

exploitation by helping professionals is palpable. Prevention requires diligent efforts in a number of directions in addition to public education. Among the other directions are the selection of appropriate candidates as future therapists, the professional education and supervision of practicing therapists, and the toughening of ethical, professional, and legal sanctions against offending therapists. Prevention will never be total or perfect. All therapists are human and therefore imperfect. Sexual involvement of therapists with patients, though reprehensible, is likely to remain a hazard of treatment for patients of professionals in the mental health field. Humankind's darker side ensures that it can never be completely eliminated.

SEVEN

Killer Cults

From Apocalypse Now to Satanic Worship

A 34-year-old businesswoman recounts memories of satanic ritual abuse during her childhood, of suffering incest rape within a family cult. At Ranch Apocalypse, near Waco, Texas, the self-proclaimed messiah David Koresh gathers cult members from Israel, Jamaica, Great Britain, New Zealand, and Australia, as well as from the United States. He tells them no one will survive the coming battle, that it will be Armageddon. In Jonestown, Guyana, the Reverend Jim Jones calls his flock together over the loudspeaker for their last communion, and tells them, "We're going to meet in another place," which they all understand to be heaven.

These three lethal visions represent the extreme end of a spectrum of cults that ranges from the life-affirming to the satanic to the "killer" cults. This chapter is about cults that kill. But to properly comprehend any of the cults, it is necessary to look at the whole spectrum.

Armageddon in Texas

The Branch Davidians had begun with the visionary prophecies of a defrocked Seventh-Day Adventist minister, Bulgarian-born Victor

"nurses" could spray cyanide down the babies' throats with hypodermic syringes. Sticking a gun into the ribs of a mother who would not stop clutching her 1-year-old son, a guard shouted, "You dumb bitch. You better do it or we're going to shoot your ass off." Tears running down her face, she injected the cyanide mix herself into the baby's mouth. Almost immediately, the child began to convulse and scream. An old man who resisted violently was knocked to the ground, his jaws pried open and cyanide poured down his throat. All the while, Jones was on the loudspeaker, exhorting his flock. "There is great dignity to dying," he called out. "It is a great demonstration for everyone to die."

Cult members who had drunk the Kool-Aid were taken away by guards and instructed to lie down in rows. Families and groups of friends grasped hands. Some embraced. Soon, they all began to gasp for air and retch. Blood poured out of their noses and mouths. Jones continually gave his benediction, repeating over and over, "I tried. I tried. I tried." Finally, he called out "mother," six times. A shot was fired, and Jones careened backward with a fatal bullet wound to his right temple. When the silence descended completely over the jungle commune, and the "service" was over, some 914 members of the cult were dead.

Satanic Memories

A 34-year-old businesswoman describes her nightmares in the pages of a popular, trend-setting magazine. She tells of being ravaged by unbidden recollections from her childhood. In these memories, she was raped by her father, her grandfather, and by a boy to whom she had been "married" at the age of two in a cult ceremony. She recalled having been deliberately impregnated a number of times. She was then made to suffer artificially induced labors during the 5th or 6th month of her pregnancies so that she could deliver the fetuses in a barnyard. She remembers being 13 at the time that a daughter was born, then twins, then another son and a daughter. She watched as the babies were sacrificed in satanic ceremonies. The celebrants drank the blood and ate the

baby's flesh. The perpetrators were members of her own family.

Although she had always remembered some of the abuse that she had experienced in the family cult, it was not until she reached her thirties that the horrible and devastating memories of ritual torture and infanticide emerged spontaneously. The details came out. She recalled wearing a fluffy blue and white dress. Her grandfather beckoned her to come into the barn and lie down, then said he was going to make sure that no more babies would come out. She remembered not being able to move her legs and thinks she was given a shot of some kind. While she lay in the dark, unable to resist, people with torches stood up suddenly and began chanting. Her grandfather led the ceremony. He held an ornate knife in the air while uttering something about consecrating her to Satan. As the chant mounted, her grandfather thrust the knife into her vagina. Blood splattered over her abdomen. A woman stuffed gauze into the wound. The victim had to be carried out. She did not die, but lived on, claiming that she suffered for years, troubled by awful memories and nightmares.

Defining Cults

What is a cult? It depends on who you ask and at what point in a group's lifespan the question is asked. Today the term *cult* is largely pejorative. To call some group a cult is a subjective judgment and not one that people inside the group might choose to make. The early Christians were considered deviant cultists and persecuted accordingly. No one, anymore, would consider Christianity to be a cult. However, when the Protestants separated from the Catholic Church, they were treated as a heretical cult. Also considered as cults at one time were the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Christian Scientists, and the Jehovah's Witnesses. All are now established, respected, denominational religious groups. Today, there are many nonreligious, charismatic treatment groups that emphasize the use of contemporary psychology—Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Synanon (before it descended into deviant practices) are two of these. Are they cults? That, again, depends on who you ask.

Elements that used to be considered only to characterize relig-

ious cults are now used to characterize such things as *corporate cults*, a term applied to highly motivated, closely knit companies driven by a dynamic CEO or by a group leadership with earthly charisma. AMWAY was once thought of in this regard; so, too, was IBM in its younger days. I have difficulty considering these successful business companies as cults.

Perhaps the most dispassionate understanding comes from social scientists, who divide religious groups into three categories: churches, sects, and cults. *Churches* tend to be large denominations with an open, welcoming approach to life and an identification with the prevailing culture. *Sects* follow their denominations in most aspects but are more strict on doctrinal matters and in the demands they make on an individual's behavior. Quaker and Mennonite sects, who have disavowed war, come to mind: many conscientious objectors have come from these sects. *Cults* follow an altogether different religious structure in that they are foreign and alien to the main stream of religious communities. Among the more widely known entities in this latter category are The Church Universal and Triumphant (Summit Lighthouse), Elan Vital (Divine Light Mission), The International Society for Khrishna Consciousness ("Hare Khrisnas"), the Unification Church (called "Moonies," after their founder Sun Myung Moon), and the Church of Scientology. But it is important to remember that what may appear to be a cult for one person, may for another be a religion.

Psychiatrist Marc Galanter refers to cults as "charismatic groups." Such groups usually contain at least a dozen members and often many more. The members adhere to a strongly felt, mutually accepted belief system. They are highly enmeshed. Cult members are strongly influenced by the group's behavioral standards. They seek or undergo altered consciousness experiences, and they attribute charismatic (divinely inspired) power to the group or its leaders.

According to J. Gordon Melton, the author of the *Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America*, there are approximately 500 to 600 cults in the United States. Of these, about 100 are principally ethnic groups composed of first- and second-generation immigrants, who only recruit within their own ethnic base. Other estimates put the total number of cults in the United States as much higher, in the range of 2,500 cults.

Close observers have noted that cults perform both terrible and positive deeds. Some cults have perpetrated horrible things on their neighbors, whereas some have provided people with productive and uplifting experiences. Most of the cults, it is fair to assume, fall in between the two extremes of negative and positive, and their practices and aspirations are quite common and ordinary. Killer cults are at the deviant extreme of the cult spectrum. But many of the things that killer cults do—for example, how members are attracted, and who the leaders are—are represented all along the spectrum. In many instances, what is common to the most benign is also present in the most lethal of cults.

Most cults have reasonably stable structures and functions. They generally have a written body of ideas and beliefs that govern relationships with others, the leader, the world, the Cosmos, and God. *The Divine Principle*, the so-called Moonie bible, was written by the Unification Church's Reverend Sun Myung Moon. As with similar tracts by other cult leaders, this is considered to be divinely inspired. In the cult, all for one and none for the self is the motto. The individual's self-worth and survival are seen as intimately interwoven with the group's survival. Although most cults have leaders who are charismatic, it is not required that a leader have charisma. Some groups themselves are charismatic, evangelical, and very demanding of their members. Leaders can be old or young, male or female. The Divine Light Mission's Maharaj Ji was 15 years old at the height of his popularity. The Reverend Moon is in his late sixties. Although male leaders are more common, female leaders are also found, principal among them Elizabeth Clare, Prophet of the Church Universal and Triumphant.

