

When it was mentioned in the last issue of *Skeptic* that this issue would focus on science, religion, and cults, *Skeptics Society* member Steve Allen sent a copy of his 1982 book, *Beloved Son: A Story of the Jesus Cults*, for our library. The story is at once so moving and so insightful into the nature of cults that we asked permission of Mr. Allen to reprint portions of the book, which he kindly granted. It is both a narrative of what happened to his son when he became involved in a Jesus cult in the 1970s, and a social analysis of cults in general. Steve Allen is a brilliant observer of human nature, taking both a humorous and serious perspective on what we do and why. His longstanding support of both skeptics and humanist organizations stems, in part, from what he learned in writing this book. How does a rational individual who dearly loves his child react to the news that he would never hear from the child again because he had joined a cult? Steve Allen reacted by learning everything he could about his son's cult, about cults in general, and about why such issues as good and evil, religion and cults, reason and faith are never as simple and clearcut as they may seem. Though the following was written a decade ago, it is as relevant as ever in light of the recent events in Waco, Texas with the Branch Davidians. The book is now out of print, but can be found at most libraries.

—Editor

# THE JESUS CULTS

A Personal Analysis  
by the Parent of a Cult Member

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By Steve Allen

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## The Bombshell

One day in 1971 I received a letter from my son Brian, who was then twenty-four. He explained that he was turning his back on the world; had joined a religious commune based in Seattle, Washington; had changed his name, and would neither write to us nor—apparently—see us thereafter. "Dear Dad," the letter read,

I have joined the Church of Armageddon here in Seattle. We are a church and a family.

Our only book is the Holy Bible, King James version.

The head of the church is our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Love Israel represents Christ and God as the final word in all matters concerning the church, by the total consent of all church members.

I have given up my old name and all that went with it. My new name is *Logic Israel*. I do not expect to be returning to Los Angeles.

This will be my last letter.

I have found my true home and I am happy. Now I can be what I am, a son of God.

Please see that all of the members of the family read this letter.

I love you all very much.

Our address here is:

Love Family

818 W. Armour St.

Seattle, Washington

With all my love,  
*Logic Israel*



To all of us who loved Brian—his mother, my first wife, Dorothy; his stepmother, Jayne; his three brothers, Steve, Jr., David and Bill—the letter came as a bombshell. We were hurt and stunned. Brian had never struck any of us as a particularly religious person. I would have sworn he was literally incapable of religious zeal. We did not know what to think. Questions flooded our minds. Who was *Love Israel*? What was the Church of Armageddon? What experience had led Brian to such a dramatic and unexpected decision? Most of all, why? Why—especially in the light of the love we knew he felt for us all, stated twice in the letter—why had he chosen to turn his back on us, his family, his old friends in Los Angeles and, in a sense, the entire outside world?

Although we had never heard of the Church of Armageddon, we immediately assumed that it was one of the new cults or small churches that had begun to spring up in many parts of the country. By 1971, of course, the whole nation had heard the shocking story of the Manson Family, which, though it was certainly not a religious group, was nevertheless an experiment in communal living, characterized by mindless submission to a dominating authority figure. I knew that once Manson's followers had surrendered to him their capacity for rational, self-willing behavior, they had placed themselves in grave danger, a danger later dramatized when Family members committed the series of murders that brought them to national attention.

We were somewhat reassured by the word "church" and also by Brian's references to Christ as "head of the church," which suggested that the intentions of the Armageddon group—whoever they might turn out to be—were virtuous. But I knew that although the 2,000 years of Christian experience encompassed the high-mindedness and spirituality of the saints, the fanaticism and murderous hatred of the Inquisition and the religious wars were also part of it.

At that time all we had to go on was conjecture. I was then doing a comedy-and-talk television show five days a week, which tied me to the Hollywood area; I could not simply

take off to Seattle to investigate. And even if I had been free, I felt I would have been intruding on Brian's privacy. He was an adult. He had a right to live his own life. So we hoped for the best. And worried. And wondered.

I knew one thing: I did not want to lose my son.

## Reactions

I sometimes think through a problem best if I write about it. I confronted not only a family crisis but an emerging social problem—that of "cults"—which continues to affect our nation 10 years later. [And now 20.] I felt I had to make sense of it for myself, and so, as I explain in the following pages, embarked on a personal study of the subject. This book represents a layman's modest effort to examine at least a few of the new sects and cults, to position the debate about them within a larger context that makes it somewhat more comprehensible, and to suggest that the issue is not a simple matter of right vs. wrong. The book is also concerned with the effects of the new religions not only on the young men and women who join them, but on their parents, brothers, sisters, other relatives and friends.

Before I proceed, a word about words: in discussing Brian's case and the large movement of which it is a part, I shall have to employ the nouns *religion*, *church*, *sect* and *cult*, even in reference to one particular group. No particular onus attaches to *religion*, *church* or *sect*—except perhaps in the minds of atheists—but *cult* has somehow grown hair. My intention is to use it in a simple, factual sense.

One of the most poignant human discoveries, and one which many never grasp, is that part of the troublesome drama of life results not from a flat conflict between good and evil but from clashes between various forms of good. Ours would be a far simpler universe if virtues contradicted only vices. In fact, however, virtues themselves are sometimes in contradiction.

One reason for the difficulty of understanding the controversy surrounding the newly proliferated sects

is that the history of religion itself is an account of long centuries of precisely such conflicts. The unknown authors of the Old Testament described hundreds of violent physical confrontations between, on the one hand, members of what they perceived as the One True Faith; and, on the other, not atheists or agnostics, but people who perceived religious truth in other forms, who "worshipped other gods." On the limited canvas of American religious experience, too, we have seen endless conflict, disagreement, persecution, and occasionally violent confrontation among religious believers.

We can be thankful that the angry dialogue among participants in the latest religious controversy is at least not so heated or so physically destructive as the long centuries of actual military confrontation between Catholics and Protestants which continues even to the present moment in Ireland. Nor should it be supposed that it was only the Protestant Reformation that gave rise to such tragedies and atrocities; for the long pre-Protestant centuries of Christian experience, going back to the time of Christ Himself, have been characterized by endless angry diatribes, denunciations, excommunications, purges, armed battles, and bloody executions by sword, axe, pressing with weights, hanging, boiling in oil, and burning alive.

Charity may be the greatest of the Christian virtues, but in the context of the historical record, humility is equally important.

