Secular, Theological, and Sociological Perspectives on Sects and Cults in the Latvian Society during the Post-Independence Period, 1991-2005

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THESIS DIGEST

This thesis will analyze sects and cults during the period of independence in the State of Latvia following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. There is a lack of academic researches about the phenomena of sects and cults in Latvian society as well as about the interaction and relationship between the church and these new religious movements. This thesis will examine the research of European and American scholars and incorporate the Stark and Bainbridge theory of religion, which from the sociological perspective analyzes formation of sects and cults and their inevitable presence in most societies. The presence of sects and cults is also inevitable in Latvia, for churches always are tended to secularization. The issue accordingly becomes acute. It must address how churches deal with the phenomena of sects and cults and how they could continue to exist in the environment of religious pluralism. Traditional churches in Latvia should avoid cooperation with the state's power in fighting against sects and cults. To be successful in the competition with sects and cults on the market of religions, churches should be "strict" and "demanding."

To better understand the sects and cults phenomena, secular and theological perspectives will also be considered. The secular perspective focuses on anti-social and criminal acts of sects and cults. The theological perspective focuses on the teaching or doctrine of sects and cults. As the paper will show, the secular approach toward the idea of brainwashing is the most popular in Latvian mass media and in the consciousness of Latvian society. The theological view is appropriate to the members of traditional churches in Latvia.

Every of these perspectives: secular, theological, or sociological has its own pros and cons, analyzed in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Latvia declared its independence on August 21, 1991. The USSR recognized its sovereignty on September 6. After regaining independence Latvia faced many new cultural, economical and religious challenges. During Soviet times everything relating to religious life was oppressed. The only legal religion of the USSR was militant atheism. When the walls around the U.S.S.R felt to pieces many new religious movements (hereafter, NRMs) came in. These NRMs were previously unknown and unheard of in Latvia. From a human experience we know that new things, new ideas, new movements always bring with them new challenges, circumspection, mistrust and even hate and aggression. This process has continued in Latvia over the past fourteen years. Because these NRMs are new in the Latvian society, people are challenged and confused at best, and hostile and angry at worst.

These NRMs present difficulties to government, public schools, and parents whose children get involved in them. Our secular government and politicians, who are usually uneducated in religious affairs, are not able to decide how to deal with this new phenomenon of NRMs.

The NRMs have also caused a lot of confusion in the life of the Church. Christians in Latvia suddenly found themselves in a completely different situation. Before the Soviet Union collapsed, Christians were persecuted and only some traditional Christian denominations were allowed to exist, or more precisely, to survive. Now people who confess

and believe very strange and previously unknown new ideas surround Christians. Currently the Church does not understand how to relate to NRMs.

Thesis proposal:

Secularization is only one of three fundamental and interrelated processes that constantly occur in all religious economies. But the process of secularization is self-limiting and generates two countervailing processes. One of these is "revival." Religious organizations that are eroded by secularization abandon a substantial market demand for less worldly religion, a demand that produces breakaway "sect movements." Secularization also stimulates "religious innovation." Not only do worldly churches prompt new religious groups, which seek to revive faith, but secularization also prompts the formation of new "cult movements." From such perspective a "church" is a conventional religious organization; a "sect movement" is a deviant religious organization with traditional beliefs and practices; a "cult movement" is a deviant religious organization with novel beliefs and practices. The presence of sects and cults is inevitable, for churches always are tended to secularize. In that way the issue of how the churches should deal with this sects and cults phenomena and how to exist in the environment of religious pluralism becomes acute. For churches it would not be the right way to cooperate with the secular state's power in fighting and trying to get rid of sects and cults. For successful competition with sects and cults on the market of religions, churches must be "strict" and "demanding".

In my research I hope to accomplish the following goals:

1. To show how academic research about sects and cults in Europe and North America can help us to understand the phenomena of sects and cults in Latvia.

2. To analyze the secular, theological, and sociological perspectives on sects and cults.

3. To provide a general picture of sects and cults in Latvia.

4. To show the impact of sects and cults on the government, mass media, traditional churches, and citizens of Latvia.

In order to understand sects and cults in Latvia I will approach this phenomenon from following angles:

1. Employ sociological studies in order to understand the reasons for the growth of sects and cults (why? how?) and the impact of sects and cults on society. The Stark and Bainbridge theory of religion is particularly informative in this approach.

2. Study contemporary opinions about sects and cults as found in Latvian magazines and newspapers in order to determine how the Latvian mass media reacts to sects and cults (secular perspective).

3. Examine governmental laws relating to religious life in Latvia to understand the interplay between state and religion.

4. Examine the extensive literature of the Counter-Cult movement which evaluates sects and cults from a theological/doctrinal point of view.

This paper is organized in four chapters with common part of conclusions at the end. Every chapter makes a contribution for approval of the main thesis. Chapter one gives definitions of terms "church," "sect," and "cult." This will be a basis for our further discussion. To talk about different perspectives on sects and cults, it is first necessary specify the subject—what is the thing we will analyze? Chapter two analyzes two perspectives on sects and cults i.e., secular and theological. Both of these popular perspectives do not answer the question how and why sects are forming. Chapter three will attempt to answer these questions through the analysis of the sociological perspective. Chapter four will analyze how the Latvian society and especially churches react towards sects and cults. This chapter will also note how the churches of Latvia should deal with the phenomena of sects and cults.

CHAPTER ONE: TERMS "SECT," "CULT"

In scholarly literature the terms "sect" and "cult" are employed with a variety of usages

and interpretations. Most often this interpretation reflects the scholar's own interests and field

of research. Theologians, sociologists of religions, and psychologists have their own

definitions. For example, Ron Rhodes is right, when he writes:

> Talk to 10 different cult "experts" and you may well be given 10 different
> definitions. Sociologists have their opinions (authoritarianism and exclusivism
> play big roles in their thinking), psychologists have their opinions (mind
> control is a big issue with them), and theologians have their opinions (heretical
> doctrines are the main issue of concern). Still others, like journalists and
> reporters, often focus on the more sensational elements of cults, such as mass
> suicides and bizarre rituals and practices.[1]

Purpose of this chapter is to deal with various definitions, worked out by groups of

different interests from popular opinion about sects and cults to definitions of sociologists of

religions. An analysis of definitions is necessary for understanding what kind of phenomena

is being considered. This chapter will also provide definitions for these theses.

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[1] Rhodes, Ron, *The Challenge of the Cults and New Religions: The Essential Guide to Their History, Their Doctrine, and Our Response*, 20.

1.1 Secular and theological definitions

Popular or secular opinion about sects and cults is found in Latvian mass media; or, more precise, mass media are the ones making stereotypes about sects and cults in Latvia. An examination of Latvian newspapers from 1997 to 2005 reveals about 220 articles which deal with the issue of sects. The term "sect" is most often used in mass media. The term "cult" is seldom used. The term "sect" is understood in a very negative sense i.e., a sect is a small, evil religious group, often with a single charismatic leader, which engages in brainwashing and other mind control techniques, takes member's money, then commits all sorts of abuse on them, and then they all commit suicide. For example, the Jehovah Witnesses and New Generation fell into disfavor with the mass media. The Jehovah Witnesses were viewed in a negative light because of their prohibition against blood transfusions, which resulted in the

death of some children in Latvian hospitals and the New Generation because of hypnotizing

persons and swindling out money of them.[2]

Term "sect" in Latvian newspapers is applied to different kinds of religious

organizations. For example, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, New Generation, Church of

Christ, Christian Science, Scientology, Adventists, Moonies etc. This approach, of course, is

oversimplification and overgeneralization. The mass media and masses are not interested in

sociological or theological nuances defining sects or cults. A common error, found in the

mass media's description of sects, is that from one bad example are made general and

universal conclusions about all so called sects.[3]

Hysterics caused by the mass media and the public response can be largely explained

by the great ignorance in the religious matters at all. Scholar of religions Agita Misane is

right, when she says, that "for a large part of Latvian society world of religions still seems

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[2] For example, Gundega Skagale, "Sektās bērni tiek ietekmēti psiholoģiski," *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* ["Children are affected psychologically in sects," *Independent Morning Paper*], January 9, 1999. Hypnosis in sects is common argument against sects by Doctor Igor Kudrjavcev, see, for example, Inta Lase, "Jāaizsargājot sektu un kultu upuri," Diena ["Victims of sects and cults should be protected," *Day*], February 18, 1999. Ringolds Balodis, previous director of The Department of Religious Matters uses the same argument against sects, especially, New Generation, see *Valsts un Baznica* [*State and Church*] (Riga: Nordik, 2000), 590-595.This argument is characteristic for Anti-cult movement, as it is seen in Steven Hassan words: "Hypnotism relates to the unethical mind control practices of destructive cults in a variety of ways. In many cults which claim to be religious, what is often called 'meditation' is no more than a process by which the cult members enter a trance, during which time they may receive suggestions which make them more receptive to following the cult's doctrine." In *Combating Cult Mind Control*, 57.

[3] In the Lithuanian media, the word "sect" can literally mean anything. The media never tries to be petty about the word, never tries to understand the term, so, whatever is less known, whatever is less understood in Lithuania's spiritual panorama, is defined as "sect". Therefore the word sect in Lithuanian media is associated with such crimes as money laundering, drug addiction, arm smuggling, etc.

fluent, vague and strange area; it is impossible to understand rationally, and even more to talk coherently about it."[4]

Popular insights on sects also include the Anti-Cult Movement (hereafter, ACM) approach.[5] It should be pointed out that this approach in particular had a major impact on Latvian public and mass media opinion about sects and cults. Margaret Singer, a prominent figure in the secular ACM provides an example of the definition employed by ACM. Singer defines a cult according to three interrelated sets of criteria:

- The origin of the group and the role of the leader.

- The power structure, or relationship between the leader (or leaders) and the followers.

- The use of a coordinated program of persuasion.[6]

Despite Margaret Singer's attempt to articulate these criteria, a precise definition of cult remains to be found. Thereby any church with structure, hierarchy, discipline, and leaders can be classified as a cult. Notably also that unlike in Latvia, where term "sect" usually is used, ACM uses term "cult."

Michael Langone, who edits the AFF's *Cultic Studies Journal*, lists twelve "statements" that "often characterize manipulative groups." Among these, Langone states that

- the group is focused on a living leader to whom members seem to display excessively zealous, unquestioning commitment
- the group is preoccupied with bringing in new members
- the group is preoccupied with making money
- the group has a polarized us- versus-them mentality, which causes conflict with the wider society

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[4] Agita Misāne, "Prāts un jūtīgums," *Diena* ["Mind and Sensitiveness," *Day*], July 15, 2004.

[5] More about anti-cult movement see, chapter 2.

[6] Margaret Singer, *Cults in Our Midst*, 7.

- members are expected to devote inordinate amounts of time to the group[7]

The major problem with these sets of characteristics is that they are subjective correlates rather than empirically measurable attributes. What, for example, constitutes "excessive" as opposed to "appropriate" zeal? What is the evangelical Christian church growth movement but an organized and systematic attempt to bring new members into that stream of Christianity? Concerns such as these exemplify the problem of how many of these characteristics must be present, and to what degree, before a group qualifies as a cult. Because ACM confuses correlates with attributes in this way, there is no uniformity or stability of definition. They present instead what Stark and Bainbridge have called the "unideal type,"[8] a labeling process more suited to the political evaluation and stigmatization of unpopular groups than an analysis of their social and cultural location.

Another well-known representative of ACM Steven Hassan says, that a "destructive cult... is a group which violates the rights of its members and damages them through the abusive techniques of unethical mind control."[9] In general, ACM focuses on the deeds of cults rather than on creeds. The ACM defines cults in view of anti-social behavior and has no interest into teaching or doctrine.

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[7] Available online at www.csj.org/infoserv_cult101/checklis.htm (accessed February 20, 2005.

[8] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 19-20.

[9] Steven Hassan, *Combating Cult Mind Control*, 37.

The theological definition of cults is worked out in evangelical circles.[10] Evangelicals in USA usually use the term "cult," while in Europe "sect" is more commonly employed. Theological definitions of cults are always made with reference to normative claims of Christian uniqueness, exclusivity, and insuperability. Usually rendered in terms of evangelical theology, these claims establish standards by which all other religious groups, beliefs, and practices are evaluated. McDowell and Stewart put it as follows:

> We must never abandon the legitimate use of a term simply because of its misuse by others. Psychologists have tried to define a cult as a group that alters one's behavior and psychological outlook on life. Sociologists have defined a cult as a group that does not fit the norms of a given society. Both of these recent endeavors fail to address what is essential to all cults, that is theology. (sic) Thus, we will use the theological definition as the only one that addresses all aspects of life, thought, and behavior.[11]

McDowell and Stewart proceed to offer their theological definition of a cult, as follows: "A cult is a group of people basing their beliefs upon the world view of an isolated leadership, which always denies the central doctrines of Christianity as taught from the Bible."[12]

This evangelical approach to cults is seen also in Hank Hanegraaff's book "Christianity in Crisis." Hanegraaff, president of Christian Research Institute, which was founded by well-known Christian apologist Walter Martin, writes:

> A second way to define cult is from a theological perspective. A cult, in this sense, is deemed a pseudo-Christian group. As such, it claims to be Christian but denies one or more of the essential doctrines of historic Christianity; these

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[10] "The movement in modern Christianity, transcending denominational and confessional boundaries, that emphasizes conformity to the basic tenets of the faith and a missionary outreach of compassion and urgency," Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 405.

[11] Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *The Deceivers: What Cults Believe, How They Lure Followers*, 13-14.

[12] Ibid., 15.

doctrines focus on such matters as the meaning of faith, the nature of God, and the person and work of Jesus Christ.[13]

By defining a cult in this way the matter of central Christian doctrines becomes crucial. The important feature in Hanegraaff's book, unlike other books by evangelicals, is that he describes what constitutes the "major" doctrines of Christianity. Hanegraaff lists:

- God – one and triune.
- Jesus Christ – second person of trinity, eternal, was virgin born, died for humanity's sin, and was physically resurrected.
- Mankind – created in God's image, morally responsible to God.
- Sin and Salvation – by God's grace alone through faith.
- Scripture – inspired by God, are inerrant and are therefore authoritative.

According to Hanegraaff, if any religious movement deviates from these "major" doctrines of Christianity, then it is cult. The problem with such an approach is that the Roman Catholic Church or Eastern Orthodox Church could also be understood as a cult.

Martin Walter was best known for his popular open-radio format show, "The Bible Answer Man" which focused largely on Christian apologetics. He is widely accepted as the "father" of the Counter-Cult Movement and is well known for his book "The Kingdom of cults." Thus it is important to see, how Martin Walter defines cult:

> The term cult is nothing derogatory to any group so classified. A cult is any religious group that differs significantly in some or more respects as to belief or practice from those religious groups that are regarded as the normative expressions of religion on our total culture. … Cult might also be defined as a group of people gathered around a specific person or person's misinterpretation of the Bible. … A study of the cults is a serious business. They constitute a growing trend in America – a trend which is away from the established Christian churches and the historic teachings of the Bible – an emphasis upon autosoteric efforts, or the desire to save one's self apart from Biblical revelation.[14]

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[13] Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in crisis*, 43.

[14] Walter R Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, rev.ed., 11-12. See also Bob Larson, *Larson's New Book of Cults*, rev.ed. (Wheaton, ILL: Tyndale House, 1989), 19.

Martin Walter emphasizes the heretical character of cults. Thus every religious organization, which is not orthodox Christianity, is a cult. Such a definition effectively relegates all non-Christian religions to the cultic. It is no surprise that in his book "The Kingdom of cults" he included such different religious movements as Scientology, Krishna Consciousness, Islam, and Seventh Day Adventists under the umbrella "cults." Another feature of cults, according to Martin, is their autosoteric efforts, i.e. in the cults people try to save themselves, but in evangelical theology God saves his people. In addition to adopting a theological definition of "cult," Walter Martin introduced various social indicators such as "terminological deception" and "closed mindedness." Under terminological deception, for example, Walter is referring to the practice in which cults deliberately use traditional Christian terminology, however, they redefine the terms according to their own heretical views. As result of such deception it may appear that cults teach traditional Christian doctrine, but reality is quite different.

Such a theological approach has its strong and weak points. The strong side is drawing attention to matter of truth; namely what is truth about God, human, salvation, and the end of the world. The mass media and ACM hardly ever focus on that type of questions. Even if they do, it is done in the context of a relativistic and pluralistic viewpoint. The weak point comes in determining what are to be considered the central or major doctrines in Christianity. What kinds of doctrines are essential? Are major doctrines only those which evangelicals consider to be essential? Even more complicated is the issue of the relationship between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Douglas writes about this problem:

> In any sociology of orthodoxy and heresy one of the most fundamental issues is
> that of historical and theological precedence. Put simply, does orthodoxy
> precede heresy, and heresy then merely deviate from the established orthodoxy,
> or does what becomes orthodoxy develop out of the contested interaction

between what are later declared competing heresies? Bauer thesis contends the later: early Christianity did not comprise an established orthodoxy that later spawned rival heresies. Rather, in the first centuries of the church, numerous understandings of the Jesus event competed for dominance, and orthodoxy depended in large measure upon where one lived, in whose apostolic lineage the church in that region was founded, and to which texts that lineage had access and considered authoritative.[15]

Another problem is that evangelicals threat the Bible as though it were a completely open book, the meaning of which is utterly clear, limpid, and available to the diligent and pious reader. However, the history of biblical interpretation makes it clear that conformity of opinion is never found, and what is called exegesis is in reality "eisegesis."

We have now considered definitions of sects and cults from both a theological and secular perspective. The secular approach focuses on the works or behavior of cults, while theological definitions focus rather on teaching or doctrine. However, this does not mean that the secular approach completely ignores doctrine or ideology. After all, cults are evaluated from the position of secular humanism. The secular humanism is regarded as a norm or standard in the society and every cult deviating from this norm is counted as dangerous and destructive. Likewise it cannot be said that the theological approach ignores issues of behavior in its evaluation of cults. If there are examples of anti-social behavior in one cult or other, this provides an extra testimony that the movement is heretic and for that reason dangerous. Both seculars and theologians usually ignore data about excellent behavior in sects and cults as well as fact that in so called orthodox churches behavior often is far from God's commandments.

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[15] Douglas E. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness? An Introduction to the Christian Countercult,* 55. Bauer's theses mentioned by Douglas see, Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy & Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1996).

Sociologists of religions have their own opinion about all these terms too. In the 1950s, sociologists in America began to use Ernst Troeltsch typology as a starting point for a discussion of cults. In their dialogue with Troeltsch, American sociologists created the now famous church-sect-cult tricotomy. Before turning to the more helpful sociological definitions by Stark-Bainbridge, it is first necessary to look at Ernst Troeltsch "church-sect" typology.

1.2 Ernst Troeltsch "church-sect" typology

Academic discussions about the classification of religious organizations are strongly influenced by the works of Max Weber and his friend and colleague Ernst Troeltsch, who categorized organizations according to the notion of the ideal type, an approximation that expresses the essence of an organization in its pure form. Differences between church and sect according to Troeltsch are as follows:

Church:

- Universal, i.e. it desires to cover the whole life of humanity. Thus to a certain extent it accepts the secular order, and dominates the masses.

- Members are born into a Church. A Church is a religious body that counts as its members anyone living within a certain geographic area.

- Utilizes the state and the ruling classes, and weaves these elements into her own life. A Church then becomes an integral part of the existing social order. Thus

Church stabilizes and determines the social order, but in so doing becomes dependent upon the upper classes.

- The Church relates the whole secular order as a means and a preparation to the supernatural aim of life.

- The asceticism of the Church is a method of acquiring virtue, and a special high watermark of religious achievement, connected chiefly with the repression of the senses, or expressing itself in special achievements of a peculiar character.

Sect:

- Small groups who aspire after personal inward perfection, and they aim at a direct personal fellowship between the members of each group.

- The attitude of the group towards the world, the State, and Society may be indifferent, tolerant, or hostile.

- Members are recruited, probably with a conversion experience, into a sect.

- Sects are connected with the lower classes, or at least with those elements in society which are opposed to the state and to society.

- The sects refer their members directly to the supernatural aim of life.

- The asceticism of the sects is merely the simple principle of detachment from the world.

- Emphasis on Eschatology, "good works," and legalism. [16]

To better understand Troeltsch's church-sect typology it is necessary to draw attention to the period of history in which his typology was worked out. Troeltsch recognized that Germany and German Christianity faced grave dangers. Troeltsch argued that on the one

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[16] Troeltsch, *The social teaching of the Christian churches*, 331-343.

hand the old "system of absolute establishment" (which created a monopoly situation through the close union of church and state) was dead. On the other hand, Troeltsch considered the American style of "disestablishment" un-German. This left a "system of mixed establishment" as the only viable option.[17] By this he meant, that the state select a small number of churches that would be granted "corporate privileges grounded in public law." These churches would be chosen because of their "contribution to public life."[18] Thus in Troeltsch's view the separation of church and state can be no separation of state from Christianity.

 In view of his political agenda, it is no surprise that Troeltsch's comments on sects were less than enthusiastic. In fact, the only viable option for an educated person was church membership, not commitment to sect, which was intellectually narrow and thus inferior. To be fair, Troeltsch also saw problems with established churches and understood the appeal of sectarian movements. For example:

> Very often in the so-called "sects" it is precisely the essential elements of the Gospel which are fully expressed; they themselves always appeal to the Gospel and to Primitive Christianity, and accuse the Church of having fallen away from its ideal…The sects with their greater independence of the world, and their continual emphasis upon the original ideals of Christianity often represent in a very direct and characteristic way the essential fundamental ideas of Christianity.[19]

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[17] Troeltsch, *Religion in history* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 109-117.

[18] It is interesting to note that Archbishop of Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church (LELC) JanisVanags used the same argument. Namely, the state has to make distinction between traditional churches and sects or cults because of the great contribution churches made for social development. See, *Netradicionālās reliģiskās kustības un to nelabvēlīgā ietekme sabiedrībā*. Konferences materiāli [*Unconventional Religious Movements and Their Adverse Impact on Society: Spiritual, Social, and Legal Aspects*. Conference papers], Riga, January 30, 1998, p.6.

[19] Troeltsch, *The social teaching of the Christian churches*, 334.

It is clear that in terms of the Troeltsch typology some religious groups have characteristics of both church and sect. Richard Niebuhr, who wrote his doctoral thesis on Troeltsch, began using the term "denomination."[20] Denomination is a term derived from the Latin word meaning "to name." Niebuhr uses it to distinguish religious organizations that are not churches in Troeltsch's sense. Denominations are organizations that do not encompass everyone in a given geographical area. Yet they are not sects because they lack exclusivistic tendencies and do not demand to profess faith or accept particular teachings before granting membership.

One of the first attempts to define the concept of cult in sociological terms is found in the work of Max Weber. He defined the term "cult" as ancient and non-Christian religions. More important, Weber associated the notion of cult not with ritualism, as did theologians, but with an antirational and mystical form of religion.

To his basic categories church and sect, Troeltsch added a third type, which he identified as "Protestant mysticism":

> From the very beginning there appeared the three main types of the sociological development of Christian thought: the Church, the sect, and mysticism…Mysticism means that the world of ideas which had hardened into formal worship and doctrine is transformed into a purely personal and inward experience; this leads to the formation of groups on a purely personal basis, with no permanent form, which also tend to weaken the significance of forms of worship, doctrine, and the historical element.[21]

The English translation of Troeltsch's work does not use the word "cult" in relation to this form of religious expression. In the original German it falls under the heading *Sekten*

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[20] See Richard H. Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press, 1929, reprinted 1954).