Cults emerge whenever the structure of society is seriously threatened. During the upheavals of the Industrial Revolution in England, the French Revolution, and the westward migration of large populations in the United States, for example, many such cults formed. Closer to the present, when American society was disrupted by the Vietnam War in the mid-1960s, many young people were attracted to charismatic politicians and religious leaders. This was also a time when there was fragmentation of the fundamental structures of society—the family, schools, and established churches. Many people were left susceptible to the seductive appeals of cults that pro-

vided total answers for life here and in the hereafter. The need to belong somewhere is irresistible to most humans. For many people in that era, the need was met by joining a "new" group.

Who Joins a Cult, and Why?

From this psychiatrist's perspective, the dangers in joining a cult are the stunting of one's personal growth and the surrendering of responsibility in exchange for what at best is spiritual security and what at worst is passive dependency. As Erich Fromm suggested in his book, *Escape From Freedom*, to leave one's thinking to another is ultimately unlikely to be an enriching life experience.

Most cults look for specific kinds of recruits. Charles Dederich, the Synanon guru, specialized in rehabilitating drug addicts who were willing to make a life commitment to the cult. Jim Jones recruited the oppressed, particularly poor blacks, prostitutes, and other disaffected individuals interested in communal living and the pursuit of a socialist utopia. The Hare Khrisnas, the Moonies, and the Children of God prefer idealistic, intelligent, college-educated recruits who will bring honor to the cult.

Most people who join contemporary cults report that they come predominantly from upper middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds. They are young—median age 22—white, reasonably well-educated, and come from intact families. The majority of members of such diverse cults as Elan Vital and the Unification Church have attended college. They report that at least one of their parents had also done so.

Studies have been done by psychiatrists to determine the mental health or illness of persons who join cults. Some outsiders may argue that anyone who joins a cult is deranged, but the studies do not confirm this proposition. A liberal estimate of significantly mentally troubled or disordered individuals among those who join cults is no higher than one-third of the members. Some other clinicians argue that there is no evidence at all to suggest that members of cults are any more disturbed than are comparable peers who are not members.

A large number of sect members have reported themselves as

being psychologically troubled. In fact, psychological distress has been found to be an important precursor to joining a cult. Psychological distress, we must remind ourselves, does not necessarily indicate the presence of mental disorder. Nonetheless, interviews conducted by clinicians among cult members, former members, and relatives of members paint a picture of young adults who are experiencing depression and serious personality disorders. New members have described having feelings of inadequacy, sadness, loneliness, and rejection just before joining. Many had limited social connections at the time. For people in the midst of a personal crisis, joining a cult has led some to experience a significant diminishing of their personal psychological suffering—at least, for a time. Yet many people seek and join mainstream religions for these very same reasons.

Cults can be powerfully seductive to individuals who have strong conscious and unconscious yearnings to be loved and nurtured. For such psychologically needy persons, cults may provide the guidance, purpose, love, nurture, a sense of belonging, a relief of conflict, and self-control that they desperately seek. Much of this is done as the recruit establishes a personal relationship with the cult's charismatic leader. Religious cults offer direct contact with God through their own charismatic leaders. This appeals to recruits who seek a transcendent or enlightened spiritual experience.

The cult as a whole is an extension of the leader's personality and teachings. The leader's grandeur as well as his or her association with divinity provides an essential feeling of specialness and importance to cult members. For people who do not fit in anywhere or see themselves as misfits or outcasts, this connection to the leader is very compelling. Their relationship with the leader can "cure," or at least alleviate, some of the personal losses and deprivations that they may have experienced with their own families. Symbolic of this connection, the cult leader is often addressed as father or some version of the word, such as "baba." The leader's teachings offer all-encompassing prescriptions for having a world and cosmic view as well as strict codes for day-to-day living. In these ways, the powerful parent figure provides a supplementary conscience for members who need support against their own aggressive, sexual, and drug-seeking behaviors that in the past have threatened to go out of control. Thus, the structure and direction provided

by the cult restrains the dark side of some of its members.

It then becomes understandable why many members find it very difficult to extricate themselves from a cult or reject a leader who has been defrocked and exposed as a sham. To do so is to risk losing an idealized and idolized figure who has provided self-cohesion, life-meaning, and psychological support to the cult member. The highly troubled, vulnerable persons in Charles Manson's "family" found him to be a vitalizing force in their aimless, desolate lives. After their imprisonment, "family" members continued to espouse Manson's beliefs. Without the connection to Manson, they likely believed that their lives would shatter.

According to Melton's *Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America*, approximately 90% of those who join a cult leave within 1 year. Over one million people took the Transcendental Meditation course, yet the number of members in the United States has remained steady at 10,000 to 20,000. Several hundred thousand people have taken the Unification Church's basic weekend introduction course; 30,000 to 40,000 joined up, but as of 1990, fewer than 6,000 remained as members. Many members leave cults voluntarily, without having been deprogrammed—and also, it seems, without significant psychological consequences. For the lucky who come out unharmed, it has just been a phase they were passing through. When considering the spiritual and psychological experiences of cult members, one is reminded of William James's classic, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. James wrote that the religious experience can be normal or pathological, and that the spiritual experience can be sublime or painfully distorted by mental dysfunction. Similarly, according to the psychological needs of the cult member, a cult can be used for the purposes of illness or of health.

Cult Practices

Recruitment

One of the chief duties of cult members is recruitment. It is absolutely essential to the cult's survival and is practiced by most cults as both

an art and a science. When seeking converts, timing is a key factor. Recruiters for cults come to college campuses, for example, when the students are most vulnerable, usually around exam time, or in the first months that students start to attend a college. Recruiters sit in libraries, waiting to make eye contact with students who exhibit some difficulty, hoping to find in such students the detritus of a broken romance, poor grades, or uncertainty about future goals. In cities and resorts, recruiters scope the scene, looking for back-packing students who have declared a moratorium on schoolwork or who are struggling with identity problems. Experts on cults recognize that everyone is susceptible to some form of organizational recruitment during their lives. UCLA law professor Richard Delgado, an expert on cults, says that "everyone is vulnerable. You and I could be Hare Khrisnas if they approached us at the right time."

Cults speak to the universal dreams of mankind for nurture, security, and certainty. One is reminded of the Grand Inquisitor of Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, who when Christ returned to earth and spoke of giving mankind unlimited freedom, told the "stranger" to go away and never come back again. The Grand Inquisitor argued that people cannot bear the burden of freedom and responsibility for their own actions throughout life. They would prefer to cede direction for their lives over to some other authority. In the story, Christ appears to agree that that "burden" was best borne by the church of which the Grand Inquisitor was a high representative.

The Unification Church appears to have the most sophisticated methods for acquiring potential cult members. The first phase is called "love bombing." A lonely student is spotted, drawn into friendly conversation, and invited to dinner. The student is soon surrounded by smiling faces and warm hands, and inundated with compliments. An invitation to a weekend retreat is extended. At the retreat, guests are urged to take part in endless exercise, singing, games, and oblique religious discussion. Little time is left for the potential recruit to sleep. Any probing questions by the potential recruit are discouraged. Monitors accompany them everywhere, including the bathroom. When Sunday arrives, potential converts are urged to stay for one last party. If the potential recruit calls family members or an employer to say that they will not be present on Monday, the Moonie recruiters know that the individual will stay for the full 7-day program.

That recruits stay for the entire program is essential, from the recruiters' point of view, because a basic tenet of most cults' conversion process is to isolate the recruit from the outside world, especially from family and friends. During the intense phase of conversion, recruits are made to feel guilty about their lives and past deeds. They are exhorted to become reborn and join their already cleansed and omniscient "brothers and sisters" in the cult family.