In getting the religious cults into focus, therefore—a necessary preliminary to rationally evaluating them—the observer ought not to assume an either/or sort of structure with "traditional religion" on the one hand, perceived as a generally peaceable, rational, dignified and socially responsible entity, and "the cults" on the other, perceived as radical and dangerous departures from ages-old religious norms.

We must realize that religion means different things not only to Catholics, Protestants and Jews, but to the numerous separate sects and subdivisions within those three large categories—and, for that matter, to the millions within the

separate denominations.

It has long been my own opinion that no two individuals, even if, for example, they both call themselves Methodists, share precisely the same religious beliefs. The reason is not only that a human being is, by nature, an incredibly complex creature, but that a religion, too, may have literally thousands of components. Therefore it is inevitable that religion on planet Earth will continue to be what it has always been, a phenomenon taking not one but thousands of forms.

Writing this story has served me well. I hope reading it will serve others equally.

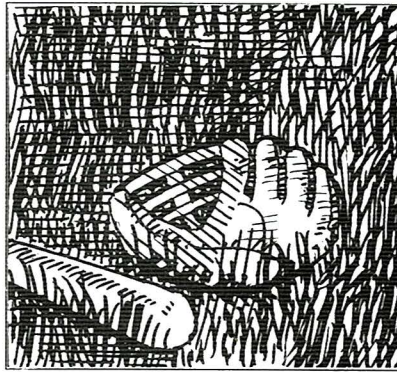
## The Response

In the days that followed the arrival of Brian's letter I discussed the situation with Jayne, who dearly loves her three stepsons. Finally I sent a letter back to Brian.

My Dear Son,

As a Christian I was naturally pleased to learn, from your recent letter, that your new church affiliation has brought you a sense of peace, love and happiness. Since these are the three supreme human goals, you are fortunate indeed to have achieved them. As I'm sure your good mind has already made you aware, it is apparently impossible to sustain an immediate grasp of these noble ideals throughout every minute of one's life, but even so your feelings of security and comfort in your new environment gladden my heart.

I am pleased, too, to know that your new friends are not only members of a Church but of a *Family*. No doubt it was Christ's original intention that all members of His flock should regard one another as members of one human family. It is sad that so often these ideals of brotherhood and closeness are lost sight of, not only by members of Christian churches



but also by members of families. But in each case the ideal is there and its appeal is strong.

It is interesting that the members of the Church of Armageddon take new names when they make their new profession of faith, apparently in the same way that many American blacks take new names when they join the Islamic brotherhood. The two components of your new name, "Logic" and "Israel," are certainly two of the most important words in the record of human experience. *Logic* is but another word for the exercise of man's greatest faculty, *Reason*, which distinguishes him from the lower animals. Most all the important work of man down through the countless generations of human history has been done by applying the power of reason, of logic, to the mysteries that surround us. One by one they have opened to minds bent on the reasonable approach to Truth.

Reason, of course, has its limits. The greatest Christian philosophers and saints have conceded that it can take us only so far in our journey in quest of Truth. It takes us, fortunately, most of the way, but at last we come to a chasm across which it seems possible to pass only on the bridge of Faith.

This, indeed, has been the message of all sacred scriptures—the Christian, the Moslem, the Oriental, and those of the people of Israel, without whose historic testimony there would have been no basis on which to construct the edifice of Christianity.

It is interesting that during these recent days, when you have been making your decision to depend so utterly on the wisdom of the Bible,

I have been engaged in two writing projects that brought me to a study of the Old and New Testaments as well as other Christian sources. As we know from the testimony of countless scholars over the centuries, and can perceive on our own, there is much wisdom in the Scriptures. Honest Christians differ, of course, on the meanings of Biblical passages, and that is why I am pleased that you have made the word "Logic" part of your new name, since without the application of the God-given power of Reason to the complex record of the Scriptures one would have difficulty in knowing what to believe. Reason aims always at consistency and therefore protects us against the accumulation of mutually contradictory views which, in the long run, cause us discomfort.

The news that it may be a long time before you return to Los Angeles naturally saddens us, but this initial response is, of course, a selfish one. What we want more than anything in the world is *your happiness*; and, although I love you deeply, I would gladly give up the sight of you for the rest of my life if that simple decision were all it took to ensure your personal contentment. Life, alas, is not so simple as that, but I do want to emphasize that you need feel no guilt whatever about your decision to leave behind you the scene of so much unhappiness for you over the years. My feeling in regard to this matter, I suppose, is much like that of those parents whose children decide to enter one of the contemplative orders of the Catholic Church, to become a monk or a nun secluded from the world and to devote their lives to prayer in relative solitude. Here again, selfishly speaking, the parents' hearts ache at the knowledge that they will henceforth be deprived of the sight of those they love. But if they share their children's faith, their sorrow is bal-

anced by a sense of happiness that the children are doing what brings *them* a sense of spiritual satisfaction.

In any event, you have entered no such secluded environment. The world is small today, and grows smaller daily. None of us can perceive the future except dimly, and each day brings its share of surprises and decisions that might not have been anticipated.

For my own part, I should like to visit you and your friends of the Love Family in Seattle sometime, as I have in the past visited you in San Francisco and Steamboat Springs. I will naturally not make such a trip soon, since I would not wish to intrude on your new life until you feel there might be some benefit in my seeing you again and having the pleasure of meeting your new friends.

As I write these few thoughts to you my eyes go back again and again to your letter. How my heart is warmed by your expressions of love, and I know I speak here for your mother, for Jayne, for Steve, David and Bill, as well as Robin [Dorothy's child by a later marriage].... All of us are made happy by your words, "I love you all very much" and "With all my love."

I know we are all pleased, too, by your sense of having found a true home. One of the thousand-and-one reasons why our planet is described as a Vale of Tears is that, even in the best and happiest of homes, the simple passage of time brings about an evolution of parent-child relationships characterized, at the end, by a growing apart of two who were at first so close. All the world's mothers start by holding an infant within their bodies, then at last in their arms. And then, in the end, the new being grows, matures, and walks away on his own path of life....

Till we see you again you will be daily in our thoughts. Our home is filled with reminders of you. Not only your pictures but the fine works of art you have created.... I know that you will turn these artistic capabilities as well as your many other gifts to the benefit of

your new friends. Whoever they are, they are fortunate indeed to have such a fine young man as yourself among their circle.

Take care of yourself, Son. We will write to you, but do not trouble yourself about the question as to whether you should respond. That decision will emerge as the circumstances of your future unfold.