[21] Troeltsch, *The social teaching of the Christian churches*, 993.

what can be translated as either "sect" or "cult." Nevertheless, it is fair to argue that in fact

Troeltsch's "mystical" groups conform to the ideal type that Weber recognizes as a "cult."

In next chapter we will focus on Stark and Bainbridge's criticism of Weber-Troeltsch's

ideal types, as well as on church-sect-cult definitions developed by them.

1.3 Stark - Bainbridge definition of "church," "sect," "cult"

The main criticism put forward by Stark and Bainbridge against the Weber-Troeltsch

typology concerns the use of "*correlates*[22] in their definitions of concepts. Stark and

Bainbridge suggest that it is *attributes*, not correlates that belong in a definition."[23] Because

correlates are not always present and often may not be present, their use as defining features

often leads to misclassification. When many correlates are involved, the result is jumble of

mixed types that cannot be ordered and thus cannot yield measurement. The usual outcome is

a proliferation of new sub-concepts or types, and sometimes it seems that each new empirical

case must become a unique type – which is to classify nothing.

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[22] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Merriam-Webster, 1998) defines word "correlate" as (1) either of two things so related that one directly implies or is complementary to the other (as husband and wife) (2) a phenomenon (as brain activity) that accompanies another phenomenon (as behavior), is usually parallel to it, and is related in some way to it. Springfield, Mass. : Merriam-Webster, 1998

[23] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 20.

Stark and Bainbridge wrote about this problem as follows:

> Suppose five correlates are used to define the ideal church, with negative values on these same five defining the ideal sect. Then suppose we treat these criteria as dichotomies. The result is 32 logically possible types (because the defining criteria can vary independently), of which 30 are mixed types. These mixed types cannot be ordered fully. Which is more churchlike, a group possessing characteristics A and B but lacking C, D, and E or one with D and E but no A, B, or C? In the empirical world, mixed types have been the rule.[24]

Thus Stark and Bainbridge note, "attributes are the basis of definition… and when enough attributes have been utilized to limit the class in the desired fashion, no ambiguity results, for then the concept forms an underlying unidimensional axis or variation. This kind of ideal type does provide a zero point for comparison and ranking."[25]

As a starting point Stark and Bainbridge use the work of sociologist Benton Johnson who discarded dozens of correlates from the various definitions of church and sect and settled on a single attribute to classify religious groups: "A church is a religious group that accepts the social environment in which it exists. A sect is a religious group that rejects the social environment in which it exists."[26] Johnson postulated a continuum representing the degree to which a religious group is in "a state of tension" with its surrounding socio-cultural environment. The ideal sect falls at one pole. The ideal church anchors the other end of the continuum and virtually is the socio-cultural environment. Johnson's ideal types identify a clear axis of variation and its end points.

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[24] Ibid., 22.

[25] Ibid., 20.

[26] Benton Johnson, "On Church and Sect," *American Sociological Review*, 1963, 542.

Guided by Benton Johnson, Stark and Bainbridge offer the following definitions:

A *Church* is a conventional religious organization.

A *Sect movement* is a deviant religious organization with traditional beliefs and practices.

A *Cult movement* is a deviant religious organization with novel beliefs and practices.

Deviance is departure from the norms of a culture in such a way as to incur the imposition of extraordinary costs from those who maintain the culture.[27]

As we can see in contradistinction to Johnson, Stark and Bainbridge add the "cult movement." By this they emphasize that sects with their departure from the church are not merely religious movement existing in tension with surrounding society. There are many movements which have no history of prior organizational attachment to a "parent" religion, thus, they are not schismatic. Indeed, they lack a close cultural continuity or similarity with other religious groups in a society. Stark and Bainbridge define two types of these nonschismatic, deviant religious groups:

> One type represents cultural *innovation*. That is, along with the many familiar components of religious culture appearing in the beliefs, values, symbols, and practices of the group, there is something distinctive and new about them as well. The second type exhibits cultural *importation*. Such groups represent (or claim represent) a religious body well established in another society…these deviant but nonschismatic bodies are often referred to as *cults*.[28]

Because sects are schismatic groups, they present themselves to the world as something old. They left the parent body not to form a new faith but to reestablish the old

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[27] Stark and Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*, 124. Other well-known sociological definitions are found in: Yinger, J. Milton, *Religion, Society, and the Individual: An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion* (New York, Macmillan,1957), 154-155; Geofrey, K. Nelson, "The Spiritualist Movement and the Need for a Redefinition of Cult," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol.8, n.1, spring 1969: 152-60.

[28] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 25.

one, from which the parent body had "drifted." On the contrary, cults do not have a prior tie with another established religious body in the society in question. The cult may represent an alien religion, or it may have originated in the host society, but through innovation, not fission. Imported cults often have little common culture with existing faiths. They may be old in some other society, but they are new and different in the importing society. In summary, "sects are breeds of a common species. That is, sects are deviant religious movements that remain within a nondeviant religious tradition. Cults are a different species and occur by mutation or migration."[29]

These definitions allow quite precise identification of church, sect, and cult in Latvian society. Thus for example Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Baptists, Methodists, and Adventists are clearly identified as churches. New Generation, United Churches of God, Lutherans of Augsburg Confession, and many Pentecostal congregations are schismatic groups, accordingly they are sects. Jehovah's Witnesses, Later Day Saints, Sukjo Mahikari, Toronto Blessing, ECKANKAR, Visarion's Church of the Last Testament, Brahma Kumaris, and ISCKON are imported cults. God-keepers and religious group established by Janis Stoknis or Kalns (as he calls himself) could be classified as innovated cults.

In this chapter we considered several different definitions of sect and cult. There were secular (popular), theological, and sociological definitions. Sociological definitions usually are not precise and focus on deviant social behavior. The term "cult" is used in the United States in contradistinction to Europe where term "sect" is preferred. The main deficiency of this approach is the tendency to universalize particular criminal cases into declaration that all

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[29] Ibid., 26.

cults are destructive and dangerous. The mass media and hysteric of parents (whose adult children are involved in extraordinary cults) are the main source of negative information about cults.

Theological definitions, in most cases, are worked out in evangelical circles. These definitions focus on teaching and automatically proclaim every heretic group departing from main Christian doctrines as a cult. This is the only approach, unlike secular or sociological, emphasizing the matter of truth. Still the theological approach has its own problems. Which of the Christian doctrines are central? The Bible is not always easy understood, there is diversity of presuppositions and interpretations. What kind of relations exists between orthodoxy and heterodoxy?

Sociological definitions of sects and cults focus on relationship between religious groups and surrounding society. This paper deals with the relationship between sects, cult, and society and for that reason the definition of Stark and Bainbridge will be used as the working one, i.e. "sect" and "cult" will be used in the sociological sense. The author is also conscious that the terms "sect" and "cult" in the popular understanding have extremely negative connotations which are based not on facts but rather on human emotions.

CHAPTER TWO: SECTS AND CULTS FROM THE SECULAR AND

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Sects and cults can be analyzed from different perspectives. Eileen Barker talks about "ideal types of cult-watching groups."[1] She mentions five groups which are analyzing sects and cults: cult-awareness groups (in this thesis called ACM), counter-cult groups (in this thesis called CCM), research-orientated groups (in this thesis a sociological perspective), human-rights groups, and cult-defender groups. The approach of each group toward sects and cults differs, though sometimes these approaches overlap. It is not surprising that Eileen Barker talks about ideal types existing only on paper but not in practice. Anson Shupe counts six "scholarly perspectives in the study of fringe religions."[2] Criminological and philosophical perspectives described by him accordingly correspond with ACM and CCM in this chapter, while his social structural perspective corresponds with the sociological approach discussed in chapter three.

Each group has their own special interests, methodology, chosen data, and particular way of communication. In this chapter we will discus ACM and CCM or the secular and theological analysis of sects and cults.

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[1] See, Appendix 3. Analysis of these different kinds of groups can be read in Eileen Barker, "The Scientific Study of Religion? You Must be Joking!" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34, 1995:287-310.

[2] See, Appendix 4, and his book, Anson D. Shupe, *Six Perspectives on New religions: A Case Study Approach*.

2.1 History of Anti-Cult Movement

The anti-cult movement (ACM) is particular kind of social movement; it is a countermovement, which means that it derives its organizational purpose from the existence of other movements. The basic format of the ACM ideology is the appearance of new and dangerous social problem, namely cults; that the problem is unrecognized, growing rapidly, and presents a clear and present danger to society; and that remedial action to recover and treat compromised individuals (deprogramming/counseling) and to counter the groups themselves (regulatory measures) is imperative.

The key feature of the secular ACM is its preference toward deeds, not creeds. It is not interested in whether the theology of a particular persuasion is true or false. It claims to be interested only in behavior, which it regards as harmful to individuals, to families or to society at large. The secular ACM wants to make people free from cults. It does, however, presume to tell them what religious ideas they should espouse once they have left the cult.

The process of the ACM development can be traced through three stages:[3]

- Emergent (mid 1960s-1970s)

- Expansion/consolidation (1980s)

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[3] I am following Anson Shupe, David G. Bromley, Susan E. Darnell, "The North American Anti-Cult Movement," in James R. Lewis, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, 184-205. About documentary history of ACM see, Anson Shupe and David G. Bromley, *A Documentary History of the Anti-Cult Movement*. Arlington, TX: Center for Social Research, 1985.

- Domestic accommodation/international expansion (1990s-)

The emergent stage began in the mid- to late 1960s when a number of groups, such as the Children of God (now the Family), the Unification Church and Hare Krishna, began to attract counter cultural, idealistic young adults. The families of these recruits, disappointed that their offspring's life trajectories were seemingly moving away from traditional education, conventional families of procreation, and mainstream employment, reacted by organizing themselves in search for answers and redress.

The most immediate problem confronting distraught families of cult converts was to provide a label for the troubles they were confronting that could serve as the basis for legitimation. The ACM sought to construct a public issue through its mind control ideology.[4] The term "cult" already had a long history as a pejorative label utilized by conservative Christian groups to identify theologically heretical churches.

The mind control model offered the ACM a paradigm of unusual behavior that (1) attached no stigma to either the families or the cultists who became victims; (2) offered the veneer of scientific legitimation; (3) linked together a set of otherwise apparently disparate groups; (4) created the basis for retrieving cult affiliates; and (5) potentially circumvented the facts that the groups at issue claimed religious status and the affiliates were overwhelmingly legal adults. The cult concept allowed the ACM to identify cultists. The mind control concept created the informational base that the ACM used in counseling families and coordinating with the media and government agencies.

The ACM began with the individual, localized efforts of family members of recruits to the Children of God, and led to the formation of FREECOG (Free Children of God). Soon

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[4] See, section "Brainwashing controversy."

thereafter, the rapid growth of the Hare Krishna, the Unification Church, and a number of other new groups expanded and diversified the ranks of aggrieved families. The result was the formation of literally dozens of regional ACM organizations that functioned primarily as information and support groups. These organizations operated as non-profit, educational associations with an information-donation-based economy. In 1974 representatives from a number of ACM groups met and formed a national organization: the Citizens Freedom Foundation (CFF).

At the same time, almost simultaneously, deprogrammers emerged. The practice of deprogramming was devised as a technique that putatively reversed the effects of cultic programming (mind control). Deprogramming assumes (1) that a person has experienced, through deception, hypnosis/drugs, or lowering of a normally resistant rationality special techniques of deprivation, conversion to a new religious creed; (2) that after this conversion, the person is psychologically "enslaved" and is unable to act independently of manipulator's directives; and (3) that a process reversal, or deprogramming of the "programmed" victim, is necessary to restore free will and rational choice. James Lewis correctly observes that "despite claims that deprogramming is a therapeutic intervention that breaks through cult members 'hypnotic trance' and forces them to think again, it is clear that deprogrammers are little more than vigilantes acting at the behest or parents upset by the religious choices of their adult children."[5]

For a number of years CFF actively and publicly promoted deprogramming, which resulted in several thousand successful deprogrammings. One of the results of the financial alliance between anti-cult groups and deprogrammers was that anti-cult groups acquired a

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[5] James R. Lewis, *Legitimating New Religions*, 200.

vested interest in promoting the worst possible stereotypes of nontraditional religions. It was, in fact, the two-decade-long interaction between the ACM and the media that has been responsible for the widespread view that all cults are dangerous organizations – this despite the fact that comparatively few of such groups constitute a genuine threat, either to themselves or to society. In addition to deprogramming, formal rehabilitation centers[6] were established to provide facilities where cultists could be deprogrammed and reintegrated into conventional society under supervision.

The final element of the ACM structure that appeared during this stage was the apostate role i.e., those who have left cults. In many cases apostates had been deprogrammed, and some went on to become deprogrammers themselves. Apostates became a critical ACM resource. They were particularly effective in generating atrocity stories that became an increasing staple of media accounts in the mid-1970s.

Since the ACM functioned as a private regulatory agency with a capacity to combat cults and recover cultists, some type of alliance with governmental agencies would be necessary. During this time the greatest effort was expended for legitimating deprogramming. The problem faced by the ACM was finding a means of enlisting the state to support custody of adults professing a voluntary religious affiliation. Mechanism discovered by ACM was court ordered conservatorships that traditionally had been used to allow families to assume legal control of aging relatives with diminished mental capacity. Appeals for conservatorships on ACM cases were based on assertions of diminished capacity as a result

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[6] The most prominent was "The Freedom of Thought Foundation." Also in Latvia there was discussion about necessity to establish such center. See, Inta Lase, "Jāaizsargājot sektu un kultu upuri," *Diena* ["Defending Sect and Cult Victims," *Day*], February 18, 1999. But until now nothing has happened.

of cultic mind control. While families and deprogrammers were successful in locating sympathetic judges for a time, sects and cults soon began contesting against conservatorships.

The end of the emergent stage is marked by three developments:

- Massive defections from sects and cults in the later half of the 1970s by affiliates who only briefly experimented with membership.

- Failure of the murder-suicides by the Peoples Temple to produce governmental mobilization against cults.

- ACM's inability to devise grounds for legally extracting affiliates from sects and cults.

The key development during expansion/consolidation stage was the establishment of national-level organizations. By the turn of decade the Citizens Freedom Foundation had received tax-exempt status as an educational trust. The second national organization, the American Family Foundation (AFF) began as a CFF affiliate but became an independent entity in 1979. The AFF became a think tank and information clearinghouse, holding annual meetings at which anti-cult research was reported and the *Cultic Studies Journal*. [7] The CFF changed its name to the Cult Awareness Network (CAN) in 1986, and rapidly became the public face of the ACM.

Another major development in the ACM structure was the expanding importance of experts and apostates. These roles became more central since the ACM shifted its strategy to respond to the massive exodus of sect and cult members and the increased resistance to coercive deprogramming. The ACM introduced the civil suit strategy, i.e. to bring civil suits

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[7] See, on website http://www.csj.org/ (accessed February 15, 2005).

with sects and cults and/or individual leaders as defendants. Typically making generic claims

of the intentional infliction of emotional distress, these suits offered a new source of

legitimation for the ACM's brainwashing ideology. This strategy required a more prominent

role for attorney and therapy experts who charged fees for initiating cases, providing

courtroom testimony, and dispensing therapeutic services. Apostates also played a decisive

role. They provided information to either therapists or the court that constituted the basis for

legal action. Margaret Singer developed a version of the mind control theory[8] that proved

very convincing in jury trials.

     Among the most significant cases that led to the demise of civil suits based on mind

control testimony were *Robin George vs. ISKCON* (in which former member Robin George

sued Hare Krishna), and *Molko and Leal vs. Holy Spirit Association* (in which former

Unificationists sued the Unification Church). The trial court rejected the testimony of the

ACM experts, and an appeals court concluded that the expert opinions lacked a scientific

basis.

     The most significant events that marked the beginning of third stage – domestic

accommodation/international expansion – were conflicts with one of the largest cults, the

Church of Scientology, and growing connections between the American and European anti-

cult organizations. The unexpected series of violent episodes involving sects and cults in

Japan, Europe, and North America also changed the ACM's fortunes, especially in Europe.

There were a series of violent episodes through the 1990s of which the most prominent were:

the Branch Davidian murder-suicides at Mount Carmel outside of Waco in 1993, the Solar

Temple murder-suicides in Switzerland and Canada in 1994, the Aum Shinrikyo murders in

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[8] See, section "Brainwashing controversy."

Tokyo in 1995, the Heaven's Gate collective suicide in California in 1997, and the Uganda murder-suicides involving the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments in 2000. While these series of events did not significantly alter the cults vs. ACM conflict in North America, the Solar Temple episode had a dramatic impact in Europe, particularly in France and Germany. A number of American ACM experts consulted with European governments, and the ACM's mind control ideology became a key component of reports and legislation.

By the early 1990s the Church of Scientology had become one of the largest cults in North America and Europe. The Scientology became the main target of ACM. As the conflict between ACM and Scientology progressed, members of Scientology became aware of an unsuccessful coercive deprogramming of Jason Scott, an adult member of the Life Tabernacle Church (a branch of the United Pentecostal Church International). The deprogramming occurred in 1992 when Scott's mother hired deprogrammers based on a referral by a CAN volunteer worker. Seizing the opportunity presented by the failed deprogramming, a Scientology attorney offered Scott legal representation. The trial resulted in a verdict against CAN that awarded Scot $1,000,000 in punitive damages and $875,000 in actual damages. The judgment bankrupted CAN, and in 1996 the organization closed. Anson Shupe, David G. Bromley, and Susan E. Darnell say "there is no shortage of irony in this outcome. CAN was undone by the same kind of civil suit strategy it had employed against new religious movements, in a case involving the same kind of coercive practices it accused

cults of employing, and with the result that its name and assets were purchased by members

of one of its most bitter enemies."[9]

In the wake of CAN's demise, therefore, AFF became the dominant ACM organization

in North America. AFF responded to the new situation by opening lines of communication

with sect and cult scholars. Representatives of two camps, those who rejected and those who

approved brainwashing/mind control idea, undertook a book project in which proponents

exchanged views on the mind control issue.[10]

2.2 Countercult and Anticult in comparison

Theological literature dealing with sects and cults is problematic in that most ignores

the relationship between Christianity and other religions of the world. By reading these

books, however, it is clear that the position of evangelical authors is that Christianity has an

exclusive status. In general Christianity includes at least three views towards other religions.

These are exclusivism, inclusivism, or pluralism.[11] The exclusivist position has been the

dominant position of the church as a whole through much of its history until the

Enlightenment. Major representatives include Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Hendrick Kraemer,

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[9] Anson Shupe, David G. Bromley, Susan E. Darnell, "The North American Anti-Cult Movement," 200.

[10] See, articles from both parties in Benjamin Zablocki and Thomas Robbins, eds. *Misunderstanding Cults*.

[11] Relationship between Christianity and other religions is not subject of this paper. For that reason only superficial and general review of the exclusivist position will be given here. More about the issue see, for example, Martin E. Marty, *When Faiths Collide* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

D.A. Carson, William Lane Craig, and R. Douglas Geivett. Key to this position is the understanding of God's general and special revelations. God is manifested through creation (general revelation), but Man has responded by freely going against this revelation and, thus, stands guilty before a holy God. However, God has demonstrated a reconciliatory mercy through His word and deed, fulfilled completely in Jesus Christ. The historical person of Jesus, then, is the unique, final, decisive, and normative self-revelation of God to Man (special revelation). Exclusivists believe that Jesus Christ is the sole criterion by which all religions should be understood and evaluated. Christ did not come just to make a contribution to the religious storehouse of knowledge. The revelation, which he brought, is the ultimate standard. Since in Christ alone is salvation and truth, many religious paths do not adequately reflect the way of God and do not lead to truth and life. Jesus is not, therefore, just the greatest lord among other lords. There is no other lord besides him.

The basic principles of the CCM are as follows:

- The Christian worldview is held to be unique, exclusive, and insuperable.

- Conflict of worldviews. The Christian worldview not only differs from worldviews of other religions, it is in conflict with them. Every Christian hence is called to participate in fight with other religions, sects and cults.

- A mandate to convert those who inhabit competing worldviews. Since Christianity is unique and it is the exclusive way of salvation, therefore, it is important that members of sects and cults not only leave their religious groups, they must also join the evangelicals.

A comparison of the ACM and CCM reveals at least five areas of difference:

- The definition of cult.

- Each movement's explanation for the prevalence of cultic behavior.

- The personal and organizational motivation behind the anticult and the countercult, and the perceived danger to which each is responding.

- The objective or goal.

- The methods employed to achieve those goals.[12]

Different approaches to the definitions were discussed in chapter one. We now briefly examine other differences between these approaches.

First, the differences between the ACM and CCM can be observed in their explanation of cultic behavior. The ACM explains cultic behavior in terms of brainwashing and/or thought control models. The CCM locates the phenomenon within much larger domain of cosmological conflict. That is, cults, sects, and any religion other than evangelical or fundamentalist Christianity simply constitute one more skirmish line in the ongoing battle between God and Satan. For example, Douglas Groothuis, writing about the New Age movement in particular, declares "despite whatever good intentions New Agers may have, it is Satan, the spiritual counterfeiter himself, who ultimately inspires all false religion."[13]

The second difference concerns motivation and the perceived danger. The precipitating motivation of ACM is the alleged abuses of civil liberties and human rights that such processes entail. For the ACM, predicated on brainwashing and thought control, the danger is the abrogation of one's civil liberties by controversial sects and cults. The CCM is grounded

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[12] Here I am following suggestion of Douglas Cowan, *Bearing False Witness? An Introduction to the Christian Countercult*.

on the perception of heresy and false religious consciousness, as well as the cosmological imperative to challenge the evil represented by both of them. For the CCM, non-Christian religious expression is a problem of soteriology and represents a major component of the Satanic program to take over the world. Unlike the ACM, few CCM ministries proactively seek encounters with adherents of sects and cults. Most CCM efforts are apologetic rather than missiologic. Most of the CCM materials are produced for and marketed to evangelical Christians.

The third point deals with the objective. The ACM seeks the successful *exit from* the questionable group and reintegration of the former cult member into family and secular society. The CCM's objective, on the other hand, it is not merely to effect the exit of the individual from the questionable group. This would be only half of the mission. Salvation is not achieved until the person is convert to evangelical Christianity. Where the ACM seeks to effect *exit*, the CCM seeks *migration*.

For many years Concordia Publishing House has marketed a series of small booklets on "how to respond to" the Masonic Lodge, the Jehovah's Witnesses etc. Each booklet provides the Christian with a brief historical and theological overview of the particular group, and then key doctrines of beliefs are contrasted with those of conservative Christianity. These are followed (1) by "typical" arguments Christians can expect from the group and (2) by counter-arguments (often in Socratic format, with appropriate biblical references) and group-specific advice that may be used to effect evangelism and conversion. Books from this series are

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[13] Douglas R Groothuis, *Confronting the New Age: How to Resist a Growing Religious Movement*, 38.

translated also in Latvian and they are almost only books on the market dealing with issue of sects and cults from the theological aspect.[14]

The forth distinction involves the methods employed to achieve these goals. The ACM consists largely of psychologists, lawyers, and deprogrammers/exit counselors, as well as the family and friends of cult members. The ACM specializes in information exchange and referral, deprogramming and exit counseling, and family group support. Conservative Christian theologians and apologists – both lay and professional, popularize counter cult. CCM specializes in information exchange, support ministry for ex-members, and apologetic tools to equip Christians for their confrontations with cults. This is done for two purposes: (1) the *apologetic-evangelistic*, which intends to operationalize the migration of the adherent to the Christianity of the counter cult apologist; and (2) the *apologetic-reinforcement*, which serves to maintain, repair, and fortify the Christian worldview in the face of the de facto threat represented by the presence of the adversarial Other. Although both groups may share the reality of apostates or ex-members, the use to which these apostates are put varies according to the explanatory agenda of the group and its programmatic objective. For example, apostate testimony from ACM concentrates on the freedom from mind control once the cultic group has been left. Apostate testimony deployed by the CCM, on the other hand, concentrates ultimately on the salvation the apostate now finds in Christ.