The Hare Khrishna and Children of God cults give converts new names. Some cults emphasize the new reality for recruits by defining time differently. For example, the day is divided by prescribed tasks and duties but is otherwise timeless. Others try to produce a new personality in the recruit through sensory deprivation, special diets, sleep deprivation, and forcing the recruit to take part in endless exhausting chants, prayers, and indoctrination sessions that focus on the cult leader's vision.

Although many cults recruit vulnerable people, the popular sense has been that they are the downtrodden of society—as indeed, they did, in Jim Jones' Peoples Temple, and in the cult led by ex-convict Charles Manson, and in many others. But the Branch Davidians came from a higher stratum of society, and the membership of satanic cults is generally believed to be more diverse. One might believe that a cult made up of reasonably well-educated, well-off recruits from middle and upper class, intact families would not fall under the suicidal thrall of a deranged cult leader. However, this has happened as a result of the power of cult psychology and the dominance of such a deviant leader.

Location Is Everything

All cults try to maintain established meeting places for their activities. Even when a cult has a number of groups that are distributed far and wide, their meeting places display a remarkably uniform appearance. This phenomenon can be observed in the uniform appearances of churches of any more-established denominational religion, even though they are in different cities, and, sometimes, in different countries. Similarly, the Hare Khrishna temples and the Divine Light

Mission ashrams maintain a comforting uniformity that bespeaks continuity and certainty, and that exists regardless of location. When a cult maintains many branches in a country or throughout the world, it is less likely to deteriorate into a killer cult. What keeps it alive and functioning is contact with other cultures and dispersion of authority, both of which serve to counter the regressive forces within a cult.

On the other hand, when a cult goes into physical isolation, watch out. Such isolation allows deviant leaders and their teachings to fester. The Jim Jones group was relatively harmless when it was meeting regularly in a converted auditorium on Geary Street in San Francisco. But it became far more than that when its members retreated to a vastly different compound in the Guyana jungle. Similarly, when the Branch Davidians took up residence near Waco, Texas, where 77 acres had been purchased years earlier, more was changed than just their venue.

Earthly Treasures

In their locations, whether isolated or not, the cults promulgate rules and regulations that are rigidly applied and observed by cult members. Many of these are calculated to foster fund-raising activities. Money, seemingly so unimportant in the spiritual life of the cult, is really of the essence because money is needed to run the day-to-day operations. Members may be exploited for their labor or may have their personal incomes expropriated for the benefit of the cult and of the leader. In several instances cult leaders—who are generally excused from following the rules to which members must adhere—live in opulence, whereas members learn to do without basic comforts. Followers of the Bogwan Rajnesh, of the Osho Foundational International, gave him a fleet of over a hundred Rolls Royce automobiles so he could enjoy daily rides. David Koresh had his own private suite with electronic equipment, television, and air-conditioning, whereas the other Davidians lived communally in a compound where toilets and running water were substandard. The cult leader, because of his divine connection, is exempted from the worldly restrictions and tra-

vails that are the lot of ordinary cult members. The indulged leader's excesses are but a worldly metaphor for the spiritual rewards that await aspirants.

In return for giving up the material and comfort rewards of this world, the cult members are promised salvation and healing. Many members even like the altruistic rewards of a stripped-down existence. Promised rewards in the hereafter, many say that they feel happy, content, and spiritually fulfilled. Focused on the group and its ideals, committed cult members come to believe that their own personal difficulties are insignificant and must be ignored.

The Road to Apocalypse Now

Killer cults are not born, they are shaped over time. The leaders of killer cults are generally either psychopathic, psychotic, or both. As they sink into madness, they pull their followers down with them. Deviant leaders take a generally benign group of adherents and gradually transform them into followers of a self-fulfilling, fatal vision in which, at least for them, the ultimate apocalypse occurs within the cult members' lifetimes.

How does a group or cult transform itself into a killing machine? Can cults, like individuals, become sick and die? Is there a way of identifying a cult that is beginning to show the early signs of becoming a killer cult?

For the purposes of discussion, we can divide cults into two categories: nondeviant ("healthy") and deviant ("sick"). This division is already arbitrary because, by definition, cults deviate from the main stream of society. Moreover, the idea of anything being divided into baskets of healthy or sick is a fiction. For individuals, psychiatrists are fond of saying that normality does not exist. How, then, could it exist for a group? Nevertheless, using the healthy-sick distinction may help us understand some fundamental differences in cults and possibly identify those that are heading for trouble.

The theoretical healthy cult is less authoritarian and more benevolent in style of leadership than the sick one. In it, humane and charitable practices flourish in harmony with the cult's espoused ide-

als. In healthy cults, members feel a stronger allegiance to the ideals of the cult than to the personage of the leader. Such a cult maintains open communication with mainstream society. Honesty, candor, and benevolence mark the relationship of members with one another and with the outside world. The cult is not at war with the outside community or country, and a siege mentality does not exist within it. This cult's spiritual message is universal, not idiosyncratic. Members seek, and possibly find, spiritual peace and fulfillment. Genuinely happy with their lives, they do not require coercion to remain within the cult. Members are free to leave at any time. Such a cult serves to empower its members personally and to facilitate their own journeys toward spiritual enlightenment. The healthy cult channels the dreams of good men and the acts of bad men into constructive outlets.

Cults become sick when their leaders become deviant or mentally ill. The worst problems often surface because a deviant or mentally troubled cult leader may attract equally dysfunctional cult members. Jim Jones of the Peoples Temple recruited many who were disadvantaged psychologically, socially, and economically. These members' personal needs were so great that it was relatively easy for them to hand over their lives—and eventually, their deaths—to the deviant whims of a mentally disturbed leader.

It is possible for a cult to be chronically ill without it being terminal. Many cults remain in this sick condition. The leadership of a sick cult is authoritarian and harsh. The real value system of such a cult, hidden behind an idealistic cover, is guided by the leader's pursuit of power, money, and sex. Rather than seeking spiritual enrichment of its members through humane, charitable practices, the cult demonstrates to the astute observer that such practices are only superficially espoused and that the leader seeks only self-aggrandizement. In such a cult, the spiritual message is frighteningly apocalyptic and one that promises unique benefits only to people who are and remain members of the cult. Members are exploited rather than enlightened. They are subject to mind control. Information coming into the cult and going out of it is censored. Sharply drawn boundaries hide the cult's secrets from the outside world. A siege mentality is induced by the leader's "sick" mind, and the cult may arm itself for the final battle. In the sick cult, the dreams of good men and the acts of bad

men are inflamed and both are harnessed to the nefarious purposes of the deviant cult leader.

MOVE was a cult in Philadelphia that preached a poorly defined mix of primitivism and anarchy. Armed and dangerous, MOVE had bad relations with its inner-city neighbors and city authorities for years in the early 1980s. In a final, tragic confrontation in 1985, the city decided to try and dislodge cult members from their barricaded row houses. The police used several hundred thousand gallons of water shot through high pressure hoses, and 7,000 rounds of ammunition in the attempt, which failed. It was then decided that the police ought to "neutralize" the bunker on top of the building. A helicopter dropped a bomb containing an incendiary blasting substance. The fire that erupted destroyed 61 adjoining homes and left 250 families homeless. In the conflagration, 11 MOVE members, including 4 children, died.

A Tale of Two Killer Cults

For a cult to become a killer of its own members, as with the Peoples Temple and the Branch Davidians, the leader must become deviant and deranged in the extreme. Jim Jones constantly preached an apocalyptic end for his followers at the hands of the FBI, CIA, Ku Klux Klan, and through nuclear war. Toward that end, he had the members practice the "white night" ritual of mass suicide by poisoning. Nearing the time when that end actually came about, Jones could not separate reality from fantasy. He believed that he was the reincarnation of Christ, Lenin, and other historical figures. David Koresh also spoke repeatedly of an apocalyptic finale to his ministry. He referred specifically to the seven seals of God's prophecy for the unfolding of the Apocalypse. There was also eyewitness testimony at the trial of the Branch Davidians that the cult rehearsed and prepared for mass suicide.