I love you with all my heart.

Dad

Brian didn't answer my long letter to *Logic* Israel, but I hadn't expected that he would. In the now lengthening silence I began to wonder how I was responsible for his decision—my version of the classic parent's question, "Where did I go wrong?" That line gets laughs from TV audiences because it has become a cliché. But most comedy is about tragedy; and there is nothing funny in the possibility that you have hurt your child.

I reasoned that if my marriage to Dorothy had not failed, Brian, Steve and David would have been spared the suffering all children of divorce know. Brian's problems were caused in part by my imperfections. When I married his mother, for instance, I was not really prepared for the roles of husband and father.

My father died, as I've said, when I was eighteen months old, so I had no male role model. My vaudeville comedienne mother, though a good soul in many ways, was one of those people who never should have gotten married and who, once she did, should almost have been forbidden by law to become a mother. Her own family background had been so chaotic that she was not at all good casting for the roles of wife and mother. But I have written of my early life in an autobiography, *Mark It* and *Strike It*, and in fiction. I choose to start here with the year 1942, at which time I was twenty years old.

*Mr. Allen then spends several soul-searching chapters describing his first marriage and his experiences with fatherhood, the painful divorce from his first wife and what that did to the family, and his second marriage to*

*Jayne Meadows and the childhood background of Brian. He then explains his position with regard to God and religion, in order for the reader to understand how he reached the conclusions he did about cults in general, and his son's cult.*

## God and Religion

My present position as to the existence of God is that though it seems utterly fantastic, I accept it because the alternative seems even more fantastic. All so-called proofs of God's being, however, seem to me indications and not proofs at all, in the strictest scientific sense. The difficulty arises from the fact that the only two means that man has of measuring his experience—time and space—are both completely mysterious in essence.

Consider, first, space. Either it has a limit, a boundary line (which is absurd, because one could always go to that point and then reach out a little farther), or else it has no limit (which is equally absurd to the mind of man). The ignorant sometimes say they have no trouble in imagining infinite space, but to the intelligent man the concept is beyond understanding.

There is the same difficulty with the idea of time. Either it had a beginning (which sounds ridiculous, since we are able to think of the day before time started), or else it had no beginning (which sounds even more absurd). To consider the problem at its other end, either time will one day stop (which is inconceivable because we can think of the day after time stopped), or else it will never stop (which is also unthinkable).

Against this background we may begin to see that when we deal with such classic proofs of God's existence as the First Cause, we are dealing not with simple, reasonable, and irrefutable concepts but with mysteries that the mind of man cannot ultimately fathom. It is known, of course, that philosophers have set forth various explanations of such fundamental questions, but the fact that the explanations are various speaks for itself. The nonbeliever says, "If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause."

But if there is anything that can exist without a cause, it might just as well be the Universe as God." Probably it is speculations such as this that have led to the creation of those philosophies that suggest that the Universe is God.

## A Larger Perspective

Although at first we viewed Brian's decision only personally, we soon realized that what had happened in our family, with our son, was happening in thousands of families in all parts of the country. In a sense, Brian's withdrawal from the world introduced me to an emerging social problem, one that affected not only the young people who joined some kind of new religious sect, but their parents, their brothers, sisters, friends, everyone who loved them and was concerned for their well-being. In the classic way, I had not recognized the dimensions of the national situation until it hit home. Once I considered the larger problem, I was able to look at our situation in a fresh light. And this new perspective was some comfort—not because "misery loves company," but because my emotions were now guided by the challenge of understanding a social phenomenon. I continued to ask myself why my son had joined the Church of Armageddon, but now I began to ask why so many young people were joining any such group.

When a subject interests me, I collect information about it, at first almost without planning to. I read, start a file. I follow up tips about articles in magazines, talk to friends and interview strangers, tape-record thoughts that come to mind as I'm driving. So without consciously intending it, I found myself reacting to Brian's situation by studying the new movement of which his story was one small part.

Fueled by my emotion, my need to understand launched what became a formal research project. Knowledge



is power, and Brian's decision had made me feel helpless. What were the different groups like? I wondered. Was there a particular kind of young person who was attracted to a religious sect? What were the common experiences within the groups? With time, in fact, I became a kind of self-appointed investigative reporter.

## My First Visit to the Love Family

On January 23, 1972, two members of the Love Family had been found dead after they had inhaled the fumes from a liquid substance as part of a religious ritual. The King County Medical Examiner's Office said the victims had taken part in the Church of Armageddon's rite which involved the use of the liquid substance toluene, placed in a plastic bag and held over their mouths.

Deputies reported that the Church of Armageddon believed that the men would revive in three days. At the request of church officials, an autopsy was postponed until the following Tuesday morning. The victims were identified as *Reverence* Israel, William Vand Brunt Eddy, 26; and *Solidity* Israel, Gregory Lemaster, 22.

I shared the news with Jayne and Dorothy. We were all depressed by it, not only out of sympathy with the two unfortunate young men who had died—and their families—but because of the reported belief of church members that the two dead men might come back to life. Since this is an obviously fanatical, superstitious belief, it cast a depressing light on an existence that we had been prepared to assume might have its attractive and productive aspects.

Disturbed by the tragedy, I hurried north for my first visit with Brian

and his friends in Seattle. Brian was waiting for me at the airport; we exchanged an affectionate embrace. It was good to see him again. There was a slight initial stiffness between us, due in large part, I suppose, to his not knowing how I would adjust to his new role. His hair was longer, and he and his companions were wearing robes of ancient design. In such situations we are never able to withdraw and analyze. One simply moves forward through the scene, continuing conversation, establishing contact. There are immediate reactions, obviously, but they are filed away in our internal computers, as it were, to be withdrawn for later reflection, since the conscious mind is occupied with the combined immediate tasks of sensory perception and verbal communication.

The commune quarters, a group of old but beautifully restored, cleaned and painted homes in the hilly, attractive Queen Anne section of the city, was obviously no withdrawn rural retreat. I could see at once that the members of the Love Family freely interacted with neighbors, neighborhood merchants and visitors. Brian conducted a tour of the facilities and introduced me to *Love* Israel [the cult leader]—formerly Paul Erdman—as well as to a few dozen of his fellow commune members. They all wore clothing of the sort seen in sketches of Christ and the Apostles. Brian particularly, with his longer hair and neat beard, looked much like certain pictorial renderings of Jesus.