In this subchapter we compared perspectives of ACM and CCM on sects and cults. The next subchapter deals with the brainwashing idea, especially used in ACM circles to render

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[14] Other in Latvian edited books from similar aspect: B.A. Hess, E. Martin, S. Russo, *Maldu tīklā* (Rīga: LBDS teoloģiskais seminārs, 1992) [*In the Net of Fallacy* (Riga: Theological Seminary of the Union of Latvian Baptist Churches)]; Josh McDowell and Don Steward, *Okultisms* (Rīga: Svētdienas Rīts, 1996) [*Occultism* (Riga: Sunday's Morning)]. Many books in Russian, predominant translated from English, are available for Latvian auditory too.

any sect or cult, where adult children of upset parents are incorporated, as illegitimate and prohibited.

2.3 Brainwashing controversy

In recent centuries, religion in Western society has evolved from a system of territorially based near-monopolies into a vigorous and highly competitive faith marketplace in which many churches, sects, and cults vie with one another for the allegiance of "customers" who are free to pick and choose among competing faiths. Under such circumstances, we should expect to find that some of the more tight-knit and fanatical religions in this rough-and-tumble marketplace will have developed sophisticated persuasive techniques for holding on their customers. Some of the most extreme of these techniques are known in the literature by the controversial term "brainwashing."

The idea of brainwashing has an enormous significance and influence on Latvian society. "Atrocity tales" like the following is typical example of how newspapers depict sects and cults:

> New religions and sects have announced themselves in Latvia. Their leaders try to involve as much young people as possible, for their minds are easily influenced and emotions non-persistent. Sectarians organize activities where conscience of the person is affected by hypnosis. People emit inarticulate sounds, make incoherent gestures, fall down without conscience, and welter on the floor. They become spiritually disabled, blindly submit to the leader of the sect, and is ready to offer everything: money, property, family, and job. When inferiors have lost everything they had, as a cast-off

they are thrown away from the organization. Often they become patients of psycho-neurological infirmary. Only seldom can return to the normal life.[15]

The main accusation, brought against sects and cults, is that they use manipulative techniques to recruit new members. They assume that no sane person could join these sects, except brainwashed people. There are several assumptions implicit in such statements:

- Sects and cults are deceitful by their very nature.

- They trick people into joining.

- This is the reason people join, rather than their wanting to join and making conscious decision to do so.

- There is an implicit assumption that "cult recruits" are weak-willed people, easily seduced by cults, and leading from this is the underlying belief that no one in their right mind would ever join such a movement.

Anthony argues that the brainwashing theory was originally developed by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as a propaganda device to explain why a few Korean prisoners of war (POWs) appeared to convert to communism. Communists were said to employ four interrelated indoctrination processes to overwhelm the free will of their

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[15] Sandra Strazdiņa, "Sektās cilvēkus pārvērš par zombijiem," *Vakara Avīze Vakara Ziņas* ["In Sects People are Transformed to Zombies," *Evenings Newspaper Evenings News*], December 2, 2002, "Latvijā sevi ir pieteikušas jaunas reliģijas, sektas un kuru vadītāji cenšas piesaistīt pēc iespējas gados jaunākus cilvēkus - viņu domāšana ir viegli ietekmējama un emocijas nav noturīgas. Sektanti rīko pasākumus, kuros ar hipnozi cilvēkiem traucē apziņu. Ļaudis izdod neartikulētas skaņas, plātās ar rokām, krīt bezsamaņā un vārtās pa grīdu. Cilvēki ir garīgi sakropļoti, akli pakļaujas sektas vadītājam un ir gatavi ziedot visu — naudu, īpašumus, ģimeni darbu. Kad pakļautie zaudē visu, viņi kā nekam nederīgas lietas tiek izgrūsti no organizācijām un bieži nokļūst psihoneiroloģiskās ārstniecības iestādēs. Reti kurš spēj atgriezties normālā dzīvē." Gatis Lidums, in his book *Iziesana no Sektas* (Riga: Svetdienas Rits, 2001) [*Life after Exit from Sect* (Riga: Sunday Morning, 2001)], 20-27 mentions five factors which preclude a person's exit from a sect. They are: deception,

victims and convert them: "conditioning," "debilitation," "deception/defective thinking," and "dissociation-hypnosis-suggestibility." The communists supposedly placed prisoners in an altered state of consciousness through hypnosis/dissociation and physiological debilitation so that their mental and judgmental capacities were radically reduced. In the resulting primitive state of consciousness, the prisoners allegedly were highly "suggestible," that is, unable to resist suggestions that they alter their beliefs. Their captors then allegedly subjected them to a process of "conditioning" that made them believe that illogical and false communist propaganda expressed a correct worldview. The conditioning supposedly pervaded the person's whole personality, resulting in the imposition of a false self that governed all actions and decisions. This new personality was assumed to last indefinitely, even without further conditioning or hypnosis.[16]

In September 1950, the Miami Daily News published an article by Edward Hunter (1902-1978) titled "'Brain-Washing' Tactics Force Chinese into Ranks of Communist Party." It contained the first printed use in any language of the term "brainwashing," which quickly became a stock phrase in Cold War headlines.[17] Hunter, a CIA propaganda operator, who worked under-cover as a journalist, turned out a steady stream of books and articles on the

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psychological and physical weakness, dependence from sect, anxiety to leave sect, desensitizing. Thus his presupposition is that sects are involved in mind control techniques.

[16] Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Pseudoscience versus Minority Religions," in James T. Richardson, *Regulating Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe,* 128.

[17] Irving Hexham, *New Religions as Global Cultures: Making the Human Sacred*, 9 maintains that the British psychiatrist William Sargant first used the term "brainwashing" in his *Battle for the Mind: Physiology of Conversion and Brain-washing* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957, 1959, 1971) and that this book is the main source of the term as it is used today.

subject.[18] He borrowed the word "brainwashing" from the Chinese *hsi-nao* ("to cleanse the mind"), which had no political meaning in Chinese. According to Hunter, the process of brainwashing is so destructive of physical and mental health that many his interviewees had not fully recovered after several years of freedom from Chinese captivity.

Anthony's thesis is that advocates of the cultic brainwashing terminology simply adopted the CIA brainwashing theory and applied it to sects and cults. Brainwashing theory was not based on the systematic research on sects and cults, but merely appropriated the CIA model for an ideological attack on cults.

It is important to note that people do not understand the idea of brainwashing in a general sense i.e. we all are brainwashed by the mass media, education, and politicians. Rather, they see brainwashing as a way to radically change a mind, so that the individual becomes a live puppet, a human robot without free will. Thus it is necessary to evaluate a brainwashing theory more closely.

The most vigorous critics of cults attempted to define the issues and conflicts surrounding sects and cults as constituting primarily a mental health problem. "A religion becomes a cult; proselytization becomes brainwashing; persuasion becomes propaganda; missionaries become subversive agents; retreats, monasteries, and convents become prisons; holy ritual becomes bizarre conduct; religious observance becomes aberrant behavior; devotion and meditation become psychopathic trances."[19]

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[18] For more on brainwashing, see Edwart Hunter's books *Brainwashing in Red China* (New York: Vanguard, 1951); and *Brainwashing: From Pavlov to Powers* (New York: The Bookmaster, 1960).

[19] Jeremiah Gutman, "Constitutional and Legal Aspects of Deprogramming," in *Deprogramming: Documenting the Issue* (New York: American Civil Liberties Union, 1977), 210-11.

Partisanship and tendentious writing on both sides of the conflict have hampered the study of brainwashing. In one camp, there are scholars who simply do not want to accept that brainwashing even exist. Its nonexistence, they believe, will help assure religious liberty. This camp has exerted its influence within academia, but instead of using its academic skills to refute the brainwashing conjecture, it has preferred to attack a caricature of brainwashing supplied by ACM groups.[20] In the other camp we find scholars who desire that brainwashing exist. Its existence will give them a rationale for opposition to groups they consider dangerous.

If one puts the various conceptions about brainwashing on horizontal axis, the left end represents the perception of brainwashing as an absolutely compelling force turning a person into zombie. That kind of view is often seen in the Latvian mass media and in several statements from leaders of the churches. The right end of this horizontal axis represents the view which rejects any possibility to impress and manipulate a person. Most of views scholars of sects and cults represent we can arrange between these two poles. Views of Margaret Singer, Ted Patrick, Steve Hassan than are closer to the left end. At the right side of this axis would be Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, while views of Benjamin Zablocki, Schein, Lifton, and Eileen Barker we can put somewhere on the middle.

Now we turn to the left end of the axis for this kind of view about brainwashing is dominant in Latvian society. A typical example of their reasoning can be found in the argument put forth by Margaret Singer that "despite the myth that normal people don't get

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[20] For example, Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Pseudoscience versus Minority Religions," 128.

sucked into cults, it has become clear over the years that everyone is susceptible to the lure of these master manipulators."[21] She sees

> A fifth class of victims: those who have been in situations of *enforced dependency* (as I call them) as a consequence of having been subjected to thought-reform processes. In essence, a thought-reform program is a behavioral reconstruction program, a program of systematic manipulation using psychological and social techniques. It is commonly known as brainwashing, and yes, it does exist. The cult members fall into this fifth class of victims.[22]

The well-known deprogrammer Ted Patrick maintains his activities with arguing as follows:

> When we take the person into custody he is, admittedly, held against his will. But it's arguable whether at that stage of his indoctrination he can be said to *have* a will, any will, let alone free will in the sense that we normally use that term… While we admit that limiting his sleep is a basic element in deprogramming, he sleeps at least as much as he did in the cult, almost all of which use fatigue as a strategic weapon…I'm criticized for holding these children against their will. But once you go into the Children of God, or the Unification Church, or the Hare Krishna movement, you are not, practically speaking, free to leave either. Now, that seems to suggest I'm fighting fire with fire – or that, at best, I'm no better in my methods than the cults. But let's look at motives. I do not make money off the deprogrammed person…I do not seek to implant in him any dogma, any preconceived or manufactured view or philosophy of life…All I want and all I do is to return to them their ability to think for themselves, to exercise their free will, which the cults have put into cold storage…Motives *are* important. The cults' motives are destructive…My motives, I hope I have demonstrated here, have nothing in common with those of spiritual gangsters…"[23]

This view is echoed by a former member of the Unification Church (Moonie) Steven Hassan, who is now representative of the ACM: "in the past twenty years, the destructive cult phenomenon has mushroomed into a problem of tremendous social and political importance. It is estimated that there are now approximately three thousand destructive cults in the United

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[21] Margaret Singer, *Cults in Our Midst*, 17. But she also acknowledges that not all sects and cults are known to use mind control or other cultic techniques of deception and persuasion, 49.

[22] Ibid., 27.

[23] Ted Patrick, *Let Our Children Go!* 76-77.

States."[24] It is interesting to note that Gordon Melton in his fifth edition of the *Encyclopedia of American Religions*[25] mentions 2,154 descriptive entries on religious bodies. Does Hassan want to say that all religious bodies in the United States are "destructive cults?"

In chapter six of his book, Hassan tries to answer question of how to discern whether or not a group is a destructive cult. He describes three general characteristics of destructive cults so that "you can protect yourself from their influence."[26] The three basic areas, in which search for characteristics of destructive cults, are *leadership, doctrine,* and *membership*. Hassan's conclusions are as follows:

- If a leader has a questionable personal background and structures his organization so that power is totally centralized and controlled by him, the group has the characteristics of a destructive cult.

- …destructive groups change the "truth" to fit the needs of the situation because they believe that *the ends justify the means*. …Legitimate organizations don't change their doctrine to deceive the public.

- The basic feature of most cult recruitment is deception…a destructive group will recruit new members through the use of mind control techniques.

- Maintenance of membership is achieved by such cult activities – undermining the new member's relationships with family and friends, sleep deprivation, dietary changes, and large time spending in-group activities.

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[24] Steven Hassan, *Combating Cult Mind Control*, 36.

[25] J.Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 5th ed. (Detroit, New York: Gale, 1996).

[26] Steven Hassan, *Combating Cult Mind Control*, 96.

- Members of destructive cults are psychological prisoners. Destructive cults plant

  phobias into members' minds so that they fear leaving group. "People had the

  freedom to join, but people don't have the freedom to leave a destructive group."[27]

From my perspective, the problem with these three characteristics of destructive cults is

as follows: they are too general and could be applied to every mainline Church. For example,

many pastors have "questionable personal background." Most denominations recruit people,

but the motives behind this practice are not seen. Thus, it is very easy to accuse them of using

deception. How easy is to leave a Lutheran Church? If it is hard, are Lutherans

"psychological prisoners." I am not denying that a few so-called cults are destructive and are

abusing their members, but I reject an idea that "three thousand" cults are destructive.

Hassan understands mind control as

> A system which disrupts an individual's identity. The identity is made up of
> elements such as beliefs, behavior, thought processes, and emotions that
> constitute a definite pattern. Under the influence of mind control, a person's
> original identity, as formed by family, education, friendships, and most
> important that person's own free choices, becomes replaced with another
> identity, often one that he would not have chosen for himself without
> tremendous social pressure.[28]

Hassan discriminates between "mind control" and "brainwashing." First, brainwashing

is coercive, but mind control is not. Second, a person who is brainwashed knows that he is in

the hands of an enemy. A person who is under mind control thinks that his leaders are peers

or friends. Third, an influence of brainwashing is short-lived. When the prisoner escapes the

field of influence, he is usually able to throw these new beliefs off. Mind control, on the

contrary, has lasting results. Ted Patrick, Margaret Singer, and Steven Hassan represent the

radical wing of the brainwashing idea.

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[27] Ibid., 98-100, 104.

We now turn our attention to the opinions on the middle of our horizontal axis. Representatives here are Benjamin Zablocki and Eileen Barker.

Benjamin Zablocki believes that:

> there can and should be a moderate position on the subject. Such a position would avoid the absurdity of denying any reality to what thousands of reputable ex-cult members claim to have experienced – turning this denial into a minor cousin of holocaust denial. At the same time, it would avoid the mystical concept of an irresistible and overwhelming force that was developed by the extremist wing in the anti-cult movement.[29]

Zablocki claims that his moderate position is based on foundational theories of Lifton and Schein[30] as they apply to sects and cults.

Lifton has done research on people who underwent coercive persuasion in Chinese communist prisons and reeducation camps. He denies the image of brainwashing "as an all-powerful, irresistible, unfathomable, and magical method of achieving total control over the human mind."[31] On the contrary, Lifton writes, "from the standpoint of winning them over to a Communist view of the world, the program must certainly be judged a failure. … Three or four years after their release, most of them expressed sentiments much more harsh toward Communism than those they had felt before being imprisoned."[32] At the same time, Lifton warns, the process, which gave rise to the name "brainwashing", is very much a reality: "the

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[28] Ibid., 54.

[29] Benjamin Zablocki, "Towards a Demystified and Disinterested Scientific Theory of Brainwashing," in Thomas Robbins, ed. *Misunderstanding Cults: Searching for Objectivity in a Controversial Field*, 167.

[30] Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Edgar H. Schein, *Coercive Persuasion* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961).

[31] Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*, 4.

[32] Ibid., 236-37.

official Chinese Communist program of *szu-hsiang kai-tsao* (variously translated as "ideological remolding," "ideological reform," or as we shall refer to it here, "thought reform") has in fact emerged as one of the most powerful efforts at human manipulation ever undertaken."[33]

In his book Lifton provides eight criteria for evaluating any educational, psychological, religious, and political environment in relationship to ideological totalism. They are:

- **Milieu Control**. This involves the control of information and communication both within the environment and, ultimately, within the individual, resulting in a significant degree of isolation from society at large.
- **Mystical Manipulation**. There is a manipulation of experiences that appear spontaneous but in fact were planned and orchestrated by the group or its leaders in order to demonstrate divine authority or spiritual advancement or some special gift or talent that will then allow the leader to reinterpret events, scripture, and experiences as he or she wishes.
- **Demand for Purity**. The world is viewed as black and white and the members are constantly exhorted to conform to the ideology of the group and strive for perfection. The induction of guilt and/or shame is a powerful control device used here.
- **Confession.** Sins, as defined by the group, are to be confessed either to a personal monitor or publicly to the group. There is no confidentiality; members' "sins," "attitudes," and "faults" are discussed and exploited by the leaders.
- **Sacred Science**. The group's doctrine or ideology is considered to be the ultimate Truth, beyond all questioning or dispute. Truth is not to be found outside the group. The leader, as the spokesperson for God or for all humanity, is likewise above criticism.
- **Loading the Language**. The group interprets or uses words and phrases in new ways so that often the outside world does not understand. This jargon consists of thought-terminating clichés, which serve to alter members' thought processes to conform to the group's way of thinking.
- **Doctrine over person.** Member's personal experiences are subordinated to the sacred science and any contrary experiences must be denied or reinterpreted to fit the ideology of the group.
- **Dispensing of existence.** The group has the prerogative to decide who has the right to exist and who does not. This is usually not literal but means that those in the outside world are not saved, unenlightened, unconscious and they must be converted to the group's ideology. If they do not join the group or are critical of the group, then the members must reject them. Thus, the outside world loses all credibility. In conjunction, should any member leave the group, he or she must be rejected also. [34]

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[33] Ibid., 4.

[34] Ibid., 420-37.

Thus, for example, religious totalism can be recognized by the criteria outlined above, "and especially by following trends: exaggerated control and manipulation of the individual, the blanketing of the milieu with guilt and shame, the emphasis upon man's hopeless depravity and worthlessness, and upon his need to submit abjectly to a vengeful deity – all within the framework of an exclusive and closed system of ultimate truth."[35] Lifton suggests that any particular religious environment must be judged according to its own characteristics. It is important to note that, according to Lifton, so called traditional churches or mainstream religions could also become involved in brainwashing or ideological totalism.

Zablocki's moderate position emphasizes that foundational brainwashing theory (Lifton, Schein) did not have any interest in explaining how participants are obtained. The main interest was about retaining participants. Zablocki asks, "why should the foundational theorists, concerned as they were with coercive state-run institutions like prisons, "re-education centres," and prisoner-of-war camps have any interest in explaining how participants were *obtained*? Participants were obtained at the point of a gun."[36] Thus foundational brainwashing theory, according to Zablocki, does not explain how cults obtain members, but how they retain them.

Eileen Barker in her book *The Making of a Moonie*[37] investigated people who joined to Moonies. In an attempt to answer whether they were brainwashed or joined by free will, Barker conclude: "I do not find either answer satisfactory, but that the evidence would seem to suggest that the answer lies considerably nearer the rational-choice pole of continuum than

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[35] Ibid., 456.

[36] Benjamin Zablocki, "Towards a Demystified and Disinterested Scientific Theory of Brainwashing,"174.

[37] Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice?*

it does to the irresistible-brainwashing pole…The idea of someone's washing another person's brain and then inserting alien beliefs and motivations has certainly provided a forceful metaphor for explaining otherwise incomprehensible behavior."[38] Barker identifies four factors, all of which could influence a person's choice and final outcome:

- The individual's predispositions

- his past experience and expectations of society

- his understanding of the attraction (or otherwise) of the Unification Church

- the immediate environment within which he finds himself. Each factor could have its effect by inclining him towards (or protecting him from) joining the movement.[39]

Accordingly, to talk about brainwashing as irresistible power is out of place. The reason people join a sect or cult is usually due to a combination of many different factors. Barker says with humor: "…Moonies are no more likely to stagnate into mindless robots than are their peers who travel to the city on the 8.23 each morning."[40]

An observation from James Lewis is helpful in summing up the discussion of brainwashing:

> The general conclusion of sociologists is that the principal source of the controversy is a parent-child conflict in which parents fail to understand the religious choices of their adult children and attempt to reassert parental control by marshaling the forces of public opinion against the religious bodies to which their offspring have converted. This core conflict is then exacerbated by an irresponsible mass media less interested in truth than in printing exciting stories about weird cults that trap their members and keep them in psychological bondage with exotic techniques of mind control.[41]

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[38] Ibid., 250-51.

[39] Ibid., 137.

[40] Ibid., 258.

[41] James R Lewis, *Legitimating New Religions*, 162.

James Lewis tries to answer the question of what lies behind the rhetoric about brainwashing, cultic manipulation, and the like. The popularity of the cult stereotype as a destructive, manipulative group indicates that there is a pre-existing disposition to accept such stereotypes in American and Western society. This predisposition might be understood in the terms of the social psychology of stereotyping. Stereotypes are used to incorrectly ascribe certain characteristics to whole groups of people and then explain or excuse social problems in light of these characteristics. Stereotypes are also usually held rigidly. The tendency is to ignore or to dismiss evidence that flies in the face of our generalization. It is relatively easy to perceive that most generalizations about cults are little more than negative stereotypes, but what are the social forces that make such stereotypes about nontraditional religions peculiarly attractive to contemporary society?[42]

To answer this question, James Lewis makes an allusion to Freud's idea of "psychological projection." Freud, who was especially concerned with sex and violence, viewed projection as a defense mechanism against unacceptable inner urges. Thus in a society with strict sexual mores, and individual who is constantly keeping a lid on his desires might perceive rather ordinary activity, such as dancing, as sexually suggestive. Becoming enraged at such 'loose' behavior, he might then attempt to lead a movement to have all the dance halls in town closed down. The same process is at work in the collective mind of society, perceiving marginal groups as sexually deviant. For instance, the stereotype of the sexually abusive cult leader, routinely forcing devotees to satisfy his or her sexual whims, perfectly captures the fantasy of many members of our society who desire to have sexual control over any person they wish. We can generalize beyond Freudian psychology's

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[42] Ibid., 202-203.

emphasis on sex and aggression to see that many other cultural anxieties and cultural

contradictions are projected onto sects and cults. James Lewis observes:

> One of the more important cultural contradictions projected onto alternative
> religions is reflected in the brainwashing-mind control notion that is the core
> accusation leveled against such groups. Discourse that glorifies American society
> usually does so in terms of rhetoric of liberty and freedom. However, while
> holding liberty as an ideal, we experience a social environment that is often quite
> restrictive. Most citizens work as employees in highly disciplined jobs where the
> only real freedom is the freedom to quit. Also, we are daily bombarded by
> advertising designed to influence our decisions and even to create new needs.
> Our frustration with these forms of influence and control is easily displaced and
> projected onto separated societies of alternative religions, where seemingly (but
> often not actually) restricted flow of information offers a distorted reflection of
> the situation we experience as members of the dominant society.[43]

When a certain stereotype is adopted by society, all the information about sects and

cults is chosen and sorted by principle whether it fits or not into that stereotype. Unsuitable

information, for example, evidence that in cults you can find something good too, usually

passes away unnoticed or is completely ignored.

In conclusion, it is important to pose the question: why is the brainwashing idea so

appealing for Latvian society and elsewhere? Brainwashing theory serves the interests of

those espousing them in a number of ways:

- Parents can blame the religious groups and their leaders for volitional decisions by

    their sons and daughters to participate in such groups.

- Former members can blame the techniques for a decision which the participant later

    regrets. We all have a natural tendency to want to blame someone else. To be able to

    point an accusatory finger at the brainwashing, mind control techniques of a

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[43] Ibid., 204.

movement removes any element of self-blame from an ex-member who might now

wonder how they devoted so many years of their life to a movement.