A misunderstanding of several important factors about the mentality of killer cults contributed to the terrible ends of both the followers of Jim Jones and of David Koresh. The power of apocalyptic prophecy was not properly weighed. Nor was the fact that the more

a group perceives itself to be under the threat of persecution, the stronger the group bonds become. Cult cohesion under conflict ought to be expected, as well as the paranoia that accompanies and is part of a siege mentality. Then, too, the suspiciousness, isolation, and the "us-versus-them" perception of reality further creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of inevitable destruction. It waits only for the trigger event.

Reports filtered out of Guyana about secretive activities of the Peoples Temple—extensive firearms acquisitions, abuse of members, keeping members in virtual captivity. Such reports brought U.S. House of Representatives member Leo Ryan and a group of reporters to Guyana to investigate. Jim Jones viewed the appearance of Representative Ryan and his group as a confirmation of his own belief that the Peoples Temple was about to be attacked by U.S. government forces. Cult members killed Ryan and two reporters, and wounded 16 others at the Jonestown airstrip. When news of this reached Jones, he activated the mass suicide procedure.

The accumulation of sophisticated weaponry began at Ranch Apocalypse long before ATF agents approached its gate. Driven by paranoid expectations of an apocalyptic ending, Koresh decreed military-type drills and construction of bunkers. When the ATF agents tried to force their way in to Ranch Apocalypse to confiscate the weapons, this event triggered Koresh's self-fulfilling prophecy of apocalyptic destruction.

Both Koresh and Jones had declared that they were God. When a cult leader makes such a declaration, it is evidence of a serious mental disorder. Gods do not have to abide by the rules of mere mortals. Thus, Koresh and Jones had numerous sexual partners among the cult members. Koresh was alleged to have had sex with many girls in his sect, some as young as 12 years old. He is also alleged to have sired most of the young children in the compound—12 of the 17 who died, by one account. Jones reportedly had sex with both males and females in his cult. Both men had sex with the wives of cult members. They broke up existing families so there would be no other competing groups within the cult. Jones ordered some marriages ended and arranged new ones. All the while, Jones ordered cult members to abstain from sex, which was considered evil except when he engaged in it. It was reported about Ranch Apoca-

lypse that Koresh freely took whichever woman caught his fancy, whereas the other men of the cult lived in "anguished celibacy." In other words, in both cults, sex was used along with many other matters as a way of controlling cult members.

These sexual activities were an integral part of a gradual, general regression of the cult and its members toward primitive functioning and thinking. In each instance, the signs of this regression were clearly present. In 1987, Koresh was charged with the attempted murder of a competing cult leader but was acquitted. Jim Jones had been involved in a paternity suit brought by a cult member. He had also been arrested for making lewd advances to an undercover officer in an adult movie theater.

As the leader becomes more and more tyrannical, demanding allegiance to himself rather than to cult ideals, serious encounters with the law occur. Suspiciousness and paranoia grow. The wagons are drawn into a circle. In Guyana, armed guards patrolled the Peoples Temple commune. Access to Ranch Apocalypse in Waco was carefully controlled. The paranoia spills over into observation of cult members, too, for any sign of possible betrayal. Spying was rife inside the Waco and Guyana compounds. Jim Jones had his members sign undated suicide notes, which would be used as part of cover stories should he later need to eliminate those members.

Inside the compounds, violence escalates. Child beatings become more brutal and frequent. In Jim Jones's last days, he had little children dunked into deep wells on the end of a rope for even minor infractions of his rules. Children present serious problems for cult leaders. Although they are seen as those who will carry on the life of the cult, they are also perceived as burdens by "sick" leaders. They require considerable time and effort, they bring in no money, and they detract attention from the leaders. Rebellious children may challenge the leader's authority when adults have long since stopped doing so. Moreover, during times of crisis, children react to stress with disruptive, acting-out behavior. One reason to break up families is to render children vulnerable and then to raise them communally, so that their only allegiance is to the group.

In the last phases, Jones and Koresh gave endless sermons and harangues. Members were exhausted by their leaders' incoherent, emotional exhortations to prepare for the Apocalypse. Jones spent

an average of 6 hours per day on the loudspeaker, calling attention to the "fascists" who were coming. Koresh drew attention to the ATF agents, who were sure to attack again and prove his prophesied cosmic conclusion.

As the leader's mental state deteriorates, paranoia and siege mentality escalate. Cult members are worked to exhaustion, made to make do with a subsistence diet. They are once again deprived of sleep, this time by the endless harangues. The whole idea of escape is made to seem impossible. No one could escape the sound of Jones's loudspeaker-amplified voice in Guyana, telling the cult members that although everyone must die, they would all soon be resurrected and given the means to remain together, rather than being hounded, persecuted, and dispersed here on earth. In Waco, Koresh decided who could leave and who must stay. During the first 4 weeks of the siege, 34 cult members, including 21 children, came out voluntarily. But in the last 2 weeks, no one was allowed to leave. Later, after it was all over, the FBI believed it had evidence that 20 Davidians who had wanted to leave had been shot as a warning to others.

Members who might want to leave are at war with themselves. The anxiety and fear that has arisen in the cult member is denied, displaced onto other cult members who are suspiciously perceived as possible defectors. The image of the all-powerful, all-knowing leader is preserved through increased acts of devotion and submission. Cult members often project their anger and disappointment at the leader onto the outside world, increasing their own paranoia. Such psychological defenses paradoxically leads cult members to rely even more on the cult leader. Though the emperor has no clothes, none of his subjects is psychologically able to admit it.

In the final weeks, the prospect of death may be welcomed by cult members, for whom life has become so wretched. Deprived of food and sleep, working grueling schedules with no time for relaxation or even spiritual refreshment, cult members may believe that a permanent rest is desirable. They fear the wrath of their now-deranged leader and his certain punishment should they deviate from his instructions. Cut off from the rest of the world and from former family ties, they are hardly able to resist the prospect of mass suicide. Deborah Leighton, a confidant of Jim Jones in Guyana, managed to escape the Peoples Temple but explained that in the last days

there, "The concept of mass suicide for socialisms arose. Because our lives were so wretched anyway, and because we were so afraid to contradict Reverend Jones, the concept was not challenged."

Near the end, the minds of cult members have fallen totally under the tyrannical control of the leader. Members have become wholly dependent and long ago have stopped thinking for themselves. When the call to die is given, most of the members go unflinchingly to their deaths by poison, fire, or gunshot, self-inflicted or given by others. The Apocalypse has arrived.

The Lethal Leader: Inside the Deviant Psyche

Throughout the history of mankind, lethal leaders have led their groups to destruction. In our century, Adolf Hitler charismatically enthralled an entire nation in the cultist pursuit of Aryan supremacy and in the process plunged the world into war, murdering millions of innocent people. Joseph Stalin, whose reign was later labeled by his successor, Nikita Khrushchev, as "the cult of personality," murdered more than 20 million of his country's people. Jim Jones and David Koresh led their followers to murder and suicide. Charles Manson's domination of his "family" led to the grisly bludgeoning, stabbing, and shooting of seven people. The nation was appalled that Manson's young men and women would murder repeatedly at his command.

Cult leaders who cause death have variously been considered psychopaths, psychotics, or, at best, borderline personalities. It is likely that the above-named lethal leaders have manifested all of these conditions at various times, or all at one time, especially as the end neared.

Diagnostic certainty is hard to achieve, however, because most of these individuals were never examined psychiatrically. Adding to the difficulty of making a proper diagnosis are the special circumstances under which their mental aberrations occurred. Even people on the outside can appreciate the mind-warping effects of having to function under extreme stress.