I met *Simplicity*, Brian's future wife. Brown-eyed, with brown hair, pretty, sweet, quiet, she seemed, in a way, an old-fashioned sort of woman, as did almost all the other women of the commune. They wear no makeup and look like nothing so much as pioneer women in old John Ford films about the American frontier. Indeed the many women of the late 1960s who adopted the look may have drawn their new image from such a source.

The women were subservient to the

men, though apparently with perfect willingness. *Love* Israel turned out to be just a likable young fellow, not at all typical casting for the role of dynamic leader. Although he had been a successful salesman and, as some of his critics have alleged, something of a con man in his earlier life, he did not have the typical salesman's glib personality, nor the deadly serious air of the religious fanatic. He did dominate the members of his group, but his methods were subtle and much the same as those apparent in any social situation in which one individual must, to a degree, control the direction of his group.

In our conversations there were frequent references to Jesus, but after a few hours I began to get the impression that the image of Christ was somehow different here from what it is in more traditional Christian contexts.

Even now, almost ten years later, the figure of Jesus seems in fuzzier focus in their belief systems than it does in those of the traditional churches. During my Catholic childhood, for example, I heard far more about Christ than I did about God, although Catholics, of course, believe that Jesus was God, in the most literal sense. But in the new sects and

cults the name of Jesus seems to be invoked more for its magical or perhaps even public-relations effects than in any clearly defined theological way. While the cult members do spend time—sometimes a great deal—in reading the Old and New Testaments, they are more given to quoting relatively obscure or philosophically perplexing passages. The Sermon on the Mount, for example, seems rarely referred to. Indeed it is typical of a certain form of Christian mentality that it would rather speculate on the most bizarre portion of the New Testament—Revelations—than on Gospel stories about the actual experiences and teachings of Jesus.

During my three days at the commune, Brian was completely open and affectionate, as always.

"I brought along a tape recorder," I said to him at one point. "Would you and *Love* and the others mind if I put a few questions to you and tape-recorded our conversation?"

"No," he said. "I'm sure that will be fine."

During my conversations with Brian there was a good deal of skirting around the emotional issues. I did not discuss with him the hurt all of us had felt, how we had missed

him, worried about him. We rarely say all that we think in such situations. I did bring up the issue of the deaths of the two members. Brian and the others basically repeated the points stated in their formal comment on the case. The statement, I would think, must hardly have satisfied the families of the two victims.

It is notoriously difficult to preach to the recently converted, but I did say at one point, "I hope the tragedy at least dramatized for you the fact that such chemicals are dangerous. In this case they were poisonous."

Brian, then relatively new to the Family, deferred to *Serious* so far as responding to questions was concerned, although he had talked to me freely the day before about customs and beliefs within the Family.

*The full and lengthy text of Mr. Allen's conversation with Serious is reprinted in the book. Mr. Allen then describes the long process of research and exploration, into both his son's cult and others, and his investigation of what had happened to other parent's children. The book then concludes with a lengthy and critical examination of the problem, the parents, and some solutions.*

## Part I — The Problem

As the parent of a cult member, I can easily enough define the ideal study of the cult phenomenon in our country: like a doctor, the writer should observe and analyze, diagnose or explain the symptoms, and then produce a remedy. For the sake of parents whose hearts ache for their children and for those children whose lives are damaged by cult participation, I wish I or another student of the situation could provide such a study. But the cult phenomenon is not, alas, the measles.

Nonetheless, in proffering my conclusions, I model myself more on the

doctor who wants to help than on the academic scholar who wants only a dispassionate, rigorous description.

The new religions defy easy analysis. It is difficult to generalize about them. There are no simple formulas to explain, for instance, which young people join them. While many critics assume that their membership is comprised of social misfits or failures in personal or professional life, straight-arrow types live alongside the dropouts. Nor do factors like intelligence alone explain the membership. One meets both low and high IQ types in the new tribes. One general

observation that seems valid is that the adherents appear to come mainly from middle- to upper-class families. True poverty apparently grants a degree of immunity.

Nor can we pinpoint a universal or general motive for joining. The presence of those with no apparent reason to join is typically "explained" by the suggestion that they fell under the influence of evil cult leaders with hypnotic powers or an awareness of brainwashing techniques. But the real situation is hardly so simple. And what about those for whom a commune represents upward mobility?

For those who were in trouble on the streets, were drug abusers or had serious psychological problems; for the rootless, shiftless dropouts, a religious commune is a step up. Instead of loneliness, aimlessness, a sense of self as sinful, a sense of life as pointless, it offers friends, order, a sense of virtue, a view of life as meaningful.

Past religious belief does seem to be a factor. Few articulate atheists, agnostics or secular humanists have been attracted to the new religions. The overwhelming majority were formerly affiliated with the Catholic, Protestant or Jewish faiths. Obviously the traditional religions failed to maintain their allegiance or capture their creative imaginations.

### Why Cults Now?

If we cannot find the common denominator that explains all cases, however, we *can* describe the world that gave rise to the commune movement of the 60s. Shortly before the emergence of the movement, leading Protestant theologians, uncomfortably accustomed to the dominance of secular currents in political and moral philosophy, developed the God-is-dead theology, which was misunderstood. Clearly, the phrase is not meant to be interpreted literally; if there is a God, it follows by definition that such an entity could not possibly die. The phrase meant—to put it most simply—that evidence of divine intervention in history, in human affairs, was lacking in the twentieth century, although it had seemed to characterize earlier ages. The people of France, for example, made Joan of Arc a saint as well as a national heroine partly because they believed God had intervened in her military campaigns to guarantee victory.

If God no longer played a part in history, we were alone on earth, completely responsible for ourselves. There was no point in looking heavenward to some kind of father figure. For some people, this view of life was simply too hard. Life lost hope, meaning and order for them. Thus,



while theologians, clergy and scholars debated, religious development on the street was taking quite another turn. Not only was there a sudden revival of interest in old-fashioned Fundamentalist belief—the very sort of thing that had earlier been laughed to scorn by such popular American figures as Ralph Ingersoll, Clarence Darrow, H. L. Mencken and other secularists—but religious and philosophical belief of an unashamedly nonrational nature suddenly burgeoned. At the outer fringes of religious fundamentalism Pentacostalists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, speakers in strange tongues, workers of mass revivalist frenzy, were heard again in the land. Many Christians might have been contented enough had the phenomena stopped at that point. But of course it did not. That it was enlarged much further became evident from the revival of interest in astrology, witchcraft, demonism, numerology, belief in the magical power of pyramids, tarot cards, seances, levitation and God-knows-what else.