- "Deprogrammers" can use brainwashing theories as justification for their new

   "profession" and as a quasi-legal defense if they are apprehended by legal authorities

   for their deprogramming, which often involve physical force and kidnapping.

- Societal leaders can blame the techniques for seducing society's "best and brightest"

   away from traditional cultural values and institutions.

- Leaders of competing religious groups, as well as some psychological and psychiatric

   clinicians, can attack the groups with brainwashing theories to underpin what are

   basically unfair-competition arguments.

Thus the claim that sects and cults engage in brainwashing becomes a powerful,

effective "social weapon" for many partisans in the cult controversy, who use such ideas to

label the exotic religious groups as deviant or even evil.

CHAPTER THREE: SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SECTS AND CULTS

In chapter two we discussed two main approaches to the evaluation of sects and cults, namely secular and theological approach. These two are very popular for Latvian society, the first one in particular. These approaches have many deficiencies: their lack an analysis of how and why sects and cults emerge; the relationship of sects and cults to the surrounding society and churches are not investigated; there is no explanation of why and what kind of people joins sects and cults. Since the subject of this paper addressees how sects and cults influence society in Latvia, we need a sociological view on the matter. My suggestion is to base this approach on social theory of religion worked out by sociologists Stark and Bainbridge. According this theory we will discuss three important questions:

- How and why sects and cults emerge (are formed)?

- Why and what kind of people become members of sects and cults?

- Are these members of sects and cults really "brainwashed"?

Of course, this sociological approach has its deficiencies, especially in view of theologians and jealous evangelicals. Eileen Barker says "the constructs of social science *exclude theological judgments*. The sociology of religion is concerned with who believes what under what circumstances, how beliefs become part of the cultural milieu and are used

to interpret people's experiences, and what consequences of holding particular beliefs may be; but it can neither deny nor confirm ideological beliefs."[1]

3.1 Stark-Bainbridge theory of religion

To understand how sects and cults emerge and are formed, an examination of Stark and Bainbridge's theory of religion[2] is quite helpful. This theory for its part is based on a theory of human action. One of the basic axioms in this theory is: Humans seek what they perceive to be rewards and avoid what they perceive to be costs. *Rewards* are anything humans will incur costs to obtain. *Costs* are whatever humans attempt to avoid. For example, in getting qualified for a new job, people will first calculate if consumed efforts will give desired rewards. We might say that subjectively rewards give pleasure while costs give pain.

Another axiom is as follows: Some desired rewards are limited in supply, including some that simply do not exist. A *limited* supply means that not everyone can have as much of a reward as they desire. Rewards that *do not exist* cannot be obtained by any person or group. For example, in some societies people don't have enough food, accordingly it is limited and not achievable for everyone. Life after death is a reward, the existence of which can not be proved. Therefore Stark and Bainbridge disbelieve in the life after death at all.

How do people get existing rewards? Desired rewards usually come through or from other people. In searching for all kind of rewards, people are forced into exchange relationships. When we seek a reward from someone else, that person must usually pay a cost

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[1] Eileen Barker, "The Scientific Study of Religion? You must be Joking!" 14.

for providing us with the reward. Thus, in order to induce another to supply us a reward we must offer an inducement – some other reward – in return.

People will not engage in these exchanges in an aimless way. They will tend to act rationally to maximize rewards and minimize costs. For example, commitment to religious organizations depends on the net balance of rewards and costs humans perceive they will experience from their participation. Thus, it follows that humans seek high exchange ratios. An *Exchange ratio* is a person's net rewards over costs in an exchange.

Through experience we know that rewards are not the same for everybody. Power, for example, is not equally divided between humans and groups in society. Accordingly, if a reward exists in limited supply, it will be monopolized by powerful persons and groups, thereby becoming relatively unavailable to others. Thus we can define *power* as the degree of control over one's exchange ratio.

Since humans cannot obtain many of the rewards, they usually accept explanations which posit attainment of the reward in the distant future. For example, if you will be smart and work hard some day you will be a millionaire. Explanations like that are called *compensators*. People experience a reward, but a compensator is believed by people. Thus a *compensator* is belief that reward will be obtained in the distant future or in some other context which cannot be immediately verified. Stark and Bainbridge do not use the term *compensator* in a pejorative sense. They are not saying that compensators are untrue. The first verse of *Genesis* states, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This may be absolutely true, but we cannot find it out anytime soon. It is this, and only this, aspect of such explanation that leads Stark and Bainbridge to identify them as compensators.

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[2] This section is based on Stark and Bainbridge, A *Theory of Religion*, 25-53.

In Stark and Bainbridge's system compensators fall along a continuum from the specific to the general. Specific compensators promise a specific, limited reward. The most general compensators promise a great area of rewards or rewards of vast scope. For example, when a shaman promises a person health through making certain rituals, this is a specific compensator. Vice versa, the promise of eternal life after this life full of sufferings is general compensator.

When basic principles of human action are made out we can turn to the concept of religion itself. The most general compensators can be supported only by supernatural explanations. *Supernatural* refers to forces beyond or outside nature which can alter, or ignore physical forces. *Religion* refers to system of general compensators based on supernatural assumptions. Thus Stark and Bainbridge define religion as "human organizations primarily engaged in providing general compensators based on supernatural assumptions."[3] But it should also be emphasized that religious organizations have the capacity to provide rewards. For example, through religious organizations one can gain leadership positions, human companionship, leisure and recreational activity, opportunities for marriage, and earn a living.

If we ask what people could gain from religion, we should understand that it depends on the *power* they have. *Power* is degree of control over one's exchange ratio. People with the gifts and resources who are in an exchange relationships will get more rewards than others. Because power means the ability to gain rewards, it is especially critical in the case of scarce rewards. It follows that the powerful ones tend to monopolize the rewards available from religion. Because the powerful ones are more able to gain rewards, they find less need

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[3] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 8.

for compensators. But this does not mean that the powerful do not have a need and do not use compensators at all. Some rewards are so scarce, even nonexistent, that even powerful ones will not be able to obtain them. Therefore, regardless of power, persons and groups tend to accept religious compensators when desired rewards do not exist.

Now we have discussed the main principles and definitions of Stark and Bainbridge's theory of religion. Building on this foundation we will discus how this theory explains the emergence and formation of sects and cults and how and why people join to them.

3.2 Emergence and formation of sects and cults

Neither the secular perspective of the ACM nor theological perspective of the CCM draw enough attention to the formation of sects and cults - why and how it comes about. Usually these approaches do not even try to distinguish sect from cult. The secular approach reduces everything to the idea of brainwashing or mind control, namely their dominate opinion that all sects and cults are deceitful *per se*. Anybody who joins a sect or cult is certainly brainwashed. The theological approach reduces everything to the devil's craft and fraud, namely, the devil himself is the author of every sect and cult. Everyone who belongs to any sect or cult is the devil's servant and is on his or her way to eternal perdition.

To properly understand the formation of sects and cults, we need another perspective, namely, sociological. This approach endeavors to analyze the interaction between sects and cults and churches, as well as sects and cults and surrounding society. As stated above, Stark and Bainbridge offer the following definitions of a church, sect, and cult: a *church* is a conventional religious organization; a *sect movement* is a deviant religious organization with

traditional beliefs and practices; a *cult movement* is a deviant religious organization with novel beliefs and practices.

In this section we will first discuss the formation stages of sects which are different from the formation of cults. After that we will analyze how and why cults are forming. We will also draw attention to the various stages of cults organization from very diffuse cults to strongly organized ones. These different organization stages of cults should be seriously considered since we want to understand how widely cults are spread in Latvia.

First, we will answer the question: Why and how do schismatic religious movements occur?[4] Stark and Bainbridge begin with discussing and analyzing the essentials of every group of people, namely, *social networks*. All organizations consist of social networks, which consist of the interpersonal relationships among members of organization. If we map the complete set of attachments within a group, we may find *cleavages* – lines of weak attachments between subnetworks that are internally strongly interconnected – persons being attached mainly to members of the same clique. Schisms in organizations are most likely to occur along lines of cleavage.

What are the sources of cleavage and conflict in a religious organization? To answer this question, it is necessary to refer back to the Stark and Bainbridge theory of religion dealt with in the previous section. In this section we analyzed what people can get out of religion and its dependency on power. Power is understood as a superior ability to win rewards in social exchanges based on all the talents and resources that allow some people to profit more

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[4] Following discussion is based on Stark and Bainbridge theory of religion. See, *A Theory of Religion*, 121-153; *The Future of Religion*, 99-125.

than others in social interactions. Because power means the ability to gain rewards, it is especially critical in the case of scarce rewards. From this follows three propositions:

- The power of an individual or a group will be *positively* associated with control of religious organizations and with gaining the rewards available from religious organizations.

- The power of an individual or group will be *negatively* associated with accepting religious compensators when desired reward exists.

- Regardless of power, persons and groups will tend to accept religious compensators when desired rewards do not exist.[5]

Thereby persons who have power get *worldly* rewards from a religious group. Persons, who do not have power or have it in less degree get *otherworldly* compensators from their religious organization.[6] Of course, there are also *universal* compensators which serve the needs of the powerful and powerless alike, for those intensely desired rewards that seem not to exist in the natural world.

These universal compensators unite both the powerful and weak ones one common religious organization. But the worldly rewards and otherworldly compensators of religion reflect the fact that members of religious organization do not have identical concerns. It means that a line of cleavage will exist between those who have power and those who have less power or lack of it. For example, people who lack a substantial share of some scarce reward will tend not to enjoy close relationships with those who possess this reward in abundance. Misery may love company, but it does not love company that heightens the sense of misery.

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[5] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 12.

[6] A joke often used in circles of Latvian Lutheran pastors: when somebody complains about small wages he can get an answer: "Don't worry, your wages are great in heaven!"

Stark and Bainbridge propose that religious movements can supply truly efficacious otherworldly compensators only if they are in a relatively high state of tension with the surrounding society. But such tension is contrary to the interests of more powerful members. "In any religious body, the less powerful will tend to prefer relatively higher tension with the external society. In any religious body, the more powerful will tend to prefer relatively lower tension with the external society."[7]

Usually these two fractions cannot peacefully coexist in one religious organization. Vice versa, the privileged ones will try to gain their end and do everything to defuse tension with the external society. While the more powerful members want to maintain a low level of tension or even reduce it, the less powerful prefer to increase the tension. Such situations unavoidably lead to a schism. Put another way, as religious movements reduce their tension and thus better serve the needs of their dominant members, support in favor of a sect movement grows. All that is needed then is leaders

Why will some people sacrifice their standing in a parent religious body in order to lead a schismatic sect movement? These new leaders are of the opinion that their motivation is theological, namely that they are trying return to the right doctrine from which church is fallen away. However, non-theological motivations also exist. For example, it is obviously more rewarding to be bishop of a large, reputable denomination than to be bishop of a small, deviant sect. But it may be more rewarding to be bishop of a sect than to be assistant pastor of a rural congregation of a large, reputable denomination.[8]

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[7] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Theory of Religion*, 143.

[8] In 1996 from LELC (Latvian Evangelic Lutheran Church) separated what is now Church of the Augsburg Confession. The formal reason was formulated as: The Gospel is not clearly preached in LELC. In my opinion, however, the real reason was that just mentioned in the main body of text.

In addition to internal forces, there are also external forces that may lead to a schism. For example, sect formation will be most frequent when the environment is most tolerant of religious diversity. To the extent that the environment punishes religious deviance, sect formation is curtailed. The history of Latvia shows that no environment is fully able to curtail the formation of sects and cults, no matter how hostile it is toward religious deviance.[9]

Another external force conducive for the formation of sects is economic depression. Economic depression can greatly increase the number of persons, longing for more active faith. Accordingly, sect formation is likely to increase at such a time. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the economic situation in Latvia changed radically. Only a small part of the society was capable of buying the things the market offered. Outside of Riga, the capital, economic depression dominates. Statistics of the registered religious organizations[10] demonstrate that during the fifteen years, various religious groups experience dynamic growth in Latvia.

In summary, an analysis of sect formation shows that all religious organizations contain internal contradictions that create cleavage and can ignite conflict. To the degree that members differ in power and privilege, they will tend to form subnetworks, with each having distinctive and conflicting religious needs. The more powerful will want to reduce tension; the less powerful will want to raise it or keep it high. No religious organization can

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[9] On persecutions of Jehovah's Witnesses in the times of the Soviet Union see: Nikandrs Gills, *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Social and Cultural Context of Contemporary Latvia* (A paper presented at CESNUR's 14th international conference, Riga, Latvia, August 29-31, 2000). About persecutions of Pentecostal churches in Latvia see: Valdis Teraudkalns, *The New Religiosity in Latvia of 20-th century: Pentecostal Movement* (Riga: N.I.M.S., 2003). About persecutions of Pentecostal churches in Russia see: Igor Jefimov, *Contemporary Charismatic Movement of Sectarianism* (Moscow: 1985), 32-56.

[10] See, Appendix 1.

simultaneously be in both low and high tension with its environment.[11] An analysis of the sources of sect formation leads to the conclusion that no single religious organization can offer the full range of religious services for which there is substantial market demand. "No one church can minister to the needs of everyone. This means that the natural state of the religious economy is pluralism."[12]

Now we will examine three models of Stark and Bainbridge cult formation.[13] These three models of cult formation, or religious innovation, are: (1) the psychopathology model, (2) the entrepreneur model, (3) the subculture-evolution model. Cult formation is a two-step process of innovation. First, new religious ideas must be *invented*. Second, they must be *socially accepted* by at least a small group of people. Therefore, we must first explain how and why individuals invent or discover new religious ideas.

Let us remember that according to the Stark and Bainbridge theory, religions are social enterprises whose primary purpose is to create, maintain, and exchange supernaturally based general compensators. When rewards are very scarce, or not available at all, humans create and exchange compensators – sets of beliefs and prescriptions for action that substitute for the immediate achievement of the desired reward. Cults also are social enterprises primarily engaged in the production and exchange of novel or exotic compensators. But how do novel compensators get invented?

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[11] At the turn of the century there was an idea in LELC to form a charismatic Lutheran parish and every Lutheran with charismatic tendencies and interests could join to it. The argument was: with such parish in LELC we will keep our Lutheran church from schism for we will serve to different spiritual needs of our people. Accordingly with Stark and Bainbridge theory it is impossible. By making subnetworks any religious organization just increases the emergence of new schismatic groups in its body.

[12] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 108.

[13] Ibid., 171-188.

The psychopathology model describes cult innovation as the result of individual psychopathology that finds successful social expression. The main ideas of this model are as follows:

- Cults are novel cultural responses to personal and societal crisis.

- New cults are invented by individuals suffering from certain forms of mental illness.

- These individuals typically achieve their novel visions during psychotic episodes.

- During such an episode, the individual invents a new package of compensators to meet his own needs.

- The individual's illness commits him to his new vision because his hallucinations appear to demonstrate its truth.

- After the episode, the individual will be most likely to succeed in forming a cult around his vision if the society contains many other persons suffering from problems similar to those originally faced by the cult founder.

- Therefore, such cults most often succeed during times of societal crisis, when large numbers of persons suffer from similar unresolved problems.

- If the cult does succeed in attracting many followers, the individual founder may achieve at least a partial cure of his illness because the self-generated compensators

are legitimated by other persons and because the founder now receives true rewards from his followers.[14]

This model is based on psychoanalytical viewpoint that religion is nothing more than delusions created by mentally sick individuals. That is, a mentally sick person has a mentally deviant way of thinking. Accordingly, in situations of crisis he or she will refuse traditional compensators and will seek for the new exotic ones. Stark and Bainbridge partly agree with this model though they point out two problems:

- It may be that some cult founders display symptoms of mental illness as a result of societal rejection of their cult, not because they were already ill.

- What about the vast majority of mental patients who have not founded cults?[15]

The entrepreneur model's general idea is: if social circumstances provide opportunities for profit in the field of cults, then many perfectly normal individuals will be attracted to the challenge. The chief ideas of such a model might be as follows:

- Cults are businesses which provide a product for their costumers and receive payment in return.

- Cults are mainly in the business of selling novel compensators, or at least freshly packaged compensators that appear new.

- Motivation to enter the cult business is stimulated by the perception that such business can be profitable, an impression likely to be acquired through prior involvement with a successful cult.

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[14] Ibid., 73-74.

[15] Ibid., 175.

- Ideas for completely new compensators can come from any cultural source or personal experience whatsoever, but the skillful entrepreneur experiments carefully in the development of new products and incorporates them permanently in his cult only if the market response is favorable.[16]

The simplest variant of the entrepreneur model, and the one preferred by journalists, holds that cult innovators are outright frauds who have no faith in their own product and sell it through trickery to fools and desperate persons.[17]

James R. Lewis agrees with this model in general, but criticizes it because "a prophet does not typically sit down in her or his drawing room and consciously develop a blueprint for a new religion in the same way an entrepreneur might develop a business plan for a new company. Instead, founders of many new religions begin prophetic careers in response to hierophanies – direct encounters with the sacred."[18] Hence any analysis that explicitly or implicitly portrays primary structuring impulses behind new religions as arising from the calculated decisions of the founder de facto denigrates religious experience by ignoring its role in the emergence of many new religions.

Sociology views cult as arising out of social forces, but does not consider religious experiences as independent motivating factors for the emergence of new cults. Stark and

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[16] Ibid., 178-179.

[17] In the Latvian press, for example, we can find references to the illegitimate obtaining of money by "New Generation." See, Aleksandrs Mahovskis, "Miesas nauda 'Jaunās paaudzes' kasei," *Vakara Avīze Vakara Ziņas* ["Money of Body for the New Generation Cash*," Evenings Newspaper: Evenings News*], March 11, 2003; Uģis Spandegs, "Sektas 'Jaunā paaudze' locekļi apkrāpj zemes īpašnieku," *Vakara Avīze Vakara Ziņas* ["Members of Sect New Generation Deceive Owner of the Land*, Evenings Newspaper: Evenings News*], February 6, 2001. To be frank, these publications do not say that the "New Generation" is selling a religion in which they themselves do not believe.

[18] James R Lewis, *Legitimating New Religions*, 29-30.

Bainbridge acknowledge that "by attempting to explain religious phenomena without reference to actions taken by the supernatural, we assume that religion is a purely human phenomenon, the causes of which are to be found entirely in the natural world."[19]

Thus, any simplistic deployment of this model is misleading. The majority of the founders of cults most likely do not create religious forms primarily with an eye to how well they will "sell" on the spiritual marketplace. Instead, religious forms typically emerge out of the consciousness of the founder for the purpose of expressing his religious experience and drawing other people into community to share his vision.

While psychopathology and entrepreneur models stress the role of the individual innovator, the *subculture-evolution model* emphasizes the group interaction processes. This model suggests that cults can emerge without authoritative leaders. The main ideas of this model are as follows:

- Cults are the expression of novel social systems, usually small in size but composed of at least a few intimately interacting individuals.

- These cultic social systems are most likely to emerge in populations already deeply involved in the occult milieu, but cult evolution may also begin in entirely secular settings.

- Cults are the result of sidetracked or failed collective attempts to obtain scarce or nonexistent rewards. Human action is always governed by the pursuit of rewards, and the avoidance of costs. If society fails to give individuals rewards, he or she will turn to cults.

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[19] Stark and Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*, 22-23.

- In working together to obtain these rewards, members begin exchanging other rewards as well, such as affect.

- If the intragroup exchange of rewards becomes sufficiently intense, the group will become relatively encapsulated, in the extreme case undergoing complete social isolation.

- The end point of successful cult evolution is a novel religious culture embodied in a distinct social group which must now cope with the problem of extracting resources (including new members) from surrounding environment.[20]

Everybody has problems. When a certain group of people comes together to solve their common problems the outcomes can be very different. Potentially it can be the forming of a new cult. It could have a place when people are trying to change themselves, as in psychotherapy, or they are trying to change their relations with external world. If their efforts are not successful or they do not get a reward, there is a strong possibility that they will form a new cult with elaborated compensators.

In that way there will emerge new cults, particularly in situations when a group of people is trying to find help for solving their unsolved personal problems. The broad field of psychotherapy, rehabilitation, and personal development has been especially fertile for cults. The best known residential program designed to treat drug addiction, Synanon, has recently evolved into an authoritarian cult movement that recruits persons who never suffered from drug problems.

Nonreligious groups can also evolve into religious cults. Furthermore it is not surprising that cults can also arise from the religious sects. An infamous example is the

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[20] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 183.

Peoples Temple of Jim Jones. This group began as an emotionally extreme but culturally traditional Christian sect. It then evolved into a cult as Jones progressively became a prophet with an ever more radical vision.

Stark and Bainbridge conclude: "Each of the three models identifies a system of production and exchange of compensators. In the psychopathology model, a cult founder creates compensators initially for his or her own use, then gives them to followers in return for rewards. In the entrepreneur model, the cult founder sets out to gain rewards by manufacturing compensators intended for sale to followers. The subculture-evolution model describes the interplay of many individual actions in which various persons at different times play the roles of producer and consumer of novel compensators."[21]

Three degrees of organization (or lack of organization) characterize cults.[22] The most diffuse and least organized kind is an *audience cult*. There are virtually no aspects of formal organization to different activities, and membership remains at most a consumer activity. Cult audiences often do not gather physically but consume cult doctrines entirely through magazines, books, newspapers, radio, and television. For example, from the end of 2004 to the present Latvian television has carried the live broadcast "Seit un tagad" ["Here and Now"]. Moderators in the TV studio answer calls from the audience about their different problems. In their answers the moderators use very different and even contradictory sources: Christianity, Hinduism, yoga, variations of psychotherapy schools, astrology, etc. If the persons who call this broadcast believe and follow to these answers, we already can count

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[21] Ibid., 187.

[22] Ibid., 26-30.

them as members of the audience cult.[23] Another example is from the Latvian Internet web. There is a broad spectrum of different Internet home pages in Latvian, simultaneously teaching dissonant opinions similarly to "Here and Now" TV program There are people who read these home pages, and some people believe what they read. These people probably never come together to attend some lectures, however they are united by these virtual cults.

More organized than audience cults are what can be characterized as *client cults*. Here the relationship between those promulgating cult doctrine and those partaking of it most closely resembles the relationship between therapist and patient or between consultant and client. Considerable organization may be found among those offering the cult service, but clients remain little organized. Indeed, client involvement is so partial that clients often retain an active commitment to another religious institution.[24]

Cult movements are full-fledged religious organizations that attempt to satisfy all the religious needs of converts. Dual membership with another faith is out. Nevertheless, cult movements differ considerably in the degree to which they attempt to mobilize their members. Many cult movements are very weak organizations. But some cult movements demand much more. They are a total way of life. They require members to dispense with their secular lives and devote themselves entirely to cult activities. Such members become

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[23] It is quite possible that many from the auditory receive it as original entertainment. This too fits to description of audience cults. It is also possible that group of people trying to change their situation to the right in the course of time will form a new cult according to *the subculture-evolution model*.

[24] I have noticed, that individuals from Lutheran church in Latvia in case of some problems and complication in their life use to visit salon of fortunetellers, arrange their energies at a representative of alternative healing, and visit healers or Latvian shamans. One example is the Center of Dianetics (Scientology) which is registered in Latvia as a civic organization. In this center, people are proposed to arrange their lives to become better fathers, mothers, businessmen, etc. People attending this center could be called customers who pay for service, not members of the group.

deployable agents. These agents completely obey the requirements of cult. Often the cult regulates everything in a person's life from severe conditions of work and hard job to free time activities.[25] Though as we will see in section "Affiliation with sects and cults," the very demand that every member of the cult becomes a deployable agent is a serious obstacle for the growth of a cult. In order to grow, a cult needs communication with external world through the members, through their relatives, friends, and neighbors. If members of the cult completely break with external world, connections with their families and friends are stopped and the cult loses its inflow of new members.