When cult leaders are isolated from the normalizing influences

of other communities, they are subject to mutual validation between themselves and their members. The leader's grandiose conception of self, fears, paranoia, and sense of an Apocalyptic vision waiting to be fulfilled are all, as it were, mirrored back to him or her and further distort the leader's mental processes. When the cult is actually under siege, as the Branch Davidians were in Waco, fact and fantasy begin to merge. All the deviant mental processes are heightened. As the end approached, Koresh's behavior became more erratic. He slept until mid-afternoon while cult members worked. At night, when cult members were exhausted and ready for sleep, he raced through the dormitories, ringing a loud bell as a signal for beginning marathon Bible study sessions. During these sessions, Koresh frequently made no sense. It is always possible that, when dealing with elements outside of this cataclysmic pressure cooker, the leader may appear quite normal and may behave rationally.

Psychotic cult leaders blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy. They exhibit grandiose ideas about themselves, persecutory beliefs, and a conviction that the end of the world is nigh. The man originally named Vernon Howell combined the names of two Biblical kings, and, as David Koresh, declared himself to be the "sinful" incarnation of Jesus Christ. Vernon Howell had been an abused child, an itinerant carpenter, a would-be rock star. David Koresh was different. He was convinced that he could open the "seventh seal" of a set described by the Book of Revelation as binding a scroll held in God's right hand, a scroll that prophesied all the calamities that will take place before the Apocalypse. Charles Manson, when arrested, insisted that he be booked as "Charles Manson, AKA Jesus Christ, God."

The problem created for the person identifying with Jesus Christ is that he or she has to die before resurrection can take place. When authorities are in confrontation with a psychotic leader who claims that sort of divinity, they would do well to remember this potential problem and to defuse paranoid and grandiose delusions by backing away. Deescalating intimidation and removing the crisis from the limelight are frequently useful when dealing with a person who has identified so openly with the deity.

Psychopathic cult leaders who are not psychotic never reach such delusional heights (or depths). Throughout their tenure, they main-

tain a basic sense of reality. Their leadership is based on self-aggrandizement, the exploitation of cult members, and the accumulation of money, power, and sexual indulgence. If cornered by the authorities and unable to see any way out, psychopathic leaders may impulsively choose suicide, taking others with them if they can no longer stay alive.

Cult leaders may display the characteristics of a borderline personality, particularly during a crisis. Some of these are

- The tendency to split the world, people, and themselves into good and bad
- Unstable yet intense personal relationships that alternate between extremes of idealization and devaluation
- Impulsiveness in sex, spending, and substance use
- Rapid mood swings
- Intense but poorly controlled anger
- Recurrent suicidal threats or behavior
- Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment
- Uncertainty about personal self-image or sexual identity
- Under stress, temporary breaks with reality or transient paranoid thinking

All of these personality traits become exacerbated as cataclysmic psychological stress takes hold and the cult's end draws nearer. These reactions are also intensified by the psychology of the cult as a whole. The good-bad splitting occurs on a wider basis. The world is divided into us and them. The outside is seen as threatening and evil, whereas the cult inside is seen as threatened and good. Mutual reinforcement of this view by the cult leader and followers can fire up hostility and aggression against the outside world. Hitler saw the Jews as evil and required their elimination. His followers did not disagree with the task. Jim Jones saw the enemies as the CIA, the FBI, and the Ku Klux Klan. Charles Manson looked upon blacks as the source of evil and destruction. He hoped that his murders would provoke blacks into starting a race war and bringing about Armageddon or, as he called it, Helter Skelter. Manson and his white followers would be transformed into deities and rule the Earth when the blacks discovered that they were incapable of managing it themselves. For

Charles Dederich, the leader of Synanon, the government and the news media constitute the evil empire. For most militant religious cults, the enemies are their members' natural parents.

Three prominent psychological defense mechanisms are frequently used by deviant cult leaders: 1) good-bad splitting, 2) projection, and 3) projective identification. These mechanisms are particularly evident in persons with borderline personality disorder.

In *good-bad splitting*, the cult leader devalues and rejects the "bad" parts of the world (and oneself), and idealizes and embraces the "good" parts. Jim Jones saw his cult as a socialist utopia. He hated the outside evil forces that would, in his belief, destroy that utopia. For those who so split the world, awareness of the hated part of the self is submerged and *projected* onto the world outside. In a cult, this mechanism impels the cult leader to further distance his or her group from society. Such projection of the bad and hated self onto the outside world also contributes to the group's suspiciousness and to its siege mentality. Once it became apparent to Jim Jones that his cult's boundary could no longer be secured, he made the deranged but clear choice to preserve the cult's identity in spirit, even if he could no longer preserve it in reality—and chose mass suicide.

An understanding of *projective identification* also is critical to deciphering the sort of massacres that occurred at Jonestown and Waco. Projective identification is a primitive mental mechanism that goes through three steps:

1. The person projects (attributes to others) intolerable inner feelings while still maintaining a certain awareness of what is projected.
2. The person who projects tries to control the individual upon whom the unacceptable feelings have been projected.
3. Unconsciously, when interacting with that individual, the projector leads that individual to experience what has been projected onto him or her.

This process may be made more clear with the following example:

John, a person who fears loss of control over his aggressive impulses, is persuaded to accompany friends on a hunting trip. While walking

with the hunters, John is seized by the fear that they could turn their guns on him. Even though he recognizes his own past fears that he might shoot someone if he had a gun and momentarily lost control, John nevertheless continues to be anxious that he could be killed. He attempts to control the hunters by dissuading them from doing any more hunting, suggesting that they go home earlier than planned. The hunters, noting John's anxiety, sense his fear of guns and also become briefly concerned about their own safety.

Projective identification produces a self-fulfilling prophecy. In denying one's feelings and attributing them to someone else, the individual behaves in a way that causes others to respond in kind. Thus, when the borderline person's hostility is returned, he or she finds confirmation of his or her original paranoid thinking.

When handling a cult crisis, negotiators need to be aware of the defense mechanism of projective identification. Lack of awareness of this defense may well play into the self-fulfilling apocalyptic prophecies of mentally disturbed cult leaders. Given their knowledge of projection, mental health professionals may help negotiators in crisis situations. What is needed is a critical window into the cult leader's mental state. Usually there is one negotiator who is in regular contact with the cult leader. If the feelings engendered in that negotiator by the cult leader can be psychologically held, examined, and properly interpreted, without immediate action being taken, it is possible to obtain critical data about the cult leader's state of mind and to gather it on a continuing basis.

For example, a cult leader stressed by a confrontation crisis may experience an increase in feelings of helplessness, fear, and rage. Although he or she is conscious of these threatening feelings, the leader may misperceive their origins in himself or herself and instead may project them onto his or her adversary. The leader's efforts to control the adversary may create similar feelings of helplessness, fear, and rage in the negotiator. What needs to happen is that these feelings should be deciphered and taken into account before any action is taken. What sometimes occurs, though, is that these feelings are reflexively acted upon by the authorities, themselves triggering an attack that fulfills the leader's projections as well as his or her apocalyptic fantasies.

No one can know with any certainty the extent to which such mechanisms as good-bad splitting, projection, and projective identification played parts in the mass murders and suicides of the 82 Branch Davidians. But it is likely that they played some prominent part. For example, it had been alleged that Koresh had been abused as a child. It was reports of his increasing physical and sexual abuse of the children at Ranch Apocalypse that produced a realistic sense of helplessness in the authorities. They perceived a need to act, ostensibly to protect the remaining children. Is it not likely that the escalating child abuse at the hands of Koresh was also a sign of increased good-bad splitting within himself and of his projecting the bad aspect onto certain cult children?

Adding to the authorities' mounting sense of frustration was Koresh's repeated promises to surrender peacefully that were never fulfilled. Koresh, rather than the authorities, seemed to be in control of the situation. Inside the compound, as a cult member later testified at the trial of surviving Branch Davidians, Koresh "told the ladies to do 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups, 50 deep knee bends, every two hours . . . to make us strong, to stop the American Army, the Assyrians, from raping us, the ladies." Koresh likely saw the Branch Davidians as all good and the world outside as all bad. From Koresh's psychological perspective, evil did not lurk in his heart but resided in the minds and intentions of the government agents who were besieging him. Cult members shot the ATF agents because they "knew" the agents would kill them. The members would not fully comprehend that they were stockpiling arms intended to kill other people because Koresh had projected his (and their) fear, hate, and rage at the outside world. Koresh projected his terrible feelings onto the FBI and then attempted to control the FBI and the likelihood of FBI retaliation against him and his followers.