To cite an illustrative parallel, sociologist Peter Berger has pointed out that when the Catholic Church chose to accommodate contemporary life by offering mass in the vernacular instead of in Latin, "a period of convulsive disintegration unparalleled since the 16th century" followed. "One of the more piquant consequences of the effort to spare modern Catholics the spiritual difficulties of the Latin mass is that some of them are currently babbling away in *glossolalia* (in growing numbers, apparently), while others are chanting hymns to the Lord Krishna—in Sanskrit."

In other words, the loss of a tradition that could be depended on

resulted in disorder.

At a deeper level, Berger offers another clue to the resolution of the mystery which concerns us—or at least describes a condition within which the partly strange religious revival is taking place. There is in the contemporary world, Berger has observed, "a very curious co-presence of modernizing and demodernizing processes." Berger has centered his attention in recent years on what is called the Third World. From his studies he has drawn the unexpected conclusion that there are "resistances to development" in the very portions of our planet where the modern amenities—plumbing systems, clean water systems, roads, automobiles, modern universities, etc.—would seem to be most needed. "What is most interesting is that these 'resistances' (which I prefer to call demodernization) increase rather than decrease as so-called development progresses." Having observed such a phenomenon in more primitive cultures, Berger then realized that it was occurring in the developed world as well.

I submit that the reversion to essentially nonrational forms of belief is part of this same strange process, a resistance to the development of the intelligence. Although some of the new groups are more consciously reasonable, many have in common a closed-minded fanaticism.

Ours is not the first nation, of course, nor is the present moment the first in history, in which such a pattern has emerged. As Isaiah Berlin has observed:

... the domination of the philosophical schools of Athens in the Hellenistic period was attended by a noticeable increase in mystery cults and other forms of occultism and emotionalism in which nonrational elements in the human spirit sought an outlet. There was the great Christian revolt against the great organized legal systems, whether of the Jews or the Romans; there were medieval

antinomian rebellions against the Scholastic establishment and the authority of the church—movements of this kind from the Cathars to the anabaptists are evidence enough of this; the Reformation was preceded and followed by the rise of powerful mystical and irrationalist currents.

## Finding Balance in an Unbalanced World

I naturally do not suggest that life is either all intellect or all emotion. Nor do I argue that nonrational equals bad. There is much to life that lies outside of the scope of reason but is nevertheless valuable: the beguiling evidence of the physical senses, the content of dreams, the beauty of nature, the appeal of the arts—music, poetry, painting. Indeed, love and sex are hardly the result of logical decision. But the successful life is one in which the two conflicting modes of thought are maintained in some sort of oscillating equilibrium. There must be balance. Rationalists err if they delude themselves that the affairs of society are fully subject to the control of the reason pure and simple. But to abandon reason is to convert society into a sort of large, unvalled madhouse in which every person is his own authority.

Young people coming of age in the sixties found themselves in an insecure world, one which could literally end at any moment. The Bomb had hung over their adolescence like a question mark. They had seen a President, his brother, and a great civil rights leader assassinated. Theirs was also a world in which humanistic values were overwhelmed by science and technology, by the rapid development of computers and by the space race. They also found themselves in a conflict of values with their elders, whom they considered conservative and materialistic. "You can't trust anyone over thirty," was a motto of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in 1964. The fundamental reason was that adults had "sold out." And in a sense the young were right, though they did not understand or sympathize with the sources of their elders' attitudes. The parents' generation worshipped the ideal of

education, for instance—not so much for intellectual reasons, alas, but because they saw that in American society schooling was the primary means by which one could ascend the ladder of the social classes. Many in the older generation could remember the suffering, the widespread poverty of the Depression of the 1930s. Others, if they were not old enough to have lived during that period of capitalist collapse, recalled the unanimity of purpose that characterized American attitudes during World War II and after, when the world had to be rebuilt.

But the young saw a world in which there was little to depend on. Even the families from which they came could not be counted on to survive. In the sixties we got used to hearing about marriages of twenty years or more that were suddenly breaking up. This was one element that definitely contributed to the commune movement, the relative collapse of the American home, a phenomenon recognizable chiefly, though not solely, by divorce statistics.

The divorce explosion in the last 25 years was itself created by such factors as: 1) the dramatic shift from rural to urban living in modern America; 2) the increased personal mobility afforded by the train, the automobile, the airplane, the bus, the streetcar, etc., all of which greatly enlarged the individual's opportunities to meet and interact with others, while simultaneously taking him out of the traditional, narrower range where close family and neighborhood influences were dominant; 3) a shift away from traditional religious affiliations; 4) the greatly increased assailing of the consciousness by motion pictures, radio, television, popular music, books, newspapers and magazines which—in the aggregate—tended as much to confuse as to enlighten; 5) the massive social dislocation of World War II, Korea and Vietnam, understood in the context of the fact that war has always had destructive effects on the home society as well as on the battlefield.

Such unrest, taken all together, provided a fertile soil for the growth of dissatisfaction with life and society as they appeared to young people growing up in the 60s. A considera-

tion of such factors, then, makes it easier to understand two developments: first, that certain individuals with innate gifts for leadership or social dominance conceived what they viewed as alternatives superior to the chaos they witnessed; and second, why large numbers of rootless young people so uncritically accepted the social prescriptions of the new self-appointed messiahs.

"Uncritically accepted" are key words here. There is another reason why at present Christianity in its least intellectual aspect—obscure sects and fundamentalism—is undergoing one of its periodic waves of resurgence. Neither we nor our children know how to think, how to reason, how to evaluate logically the arguments of those who want to sell us one bill of goods or another. I believe, in fact, that over the past 25 years there has been a steady, demonstrable deterioration of the American intelligence. To me, the proliferation of partly mindless belief can be ascribed in large part to ignorance of relevant information and the inability to think well.

We mentally respond on the basis of our conditioning, but we do not feel comfortable with active, logical thought. Instead of reasoning our way to a hypothesis or conclusion, we let tribal loyalty, bias, prejudice, superstition or self-interest lead us. We too often think with our emotions or our egos rather than our brains. Consider some of the beliefs we hold: "Opposites attract." "Fish is brain food." "There's nothing new under the sun." "The mental health movement is a Communist plot." We are full of such misinformation.

It is no surprise, then, that many of our children listen uncritically to the appeals of cult leaders or the enthusiasm of their peers.