Compensators employed by the cults can also be used to characterize three types of cults. Audience cults offer compensators of modest value at a correspondingly modest cost, that is, audience cults deal with vague and weak compensators, often amounting to no more than a mild vicarious thrill or social entertainment. Client cults offer valuable, but relatively specific compensators. Psychoanalysis and Dianetics claim to cure neurosis, but they do not promise everlasting life. Astrologers offer specific advice, but they do not reveal the meaning of the universe. Only cult movements offer the most general compensators, the kind we have defined as available from religions.[26]

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[25] In the 1990s many Latvian people sold all their property to leave for the Krasnoyarska district in Siberia where they live under the guidance of self-proclaimed Messiah Visarion.

[26] From this point of view, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, the United Church of God etc. in Latvia are cult movements. People living in the community of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness can also be regarded as members of a cult movement.

3.3 Affiliation with sects and cults

For decades, scholars of the social sciences have undertaken research concerning how people are recruited into exotic and extraordinary religious groups. Speaking on the subject of formation of sects and cults these both should be strictly divided. When sect or cult already has its form and is developed, seems there are no obvious distinctions how they gain membership. Thereby though we will talk about cults, the same principles can be attributed to sects too.

Generally accepted assumption why people join to cults and sects is: when a person suffer deprivation, there are certain doctrine which attracts the person, draws him or her to some religious group and solves his or her problem of deprivation. Cults and sects have a tendency to recruit people who are harboring a grievance or suffering from abuse or hardship. Such hardships are not limited to economical problems, but include interpersonal problems with family and friends. Stark and Bainbridge point out that deprivation is variable. If the surrounding society is hostile toward every deviant group and in that way becomes costly to join it, the deprivation should be serious enough. The greater disadvantages and inconveniences required by a cult, the greater have to be deprivation and problems required by the recruit. If, however, the official churches in the society are weak and sects and cults are not disapproved, here is great possibility that people with less or even insignificant deprivation will see cults as attractive and will join to them.[27]

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[27] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 312.

This assumption of deprivation and the corresponding attractiveness of the group's doctrine is, however, deficient. For it does not answer why many who have suffered and even met a group with appropriate doctrine, nevertheless, did not join it. Nor does it explain why people are leaving churches where right and clear doctrine is taught.

Stark and Bainbridge advance a thesis, that social relations play an essential role in cult and sect recruitment.[28] If there are close relationships or interpersonal bonds between members of the cult and potential recruit, the possibility that potential recruit becomes member of the cult is much higher. In cases like this the potential member focuses on friendly relationship rather than on the doctrine of the group. Acceptation of doctrine and becoming a full-time cultist usually comes *after* a long period where day-to-day interactions with cult members take place. Rather than being drawn to the group because of the appeal of its doctrine, people are drawn to the doctrine because of their ties to the group. Thereby we can see at least one reason, why people are leaving churches where they formerly found attractive doctrine.

The research of Stark and Bainbridge also shows that recruiting new members into cults is going on through preexisting social networks. Accordingly, if the cult recruits people without any social bonds (lonely, without family and relatives), the cult is doomed to failure from the very beginning. On the other hand, if the cult can recruit people who form a part of large social network, the cult has great chance to expand within this network. This is a reason why one of the methods used by Mormons' missionaries is to address families walking on the streets and in parks, making contacts and then establishing friendly relationships with them. While confessional Lutherans in Latvia are of the opinion that the attractiveness of

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[28] Ibid., 307-324.

doctrine is the most important thing in missionary work, social scholars point out that interpersonal bonds should be primary.

By accepting the thesis about importance of social relationships we should not reject the thesis about the doctrinal attractiveness of cults for the person who is suffering deprivation as wrong. However, we can speak about the convergence of these two theses. Both relationships with other members, and attractiveness of doctrine that can answer a person's needs after deprivation are determinant factors into why people join a cult.

We have discussed answers given by Stark and Bainbridge theory as to why people are joining sects and cults. The next step is to find out who are the persons who join cult movements?[29] Stark and Bainbridge highlight the great role of social networks in the process of recruitment. This does not mean, however, that everybody who is connected to these social networks in some way will end up joining the cult. The popular opinion about people who join cults is that these are marginal, deprived, disturbed individuals. If it is true, cults have a remote chance of achieving success in society and are doomed to disappear. However, history shows that many of cults have grown up to the status of great religions of the world, and Christianity is one of them.

There are three important factors which could have an effect on whether a person joins a cult:

- the religious condition of the person
- his or her social circumstances (emphasizing gender and education)
- his or her mental health

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[29] Ibid., 394-424.

The discussion of mental health includes the highly charged debate concerning "brainwashing" and "deprogramming." Stark and Bainbridge posit: "Under present sociocultural conditions, cults can have great success recruiting persons who are fully normal in terms of almost any characteristic one wants to measure."[30]

A person with foothold religious status, namely, one who is a member of a strong and healthy church, is unlikely to join a cult. While a member of a more secularized church or person without any religious background can easy become a recruit. This idea comes from Stark and Bainbridge's main thesis about secularization[31] as "a self-limiting process that engenders revival (sect formation) and innovation (cult formation).[32] If secularization prompts cult formation, then the people who are most subjected to the impact of secularization are the ones who are most likely to form and to join cult movements. Accordingly, it is not true that the cults are deceiving our children and stealing them from us. Our children join sects and cults to fill needs created by us, either by raising them without religion or by raising them within highly secularized religious group.[33]

Sects are usually formed from people without social power (power in sense of the Stark and Bainbridge theory of religion), who in some way are "losers." There is internal tension in any religious organization between "lucky guys" who want to maximize the worldly dimension of the religion, and losers who want to maximize the dimension of

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[30] Ibid., 395.

[31] According to Webster term "secular" means "belonging to the world and worldly things as distinguished from the church and religious affairs." Secularization, then, means to become worldly. Modern writers use this term to mean the erosion of belief in the supernatural.

[32] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 430.

[33] This idea corresponds with opinion popular in evangelical circles, that "the cults are the unpaid bills of the church." See, Van Baalen, Jan Karel, *The Chaos of Cults: A Study of Present-day Isms*, forth ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 12.

otherworldliness. This is why the process of forming new sects is inevitable and endless. While sects are recruiting people with lack of power in this world, is it the same for cults?

To understand why people join cults, and what kind of social status they represent, we should investigate the consequences of secularization. When religions turn to worldliness or secularity, they disappoint the poor and instigate emergence of revival movements or sects. As secularization and sect formation takes place, the credibility of the religious tradition begins to erode. Religious people start to ask questions: Who has the truth? Does any group have the truth? There is a great risk that people disappointed by all this religious turmoil will join some new religion or cult. And these are the people who, like in the case of Mormons in USA of 19th century, are interested in ideas, who read a lot and who are discussing theological and social issues. New religions always incorporate new ideas. To become a competent member of the cult one should read a lot and be able to analyze. Revival movements of sects try to reanimate the good old and well-known religion, and thus attract the people with limited intellectual ability.

What are the reason well-educated middle class people join cults? Stark and Bainbridge tell us: "All persons, regardless of their power and privilege, are deprived of those intensely desired rewards that are not simply scarce, but that seem to be absolutely unavailable in this world."[34] So eternal life as reward, for example, can be granted only by religion. If liberal protestant churches reject the resurrection of the body and eternal life, people will search for a new, more effective faith, which will gratify them with hope of eternal life. Moreover, the most educated people know the faults and failures of the traditional church best of all,

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[34] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 406.

thereby they can better understand and evaluate new ideas and new cults. Thus, well educated people are often susceptible to joining cults.

An analysis of the social status of persons joining cults should consider another persuasive fact. The psychedelic (consciousness expanding) movement of the 1960s significantly contributed to the growth of many cults in 1970s. Drug abuse and cult participation often shares a common social element. Some cults recruit heavily from the sons and daughters of the middle class who are dropping out of conventional society, and, in many cases, drugs may have contributed to dropping out. Taking drugs may often be an act of defiance by somebody already in the process of dropping out. Another suggestion is the generally accepted opinion in the psychedelic movement that drugs expand one's consciousness, promote the discovery of a new vision, and develop a person's spirituality. From this point of view, taking drugs is something like religious revelation. One of the classic viewpoints of the psychedelic ideology is that thinking under influence of drugs is much more direct. It is an intuitive experience of internal reality. After the crash of the movement, however, many of its leaders rejected using drugs in favor of religious or philosophical concerns. Drug use moved away from an activity to expand consciousness and became an illegal entertainment of the youth subculture. Thus psychedelic movement was in some ways similar to a religious cult for it offered new visions, a new sense of life and sources of spiritual blessedness. It was quite natural, that many members of the movement later joined cults of 1970s.

Along with the recruitment of educated people and a contingent of the drug culture there is also a tendency to recruit women into cults. How is this explained? At first we should point out that in many societies women are still discriminated against in comparison with

men on the level of career and other public facilities. Women among the social elite can suffer significant deprivation and social isolation. No doubt, these factors induce women to join cults. One of the things attractive for women is the possibility of becoming a leader of the cult or even to be the founder of a new religious movement. Traditionally there are no leadership positions for women in the church. The ordination of women for the pastoral ministry, for example, is a relatively new phenomenon. While such movements as Salvation Army, Christian Science, Theosophy, and Spiritualism always offered high positions and important roles for women. The predomination of women, however, is not universal for all cults. Nevertheless, the cults with balance between men and women (for example, Mormons and Moonies) seem to be the most successful.

We have already discussed two factors effecting the recruitment of people into cults, namely, religious conditions, and social circumstances (emphasizing gender and education). Now we will turn to the mental health factor. People who hate cults or are afraid of them usually declare that cults practice deceit and use all kinds of mental control and brainwashing methods.[35] In other words, a person who joins a cult was and is made mentally sick.

Freud and his followers frequently suggested that all religion was mass delusion, a communal neurosis, or even shared psychosis.[36] Psychoanalysts call all religion neurotic. The 1987 edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association) has endorsed the position that cultic beliefs and lifestyles contribute to mental illness and are an obstacle to the development of a healthy personality. In this

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[35] For more details see section "Brainwashing controversy."

[36] Encyclopedia Britannica (CD 2000) defines "neurosis" as "mental disorder that causes a sense of distress and deficit in functioning"; "psychosis" as "any of several major mental illnesses that can cause delusions, hallucinations, serious defects in judgment and insight, defects in the thinking process, and the inability to objectively evaluate reality."

major work in psychiatric literature, leaders of cults are cited as examples of the paranoid personality.[37] Magical thinking and euphoric and ecstatic states are linked with immaturity and defective personality traits.[38]

Yet careful studies have failed to show any hint of mental illness on the part of active religious people when compared with others of similar social standing. For example, in his examination of the religious situation in USA, Harold Koenig concludes that religiosity involves even better mental health. More specifically he concludes:

- A large segment of the American population (as high as 20 to 40 percent) says that religion is one of the most important factors that enable them to cope with stressful life circumstances.

- The use of religion as a coping behavior is associated with higher self-esteem and less depression, particularly among persons who are physically disabled.

- Private religious activities, such as prayer and scripture reading, are associated with greater well-being, greater life satisfaction, less death anxiety, and lower rates of alcoholism and drug use.

- Interventions for depression and anxiety disorder that integrate religion with psychotherapy induce recovery quicker than secular techniques alone.[39]

The widespread negative estimation of cults is better understood if we see that it usually comes from ex-cult members, the majority of whom have been forced or pressured out of their newly found faith communities. How reliable is this kind of testimony? First we should point out the fact that every organization, church, cult, political party, club etc. usually attract people whose mental health is far from ideal. Indeed, a lot of neurotics could join a

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[37] DSM-III-R, 338.

[38] Ibid., 401.

[39] Harold G. Koenig, *Is Religion Good for Your Health?* (New York: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 1997), 101-102.

cult in hope of solving their problems with personal relationship. Since a neurotic person is not able to stay in contact for a long time and very soon discovers that he or she is not holding the stage as at the beginning, he or she leaves the cult and continues to search for help somewhere else. Similarly we cannot judge a cults' negative effect on a person's mental health from the few cases in which therapeutic help was needed. Second, ex-member should convince relatives that joining in a cult was involuntary and it will never happen again. The idea of brainwashing nicely solves both of the problems.

This section deals with the crucial factor in recruitment, that is to say, the formation of close social relationships with members of the cult. We mentioned also peripheral factors such as preexisting deprivations and emotional problems. In that way the idea of brainwashing becomes unnecessary and unreasonable, unless one's intention is not to make war against cults.

The idea that cults are attractive just for inferior, desperate, and aberrant persons is very useful for answering many vexed questions. From such a viewpoint the world can justly despise cults. Then there is no reason to give them freedom to preach and teach and to recruit new members. The reality, however, is quite different. Well-educated persons are leaving traditional churches and sects, and joining in cults, for they are frustrated by the endless mutual quarrels and cannot find answers on their existential questions within traditional Christianity.

This third chapter offers a theoretical background for the paper. It is based on the Stark and Bainbridge theory of religion. Why did I choose particularly this theory? First, as far as I know, to date there is no other sociological theory of religion which is as comprehensive as that of Stark and Bainbridge in analyzing the phenomena of both sects and cults.

Second, this theory complies with the subject introduced by this paper. Namely, we are discussing different kind of perspectives on the sect and cult phenomena in the Latvian society. While the secular perspective of the ACM and theological view of the CCM are more or less recognized in Latvia, the sociological perspective of Stark and Bainbridge theory is not known even in the circles of Latvian sociologists (at least as I can judge from the publications). One of the purposes of this paper is to inform our society about such perspective.

Third, this sociological approach could be helpful for many members of our society to dispose of stereotypes and preconception about sects and cults. Both, in Christian as well as in non-Christian circles an unproved opinion dominates that only freaky people, losers, or brainwashed persons join in sects and cults, thereby it is better do not have any contacts with them, for they could be dangerous. Stark and Bainbridge theory rejects this sort of presumption.

Fourth, the Stark and Bainbridge theory analyzes the phenomena of sects and cults in the broader context of the society. It offers answers to important questions. How and why do sect and cult movement emerges? What kind of people joins them? How do relationships between sects and cults from one side and church and society from the other develop? These questions are not even asked by the secular or theological perspective.

CHAPTER FOUR: LATVIAN SOCIETY'S RESPONSE TO SECTS AND CULTS

Chapter four continues with an analysis of how Latvian society and traditional churches respond to sects and cults. This analysis will be based on the Stark and Bainbridge theory of religion, where the aspect of "the secularization process" is especially kept in mind. By this analysis we will see, that processes of the sect and cult phenomena in Latvia can be best explained in light of Stark and Bainbridge theory. Everybody knows that there are sects and cults in Latvia, but we have no clear answer for how to explain this phenomena. Likewise, Latvian society does not know exactly what to do, if anything, with such phenomena. The Stark and Bainbridge theory also provides an answer for this question.

First we will analyze how mass media and society respond to the emergence and development of sects and cults. We will draw particular attention to the question of why do we have such kind of a reaction. Next, the official state attitude toward churches, sects and cults will be analyzed. The chapter then concludes with a proposal for what churches should do in the society where the presence of sects and cults is unavoidable.

Eileen Barker writes: "The flow of new religious movements into the erstwhile socialist countries gives rise to two points of interest… First, there is the growth of anti-cult activities, largely dependent on the anti-cult organizations in the West for their material. Secondly, and potentially more interesting, there is the interplay between the new religions

and the national Churches and the polity in each of the societies."[1] In chapter four we will also see how the Anti-Cult (ACM) perspective (created by the mass media) has exerted a strong influence on Latvian society. Likewise an analysis of the interaction between traditional churches on the one hand, and sects and cults on the other, will be given in this chapter.

4.1 Mass media and society's response

Valdis Teraudkalns in his analysis how activities of neo-Pentecostals are reflected through mass media says:

> The mass media exaggerates the social danger of neo-Pentecostals, for none of the religious groups are free of transgressions and extremes. The attitude of the mass media is dictated by all media inclination to show rather shocking things; orientation on the "middle" general reader, who wants texts easy to perceive; and by ignorance of many journalists in religious matters…Anxiety of mass media and institutions of state security about neo-Pentecostals engage in policy is rather hypocrisy. Many social as well as religious groups are looking for a lobby to attain their own objective. Neo-Pentecostals differ from other religious groups by their directness and more explicit populism in political activities. Yet by keeping in mind that bombastic ideological statements can also be heard from the podium of Saeima, neo-Pentecostals should not be viewed apart from

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[1] Eileen Barker, "Whatever Next? The Future of New Religious Movements," in *Religions sans frontières?* 372.

the political environment, where manipulation with facts and demagogy often dominates.[2]

This quote is a good reflection of internal problems, which are the reason why the mass media is absolutely unable to give objective analysis of sects and cults. The mass media is inclined to show shocking, scandalous things, rather then the "peaceful," "everyday" aspects in the lives of sect and cults members. The mass media uses the ACM perspective, for this one, in contradistinction to the theological perspective, doesn't deal with theology and doesn't have a wish to convert anybody into traditional Christianity. They are oriented toward the middle, general reader, who prefers thinking in simple "black vs. white" categories rather than complicated schemas. The great majority of journalists in Latvia is rather ignorant in religious matters. Religion does not fit easily into the dominant world-view of most contemporary journalists who are often ill prepared to deal with religion, being indifferent, or occasionally, actively hostile. Considering that the mass media shapes the image of sects and cults and that this image is very defective, we can imagine how far Latvian society is from a real understanding of the sects' and cults' phenomena. Valdis Teraudkalns' quote points out another problem in Latvian society which is still waiting a solution. This is the problem of the separation between the state and the church, and growing

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[2] V. Tēraudkalns, Jaunā reliģiozitāte 20.gs. Latvijā: Vasarsvētku kustība [*The New Religiosity in Latvia of 20th Century: Pentecostal Movement*], 205, "Masu mediji neopentakostu sociālo kaitīgumu pārspīlē, jo no likumpārkāpumiem vai galējībām nav pasargāta neviena reliģiskā grupa. Masu mediju attieksme saistīta ar medijiem raksturīgo tiekšanos pēc skandalozā atspoguļošanas, apzinātas orientācijas uz "vidējo" masu lasītāju, kas vēlas ātri un viegli uztveramu tekstu, un daudzu žurnālistu neizglītotību reliģiskos jautājumos….Masu mediju un valsts drošības iestāžu bažas par neopentakostu iesaisti politikā ir liekulīgas. Lobijus savu mērķu īstenošanai meklē daudzas sociālas, kā arī reliģiskas grupas. Neopentakosti atšķiras no citām reliģiskām grupām ar savu tiešumu un izteiktātu populismu politiskajā darbībā. Bet, ievērojot, ka plakātiski ideoloģizēti izteikumi izskan arī no saeimas tribīnes, neopentakostismu nevajadzētu aplūkot atrauti no politiskās vides, kur bieži valda manipulēšana ar faktiem un demagoģija."

practice of church, sects, and cults members engaging in the political life of the state. The mass media pays especial attention to such cases. For example, during last local elections (March 12, 2005) on the Latvian web, everybody could catch a video,[3] where a candidate on Riga's mayoralty, Juris Lujans (a member of the church "Prieka Vests" [Joyful News]) visited a meeting of the Pentecostal church "New Generation." The material is completely shaped to make the audience understand how wrong it is, if sects want political power, and how wrong it is, that some of our state's deputies are sectarians! Is not the church in our country separated from the state? We will talk later about the separation between church and state. Lutheran pastor Viesturs Pirro has captured the understanding of Latvian society about separation between the church and the state: "The church was actively engaged in the restoration of the independence of our country: our pastors opened church-buildings for meetings, participated into demonstrations, addressed the nation in the time of trial. It seemed, that Church will get back its place in the state and society, which was taken away during years of occupation. But in 1988 the 7th Saeima wrote in the Constitution, paragraph 99: 'The Church is separated from the State.' One part of the society it comprehended as: 'go back behind the walls!'"[4] In other words, the mass media and the society are critical not only about "sectarians" engaging in politics, but also about participation by members of traditional churches.

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[3] Video: "Kas raujas pie varas? Latvijas Pirmās partijas dažādās sejas" ["Who Pulls to the Power: Different Faces of the Latvian First Party], www.tvnet.lv, (accessed, 17.03.2005).

[4] Viesturs Pirro, "Ko kristieši meklē politikā?" *Svētdienas Rīts* ["What Christians Seek in Politics?" *Sunday's Morning*], March 12, 2005, "Baznīca aktīvi darbojās valsts neatkarības atgūšanā – mūsu mācītāji atvēra dievnamus sapulcēm, piedalījās mītiņos, uzrunāja tautu pārbaudījuma laikā. Likās, ka Baznīca atgūs padomju okupācijas gados zaudēto vietu valstī un sabiedrībā. Taču 1988. gadā 7. saeima Satversmes 99. pantā ierakstīja: 'Baznīca ir atdalīta no valsts.' Daļa sabiedrības to saprata kā 'atpakaļ mūros!'"

Why is the attitude of society and mass media toward sects and cults negative or neutral?[5] Here we could find more than one answer. First, militant atheism still dominates in Latvian society as a heritage from the times of Soviet Union. The characteristic of atheism is not only to deny God's existence, but also to attack God. Atheism is not merely neutral toward religion. Rather, it is aggressive and militant against every external religious activity. Accordingly, not only sects and cults, but also every traditional church falls under atheisms disgrace.

Second, Latvian society is secular; its values are based on ideas of humanism as these are declared in II and III Manifesto of humanists. Some of the ideas we can found in Manifesto are as follows:

- Traditional theism is an unproven and outmoded faith.

- Traditional religions are surely obstacles to human progress.

- Salvationism still appears as harmful, diverting people with false hopes of heaven hereafter. Reasonable minds look to other means of survival.

- Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis.

- Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change. Humanists recognize nature as self-existing.

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[5] Actively negative attitude toward sects and cults can be also a testimony, that Latvian society is jealous in the matter of religion. Philip Jenkins to puts it in the words: "Cult panics are an effective barometer of religious commitment and inquiry in a particular society; we might even argue that the more intense the panic, the greater the vigor. It is the society that lacks cults and cult panics that has most to fear about the state of its religious life." See, in *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History*, 239.

- Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience. In contrary to the will of God, expressed in Commandments, these ethical values of humanists are autonomous and situational, namely, they come from the human being and therefore are subject of endless changes depending from different situations in human's life, different cultures and ages.

- Every human has right to birth control, abortion, divorce, euthanasia, and the right to suicide.

- The separation of church and state is imperative.[6]

These are only a few of humanists' ideas. It seems that everybody in Latvia is familiar with these ideas and for many inhabitants of Latvia it is integral part of their life's philosophy. The attitude of humanists toward religion is in some respect ambiguous and inconsistent. On the one hand humanism asserts pluralism of religions, namely, everybody can believe in what and whom ever he or she likes. On the other hand, however, humanism regards religion as an obstacle for the progress of mankind. Even more, by its autonomous and situational ethics, humanism is defiant of Christianity and causes tension between secular society and religion.

Third, in the circles of academia (for example, sociologists of religion), where ideas of secular humanism are dominant, and the mainstream opinion for the last decades is an idea that religion as phenomena must die and disappear from the stage of history.