Finally, according to a spokesman for the FBI, "there was simply an accumulation of frustrations: the negotiations had gone nowhere, they were convinced that Koresh was stalling and feared he was spoiling for a confrontation." To what extent was this statement a true assessment of David Koresh's thinking? Is it possible that the decision to assault the compound was driven by feelings that had been communicated from Koresh's deranged mental state, and that had not been properly psychologically assessed?

In both instances, with Jim Jones and with David Koresh, government officials grossly misunderstood the psychological forces operating inside the cults and in the heads of their leaders. They did not comprehend the siege mentality nor the suicidal intent of the cults. They did not seem to know how to evaluate or decipher such mechanisms as good-bad splitting, projection, and projective identification. As a result, 15 years after Representative Leo Ryan set foot on a Guyana airstrip and provided an unwitting trigger to Jim Jones's apocalyptic end for over 900 of his cult members, the government authorities replicated their mistake in that first assault in which four ATF agents were killed. Once government agents had been killed, the fiery apocalyptic fate of the Branch Davidians was all but signed and sealed. It was later delivered on national television.

During the 51-day siege, the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit wrote up a psychological profile of David Koresh. In a detailed memo, these behavioral experts concluded that a high probability existed that the cult leader would commit suicide if directly confronted by the FBI. Nonetheless, the FBI agents on the scene, handling the negotiations, reportedly grew impatient and disregarded the advice of their own behavioral science experts. When the government forces attacked, the apocalypse took place as Koresh might have wished—live for a national television audience. The futility and folly of using intimidation and then of mounting a frontal assault upon a would-be martyr with an apocalyptic vision ought to have been apparent to the authorities, but it was not.

After the fires cooled, a psychiatric expert on the panel that reviewed the government's handling of the siege disagreed with its findings. He criticized the FBI for using pressure tactics and tear gas that may well have pushed Koresh into triggering his plan for mass suicide. In the future, it is hoped that negotiators in similar situations—and there will be others—will use the psychological knowledge that is available about cult leaders and their followers to avoid unwittingly becoming the executioners of a cult leader's self-fulfilling death wish. Congressional hearings into the tragedy have been conducted.

Analysis of the psyches of cult leaders has its limitations, however. Cult leaders are not available for psychiatric examination at the time of crisis. Moreover, cult leaders' personalities vary greatly, par-

ticularly in their motivations and degree of mental aberration. Cultural and ethnic differences, if present, may complicate psychological analysis. Also, psychiatrists cannot draw clear distinctions between mystical experiences of the sort that cult leaders say they have and deviant mental states. Nevertheless, when a cult leader becomes psychotic, it is reasonably certain that tragedy is likely to be a result.

A Satanic Cult's Murders

On a routine search for illegal drugs on a ranch near Matamoros, in Northern Mexico, a town just across a bridge from Brownsville, Texas, police found a pot that contained dried blood, a charred human brain, a spinal column, a horseshoe, and a roasted turtle. From the human remains and other fragments, coroners were able to identify the victim as a University of Texas student, Mark Kilroy, who had been missing for more than a month. The graves of 12 more victims, all young males, were soon found on Rancho Santa Elena. Some had been shot or beaten to death; others had been hung, slashed, tortured, and mutilated; and two had been boiled alive. Several Mexicans were arrested for these murders, which they said had been done in the service of a cult that practiced human sacrifice. The cult combined elements of voodoo, Satanism, the Caribbean animal cult Santería, and santismo, a bloody Aztec ritual.

According to Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox, the cult "felt that all the sacrifice would draw a protective shield around them" and protect their 2,000-pound-a-week marijuana smuggling operation. The walls of the cult's "clubhouse," on the grounds of the ranch, were stained with human and animal blood. Items used in the ritual sacrifices included votive candles and a machete. According to the arrested men, the cult's leader was a red-haired, Cuban-American drug lord, Adolfo de Jesus Constanzo, who had fled with his "witch," Sara Maria Aldrete. One of the arrested men, Elio Hernandez Rivera, confessed that he had been selected by Constanzo as an executioner and had inverted crosses branded into his flesh by a hot knife blade as a sign of his trade. Inverted crosses are often a sign of

satanic worship or other occult practices. Rivera said that Constanzo had directed him and other cult members to kidnap "an Anglo" to be sacrificed and that it had been Mark Kilroy.

Constanzo's followers also told police that he had kept them under his control in recent months by using the rituals of Palo Mayombe, an Afro-Caribbean cult that features what one expert said was "evil for evil's sake." In this case, as in some others that had come to the attention of police, the authorities believed that drug lords were using cult practices not so much as religions but as ways to discipline and subjugate their followers.

Satanism: Criminality or Curiosity?

In the Matamoros tragedy, Satanism seemed an excuse for bloodletting connected to drug smuggling and criminal enterprises. Stories of Satanism have pervaded the media for some time, and some have included notions about satanic cults. Satanism, or the worship of his Infernal Majesty, has been traditionally associated with a variety of practices and rituals that ridicule Christianity, particularly the Roman Catholic form of Christianity. There is a black mass ritual that profanes the central acts of Christian worship. In it, for example, the Lord's Prayer may be repeated backwards, the host may be dyed black, an animal may be sacrificed to blaspheme the crucifixion, or—in more virulent forms—a child may be sexually abused or a woman raped on an altar. The worship usually ends with a call for Satan to perform evil deeds.

Traditional Satanists, however, worship publicly and are rarely involved in criminal activities. Anton LaVey founded the Church of Satan in 1966, basically to perform wedding and funeral services. Although this "church" received a great deal of publicity, it is estimated to have less than 1,000 members. Its philosophy is based more on the pursuit of individual pragmatic hedonism than on Satan worship. LaVey's book, *The Satanic Bible*, has become an occult best-seller. It lists nine basic satanic statements:

1. Satan represents indulgence, instead of abstinence!
2. Satan represents vital existence, instead of spiritual pipe dreams!

3. Satan represents undefiled wisdom, instead of hypocritical self-defense!
4. Satan represents kindness to those who deserve it, instead of love wasted on ingrates!
5. Satan represents vengeance, instead of turning the other cheek!
6. Satan represents responsibility to the responsible, instead of concern for psychic vampires!
7. Satan represents man as just another animal, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all fours, who because of his divine spiritual and intellectual development has become the most vicious animal of all!
8. Satan represents all of the so-called sins, as they lead to physical or mental gratification!
9. Satan has been the best friend the church has ever had, as he has kept it in business all these years.

Michael A. Aquino formed the Temple of Set after leaving the Church of Satan. His group is devoted to the ancient Egyptian deity Set, believed to be the forerunner of the Christian Satan. Aquino split with LaVey over whether Satan was a real being. LaVey denied Satan's existence while Aquino affirmed it. That is to say, Aquino is in good company, for many Christian religious denominations believe in the actual existence of Satan. The Temple of Set is dedicated to awakening the divine power within individuals through conscious acts of will and intelligence. The group believes that over the centuries, Set has manipulated human evolution to create a new species that possesses superior, nonnatural intelligence. Both Aquino's and LaVey's organizations avoid the committing of violent acts.

Adolescent Satanic Rituals

Satanic practices among teenagers are most often a sign of troubled youth rather than a cause of the trouble. These practices have symbolic, not spiritual, value to the teenagers. They impart power to overcome helplessness. They make a virtue out of feelings of alienation, and they provide an excuse for antisocial behaviors. Even though they seem relatively harmless, satanic groups can exert a pro-

foundly negative influence on a teenager who happens to be mentally disturbed. Satanic or occult activities can begin with mere vandalism and escalate to the desecration of churches and cemeteries, the mutilation of animals, and even progress to the point where teenagers commit suicide.