## Interpretations

The present rise of nonrational belief results in part from the unhappy confluence of the notoriously weak human mind with that notoriously difficult collection of books—as seminary students across the nation bear witness—the Bible. Most people assume that as regards the great majority of statements, there is an

essentially simple interpretation that is the right one; and that, to the extent that other interpretations present themselves, they are likely to be introduced by individuals of low intelligence or ill will. But this is not true. Laws, for obvious reasons, are worded more carefully than any other class of statements, yet an entire legal and judicial profession is concerned with their *interpretation*. Statements found in the Oriental Scriptures, the Koran and the Bible—in sharp contrast to the style of legal language—are often vague, abstract, impenetrable, mysterious. Now if it takes the most brilliant legal minds of a society to interpret laws, it is inevitable that there is far less agreement, even among the best-intentioned Biblical scholars, about the meaning of Scriptural passages.

Every theologian is perfectly aware of this, but the country is full of poorly educated religious fanatics who are convinced that every passage of Scripture has one correct interpretation—their own, needless to say—



and that all those who do not accept such divine truth are either sadly misguided or consciously demonic. Of course, not every specific opinion or belief held by religious or political fanatics is itself in error. The most stupid individuals, the most evil, the most ignorant, the least informed, nevertheless are not totally mistaken. Their evil and error are invariably mixed with a certain amount of accurate information or reasonable belief. Unfortunately they hold to the nonsensical part with a fervor equal to—perhaps even surpassing—that which characterizes their more sensible views.

It is crucial here to distinguish between fanaticism and firm belief. The latter can be admirable, even necessary in the context of certain social dramas, but there is nothing

admirable in loyalty of the mindless sort, loyalty that is quite prepared to cast aside all ethical and moral considerations so long as the believer can convince himself that the crimes, atrocities, or inanities he commits are performed in the service of the True Faith.

Not only are there irrational elements in the beliefs of various of the new faiths, but also some of their practices tend to discourage independent exercise of reason. For a brief period early in its existence, the Love Family permitted its members to read nothing but the Bible. Whatever benefit the reading of the Scriptures may impart, there is not the slightest doubt that reading literally nothing but the Bible will lead, within a fairly short time, to a remarkable ignorance about matters that mankind has for thousands of years considered of enormous importance. Fortunately, in time the Family realized it could not educate its young without secular books. It now has various texts available, a few of which I have provided myself.

## Part II—Parents

The parents of some cult members are sincere and perhaps devout adherents of a traditional church, and their shock and sadness are especially understandable. It has always been an unpleasant experience for Catholics when their children renounce the Church and join another; unpleasant for Protestants when their children become Catholics; and even more shocking for devout Jewish families when a son or daughter abandons the faith that has sustained Jews for thousands of years and becomes a Christian.

I have the impression that by 1980 many parents had made either reasonably or totally comfortable adjustments to such wrenching changes, although this usually takes

quite some time. But many others have not. Some of these have formed organizations by means of which they share their mutual anguish or outrage. Citizens for Religious Freedom, for example, is one such organization. It takes an outspoken stand on the issue, and its members have frequently resorted to kidnapping as part of what they call a *deprogramming* process. The philosophical rationale for such methods—which are sometimes illegal—runs as follows: My son (or daughter) was enticed into this evil cult against his wishes and certainly against his better judgment. He is being kept a prisoner, brainwashed with pseudoreligious propaganda, made subject to the will of a self-deluded would-be

Messiah, and therefore must be taken—by force if necessary—out of such a bizarre setting.

A vitally important factor affecting the decision to resort to such means, of course, is the age of the young person involved. If a boy or girl is only 16 or 17, it is understandable that parents would demand the return of the teenager. If, on the other hand, the new convert is an adult, the situation is quite different, both legally and morally.

Because Brian was a fully self-responsible adult when he became a member of the Love Family, it follows that I had no moral or legal right to force him to conform to my own social standards. Also, the experience with kidnapping and depro-

gramming, for the most part conducted under the auspices of Ted Patrick, has not been such as to encourage common recourse to this particular method of addressing the problem. I have spoken to a few young people who have been deprogrammed. While some of them have returned to the Love Family—as they have to other religious groups—others have permanently disassociated themselves from the Seattle group. But in most such cases I have the impression that their minds have by no means simply been wiped clean of the experience. Some ex-members who now speak critically of the communes seem, to those who meet them, to be—well, descriptions involve such terms as "odd," "still a little strange somehow," "not entirely with it," "still a religious fanatic," etc. There are exceptions, of course, and the six or seven such cases that have come to my attention by no means constitute a nationwide survey; it would be dangerous to draw conclusions on the basis of so small a sample.

## Freedom and Religion

The controversy over deprogramming is additionally confused, not clarified, by virtue of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which guarantees religious freedom.

The American founding fathers were well aware that if all of us spoke our minds on the subject of religions other than our own, our opinions about most such faiths would be considerably less than flattering. Those to whom church affiliation or attendance is largely a social matter are inclined to be tolerant and compassionate. But to the degree to which a Catholic, Jew or Protestant is fiercely loyal to his own faith and personally convinced that it is the best of all possible religions, his opinion of other philosophies may be conveyed by such adjectives as *superstitious*, *absurd*, *dangerous*, *fanatical*, *bigoted*, *antisocial*, etc.

Obviously the law must therefore protect all Americans against encroachments on their religious conscience, since "the people" cannot automatically be depended on to guarantee such freedom.

It is one of America's proud boasts that it guarantees freedom of religion and freedom *from* religion. Our government is prohibited by law—which is to say by the Constitution—from controlling religions as such. But not all the fruits of freedom are admirable, and just as the Constitution protects the religious liberty of the more socially accepted traditional forms of faith, so it protects radical, bizarre and peculiar religions and sects.

But it is not up to parents' organizations alone to address the large problem of parental feelings. The sects, too, to the extent that their members are capable of rationality and thus Christian compassion, must engage in an examination of conscience. Since not only the Love Family but all the Christian communal groups preach love—we may assume quite sincerely—it follows that they are under the moral obligation to direct this virtuous emotion to the whole world, including members' own actual parents, those who brought them into the world and supported them financially, in most cases up to the very moment of their entry into a communal sect.

Such parents, particularly during the early period of their shocking separation from their children, desperately require emotional support. In addition to the simple sense of loss and puzzlement, they will inevitably search their own consciences and—rightly or wrongly—feel guilty.