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[6] See, Humanist Manifesto II and III, www.americanhumanist.org/ (accessed March 10,

Wallace Anthony, for example, says about future of religion:

> …the evolutionary future of religion is extinction. Belief in supernatural beings and in supernatural forces that affect nature without obeying nature's laws will erode and become only an interesting historical memory. To be sure, this event is not likely to occur in the next generation; the process will very likely take several hundred years, and there will probably always remain individuals, or even occasional small cult groups, who respond to hallucination, trance, and obsession with supernaturalist interpretation. But as a cultural trait, belief in supernatural powers is doomed to die out, all over the world, as a result of the increasing adequacy and diffusion of scientific knowledge and of the realization by the secular faiths that supernatural belief is not necessary to the effective use of ritual. The question of whether such a denouncement will be good or bad for humanity is irrelevant to the prediction; the process is inevitable.[7]

Of course, Wallace admits that the dying process of religion can take few centuries, but "the process is inevitable." Secularization will take over all spheres of human life and there will not be place for religion. Since emergence of sects and cults still increase in Latvia and elsewhere, it appears that this theory of general secularization maintained by professors of many universities is simply wrong. Peter L. Berger, professor of sociology confesses that he too was of the opinion that we are living in secular world, where religion will soon die.[8] He points out, that "secularization theory" comes from the books of 1950s – 70s,[9] but the very idea was already from the age of enlightenment. The schema is very simple: the modernization of the society, owing to the development of sciences and different technologies, inevitably will edge out religion and the society accordingly becomes secular.

2005).

[7] Anthony Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological View*, 265.

[8] Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, 2.

[9] For example, see: Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967); David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979); Bryan Wilson, *Religion in a Sociological Perspective* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982).

The idea of secularization in of itself is neither good nor bad. Most of progressively thinking people regard general secularization of the society as positive process, by which society will be set free from the superstition of religions, false hope about heaven, and neuroses. Religious people, in their turn, including members of traditional churches regard the secularization process as negative.

Both Peter Berger, and Stark and Bainbridge point out that secularization is a process always accompanied by the opposite process of emerging new sects and cults or some other process of desecularization. Any hope for the future without any religion is a fantasy. Accordingly to the Stark and Bainbridge theory, supernatural assumptions are the only plausible source for many rewards that humans seem to desire intensely. "Only the gods can assure us that suffering in this life will be compensated in the next. Indeed, only the gods can offer a next life – an escape from individual extinction. Only the gods can formulate a coherent plan for life – that is, make meaningful in a fully human way the existence of the natural world of our senses."[10]

Peter Berger, however, also mentions exceptions to the desecularization thesis. On the one hand, the whole world is very religious and nothing gives proof about some global secularization. On the other hand, however, there are exceptions. First, it is Europe, the states of the former Soviet Union, and previous communistic states of Eastern Europe. Little research exists concerning Latvia and other former republics of the Soviet Union.

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[10] Stark and Bainbridge, "Secularization and Cult Formation in the Jazz Age," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1981, 20 (4), p.361.

In Europe, however, it may be said with assurance that church attendance is dramatically decreasing and those churchly norms in issues like sexuality, reproduction, and marriage are disregarded and denied. The situation in Europe is completely different from that in America. Sociologists of religion are very preoccupied with the question of why Americans are more religious and churchly than Europeans.

Another exception to the desecularization thesis is the international subculture which is composed of persons who have received a western education, especially in the humanities and social sciences. This subculture is really secular. Though these people are not many, they have a great influence on the Western system of education and on the mass communication. It is this academic elite in particular which sets the "official" definition of reality.[11]

Concerning Europe, sociologist Grace Davie expresses the thought that Europe is rather *differently* religious, than *less* religious. He refers to the 1981 and 1990 findings of the European Values System Study Group and makes following conclusion: "While many Europeans have ceased to participate in religious institutions, they have not yet abandoned many of their deep-seated religious inclinations."[12] He names it "believing without participating." Peter L. Berger emphasizes the same idea: "A shift in the institutional location of religion, rather than secularization, would be a more accurate description of the European situation."[13]

The thesis of secularization, worked out in Europe, was regarded as framework for the religiosity of the whole world to follow. Namely, what Europe does today, the whole world will do tomorrow. The situation in America, however, where conservative religious groups

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[11] Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World*, 9-11.

[12] Ibid., 68.

[13] Ibid., 10.

have experienced an increase for the last century, clearly shows that the religiosity of Europe is not an export model at all. Quite opposite, religiosity of Europe is something very specific, appropriate just for this particular corner of the world.[14]

Is Europe really secular? It depends on how one understands secularization:

- secularization as differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions
- secularization as decline of religious beliefs and practices
- secularization as marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere.

The essence of the secularization theory is *secularization as differentiation*, namely, liberation and differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions is the main tendency in European structures. Though it does not mean that modernity necessarily implies a reduction in the level of religious belief or practice, nor does it imply that religion is necessarily relegated to the private sphere.

These sects and cults place Europe face to face with a new challenge and task, concludes Grace Davie. The task, thereby, is a society where religious pluralism and freedom of religion dominates. It is not enough any more to permit an individualized live-and-let-live philosophy. This new society must now take into account a person, who takes religion very seriously and will not let others live in peace and quiet.

In summary, society's negative and/or neutral reaction against sects and cults is based on the nature of sects and cults, ideological presuppositions (atheism, humanism), secularization myth, and violence cases in sects and cults.

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[14] Ibid., 66-76.

4.2 Legislation on sects and cults in Latvia

At the beginning of this chapter we will discus the question: How many "traditional

churches" do we have in Latvia? This question serves as a good introduction for analyzing

the legislation of Latvian state towards sects and cults. Reinhard Slenczka[15] precisely points

out that there is not one dominant traditional church in Latvia. He specifies that two borders

goes across Latvia. One of them divides between Western and Eastern Christianity. Another

divides between Catholicism of the Southern Europe and Protestantism of the Northern

Europe.[16] Reinhard Slenzcka also mentions the so-called traditional churches of Latvia,

namely Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Old believers, Baptists.[17] The situation is not

so simple, however, for in various documents the number of traditional churches differs, and

there is still no agreement. No official documents use the term "traditional church." The only

thing we can find is a variety of "confessions" with different kinds of privileges in different

contexts.

The Law on Religious Organizations (26.09.1995) is the main law regulating

relationships between the state and different religions. This law deals only with "religious

confessions" defined as "directions of the world religions, having their own confession of

faith, teaching, dogmatic, as well as traditions of cult" (paragraph 1.2). Paragraph 6.3 of this

law says, that "teaching of the Christian faith is taught accordingly to the program, certified

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[15] Dr. Slenzcka is the rector of the Luther Academy in Riga, Latvia. Luther Academy is the seminary of Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church (LELC).

[16] Reinhard Slenczka, "Traditionelle und nichtraditionelle religiose Organisationen," 283.

[17] Ibid., 284.

by the Ministry of Education and Science, and it is done by pedagogues of Evangelical
Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Old believers, or Baptists confessions,[18] if there are at
least 10 pupils at school, wanting to acquire teaching of the respective Christian confession."
While the paragraph 8.4 declares: "parishes of the confessions and religions, starting their
activity for the first time in Republic of Latvia and which are not part of the religious unions
(churches) already registered by state, must reregister in The Department of Religious
Matters[19] every year for the next ten years." Just one conclusion: The Law on Religious
Organizations does not mention both the term "traditional churches" or terms "sect" and
"cult." Paragraph 8.4 requires that new "confessions and religions" should re-register every
year. They have also no privilege to teach in the state schools.

The Law on Religious Organizations does not permit simultaneous registration of more
than one religious association (church) in a single confession, and therefore, the Government
does not register any splinter groups (paragraph 7.3). This has resulted in the denial of
registration applications of several groups, including an independent Jewish congregation,

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[18] But International Religious Freedom Report 2004, released by the Bureau of Democracy,
Human Rights, and Labor, funnily enough mentions possibility also to teach Judaism in state
schools.

[19] The Department of Religious Matters (hereafter, DRM), according "The Law on Religious
Organizations," paragraph 5.1, and Regulation Nr. 321 of Cabinet of Ministers, September
19, 2000, "The Regulation of The Department of Religious Matter", paragraph 1, is public
institution of administration under supervision of Ministry of Justice, with task to ensure
realization of the state policy and coordination in religious matters within competence
declared by rules and other normative acts; manages issues dealing with relationships
between the state and religious organizations; follows efficiency of state's legal control over
practicing of religion; and suggests efforts for prevention of violation of human rights in the
area of religion, warranted by Constitution of Republic of Latvia and international
agreements.

the Latvian Free Orthodox Church, Lutherans of Augsburg Confession, and a separate Old

Believers group.[20]

Another official document: "Regulations of the Chaplain Service," declares, that as

chaplains can serve Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Old believers, Methodists,

Baptists, Adventists, Judaists, and Pentecostals. As we can see, nine confessions are

mentioned here.[21] "The Conceptual Report about the Current Situation of Relations Between

the State and Church in Republic of Latvia"[22] lists all these confessions except Pentecostals,

as having rights, delegated by the state, to register marriage. This official paper also does not

use the term "traditional churches." Though we can see that eight confessions have the

privilege to officially register a marriage. Surprisingly, the official report of The Department

of Religious Matters (2003) reports that religious union, "Latvijas Dievturu sadraudze"

["Friendship of Latvian God-keepers"] in their statement of activities in year 2002 declare

four allies of marriage, although they have not such rights.

There is also The Traditional Religion Council established in Latvia. This council aims

at facilitating greater ecumenical communication, discussing matters of common concern and

improving dialogue between the traditional faiths and the Government. In the past, the

council has convened monthly, but it is now being replaced by a new organization called the

Ecclesiastical Council. This new council was organized by the previous Prime Minister in

2002 and is chaired by either the sitting Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister. It

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[20] Lutherans of Augsburg Confession, for example, split from the LELC, still struggle for abolition of this paragraph, for it denies them such priorities as teaching in state schools and official registration of marriage. See, Felix Corley, "Latvia: New Hope to Change Religion Law?" *Forum 18 News Service*, September 17, 2003.

[21] "Regulations of the Chaplain Service," July 2, 2002.

[22] Author Ringolds Balodis. Accepted at the session of Cabinet of Ministers, September 28, 1999.

includes eight representatives from the major churches: Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Orthodox, Jewish, Adventist, Methodist, and Old Believers.

In June 8, 2004, contracts were signed among Lutherans, Orthodox, Old believers, Baptists, Adventists, and Methodists on the one hand, and Cabinet of Ministers represented by Ainars Slesers on the other. These contracts, whose juridical status is still uncertain, was the first attempt to regulate relationships between the state and so called traditional churches. As we can see, the contract is not concluded with the Union of Pentecostal Churches.

This brief analysis of the official documents shows that there are no traditional churches in Latvia, rather there are a variety of confessions with different kinds of privileges.[23] Sects and cults, which are newcomers in Latvia, have no such privileges and for ten years they must re-register every year.

In April 10, 2001, by the order Nr.1/7-234 of Ringolds Balodis (chief of the Department of Religious Matters), The New Religions Consultative Council was established. Its purposes were as follows:

- To gather information about activities of religious movements in Latvia and recognize conformity to international legislations and rules of the Republic of Latvia.

- Study of registered, reregistered, as well as unregistered new religious movements, analysis of teaching of sects and cults, and conformity of activities to international legislation and of the Republic of Latvia.

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[23] In November 27, 1997, 6th Saeima in The Law on Religious Organizations tried to formulate traditional confessions of Latvia. There was discussion whether besides with Lutherans, Catholics, Orthodox, Old believers, Baptists, and Judaists should be mentioned also Methodists and Adventists. The problem with traditional churches was not solved.

- To inform society on the subject of activities of new religious movements, sects and cults, if it is in conflict with laws, morality and morals of the society.

The council includes representatives from the institutions of state and municipalities, from law enforcement institutions, from educational, cultural, and social spheres, academics, and theologians, invited by DRM. It meets on an "ad hoc" basis and offers opinions on specific issues, but it does not have decision-making authority. The attitude toward sects and cults from several members of the council does not show a good awareness at all. Rather, in the activities of this council we can see secular the perspective of the ACM, namely, all sects and cults are dangerous, deceitful, and dealing with brainwashing. Valdis Teraudkalns, for example, says:

> A fear from what is Different in sharpen way express also some of them, which activities are directed to the analysis of religious life. For example, Inta Bieza, member of New Religions Consultative Council, deputed from The Center of Riga for Protection Children Rights, in an interview talked about invasion of sects, and for that reason "all kind of evil in the world now comes down on Latvia." Such kind of simplification, rather fitting in arrangement of some exaltation stimulating group, is not excusable for the person, who pretends to be an expert. If to see dynamics of development of new religious tendencies in the world and also in Latvia, existing of such investigation structure is very welcome. Unfortunately unreasoned statements like this make the council itself to nice subject of sect investigation.[24]

In the previous section it was mentioned that church is separated from the state in Latvia. It was also mentioned that the mass media sometimes interprets this to mean that members of churches and sects are prohibited from engaging in policy. How than should on understand paragraph 99 of the Constitution of Latvia:

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[24] Valdis Teraudkalns, www.politika.lv (accessed August 12, 2003).

"Everybody has rights of freedom of thought, consciousness, and religious confidence. The Church is separated from the State"?[25]

First, there is no one monopoly-church in Latvia. Accordingly, the state does not favor just one church. There are no particular privileges just for one church. For Latvian society and in Christian circles this would be a more acceptable and comprehensible idea. Thus, church separation from the state actually means religious pluralism and freedom warranted by state of Latvia.

Second, church separation from the state does not mean that the state must be free from religious impact. This idea is met with mistrust in mass media. Dr. Edgars Jansons (habil. chem.) expounds: "The Constitution declares separation between church and state. Sadly state officials, including the president and even political parties do not pray for Gods blessing for their activities in secret, but on the public worships."[26] Does separation between church and state really mean, that for state officials participation in any public service, what so ever confession, is forbidden? If so, it would be the elimination of religious freedom for these people.

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[25] Let us see, that term "church" is used. Should it be understood as "traditional churches in Latvia"? As the previous discussion shows, there's no knowing how much they are. Should sects and cults also include in the term "church"? Or maybe "church" must be understood as "religion" at the broader sense, as sociologists of religion understand it. For example, according to the Stark and Baibridge theory: a church is a conventional religious organization. As author of the paper, I cling to the last of definitions.

[26] Edgars Jansons, "Baznīca un ticība valsts skolās un skolēnos," *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* ["The church and faith at state schools and in schoolchildren," *Independent Morning Paper*], June 9, 2004, "Satversme noteic, ka valsts un baznīca ir šķirtas. Diemžēl valsts amatpersonas, arī prezidente un pat politiskas partijas, nelūdz Dieva svētību savai darbībai klusībā, bet gan publiskos dievkalpojumos." See also, Ritums Rozenbergs, Uldis Dreiblats, "Ekonomikas ministra kandidāts – sektants," *Neatkarīgā Rīta avīze* ["Candidate on Minister of Economics – an Sectarian," *Independent Morning Paper*], November 7, 2002, where the candidate on ministry is criticized because of being member of the sect "Joyful News."

Third, the separation between church and state does not mean that society must be secular, or that the only legitimate ideology is secular humanism. Discussions about the teaching of Christianity in state schools show that the separation is misunderstood, for it is argued, that teaching of religion must not be allowed at school. This approach discriminates against those Christian parents whose children attend completely secular schools. Did anybody ask Christian parent for permission to teach their children only ideas of secular humanism? Secular humanism is a definite worldview, rejecting the legitimacy of religion as such. Secular humanism is not neutral toward Christianity rather it is negative.[27]

Fourth, the total separation between church and state is impossible. Nobody can forbid a politician, who is member of some sect, to follow his or her religious convictions at work. Nobody can forbid a member of some church or even pastor engage in policy and accordingly, express his or her Christian convictions. If the church is completely separated from state, it would be nothing more than a club of pious people, concerned just about their own internal problems. If state is completely separated from church, it becomes totally secular and in some respect pseudo-religious.

Fifth, "the state and religious organizations are separated institutionally. State does not interfere in affairs of religious organizations and does not perform their functions: celebrate religious rites, administer Sacraments, appoint the clergy,

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[27] It is noteworthy that the conservative Christians in USA, in discussions with secular state equal secular humanism to religion. They allege some rulings of the Federal and Supreme Court, which equal humanism to religion. See, James McBride, "There is no Separation of God and State: The Christian New Right Perspective on Religion and the First Amendment,"

regulate the internal life of the church, etc. Religious organizations, for their part, don't pass laws, don't realize political activities, don't appoint to or to suspend from the state officials and/or civil services, and don't adjure them."[28]

Sixth, separation between church and state is necessary to build bridges, not walls. For a great part of the Latvian society, this principle of separation is understood as a wall, once and for all separating our secular society from the rests of religion. Thus all support from the state to the any kind of religious activities will be received with emotional criticism. This separation is necessary, however, for clear collaboration between the state and church could develop.[29] As an example of bridge building we can note contracts, concluded between the state and some of confessions.

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in *Cults, Culture, and the Law: Perspectives on New Religious Movements*, eds. Thomas Robbins, William C. Shepherd (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985), 216-219.

[28] Agita Misāne, "Prāts un jūtīgums," *Diena* ["Mind and sensitiveness," *Day*], July 15, 2004, "Valsts un reliģiskās organizācijas ir šķirtas institucionāli. Tās neko nedara cita citas vietā. Valsts neiejaucas reliģisko organizāciju reliģiskajā darbībā un neveic to funkcijas: nenotur reliģiskus rituālus, nepārvalda sakramentus, neieceļ amatos garīdzniekus, neregulē draudžu iekšējo dzīvi u.c. Reliģiskās organizācijas savukārt nepieņem likumus, neveic politisku darbību, neieceļ un neatstādina valsts amatpersonas un ierēdņus/-es un nenozvērina tos."

[29] In USA originally this separation was seen as state's warranty to the pluralism and freedom of religions, that state would support all religions alike. Though after depression of 1920[ies] situation is changed. Now it is pointed out, that state does not support any religion. Therefore, if at the beginning separation was necessary for cooperation, now it is for building walls. See, James McBride, "There is no Separation of God and State: The Christian New Right Perspective on Religion and the First Amendment," 205-211.

4.3 Traditional churches' response

What kinds of attitude have traditional churches displayed toward sects and cults? The Latvian Orthodox Church in November 10, 1997, at the council of clergy and laymen, passed a resolution "Attiecībā uz jaundibinātajām un Latvijā ienākušām sektām" ["Concerning new-founded and newcomer sects in Latvia"]. The resolution was formulated as follows:

> To all faithful members of the Church, for they do not come under the interdict of the canons of the Holy Apostles, Holy Councils and Holy Fathers, never participate in common prayers, different kind of meetings, schools, lectures, and other activities, organized by new-founded sects and newcomers in Latvia pseudo-religious groups, does not matter what they put in their name.[30]

This resolution reflects a very negative attitude toward sects. It is notable also, that the term "pseudo or false religious groups" emerges here. It resembles the method used by the ACM in its fight against sects and cults. This method also stresses the fact that the sect or cult is not authentic religion, but just pretending to be a religion. Thus one can fight against sects and cults, while not violating religious freedom.

The web site of Theological Seminary of Roman Catholic Church includes a collection of student presentations about sects and cults.[31] The web site examines movements such as the White Brotherhood, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Theosophy, Scientology,

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[30] See, http://www.pareizticiba.lv/Main_lv/Menu_files/Church_today/Ofdoc/Sobori/1997.html (accessed April 25, 2005), "Visiem uzticīgiem Baznīcas locekļiem, lai nenokļūtu Svēto Apustuļu, Svēto Koncilu un Svēto Tēvu kanonu liegumiem, nekādā gadījumā nepiedalīties kopējās lūgšanās, dažādās sapulcēs, skolās, lekcijās un citos pasākumos, ko rīko jaundibinātas sektas un no jauna Latvijā ienākušās sektas un pseido reliģiskas grupas, neskatoties uz to, ko viņi savā nosaukumā ir iekļāvuši."

[31] Collection of reports "Parareliģiskās kustības" ["Parareligious Movements"], http://www.catholic.lv/seminars/resursi/Sektas.htm (accessed March 19, 2005).

Unification Church, Family, and Fiat Lux. These reports reveal attitudes toward sects and cults:

- Not everything is bad in sects. There is something to learn of them.

- As the result of some activity by sects, for example, Jehovah Witness the human's life and personality suffered injury.

- The New Generation destroys psychologically immature souls.

- We should be indulgent and loving toward members of these groups.

- Sun Myung Moon (the leader of Unification Church) is involved in financial machinations.

- The White Brotherhood is extremely dangerous and a totalitarian sect.

These reports resemble the Counter-cult (CCM) approach towards sects and cults. Most literature edited by CCM focuses on heresies and their confutation.[32] Characteristically, the literature accentuates the anti-social features of sects and cults. It is notable, that the positive activities of sects and cults that promote the development of personality are ignored.

In 1998 Latvian Baptists published declaration about "Gospel of Welfare" or the movement of "The Word of Faith." This declaration blames the theological view of well-known Latvian such as V. Gleske (congregation "Joyful News") and A. Ledjajevs (congregation "New Generation"), for distorting the teaching of God's Word.[33]

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[32] Such literature is greatly lacking in Latvia. For key references are: Luīze Mandaua, *Vai Dievi ir tādi?* Transl. Arvīds Vītols [Louise Mandau, *Are Gods like that?* Transl. by Arvids Vitols] (Rīga: Preses nams, 1998); ЕГОРЦЕВ Александр, *"Тоталитарные секты: свобода от совести"* [Aleksandr Yegorcev, *Totalitarian Sects: Freedom from Consciousness*] (Сектор [Sector], 1997).; Александр Дворкин, *"ВВЕДЕНИЕ В СЕКТОВЕДЕНИЕ"* [Aleksandr Dvorkin, *Introduction into Sectarianism*] (Нижний Новгород [Niznij Novgorod], 1998).

[33] "Deklarācija par Labklājības evaņģēliju," *Svētdienas Rīts* ["Declaration about Gospel of Welfare," *Sunday's Morning*], October 24, 1998.

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia has not worked out any official position toward sects and cults. However, the opinions expressed by Archbishop Janis Vanags and Pastor Juris Rubenis are more or less reflective of the views of Latvian Lutherans. In 1992, the two men addressed a conference on, "Netradicionālās reliģiskās kustības un to nelabvēlīgā ietekme sabiedrībā: garīgie, sociālie un tiesiskie aspekti ["Unconventional Religious Movements and Their Adverse Impact on Society: Spiritual, Social, and Legal Aspects"].[34]

Archbishop Vanags rightly pointed out that "… the starting-point for sectarianism in the sphere of the relationship between Church and state is the isolation of church from the rest of society… sects and cults, Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, are still in opposition, for the sects and cults view the state as an evil, devilish formation."[35] Traditional churches, for their part, in contradistinction to sects, willingly took part in the development of society.[36] This view, indeed, precisely conform with insight of Stark and Bainbridge about formation of sects and cults, namely, sects and cults are always in tension with external society and are contrary to the norms generally accepted. Another question is, whether is it good that traditional churches are so closely connected with the surrounding society, that there is no tension between the church and society. In this report, Archbishop Vanags mentions only five religious groups, namely, The Branch Davidians lead by David Koresh who tragically

[34] January 30, 1998, in Riga. The collection of articles by the same name is issued, where ideas of Archbishop Vanags and pastor Rubenis are included. The following quotations are from this collection.

[35] Ibid., 5 - "... sektantisma izejas punkts Baznīcas un valsts attiecību jomā ir baznīcas izolēšana (izolēšanās) no pārējās sabiedrības...sektas un kulti, kā, piemēram, Jehovas Liecinieki, turpina būt opozīcijā, jo šādu sektu un kultu ieskatos valsts pēc savas būtības ir ļaunas, velnišķas izcelsmes veidojums."