As with adolescence itself, teenage cults are usually transitory. For some children, during their stage of adolescent development, the occult may have a special appeal. The adolescent's feelings of newfound grandiosity, invulnerability, and omnipotence may be quite compatible with a belief in occult powers.

What appeals to many teenagers, and others involved in satanic or occult practices, are the rituals. But we must keep in mind that many rapists, child molesters, drug dealers, murderers, and other criminals commit crimes that have strong ceremonial or ritualistic components. Paganism, witchcraft, and satanic practices are used by some of these criminals as ways of expressing psychopathic behaviors. The satanic practices are really rationalizations, made either consciously or unconsciously, for sadistic acts. The few dangerous "satanic" killers are not really worshipers of Satan. The ritualistic or ceremonial aspects of their crimes merely reflect the *modus operandi* of the offender and do not have any spiritual meaning. Often, sexual ritualism in a rape or murder, or in a series of these crimes, reflects the symbolic acting out of the offender's sexual fantasy.

Remembrances of Ritual Abuse

Beginning in the early 1980s and continuing to the present, there has been a parade of people who assert that they were childhood victims of ritual satanic abuse. They have come forward now, they usually say, because they have only recently recovered the memories of that abuse, either spontaneously or while in psychological treatment that has included hypnosis or drug-induced deep interviews. Most of those who allege satanic ritual abuse are women, although the stories indicate that both boys and girls have allegedly been abused in family satanic cults. The statistics show that women who have been abused usually find their way into the mental health system, whereas

men with similar histories of abuse often act out in a violent way and land in jail. As has been the trend with memories of incest, and with physical and sexual abuse, the stories of ritual satanic abuse came forth first from women, followed by similar stories from men.

Most of the current reports of childhood sexual abuse from satanic cults comes from alleged survivors of intergenerational satanic cults. In these, satanic rituals and abusive practices are passed from one generation of the family to the next. To paraphrase the Bible, in such cults the sins of the fathers are passed on to the sons. Such families may join with other, like-minded ones to form a larger satanic group. The offensive practices of such cults allegedly include ritualistic mutilation, sexual abuse, the impregnation of young adolescent girls so they can bear babies that are then sacrificed. As with other forms of child abuse, the cycle is perpetuated within a family, as a victim of abuse in childhood grows up to abuse subsequent generations.

The validity of recovered memories of ritual abuse has sparked a vehement controversy among mental health professionals. Because criminal activity is often alleged, the controversy has also embroiled the ranks of law enforcement. For instance, there were headline-grabbing allegations of ritual abuse of very young children in the McMartin Preschool case in California. On the heels of the McMartin allegations, other accusations of ritual abuse swept across the country. No evidence has been found to substantiate these ritual abuse allegations. Critics charge that the allegations arose in response to suggestive and leading questioning of the children by certain interviewers. The critics argue that because the interviewers believe the abuse is real, and because they consult with one another and attend the same workshops and conferences, they are primed to see abuse where none may actually have been present.

Today, some people who are in psychological treatment and who allege ritual abuse at the hands of their families are turning against their families. Fathers and mothers complain that they receive phone calls "out of the blue" from a now grown child who states, "You know what you did." Often, the parents or other relatives have no idea why they are being accused. Some of the alleged victims of satanic abuse bring lawsuits against the families, based on the recently recovered memories. The accused families, in turn, have brought lawsuits

against the therapists who are working with the alleged victims, charging that the therapists have induced false "memories" of childhood abuse through their incompetence and therapeutic zeal. Subsequently, some "retractors" are suing their former therapists for allegedly inducing false memories of satanic abuse. In a further counterreaction to the increasing reports of satanic abuse of children, the False Memory Syndrome Foundation has been established in Philadelphia for families that are being ripped apart by allegedly false assertions of ritual and sexual abuse.

I cannot resolve the controversy between the mental health professionals who hear patients report memories of satanic childhood abuse and those on the other side who disbelieve the credibility of these memories. However, the sheer number of patients who are recovering and reporting memories of childhood abuse is staggering and cannot be ignored. Psychiatrists have long believed that the incidence of child abuse in our culture is much higher than has been reported. These newly recovered memories certainly raise suspicions that some type of abuse, at least, has never previously seen the light of day. Moreover, these are not isolated reports by psychotic or demented patients but the reports of people who are considered to be reasonably mentally healthy.

Also involved is the issue of how rapidly and how thoroughly we bury such offensive memories. As Dr. David Spiegel, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Stanford University School of Medicine, asserts, "We have evidence from our research that dissociation and other kinds of defenses are mobilized during trauma. Rape victims, for example, even in adult life, find themselves progressively less able to retrieve memories of it."

Those who assert the recovered memories are false fall into two categories. The first comprises people who attribute such "memories" to individuals who are highly susceptible to movies, books, and other media that deal with the occult, and who confuse what has been read or seen with what is remembered. Dr. Paul McHugh, chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University, states that "I think the most impressive thing to me about all these phenomena—multiple personality as an expression of sex abuse forgotten in childhood, satanic ritual abuse, and alien abductions—is that all of these ideas were generated in the contemporary

era out of the paperback industry and not out of the scientific or the clinical literature. I believe psychiatry has been very greatly harmed by its gullibility in relationship to this. In that way it is no different than the Salem witch trials." In fact, ritual abuse can be interpreted as a common fantasy of Western civilization for centuries. Incest, sodomy, cannibalism, sex with children, and blood rites are common elements of demonology found in all cultures. It is as if our most dreaded demons, our darkest side, must be attributed to an external evil power—Satan. Freud brought down on his head the condemnation of Victorian society when he discovered the universal unconscious containing a seething witches' brew of incestuous, murderous, and other unimaginable illicit desires in both men and women.

The second group that asserts these memories are false ascribes the reports of satanic abuse to suggestible, naive patients who are working with overzealous and equally naive therapists. Forensic psychiatrist Park Elliot Dietz, who has dealt with cases of ritual abuse for more than 10 years, says, "You could say there is a satanic movement in the United States, sure, but it's not of any significance. There has never been an instance in which what would be labeled by therapists as satanic ritual abuse has ever occurred."

The law has a generally disbelieving attitude toward uncorroborated memories of criminal acts. Even when the individual who alleges the abuse has a psychiatric disorder known to be related to severe childhood abuse, the law does not legally accept such memories as probative evidence that the criminal acts occurred. Law enforcement authorities who have investigated allegations of satanic or ritualistic abuse remain largely skeptical. Kenneth V. Lanning, an FBI expert on satanic, occult, and ritualistic crime, wonders where the bodies are buried: "Until hard evidence is obtained and corroborated, the public should not be frightened into believing that babies are being bred and eaten, that 50,000 missing children are being murdered in human sacrifices, or that satanists are taking over America's day care centers or institutions." Lanning observes trenchantly that, "The fact is that far more crimes and child abuse has been committed by zealots in the name of God, Jesus, and Mohammed than has ever been committed in the name of Satan. Many people don't like that statement, but few can argue with it." And he adds, significantly, "I believe that the majority of victims alleging 'ritual' abuse

are in fact victims of some form of abuse or trauma." In confirmation of Lanning's conclusions, a federally funded study of 12,000 reported cases of child abuse found no evidence that satanic cults ritually abuse or kill children. The coauthor of the study feels that a bigger problem is the abuse by parents with conventional religious beliefs.

Several hypotheses have been developed to explain unauthentic memories. Fantasy, illusion, trance states, a highly charged emotional state, or screen memories that cover or hide other traumatic events may play a role in the development of false satanic ritual abuse memories. These memories may combine borrowed ideas, myths, stories, and distorted childhood beliefs. Once activated, the manufactured memories become indistinguishable from authentic memories. False memories also can be implanted by a therapist's suggestion or adopted from an authority with whom a person—particularly a highly suggestible, hypnotizable patient—desires a special relationship. In some of these ways, a cult leader's views of Satan or alleged satanic experiences can be communicated to followers who then may adopt them as their own.