In the case of some cult groups, the parents' suffering will be even more acute because of the absurd preaching that the parents represent Satanic or otherwise evil, destructive forces. We know, to our sorrow, that there is no shortage of parents in the world who are, in fact, evil and destructive, since the criminal, the violent, the depraved are as likely to become parents as anyone else. It would therefore be perfectly reasonable if a given cult leader said to a new adherent, "We have information that your father and mother are evil, sinful individuals and we think you are well out of their home." But to preach criticism of all parents, as an overreaching generality, is itself evil and stupid, particularly when in the next breath cult leaders are preaching

love, sweetness and light.

Fortunately, in the Love Family at least, I have seen no evidence of such anti-parent thinking or indoctrination. Even as regards individual mothers and fathers who have made clear their dislike for the group, the only reaction I have seen is a sort of sad, resigned hope that the parents will somehow, in time, perceive the situation in what the members of the sect see as more realistic terms.

Some parents believe that accommodation of a sort is possible with the Love Family but not with the Children of God or the Unification Church, among others. Since no two cult groups are identical, it is reasonable to distinguish among them.

One of the unfortunate, if inevitable, things about controversy is that it leads to a polarization of argument. The young commune members want to view practically all aspects of their experience as noble, uplifting, enriching, spiritual, while critics and angry parents profess to see nothing but evil in the new religious forms. The fact is that there are elements of justice in both arguments.

Some commune members may imagine they are conceding a point to the opposition when they say, "Well, of course what happened in Jonestown was a disaster, and the Manson Family was a criminal and certainly nonreligious operation."

These statements are true enough, but they fall very far short of an honest recognition of the problem. Sect members, are the practices of your group perfect? You know they are not, for there is no perfection in the physical universe. Consider, then, in what sense and to what degree do you fall short of perfection?

Those parents who object to the cults are sometimes guilty of making comparisons between the communal life and existence in the outside world that do not incorporate enough material reality to be meaningful. The commune or cult affiliation may be perceived in totally—or at least largely—critical terms, while the noncommunal alternative may be perceived, and spoken of, in almost ideal terms. Again, had life in the world appealed to these young people, they would not have wanted to reject it.

## Part III—Solutions

As regards the "solution" to the problem posed by the proliferation of new religions, what can one say? First of all, not everyone agrees that there is a problem. We must remember that the social and moral condition of some members is preferable to their preconversion state. And—galling as the fact may be to millions of observers—many individual members of cults seem perfectly content with their lot. If they are ever to return to the world, most will do it on their own terms and in their own good time. Those who are praying for such an outcome will be encouraged by the fact that, historically, philosophical communes in the United States have rarely persisted. They arise, flourish, and then—for a variety of reasons—dissolve.

We must hope that these young people retain some of their critical skills; that they can see, for example, the danger of investing total confidence in a leader who is, after all, another human being. Although it is unfair to compare all religious sects and leaders with Charles Manson and the Reverend Jim Jones and their groups (Manson's group was not religious, in the first place; Jones's was, but it does not follow that because he turned into a monster, other leaders of new small churches are essentially evil), in another sense the comparison is legitimate: such cases teach the danger of investing *total* loyalty in one who is merely another person. Being totally subservient to God, or to one's interpretation of Jesus Christ, is one thing. But paying to a man the same sort of subservience—which is properly part of worship, of adoration—is quite another matter. No Catholic would dream of investing his spiritual loyalties heart and soul in the Pope, however much he might honor and revere whatever gentleman happens to hold the supreme office of his church at any given period. After all,

there have been popes who were licentious and murderous. It is reasonable, then—at least within the context of cult members' general assumptions—for them to hold in particularly high respect *Love* Israel, Ron Hubbard, Moses Berg or other leaders. But the wise believer must always protect himself by reserving common sense, so that if a revered leader suddenly orders murder, suicide or any other actual crime, the believer will automatically say to himself, "The leader has gone too far. I am therefore no longer under obligation to follow him."

Nor is it only specific crimes that can serve as warning signals to the adherents of the new faiths. Any obvious offense to traditional morality, reason or even common sense ought immediately to be taken very seriously. Thousands of individual adherents of the new groups do arrive at such points of awareness. As a result their faith in the infallibility of the leader weakens and they simply leave him. But an even greater number seem to have been blinded by the very fact of their faith, so that they are no longer capable of making judgments based on evidence and reason. This is a point to which every True Believer should give the most careful consideration. Neither he nor his leader is protected from criticism simply because his activity is religious.

### Learning to Reason

What can those who are unsympathetic to the commune movement do? Unfortunately, little of an immediate nature. I do not believe that there is any overall means by which the problem of irrational religious behavior can be cured. It can, however, be prevented or discouraged. But it is a social dilemma as complex as the problem of crime. There are short-term measures, such as build-

ing more prisons, hiring more police, etc., but all of these together have never solved the problem. To do that would require a massive reorganization of society from the ground up. Just so, our society as presently constituted is likely to perpetuate the cult problem in the short run, rather than resolve it.

Thus, preventive measures are vital. The prevention I urge is that our society undertake a formal commitment to reason. We must inculcate a respect for wisdom rather than attaching credit to blind belief. Man was not put on this earth primarily to buy philosophical merchandise before examining it, just as he was not put here to turn out hit record albums, to be utterly irresistible to the opposite sex, to use cocaine, or to wear the tightest possible jeans.

Do not be deluded that all that is needed is a return to good old-fashioned common sense. No one would deny the shortage of common sense. But we need more than that. Common sense might be compared to playing a musical instrument by ear. It's nice if you can do it, but it's better if you can also read music and know something about the theory behind it. Common sense, after all, for long centuries made man comfortable in his certainty that the earth was flat, that the sun goes around the earth, and that women are inferior, etc. Man starts—if he is fortunate—with common sense, but to it he must add the applied power of reasoning, aided by the observations and methods of science.

We must do a number of things, and as quickly as possible, to encourage respect for reason in our society. We must teach the simple lesson, for instance, that there is a difference between conclusive evidence and consistent evidence. Consistent evidence argues only that we are still on the right track. Conclusive evidence shows we have reached the end of

that track. We must, in fact, *add a fourth "R" to our formal process of early education*. The four would be readin', writin', 'rithmetic and reasoning. It might be objected that you cannot introduce a six-year-old child to logical reasoning of a subtle and sophisticated nature. Indeed you cannot. By the same token you cannot introduce a six-year-old child to calculus or advanced geometry. But no one ever uses that fact to argue that we ought not introduce young children to arithmetic.

