods have been largely successful, and this is cause for concern. James Beckford, Bromley and Shupe, and Robert Bellah have all suggested the possible dangers inherent in the belief that good, being good, can do no evil. The self-definition

of the ACM and by extension the wider society as good, and the definition of new religions as evil, leads to the dehumanization of cultists and the potential for real violence in the name of righteousness. While the ACM does not hold positions of power all throughout the American government, the lobbying and passive anti-cultism of the population and government figures could lead to dangerous suppression and reprisals. The mainline Christian denominations have recognized this danger, and many of them refuse to support the calls for suppression of new religions and for legalization of deprogramming. Many have publicly called for the halt to such efforts at suppression.¹ Others, however, are unaware that their actions are prejudicial. Nevitt Sanford and Craig Comstock point out that selective perception often leads to subconscious repression. They state:

Selective perception itself becomes a sanction [for evil]. The official may intend no harm, but neither does he notice its occurrence; and if complaints are made, he may show considerable imagination in defining them away.²

The nativistic tendencies of the ACM have, therefore, implications which the wider public has yet to realize. The previous pages have attempted to bring this problem to light.

The anti-cult movement is not so wide spread that it has gained wide recognition amongst the general populace. Indeed, while most people have heard the term cult, very few

have heard the term anti-cultist. In fact, when the one mentions anti-cultism to most people, the response is one of positive encouragement. Passive anti-cult sentiment results in passive acceptance of anti-cult behaviour and rhetoric. This paper has shown that this acceptance is not something to be encouraged. It is possible that the ACM will, in Anthony Wallace's terms, reach a new steady state in which it no longer feels threatened to the point of needing to lash out at someone. At the very least, this paper has shown that this hope is something to be greatly desired.

Endnotes

1. See for example the letter written by Rev. Barry Lynn of the United Church of Christ to Senator Dole in New Religions and Mental Health, pp.119-123.
2. Sanford and Comstock, Sanctions for Evil, in Sanctions for Evil, p. 6.

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