[36] For example, on June 14, 1987, the pastors' movement, called Rebirth and Renewal, was founded. Seventeen Lutheran ministers united and vowed to strive to create new opportunities in the life of the church and society.

perished in Waco, Texas;[37] God's churches of the self-proclaimed bishop Roslevics;

Jehovah's Witnesses; Mormons; and the followers of Moon. At the end of his report, Vanags

notes that there is a strong use of mind control in cults. That is the reason why it is almost

impossible for individuals to withdraw from the cults. Of course, it is quite possible that there

are some of sects and cults which use strong mind control. Though from this report one can

get an impression that mind control is the most typical feature of sects and cults. This reflects

the traditional argument of the ACM against all sects and cults. They use brainwashing, for

nobody who is normal will ever join such a group.

In his presentation to the Riga Conference, Pastor Rubenis begins by noting that new

religious movements (NRM) must not be tendentiously caricatured. Rather they must be

analyzed in order to understand why people are joining them. However, Rubenis also states

that one of the features of NRM is the use of recruitment techniques in order to get complete

control over people. Pastor Rubenis makes an important point. Where society is religiously

unintelligent, the NRMs finds fertile ground for their activities.[38]

For several years, the mission The Lutheran Hour carried out missionary work through

the mass media. It also offered correspondence courses for radio-listeners who wanted to

deepen their knowledge about the Christian faith. One of these correspondence courses is

"Netradicionālās reliģijas Latvijā" ["Unconventional Religions in Latvia"].[39] The author of

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[37] In 1993 a government raid on the Branch Davidians' compound at Mount Carmel near
Waco, Texas led to a standoff and fire in which about 75 people including the group's leader,
David Koresh, died. It is still unclear whether or to what extent the deaths in the fire were
suicides. In total there were 93 deaths. The Branch Davidian movement is an offshoot of
Seventh-day Adventism.

[38] Ibid., 11.

[39] *Netradicionālās reliģijas Latvijā* [*Unconventional Religions in* Latvia]. Free
correspondence course (Riga: The Lutheran Hour).

this course is Juris Ulgis (lecturer at the Luther Academy). Eight booklets deal with the

Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Society of Krishna Consciousness, Islam, God-keepers,

Word of Faith movement. These booklets reflect the traditional evangelical approach,

namely, they focus on issues of doctrine and disprove of heresies.

Why is it that traditional churches in Latvia react carefully, sometimes even negatively

toward sects and cults? Several answers to this question are reasonable. First is competition

on the market of religions. The Latvian reader would be surprised about using terms of free

market economics in connection with religion.[40] But I see nothing inappropriate in

acknowledging that where religious affiliation is a matter of choice, religious organizations

must compete for members, and that the "invisible hand" of the free marketplace is as

unforgiving of ineffective religious firms as it is of their commercial counterparts. Roger

Fink and Rodney Stark write about economics of religion as follows:

> Religious economies are like commercial economies in that they consist of a
> market made up of a set of current and potential customers and a set of firms
> seeking to serve the market. The fate of these firms will depend upon (1)
> aspects of their organizational structures, (2) their sales representatives, (3) their
> product, and (4) marketing techniques. Translated into more churchly language,
> the relative success of religious bodies (especially when confronted with an
> unregulated economy) will depend upon their polity, clergy, their religious
> doctrines, and their evangelization techniques.[41]

Of course, the entry of many sects and cults into Latvia makes traditional churches

worried and alarmed. These movements intensify competition in the market of religions,

attract new customers who where perhaps previously members of traditional churches, and

throw doubt upon the teaching of traditional churches about God and humans' salvation. This

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[40] Also in Latvian newspapers the idea about market of religion appears time to time. See, for example, Maija Pohodneva, "Sectarians on the Market of Religion," *The Voice of Riga*, February 23, 2000.

[41] Rodger and Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990*, 17.

language of free market economics, however, should not be misunderstood. It does not mean that all traditional churches need is clever marketing and energetic selling. It is the other way round, as Rodger Finke and Rodney Stark argue in their book: *The Churching of America*. The doctrinal content of religion has great importance. Many denominations in America declined particularly for this reason, namely, because of their doctrinal content or absence of it. As denominations have modernized their doctrines and embraced temporal values, they have gone into decline.[42]

Another reason for the traditional church's negative attitude toward sects and cults involves the "utopian" idea about a society with only one religion, namely, Christianity, and maybe even only one confession, for example, Lutheran. It seems that this utopian idea often hides inside, even in unconscious and unreflective ways, for a great part of traditional church members. When new religious movements come into Latvia they cause an anxiety and even indignation, for they destroyed the illusion about one single religion and one leading church for this particular society.

When the religious market is not regulated by the rules of one dominate religion with the support of state's power, religious pluralism is inevitable. Furthermore, the religious market is regulated by rules of demand and supply. Accordingly, religious pluralism is the natural situation for the market where a particular religion meets a particular needs of the costumers.

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[42] Ibid., 17-18.

Finke and Stark say:

> ...religious economies can never be successfully monopolized, even when a religious organization is backed by the state. At the height of its temporal power, the medieval church was surrounded by heresy and dissent. Of course, when repressive efforts are very great, religions in competition with the state-sponsored monopoly will be forced to operate underground. But whenever and wherever repression falters, lush pluralism will break through.[43]

Philip Jenkins points out that the formation of new sects and cults is an inevitable process. The traditional churches often are not able to properly react to the new social and spiritual needs. On that score Jenkins compares cults with laboratories where new religious ideas are experimented. After a certain time these new ideas come into church and are even accepted. For example, ordination of women, calling God a Mother, and the esoteric conception of Christ.[44]

The popular view about religious pluralism is something like this: pluralism weakens faith, many religious groups compete by all possible means, they blame and defame each other which leads to the notion, that religion *per se* is dubious and can't be trust. This concept, however, contradicts with history and economical principles. The very societies, where everybody is Lutheran or Roman Catholic show their indifference about the church. Societies with broad pluralism of religions, for their part, show high degree of religiosity, as the United States, for example.[45] It is true, however, that according to Stark and Bainbridge theory, cults are flourishing in societies where traditional churches are in continuous tension and competition with schismatic groups.

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[43] Ibid., 18.

[44] See, Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and* Messiahs, 227-240.

[45] Finke and Stark note, that rates of religious adherence did increase from 17% in 1776 to 62% in 1980. See, *The Churching of America*, 16.

From free market economics, we know that monopolies tend to more less motivated. The same is true concerning churches where the make up a part of state officials and draw a salary from the state. Such clergy often succumb to bureaucratic indolence. When church monopolies do not exist, as in the United States, the salary of clergy is tied to the size and growth of the local congregation and/or to the competence of the pastor. This system encourages an active clergy.

Accordingly, religious pluralism strengthens rather than weakens religiosity. "Where many faiths function within a religious economy, a high degree of specialization as well as competition occurs. From this it follows that many independent religious bodies will, together, be able to attract a much larger proportion of a population than can be the case when only one or very few firms have free access."[46]

A third reason for anxiety among traditional churches over the entry of sects and cults into Latvia is the concern about the salvation of the human soul. Namely, everybody, who leaves traditional church and joins to some sect or cult, not only is a loss for the church, but also put the salvation of his or her soul and the promise of the eternal life at risk. Doubtless, this kind of thinking comes from an understanding of the exclusive character of Christianity. As it was mentioned in chapter one, the theological perspective of CCM is based on a conception of Christianity as exclusive religion. Traditional churches in Latvia, as far as I know, have never publicly discussed the issue of the relationship between the Christianity

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[46] Ibid., 20.

and other religions.[47] However, judged by the reaction of churches towards sects and cults, it appears that the majority tends toward the exclusiveness view, and maybe to inclusiveness of Christianity. In that way the worry of traditional churches about sects and cults, especially involving Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, is quite sound and understandable.[48]

What should traditional churches in Latvia do, if religious pluralism seems to be inevitable for our society? Let us remember, that according to the Stark and Bainbridge theory, secularization is only one of three fundamental and interrelated processes that constantly occur in all religious economies.

> "The process of secularization is self-limiting and generates two countervailing processes. One of these is *revival*. Religious organizations that are eroded by secularization abandon a substantial market demand for less worldly religion, a demand that produces breakaway sect movements. ... Secularization also stimulates *religious innovation*. Not only do worldly churches prompt new religious groups, which seek to revive faith, but secularization also prompts the formation of new religious traditions."[49]

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[47] The most important documents of Roman Catholics dealing with inter-religion relationships, are: "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium," (1964); "Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions: Nostra Aetate," (1965); Cardinal Walter Kasper, "Peace in the World, Dialogue among Christians and with other Religions."

[48] Ron Rhodes puts it in words: "Yet to say that every man and woman is free to choose his or her religion is not the same as saying that every religion is *equally true* or *equally healthy* or *equally* beneficial for people. Nor is it the same as saying that every religion yields *equal eternal results* – that is, living eternally with the one true God in heaven." In *The Challenge of the Cults and New Religions: The essential guide to their history, their doctrine, and our response*, 13-14.

[49] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 2. To be true, there is another view too, namely, Wilson notes, that new religious movements are themselves testimonies to secularization: they often utilize highly secular methods of evangelism, financing, publicity and mobilization of adherents. See, Wilson B. R., "Secularization: Religion in the Modern World," in *The World's Religions*, ed. S. Sutherland (London: Routledge, 1988), 965.

There we can also find the hypothesis of Stark and Bainbridge that "cults will flourish where the conventional churches are weakest."[50] Thereby traditional churches, if they are weak, always have to reckon with the presence of sects and cults. So, what the churches should do?

First, they should avoid using of unfair methods against sects and cults. There are two unfair methods, either deliberately or unwittingly used by traditional churches in Latvia. The first one is blaming of sects and cults in brainwashing. As we saw in chapter two, the idea of brainwashing in its popular sense is absurd. This idea is used by anxious parents for legal action against sects and cults, and to explain how their adult children could join a sect or cult. As we saw in chapter three, the emergence and development of sects and cults is completely explainable without the idea of brainwashing.

The second method is to use the power of the state against sects and cults. Practically, this approach could be called "the little inquisition." The struggle for a monopoly of one or several churches in Latvian society is absurd. Two kind of situations are possible. On the one hand, we could allow freedom in the religious market. Time will show which religious organizations flourish and which decline. The winners will be both the members of the Latvian society and the religious organizations, of course, with the exception of those who do not win the competition. It is quite possible, that traditional churches use the power of the state against sects and cults, because they are aware of the competition and are afraid to lose.

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[50] Stark and Bainbridge, "Secularization and Cult Formation in the Jazz Age," 363. To review the statistics of 1926 about persons belonging to Christian Science, Theosophy, Divine Science, Liberal Catholic, and Baha'i, Stark and Bainbridge conclude, that cults are flourishing where churches are weak.

On the other hand, as soon as the market of religion is limited and controlled by the power of state, or if the monopoly of just one religion is allowed, society will drop into ignorance toward traditional churches. Where everybody is Lutheran or Roman Catholic, the majority tends toward the neglect of regular worship. This strategy cannot solve the problem with sects and cults, for the members of unwelcome religious movements can just go underground and continue their activities with even more zeal.

The war of church against sects and cults by inviting secular power of the state can eventually turn against traditional churches themselves. If repression on religious ground can be directed on sects and cults who can guarantee that the next wave of repression will not be turned against the traditional churches of Latvia. If churches stand for freedom and pluralism of religion, they gain two kinds of benefits. First, they provide themselves with an existence and security. Second, it opens the door for dialog with representatives of sects and cults. The dialog is impossible if the one side uses legal methods to oppress the other side. It would be like a conversation between the big and small brother. Fertile dialog is possible only when both sides have equal facilities and difficulties in the society.

In my opinion, traditional churches have a greater challenge when engaging in dialogue. First, the representatives of sects and cults are not seen as equal partners for conversation, because they are heretics, sectarians, and brainwashers. Second, sects and cults do not have any input on the culture and history of society, and for that reason the members of these movements should be regarded with suspicion. It is important to remember that sects and cults really are in tension with society. This is so by their nature. Third, those who do engage in dialogue with representatives of sects and cults are regarded with suspicion even when it is not their intention to encourage or support sectarian beliefs. A publication on

NRMs (produced by the World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation)

suggests that, "entering into dialogue does not mean that one supports or ascribes to the ideas

of activities of the other. And dialogue does not mean that all will agree. The creative tension

of mutual critique is also part of dialogue."[51] The publication also offers recommendations

and particular guidelines for undertaking dialogues with people of the NRMs. Three

suggestions could be useful for traditional churches in Latvia:

- In dialogue, partners should be free to "define themselves" and not be defined by images or stereotypes of others.
- We enter into dialogue with people, not labels or systems.
- In dialogue one should not compare one's own ideals with the excesses or failings of the other religion.[52]

What must traditional churches do for successful religious competition? The main

thesis put forward by Rodger Fink and Rodney Stark is worthy of note. Through an analysis

of 200 years of the history of religions and the denominations in the United States, they came

to conclusion: "religious organizations are stronger to the degree that they impose significant

costs in terms of sacrifice and even stigma upon their members."[53] Sacrifices consist of

investments (material and human) required to gain and retain membership in the group.

Religious stigmas consist of all aspects of social deviance that attach to membership in the

group. A group may prohibit some activities deemed normal in the external society (dancing)

and require other activities deemed abnormal by the world (speaking in tongues). Thus in

terms of real costs and benefits, the more "mainline" the church (in the sense of being

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[51] Brockway, A. R., and J. P. Rajashekar, eds., *New Religious Movements and the Churches*, 177. To be true, as the further discussion about exacting churches shows, strong and growing churches do not get into dialogues. The dialogues and ecumenism is the feature of weak churches.

[52] Ibid., 177.

[53] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America*, 238.

regarded as "respectable" and "reasonable"), the lower the value of belonging to it, and this eventually results in widespread defection.[54]

Accordingly it is pointed out, that the mainline churches in the United States were declining not because they asked too much of their members but because they asked too little. This is thought of great importance, for usually the decline of traditional churches is explained in at least three ways. First, religion is in retreat from modernism, probably never to recover. Second, religion is not meaningfully reduced to membership counts. What matters is what is in people's hearts? Third, Churches were badly in need of liberalization and modernization – that they must drop their unreasonable moral demands, which only drove people away. Ironically, as Finke and Stark point out, the religious groups which are not tolerant, ecumenical and do not fit to the ethical norms dominant in the society, are the most vigorous and fastest growing. On the other hand, churches which became tolerant and liberal in ethical matters and rational in the matters of faith, became dirt-cheap, and nobody wants to buy them.[55]

In 1972, Dean Kelley published a remarkable book titled *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*.[56] He traced the success of conservative churches to their ability to attract and retain an active and committed membership, characteristics that he in turn attributed to their strict demands for complete loyalty, unwavering belief, and rigid adherence to a distinctive lifestyle. The keyword for Kelley's analysis is "strictness." Kelley cataloged three traits of the ideal-typical strict church: absolutism, conformity, and fanaticism. Kelly then contrasted

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[54] Ibid., 253.

[55] Ibid., 249-50.

[56] Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing: A Study in the Sociology of Religion* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1972, 1986).

these traits to three traits of the more lenient church: relativism, diversity, and dialogue. Strict churches proclaim an exclusive truth – a closed, comprehensive, and eternal doctrine. They demand adherence to a distinctive faith, morality, and lifestyle. They condemn deviance, shun dissenters, and repudiate the outside world. They frequently embrace "eccentric traits," such as distinctive diet, dress, or speech that invite ridicule, isolation, and persecution.[57]

Why are people fond of "expensive" or "strict" religions? This agrees with the first axiom of Stark and Bainbridge theory: humans seek what they perceive to be rewards and avoid what they perceive to be costs. Do not people desire some church where all services would be for free or for possibly less cost? If the pretensions of a church increase cost, what could be the reason to join such an "expensive" church?

Laurence R. Iannaccone argues "that strict demands 'strengthen' a church in three ways: they raise overall levels of commitment, they increase average rates of participation, and they enhance the net benefits of membership. These strengths arise because strictness mitigates free rider problems that otherwise lead to low levels of member commitment and participation."[58]

Because religion involves collective action, religious groups are always potentially subject to exploitation by free riders.[59] Truly rational actors will not join a group to pursue common ends when, without participating, they can reap benefit of other people's activity in obtaining them. Churches are plagued with members who draw upon the group for weddings,

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[57] Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (1986), 79-84. As synonyms for the term "strictness," he used also "seriousness," costliness," and "bindingness."

[58] Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Why Strict Churches are Strong?" 1183.

[59] The problem of nominal-Christians is one of the more acute for traditional churches in Latvia. In Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia these nominal-Christians often is called: *Lutherans on vacation*.

funerals, and holiday celebrations, but who give little or nothing in return. Even if they do contribute money, they weaken the group's ability to create collective religious goods in that their inactivity devalues both the direct and the promised religious rewards by reducing the "average" level of commitment. There can be little less inspiring than attending services in a nearly empty church.[60]

In the austere but precise language of economics, religion is a "commodity" that people produce collectively. My religious satisfaction thus depends both on my "input" and on the "input" of others. In that way, if there are a lot of enthusiastic members in my church, it will give me more religious satisfaction. Accordingly, if my church is full of free riders, I will be tempted to be the same. If I see around me only persons getting churchly goods at my expense, I will be tempted to do the same.[61]

Strict churches solve the problem of free riders by their "expensiveness." They weed out the people whose membership would be too low. The level of self-offering and membership on the whole in church will increase.[62] People, therefore, are ready to pay just for getting free from these free riders.

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[60] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America*, 253.

[61] Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Why Strict Churches are Strong?" 1207, calls it: the classic Prisoner's Dilemma, in which each member is tempted to free ride off the other.

[62] Free riders could be compared with barren tree, which not only does not bring fruit, but also drains off the streams of life from fertile soil. Analyzing the parable of barren tree (Lk.13:6-9) Kenneth E. Bailey concludes: "When that leadership is fruitless it not only fails in its own obedience but also sterilizes the community around it." See, *Through Peasant Eyes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 87. Free riders too not only do not fulfill their obligation but also weaken the congregation.

Concerning the problem of the free rider, Finke and Stark conclude:

> The inevitable dilemma is clear. On the one hand, a congregational structure that relies on the collective action of numerous volunteers is needed to make the religion credible and potent. On the other hand, unless these volunteers are mobilized to a high level of participation, that same congregational structure threatens to undermine the level of commitment and contributions needed to make a religion viable. Costly demands offer a solution to the dilemma. That is, the level of stigma and sacrifice demanded by religious groups will be positively correlated with levels of member participation …costly demands strengthen a religious group by mitigating "free rider" problems and by increasing the production of collective religious commodities…The costs act as nonrefundable registration fees which, as in secular markets, measure seriousness of interest in the product. Potential members are forced to choose: participate fully or not at all. The seductive middle ground of free riding and low participation is eliminated.[63]

By getting rid off the free riders strict churches attract people, because many of the emotional and psychic rewards of religion are greater to the degree that they are socially generated and experienced. Of course, it is possible to sing psalms or pray God in solitude or with small group in a boring liturgical context, but the religious rewards will be minimal. In contrast, if you are singing psalms together with 500 persons in congregation, moreover if they are good singers, you can get emotional satisfaction, never available in solitude or in congregation of ten individuals with plaintive voices. Laurence R. Iannaccone articulates this as follows: "The pleasure and edification that I derive from a Sunday service does not depend solely on what I bring to the service; it also depends on how many others attend, how warmly they greet me, how well they sing or recite, how enthusiastically they read and pray, and how deep their commitments are."[64]

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[63] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America*, 254.

[64] Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Why Strict Churches are Strong?" 1184.

The benefit from membership in "strict" or "expensive" religious organization is not always immediately obvious. Many of the results promised by religion can occur only elsewhere and far in the future. Thus religion is an inherently risky enterprise. Individuals rely on interactions with others to help them determine whether the value of religious rewards outweighs the risks. To the extend that others with whom an individual interacts builds confidence in the value of future religious rewards.

Membership in strict and rigorous religions is actually a good bargain, when viewed from the viewpoint of the costs – rewards principle. Thereby, if traditional churches in Latvia want to win the competition on the market of religion, they must be rigorous. It would be big mistake, if traditional churches try to adapt themselves to society and to please it, or if they decrease demands of the church membership.

Laurence R. Iannaccone mentions another method for solving the problem of the free rider. Namely, churches can penalize or prohibit alternative activities that compete for members' resources. Such prohibitions tend to screen out less committed members. They act like entry fees and thus discourage anyone not seriously interested in "buying" the product.

Prohibitions can also raise the average level of group commitment and participation. Distinctive diet, dress, grooming, and social customs constrain and often stigmatize members, making participation in alternative activities more costly. Potential members are forced to choose whether to participate fully or not at all. The seductive middle ground is eliminated, and paradoxically, those who remain find that their welfare has been increased. It follows that perfectly rational people can be drawn to sects and cults. This conclusion

sharply contrasts with the view, popular among psychiatrists and the media, that

conversion to deviant religious sects and cults is inherently pathological.[65]

Are there, though, any limits for strictness? In the rational choice model, increased

strictness adds to the attractiveness of a church only because its benefits outweigh its costs.

The benefits take the form of greater group participation, commitment, or solidarity. These

benefits can be quite large, since free riding is a serious problem. But they are not infinite.

They must be set against the costs of strictness. As a group becomes progressively stricter,

it eventually reaches a point beyond which the additional benefits of increased strictness

are outweighed by additional costs. The notion of optimal strictness becomes especially

important in a changing social environment. To remain strong, a group must maintain a

certain distance or tension between itself and society. But maintaining this "optimal gap"

means walking a very fine line in adjusting to social change so as not to become too

deviant, but not embracing change so fully as to lose all distinctiveness.[66]

Concluding an analysis about the strictness of churches, one more question needs to

be addressed. What is successful strictness? Strictness can be boundless; strictness can be

lawless and capricious. What kind of strictness could be successful? Laurence R.

Iannaccone answers: "Successful strictness must involve the sacrifice of external

(nongroup) resources and opportunities that the group can itself replace. In other words, a

group can afford to prohibit or put out of reach only those 'commodities' for which it

offers a close substitute."[67] For example, if a sect isolates its members from the society, it

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[65] Ibid., 1188.

[66] Ibid., 1202 – 1203.

[67] Ibid., 1204

must be capable of offering an alternative society. If the church forbids different kind of "profane" entertainment, it must offer an alternative entertainment.

In summary, a churches' negative and/or neutral reaction against sects and cults is because of:

- Latvian churches are motivated by theological reasons, such as care about the salvation of human souls, and cults oppose the teaching of traditional churches about God and salvation.

- Latvian churches have the utopian idea that society should have only one religion, namely, Christianity, and maybe only one confession, for example, Lutheran. The idea of "religious pluralism" is looked upon with suspicion.

- Sects and cults intensify competition in the market of religions and attract members who may have been members of traditional churches.

In the future, Latvian churches must take into consideration pluralism of religions. To win the competition on the market of religions, churches must be "strict" and "expensive."

In chapter four we discussed the attitude of the Latvian society, including the mass media, government and traditional churches toward sects and cults. Ignoring or strictly negative reactions towards sects and cults can be explained in the light of Stark and Bainbridge's theory. Both, sects and cults, by their very nature, are in tension with external society and that is why they actually challenge counter-action from the state and from the traditional churches. Accordingly with Stark and Bainbridge theory, however, the presence of sects and cults on the market of religions is inevitable and even acceptable. An artificial limitation of the market does not solve the problem. Sound competition will be good for both, the society and the churches. Finally, the reason why people join sects and cults is completely explainable without involving the idea of brainwashing or mental disease. People - who join strict churches, sects, and cults, are "normal."