The highly controversial matter of recovered memories, and true versus false memories, is examined in greater depth in a later chapter of this book, but I want to make some preliminary comments on the subject here. There is no doubt in my mind that some overzealous, incompetent therapists have falsely convinced patients that they were abused. But it is wrong to deny the existence of dissociative disorders that split off thoughts and feelings from consciousness. Dissociative disorders often are the result of extreme psychological trauma arising from childhood abuse. To deny this is to blink at the clinical reality. In psychiatric hospital settings, as well as in outpatient situations, psychiatrists frequently encounter patients with dissociative disorders. Many, if not most, of those patients have histories of being abused in their childhoods. As we shall see in the multiple personality and recovered memories chapters, the key to understanding these recovered memories may lie in the ways in which traumatic memories are laid down and ultimately recalled, which is in a manner that appears to be quite different from the processing of ordinary memories.

Maintaining an open mind toward the matter of recovered memories, satanic abuse, and other ritual abuse of people in their

childhoods is the best approach as research into the matter continues. Dr. Richard Kluft, a psychiatric expert on traumatic memories and dissociative disorders, suggests that polarized arguments must be avoided. He cautions, "It is understandable, albeit unfortunate, that many years may pass before we are able to understand patients' allegations of ritual abuse as well as we understand their accounts of incest and more familiar abuses and exploitations."

Forensic Psychiatrists and Cults

There are many types of litigation involving cult members and cults in which forensic psychiatrists can and do become involved. For example, forensic psychiatrists may testify in suits alleging fraud, unlawful imprisonment, or the intentional infliction of emotional distress. We deal with such questions as, Was the alleged emotional trauma caused by the cult experience, or can it be traced to some other cause? Did the emotional trauma exist before the person's joining the cult? Was the trauma exacerbated by joining a cult? What are the extent of the psychological damages that have been incurred?

Forensic psychiatrists also are called on to examine individuals who have alleged that they were the victims of satanic abuse in their childhoods. Often, such abuse is recalled through memories that are recovered years after the alleged abuse has occurred. In the lawsuits that follow some of these recovered memories of abuse, the forensic psychiatrist is asked to assess the credibility of the litigant, of the recovered memories, and of the allegations of psychiatric disorder arising from the alleged abuse.

All psychiatric interventions involving involuntary evaluation or treatment of a cult member are fraught with thorny ethical and legal dilemmas. Some psychiatrists who have given adverse testimony about a cult member's mental competency and against the cult itself have been hit with civil suits and even with threats of physical violence. No involuntary examinations of cult members should be attempted without prior consultation with psychiatrists and attorneys who have had experience dealing with cults.

Forensic psychiatrists can also lend a hand in matters involving

cults during a developing crisis or confrontation. Most forensic psychiatrists have acquired knowledge and experience concerning the always murky relationship between mental illness and the emergence of violence. Psychiatrists do not possess the ability to accurately predict violence, but, in association with other mental health experts, forensic psychiatrists are sometimes called on to attempt to assess the risk of violence. Here, as in other instances, forensic psychiatrists are better at assessing the emergence of violence when it is most imminent.

Anticult Organizations

The emergence of cults has been balanced to some degree by the creation of anticult organizations. An original informal network of organizations made up of parents whose children were cult members has evolved over time into a centralized organization. The American Family Foundation has become a leading anticult organization that acts as a coordinating center for the anticult movement, disseminating information, providing families with a support system, conducting educational programs, and publishing newspapers and reports. Other groups such as the Cult Awareness Network (CAN), the Cult Hotline, and the Watchman Fellowship (a Christian group) also provide up-to-date information on cults. Anticult organizations originally supported the deprogramming of cult members, but this practice has recently been in decline. Sometimes, when a family member joins a cult, the family is seized with an anticult fanaticism. This can further alienate the cult member and be a bar to communication with him or her. Family members' understandably strong but disruptive feelings need to be productively tempered. This can be done with the assistance of knowledgeable mental health professionals and with the support of the groups and informational sources noted above.

A major problem with regard to attacking cult groups is that religious practices are protected by the First Amendment. No matter how unacceptable a cult's religious exercises may seem to the family of a cult member, such practices are considered legal. The only way

to attack a cult legally is to prove that it has used coercive mind control methods that have reduced a victim's mental capacity to the condition of being legally impaired.

Many mental health professionals hold an anticult bias. This is understandable because of the humanistic bias of most mental health professionals, a view that leans in favor of individual autonomy and freedom. In addition, mental health professionals generally do not get to see people from the cults who have had positive experiences. Rather, they are usually called on to help pick up the pieces of a bad experience. Mental health professionals usually are charged with the treatment of current or past cult members who are mentally disturbed and with the treatment of their families, who are often devastated and in deep psychological pain.

In fact, some people are psychologically damaged by their cult experience. No doubt there are some people who also benefit in various ways. The statistics on influx and outflux from cults suggest that most people who enter and then exit cults are basically unfazed, going on about their lives after a brief fling with social and personal experimentation.

Apocalypse Now: The Future of a Delusion

Apocalyptic killer cults exist at various stages of incubation as this is being written. Sooner rather than later, a new killer cult will burst violently into our consciousness. Killer cults with their apocalyptic messages have been part of humankind for hundreds, if not thousands of years. They will be with us forever because some people will always need to attribute their darkest impulse to others whom they must then kill or escape through suicide. Like the Peoples Temple in Guyana, the Branch Davidians did both.

In Japan, an apocalyptic cult named Aum Shinri Kyo, or Supreme Truth, is suspected in the fatal nerve gas attack on Tokyo's subway. The deadly nerve gas sarin killed 12 people and sickened about 5,500 commuters. Shoko Asahara, the captured doomsayer guru of Supreme Truth says that he has been attacked by the CIA with poison gas. Asahara has made repeated predictions that the

world is about to end. He lists among his many enemies the Japanese and U.S. military. Supreme Truth appears to have hatched into a full-fledged, paranoid apocalyptic killer cult. Asahara and a number of his top disciples have been arrested and charged with murder and attempted murder.

Once a killer cult self-destructs, the violence does not necessarily end. On April 19, 1995, the second anniversary of the government raid that led to the death of 82 Branch Davidians, Oklahoma City's federal building was bombed. Investigators believe that revenge for Waco was the main reason that the federal building was targeted because it housed officers of the ATF and a children's day care center. The bombing focused attention on the emergence of civilian militias on the American scene. They exist in almost every state. Some of the more virulent militias have ominous killer cult-like traits such as an apocalyptic vision and an angry, paranoid view of the government and the world. Unlike most cults, some militias espouse racist and antisemitic views.

The future of the apocalypse now delusion is a self-fulfilling calamity as horrible and terrifying as that predicted for Armageddon by the book of Revelation. Apocalyptic killer cults are not born, they evolve through stages. Therein lies the means of preventing the certain destruction of the apocalyptic prophesy.

EIGHT

Multiple Personality and Crime

A Real Whodunit

In November of 1990, an unusual witness took the stand at a rape trial in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. A 27-year-old woman testified that Sarah was "the name of the body" she inhabited. It was also the given name of the rape victim. Sarah had no memory of having met the man on trial for raping her, 29-year-old grocery bagger Mark Peterson, but testified that she had been told about the rape by others of the 6 personalities and 15 personality fragments who also inhabited her body. They said it was the naive and fun-loving Jennifer who had had sex with Peterson. He had violated "the body."

Wisconsin law states that it is a crime for anyone to have sexual intercourse with a mentally ill person if that person does not understand the consequences of his or her conduct and if the accused knows of the impaired mental condition. At the trial, Peterson maintained that sex with Sarah had been consensual and that therefore no rape had taken place.

Sarah had been diagnosed with multiple personality disorder (MPD). She testified that when another personality takes over, she has no control of what happens. However, she had learned in psy-