CONCLUSION

This work analyzed sects and cults in Latvian society based upon the Stark and Bainbridge theory of religions. As far as I know, this is the only theory that analyzes the phenomena of sects and cults in the broader context of secularization in society and in the church. The Republic of Latvia is a secular state. Traditional churches in Latvia tend to cooperate with the state; accordingly more or less secularization of the churches is inevitable. New sects emerge and new cults come into Latvia. The Stark-Bainbridge theory of religions seems to be the most suitable for analyzing the interaction between society of Latvia on the one hand and sects and cults on the other.

On the basis of the Stark and Bainbridge theory the thesis proposal was that secularization is only one of three fundamental and interrelated processes that occur in all religious economies. However, the process of secularization is self-limiting and generates two countervailing processes. One of these is *revival*. Religious organizations that are eroded by secularization abandon a substantial market demand for less worldly religion, a demand that produces breakaway *sect movements*. Secularization also stimulates *religious innovation* thus promoting the formation of the new *cult movements*. For churches in Latvia to be successful competitors on the market of religions, they must be "strict."

In order to prove the thesis proposal, this paper was organized in four main parts. The first chapter defined the terms "church," "sect," and "cult" from the secular, theological and

sociological perspectives. Each definition focuses on particular aspects of the sects and cults phenomena.

The secular definitions focus on the *deeds* of sects and cults, emphasizing criminological and anti-social aspects in sects' and cults' activities. One of the major defects of this approach is its undisguised hatred of against sects and cults based upon certain stereotypes of what sects and cults are, who their leaders are, and how people join these movements. These definitions are not ideologically neutral, as representatives of Anti-Cult movement (ACM) may believe. Secular humanism, which regards religion as an obstacle to the progress of mankind, is the basis of the secular definitions of sects and cults.

The theological definitions concentrate on the *teaching* (doctrine) of sects and cults. This approach raises issues of orthodoxy and heresy. This perspective, in contradistinction to others, especially focuses on the issue: what is the truth. This approach also has at least three defects. First, it lumps together all kinds of religious groups, sects, cults, churches, the world religions, and analyzes them from the positions of evangelical theology. In that way even Lutherans, apart from Roman Catholics, could be included in sects and cults. Second, understanding of the Bible, as evangelicals declare, is not so simple and clear. Not all of churches would agree with the strict position of evangelical theology. Third, this approach does not explain the formation process of sects and cults. This approach does answer why *normal* people join sects and cults. Even if some answers are given, the problem is blamed on the devil. The devil is the one who entraps persons into a sect, and our Christian task is to set them free from the devilish snares. I do not deny the existence of the devil, but I cannot agree with such a single answer to such a difficult question.

Finally, the sociological definition considers the *interaction* of sects and cults with their environment, especially on aspects of *tension* and *deviance*. Necessity of the first chapter like this seems to be obvious, for to analyze sects' and cults' phenomena in Latvia, first we have to know and agree, what the sects and cults are.

Chapter two analyzed the secular and theological perspectives on sects and cults. The proponents of the secular perspective and the theological perspective disagree in the following essential matters:

- the definition of a cults

- the prevalence of cultic behavior

- the personal and organizational motivation

- the perceived danger to which each is responding

- the goals of each perspective

- the methods employed to achieve those goals.

The ACM believes that membership in sects and cults is a result of brainwashing, whereas the Counter-Cult movement (CCM) believes that membership in a cult is a result of the devils craft in the world. The motivation of the ACM is the struggle for the civic freedom and human rights. Sects and cults by their manipulations endanger civic freedom and human rights, whereas the motivation of the CCM is the matter of salvation. For the CCM people in sects and cults are condemned to eternal perdition, and everything possible must be done to save people from these traps of devil. The goal of ACM is to draw people out of sects and cults, so that they may return to the secular world. Let's remember that secular humanism is not neutral toward religion by nature. It is negative, even aggressive toward any form of religion, including a church. The goal of CCM is not only to lead persons out of sects or

cults, it is also necessary to lead them to some evangelical congregation, so that they may gain the salvation.

The only thing that is common to the ACM and CCM perspectives is their negative attitude toward sects and cults. It is understandable, for according to definitions of the Stark and Bainbridge theory, sects and cults are in tension with their environment. It is the nature of sects and cults to challenge and to even refuse the norms existing in and accepted by the society and the church.

Chapter two also discussed history and development of brainwashing because idea is very popular in the USA and Europe, and also in Latvia great attention was paid to this topic. The main conclusions were as follows:

- The principal source of the brainwashing controversy is a parent-child conflict in which parents fail to understand the religious choices of their adult children and attempt to reassert parental control by marshaling the forces of public opinion against the religious bodies to which their offspring have converted.
- This conflict is then exacerbated by an irresponsible mass media less interested in truth than in printing exciting stories about weird cults that trap their members and keep them in psychological bondage with exotic techniques of mind control.
- When a society uses the brainwashing idea to wage war against sects and cults, it says something about that society. It means that there are conflicts, worries and problems in the society itself, and all of these are projected on new sects and exotic cults. In that way sects and cults become a kind of scapegoat on which society shifts the blame for its own ills.

- The claim that sects and cults engage in brainwashing is a powerful, effective "social weapon" for many – parents, former members, and church officials - in the cult controversy.

Chapter three analyzed the sociological perspective on sects and cults on the basis of Stark-Bainbridge theory of religions. The Stark-Bainbridge theory is based on the axioms, propositions, and definitions as follows:

- Humans seek what they perceive to be rewards and avoid what they perceive to be costs.

- Some desired rewards are limited in supply, including some that simply do not exist. A "limited" supply means that not everyone can have as much of a reward as they desire.

- Usually what people want to get as a reward comes from and through other people. Accordingly, by trying to find different kind of rewards they are forced into exchange relationships.

- Commitment to religious organizations depends on the net balance of rewards and costs that humans perceive they will experience from participation. Thus, it follows that humans seek high exchange ratios. "Exchange ratio" is a person's net rewards over costs in an exchange.

- "Power" is the degree of control over one's "exchange ratio." This power, however, is not distributed equally between all members of the same religious organization. Therefore the rewards, which are limited in supply, come into hands of powerful.

- Since many of rewards are not accessible to all people, they usually will accept explanations which posit attainment of the reward in the distant future. Those kinds of

explanations are called *compensators.* If rewards usually are experienced, than compensators usually are believed by people. Accordingly, a "compensator" is the belief that a reward will be obtained in the distant future or in some other context which cannot be immediately verified.

- Compensators fall along a continuum from the specific to the general. Specific compensators promise a specific, limited reward. The most general compensators promise a great array of rewards or rewards of vast scope. For example, when a shaman promises to a person health through making certain rituals, this is specific compensator. On the contrary, the promise of the eternal life after this life full of sufferings is general compensator.

- In that way religion is the system of compensators based on supernatural assumptions. It does not mean, however, that rewards are not possible in religion.

This theory answers the questions of how and why sects and cults emerge, while the secular and theological approaches give only superficial or tendentious explanations. There is a generally held opinion that the reason for schisms in the church is theological disagreements, matters of doctrine. The Stark and Bainbridge theory, however, asserts that schismatic groups split off churches for another reason: the church, being conventional, focuses on rewards instead of compensators. Accordingly, there will be a split between those who have power and those who do not. Those who do not have power will form schismatic groups sooner or later. Stark and Bainbridge note that the greater is tension between the group and surrounding society, the more emphasis is laid on the otherworldly compensators. Chapter three concluded that the formation of sects can be contributed to by external powers

such as a democratic society, which allows pluralism and freedom of religion, and by economic depression.

Chapter three answered the question of how novel compensators are invented. Three models were discussed. "The psychopathology model" describes cult origination and growth as the result of individual psychopathology that finds successful social expression. "The entrepreneur model" holds that if social circumstances provide an opportunity for profit in cults, then many will be attracted to the cult. "The subculture-evolution model" emphasizes group interaction processes." The process of solving problems common to mankind may result in different outcomes, including the formation of a new cult.

The final portion of chapter three addressed how people are recruited to cults and sects and concluded that, social relations play an essential role in cult and sect recruitment. If there are close interpersonal bonds between members of the cult and a potential recruit, then the possibility of that recruit becoming a member of the cult is much higher. In such cases the cult reaches a member through friendly relationships rather than through the group's doctrine. This approach differs from the popular view in which brainwashing explains recruitment.

Chapter four dealt with the interaction between traditional churches and sects and cults. The situation in Latvia confirms the thesis proposal. The thesis advanced in the introductory portion of chapter four may be summarized as follows: when the church and the society become secular new sects and cults will be formed; and they always will be in tension with the surrounding society thus causing criticism and discontent. Churches can win this competition in the market of religions by being "strict."

Is there found any confirmation for thesis proposal in the society of Latvia? The following points confirm thesis proposal in Latvian society. First, the negative portrayal of sects and cults in the mass media affirms the sociological definition of sects and cults. Sects and cults by their novelty, extraordinary beliefs, and unconventional lifestyles challenge surrounding society and create tension. To be fair, I should point out that negative coverage of cults and sects is not without exception. There are several publications and broadcasts where new and unconventional religious ideas are positively advertised. This could be explained by external factors, such as economic depression or the failure of traditional churches to meet of the spiritual needs of the people.

Second, traditional churches in Latvia wish to be integral part of Latvian society and to help shape its future. When tension is lost between the church and its environment, then church becomes secular or worldly. This secularization leads to the formation of new sects and cults. In addition, with the diminished distinction between church and state the number of free riders in the church increases, and as a result churches are weakened from the inside.

Third, the wish of traditional churches in Latvia to cooperate with the state in the "fight against sects," indicates some problems within churches themselves:

- Churches know that they are weak and therefore want to use the power of the state.
- Churches do not want to accept religious pluralism in Latvian society.
- Churches still live in hope that a few churches will be able to monopolize whole market of religion.

This kind of "fight against sects," however, is doomed to failure, for the secularization of churches always creates new sects and cults. The natural environment for religions is religious pluralism. A society in which a few churches monopolize religion is like an open

market in which only six companies are allowed to compete. When churches fight against sects in this way, it is foul and unchristian. To use the state's strength and power actually means "the little inquisition." A religious monopoly is also not defensible because traditional churches have a great impact on the cultural and political life of Latvia, while sects have little influence. It is improper for traditional churches with their influence in Latvia to enlist the power of the state against sects and cults which have little power or influence.

Fourth, the wish of some sects to affect the political process in Latvia and to support individual politicians can be explained in several ways. Schismatic groups or sects tend to become churches because living in permanent tension with surrounding society is tiresome. In sects there will always be a group of people who gain more rewards from the group than others. These are the people who will wish to decrease tension with society. The possibility that the leader of some sects and cults see their organizations as good business and a means to financial gain cannot be ignored too. Reaching into political circles is important for the further development of a cult's business. Of course, the wish to influence the political process in Latvia could come also from the theological reasons. The task of Christians is seen by some as the reorganization of this world according to the principles of God's kingdom.

Fifth, it is usually said that traditional churches in Latvia are conservative by comparison to the European context and do not follow the changes of the age. Churches in Latvia still believe that homosexuality the sin and many of them refuse to ordain women as clergy. The "strictness" of the church is the answer to the question of how to compete against sects and cults in the market of religions. As discussed at the end of chapter four, strict demands (e.g., doctrinal adherence) strengthen a church in three ways:

-   they raise overall levels of commitment

- they increase average rates of participation

- they enhance the net benefits of membership.

These strengths arise because strictness mitigates against the free rider problems that otherwise lead to low levels of member commitment and participation.

This paper does not pretend to be the final word. Many questions about sects and cults phenomena in Latvia remain unanalyzed and unexamined. The issues demanding a deeper and more detailed analysis are as follows:

- What is relationship between orthodoxy and heterodoxy?

- Does the negative attitude of the mass media toward sects and cults provoke aggression by sects and cults?

- How are particular sects and cults formed in Latvia?

- What is the social status of people who join sects and cults?

- Should the secular power of the state be employed against sects and cults?

I will conclude this paper by reiterating an idea derived from the last part of the thesis proposal: the churches of Latvia can win a competition in the market of religions if they remain "strict."

The strictness of the church must be understood in the "Law and Gospel" perspective. C.F.W. Walther points out that "the doctrinal contents, of the entire Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testament, are made up of two doctrines differing fundamentally from each other, viz., the Law and the Gospel ...Apart from the Law we do not understand Gospel, and apart from the Gospel the Law is of no use to us."[1] The churches must teach, preach, and

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[1] C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel: Thirty-nine Evening Lectures*, 14.

live by both Law and Gospel. Without Gospel churches become legalistic which leads to despair or hypocrisy. Without Law Churches become libertarian which leads to chaos and laxity. Dietrich Bonhoeffer introduced the catchphrase "cheap grace:"

> Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without repentance; it is baptism without discipline of community; it is the Lord's Supper without confession of sin; it is absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ.[2]

Strict churches teach and preach Law, i.e. repentance, self-discipline, bearing a cross, discipleship. Strict churches avoid "cheap grace" in their midst. Accordingly, they become strong. Strict churches live by "costly grace":

> It is costly, because it calls to discipleship; it is grace, because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*. It is costly, because it costs people their lives; it is grace, because it thereby makes them live. It is costly, because it condemns sin; it is grace, because it justifies the sinner. Above all, grace is costly, because it was costly to God, because it costs God the life of God's Son—"you were bought with high price"—and because nothing can be cheap to us which is costly to God.[3]

Soli Deo Gloria!

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[2] Dietrich, Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 44.

[3] Ibid., 45.

APPENDICES

1. Statistics about religious organizations in Latvia.

Religious organizations	Dynamic of congregations									Members hip
Year	1990	1992	1993	1995	1996	1998	1999	2000	2001	2003
Roman Catholic Church	187	190	195	198	203	241	243	247	250	**429 675**
Lutheran Church	252	282	292	297	303	300	302	302	308	**556 000**
Orthodox	89	90	102	108	112	110	112	112	114	**350 000**
Old Believers	65	55	56	55	55	65	65	66	67	**3 070**
Baptists	61	71	73	79	81	82	85	87	89	**6 804**
Adventists	28	33	35	43	44	44	44	46	46	**3 956**
Methodists	-	2	3	6	8	10	10	10	12	**1 012**
Jews	4	5	5	6	6	6	7	7	7	**664**
Armenian Apostolic Church	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	No data
Muslims	-	-	1	3	3	6	6	6	7	**205**
ISKCON	-	1	1	1	1	4	8	10	10	**135**
New Apostolic Church	-	1	1	1	1	10	11	11	11	**982**
Pentecostals	7	32	41	49	48	65	73	77	56	**3 519**
New Generation	-	6	8	9	12	15	15	16	43	**7 583**
Lutherans of Augsburg confession	-	-	-	-	-	6	8	9	9	**537**
Buddhists	-	5	5	5	5	2	3	3	4	**99**
Reformed	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	3	3	**164**
Presbyterian	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	3	3	**12**
Baha'i	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	**49**
Taoists	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	No data
United Churches of God	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	3	3	No data
Theophores (godkeepers) – Latvian neopaganism	-	-	-	-	13	13	13	13	13	**633**
Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	-	-	-	3	10	10	10	**154**
Later Day Saints	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	3	**714**
Sukjo Mahikari	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	**74**
ECKANKAR	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	No data

Messianic Jewish Congregation	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	**52**
Visarion's Church of the Last Testament	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	**60**
Others*	-	3	4	4	5	5	5	7	7	**854**
TOTAL	693	776	823	865	907	1.001	1.036	1.058	1.082	1 367 153

Others: Youth Christian Union Latvian community – 12 members; Salvation Army – 446 members; Latvian Unitarian Universalistic Christians; St. Redeemer's Church in Riga (anglican) – 43 members; "Bhakti Joga" Liepajas Congregation (hindu); Apostolic Congregation „Platones Christian Center"; Ogres Apostolic Congregation „The Power of the Word" Ogres Apustuliskā draudze "Vārda Spēks" Christian Science – 25 members; and others.

As of April 2004, the Justice Ministry had registered 1183 congregations. This total included: Lutheran (308), Roman Catholic (264), Orthodox (125), Baptist (96), Old Believer Orthodox (67), Seventh-day Adventist (50), members of Jehovah's Witnesses (13), Methodist (13), Jewish (13), Buddhist (5), Muslim (15), Hare Krishna (11), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) (4), and more than 100 other congregations.

2. Clergy of religious organizations in Latvia

Denomination	2002	2003
Roman Catholics	221	133
Lutherans	149	160
Baptists	80	80
Methodists	9	8
Evangelicals	77	64
Orthodox	75	75
Pentecostals	55	56
Seventh Day Adventists	35	35
Old Believers	35	36
Jehovah's Witnesses	26	38
New Generation	21	20

Total: 808 clergy

Church buildings, which belong to following religious organizations

Denomination	Year 2002	Year 2003
Lutheran	300	300
Roman Catholic	216	217
Orthodox	122	118
Old Believers	66	66
Baptists	66	65
Seventh Day Adventists	18	21
Pentecostals	15	19
New Generation	9	4
Methodist	10	8
Salvation Army	8	8

Total: 873 church buildings

2. Eileen Barker's "Ideal Types of Cult-Watching Groups."[1]

Ideal Type	CAGs	CCGs	ROGs	HRGs	CDGs
Main question underpinning existence	What (potential) harm is caused by 'destructive cults'?	What are the heretical beliefs of NRMs?	What do NRMs do believe? How do they relate to rest of society?	How does society treat NRMs differently?	What is right & good about NRMs? How are they abused?
Main aims, interests and/or purpose	Help victims; alert potential victims; control or ban dangerous cults.	Explain where and how NRMs deviate from the Truth.	Increase understanding based on objective information.	Protect human rights of religious minorities.	Defending NRMs; exposing CAGs.
Membership	Relatives; ex-members; exit-counselors; mental-health professionals.	Theologians; apologists; believers of the faith community.	Academics and other scholars and professionals.	Human rights activists; professionals, esp. lawyers.	Members and sympathizers of NRMs.
Evaluation	Negative	(Negative)	Neutral	(Neutral)	Positive
Feared source of violence	Unidirectional - from destructive cults onto members and non-members.	Not primary concern (except when Satanic or millennial).	NRMs and/or society; concerned with interaction and comparison.	Any abuse of human rights.	Unidirectional -from society in general or particular groups.
Selected for NRM image	'Bad' or criminal acts.	'Wrong' or 'false' beliefs.	Beliefs, practices & comparisons.	Discrimination by society.	'Good' acts Intolerance.
Ignored or rejected for NRM image	'Good', 'normal' and/or acceptable behavior	'Correct' and/or shared beliefs	Truth of beliefs & non-empirical judgments	Beliefs, actions irrelevant to discrimination	'Bad' acts of NRMs; social tolerance
Sources of information for cult-watching activity	Ex-members; relatives; media; own counselors; negative information from scholars	NRM literature; Testimonies of ex-members	NRMs; ex-members; family; society; group dynamics; rest of society	Legislation; treatment of and/or violence to NRMs	NRMs; CWGs; media; society
Direct knowledge of NRMs	Anxious parents and former members of NRMs	Reading the literature; own previous belief	Observation, questionnaire, interview, literature	Limited acquaintance	Membership, Acquaintance
Methodo-logical approach	Generalizing from distressing individual cases	Hermeneutic comparison of Scriptures	Empirical testing with comparison	Collecting data related to HR abuses	Collecting data; generalizing

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[1] In David G. Bromley, *Cults, Religion, and Violence* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 10.

Funding (all groups use some volunteers)	Membership dues; govt; trusts; fees for counseling & expert witnessing	Internal to believers; churches; selling literature	University research funds; govt; churches; police; trusts;	Larger bodies; NGOs; churches;	NRMs (directly or indirectly); membership fees
Credibility to non-CWGs	Mixed — but most used by media	Low outside faith community	High among non-committed	Mixed; high if larger group	Low
Influence	Strong	Weak	Varies	Varies	Weak
Indirect contribution towards violence	Lowers as watchdog; Heightens through polarization	Rarely effects situation in modern secular democracies	Lowers through providing accurate information and direct contact	Lowers as watchdog of civil rights violations	Negligent effect, though can heighten through polarization & exposing ACGs

The types, which are illustrated schematically in table, are:

- cult-awareness groups - CAGs, (in this thesis called ACM)

- counter-cult groups - CCGs, (in this thesis called CCM)

- research-orientated groups - ROGs, (in this thesis it is sociological perspective)

- human-rights groups - HRGs, (not included in this thesis)

- cult-defender groups - CCGs, (not included in this thesis)

3. Shupe's "Six scholarly perspectives in the study of fringe religions"[2]

Perspective	Unit of observation
CRIMINOLOGICAL Subversive Exploitive	Acts of a group's members which cause the state to define the group as disloyal. Acts of a group's leadership which deprives naïve members of certain freedoms and resources guaranteed to be safeguarded by the state.
PHILOSOPHICAL	Contents of beliefs and doctrine and their continuities/contrasts with existing legitimate belief systems.
ANTHROPOLOGICAL	Rituals, beliefs, and practices of religions as indices of social change.
SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL	Acts of group members thought to reveal certain psychological processes.
SOCIAL STRUCTURAL	Recurrent patterns of interaction within groups as well as between groups and their social environment.
HISTORICAL	Patterns of meaning constructed from the continuities between antecedent events and later events.

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[2] Anson D. Shupe, *Six Perspectives on New religions: A Case Study Approach*, 15.

5. Some CCM and ACM links

CCM LINKS

Amazing Grace:
http://www.gregandsheila.com

Apologia Report:
http://www.gospelcom.net/apologia

Apologetics Index:
http://www.gospelcom.net/apologeticsindex

Atlanta Christian Apologetics Project:
http://www.atlantaapologist.org

Baptist World Cult Evangelism:
http://www.mindspring.com/~bwce/

Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry:
http:www.carm.org

Christian Research Institute:
http://www.equip.org

Cult Awareness and Information Center:
http://www.caic.org.au/

Cultwatch:
http://www.cultwatch.com

Dave's Cult Page:
http://www.lightlink.com/drogers/cults/

Doc Bob's JW Page:
http://www.star.net/People/~docbob/

Evangelical Ministries to New Religions:
http://www.emnr.org

exjews.net:
http://www.exjws.net

Ex-Masons for Jesus:
http://www.ephesians5-11.org/ex_masons_for_jesus

Good Catholic Information:
http://www.goodcathinfo.com

Harbor Lighthouse:
http://www.harborlighthouse.com

Jehovah's Christian Witness:
http://www.eskimo.com/~jcw

Jews for Jesus:
http://www.jewsforjesus.org

Midwest Christian Outreach:
http://www.midwestoutreach.org/index2.html

Mission to Catholics International:
http://mtc.org/~bart

Mormonism Research Ministry:
http://www.mrm.org

Reasoning From Scripture Ministries:
http://home.earthlink.net/~ronrhodes

Recovery from Mormonism:
http://www.exmormon.org

Resource:
http://members.aol.com/djrtx/resource.htm

Saints Alive in Jesus:
http:www.saintsalive.com

Spiritual Counterfeits Project:

http://www.scp-inc.org

Sword of the Lord Ministries:
http://www.excult.org

Watchers of the Watch Tower World:
http://www.freeminds.org

Watchman FellowshipVV:
http://www.watchman.org

ACM LINKS

American Family Foundation:
http://www.csj.org

Rick Rose homepage:
http://www.rickross.com

Steven Alan Hassan's Freedom of Mind Center:
http://www.freedomofmind.com

Ex-Cult Resource Center:
http://ex-cult.org/

F.A.C.T. Home Page, focuses on Scientology:
http://www.factnet.org/

Trancenet, focuses on Transcendental Meditation:
http://trancenet.org/index2.shtml

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