And we should go back even further than that. We should publicize the findings of groups specializing in infant education, such as the Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential in Philadelphia. Read their books, such as *How to Teach Your Baby to Read*, by Glenn Dorman. Note that the title is not *How to Teach Your Child to Read*. Specialists have learned that inasmuch as we start learning languages in the crib, just so we can easily learn to read those languages at the same point and with the same remarkable ease.

Read a book entitled *Kindergarten Is Too Late*, by Masaru Ibuka, one of the founders of the Sony Corporation. It has been found—and there seems to be no controversy about the findings—that the children who start learning at the age of two have an enormous head start over those who are not exposed to reading until they are five or six. And it is significant that their lead persists right through to the university. Read *The Right Brain* by Thomas Blakeslee. Society must begin not only to study the findings such books relate but put them to work.

One result of proper early instruction in the methods of rational thought will be to make sudden mindless conversions—to anything—less likely.

Part of the problem at present is that once the untrained mind has made a formal commitment to a religious philosophy—and it does not matter whether that philosophy is generally reasonable and high-minded or utterly bizarre and irrational—the powers of reason are surprisingly ineffective so far as changing the believer's mind is concerned. The uncomfortable reality must first be

faced that science, reason and the factual record all taken together are inconsistent with a great part, if by no means all, of religious belief, though not of morality. If we arbitrarily limit our historical research to the last five hundred years and examine the particulars of every argument that pitted the church against science, we find that by and large science has represented the more reasonable and factually correct side of the debate.

But even in personal terms most of us have had experience in trying to "talk sense" to a philosophical opponent and seen that, no matter how reasonable and accurate our statements, they simply do not seem to penetrate the other's consciousness. I recall some years ago having a good-natured argument with a friend—a radio newsman—who was a Christian Scientist. I was defending the Catholic position. At one point during our conversation the fellow said, "I'm firmly convinced that if my faith were strong enough I could drive my car for the rest of my life without ever putting gasoline into it."

I recognized at once that there was no hope of dealing logically or even by means of common sense with such an assertion. I went over the ground once or twice to make sure that I had correctly interpreted what my friend had said, although there was nothing inherently complex in his profession of faith. Indeed he had meant the statement to be taken at face value. The fact that no Christian Scientist in the world has ever been able to drive an internal combustion automobile without gasoline did not seem to him to have any relevance whatever.

## Learning to Love

But formal instruction in the techniques of reason, beginning at the kindergarten level, is only half the solution. The inability to reason is only half the problem. The other half, as we have seen, is the deterioration of the American family, the soil from which each new generation, individual by individual, grows. I recommend that from the same early point our schools begin to provide instruction on the subject of

personal human relationships. We ought to be taught how to love, as well as how to reason. Just as there are millions who do not think very well, so there are millions who do not love well.

We have assumed that the ability to love was naturally nurtured in the home, and the home continues to be the ideal place for that example which is always the best instruction. But the American home is now a partly failed institution.

If you stop to consider it, it is incredible that we train young people for practically everything except for the two most difficult assignments they will ever face. We train them in reading, in mathematics, science; we train them to type, to work machinery, to pull teeth, to perform a remarkable variety of manual and intellectual tasks, as a result of which we produce millions of doctors, lawyers, mechanics, engineers, athletes, scholars, clergymen—accomplished practitioners of all kinds. But for marriage, a complex, troublesome and perplexing business for all its rewards, we prepare them practically not at all.

There are still uncounted millions of young people who approach their 20th year with only the most confused understanding of the whole area of sex, love, and marriage. To many the three seem merged into one puzzling blur, so that millions still confuse instinctual sexual attraction with love, and then, assuming that one should marry whomever one loves, stumble into marriages, many of which cannot possibly succeed.

Many of today's young people, of course, have different ideas about sex, love, and marriage than did earlier generations, but the majority are obviously still making the historic mistakes.

I am hardly the first to recommend formal courses to help prepare young people for the roles of husband, wife, father and mother. But starting to prepare boys or girls for marriage at 15 is starting at least 10 years too late. Better that late than never, assuredly, but the sooner we can get such courses into our schools and churches, the better.

I would not presume to suggest the

specific content of such courses. Specialists know what should be taught; and they have already perceived the wisdom of demanding the support of the church, the support of legislators and educators.

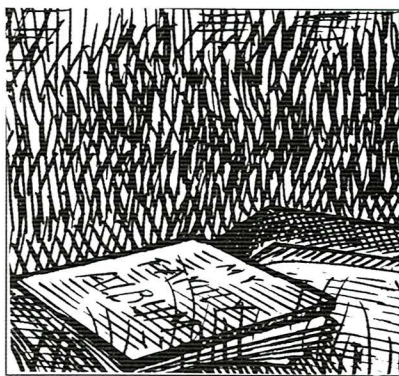
I would suggest that efforts be initiated at once to prepare suitable texts for pre-school-age children. If a four- or five-year-old can be taught to read a book in which he is advised to "see the dog, see the dog chase the ball, see the ball bounce," why could he not learn something about reading and loving at the same time, from a book that would say, "See the dog playing with the little boy. See the dog lick the boy's face. The dog loves the boy. The boy loves the dog. See the boy run with his father. The mother gives the boy a new toy and hugs him because she loves him."

It may be objected that my suggestion is Utopian. No, it isn't. What would be Utopian would be to invest the idea with unrealistic hopes. Just as teaching small children how to think clearly would not automatically return us to the golden age of Greece, where many citizens were practitioners of philosophy, so we ought not to assume that giving every child affectionate counseling and guidance from age five would cause neuroses, mental illness, and unhappiness to vanish.

But one *can* say that our predicament would be far less precarious than it is now.

Thus, certain things can be done to immunize our young against irrational belief. But to do them presupposes the presence of rational, loving parents. And we are faced with the dismaying reality that for many children there simply are no such parents. There may be a divorce, or death, or emotional instability or social irresponsibility, so that the effects of the parents on the children are largely destructive.

Still, in the majority of American homes, it is possible, by consciously starting to address the factors of thinking and loving when children are in the crib, that the societies they



live in as children, as teenagers, as young adults, will not seem so unattractive that they will be driven to seek out desperate alternatives. Specifically, we can keep closer to our children, touch them more, spend more time with them, take more interest in their schoolwork, their playtime activities. If we send them to churches, Sunday schools, or synagogues we ought to share these experiences with them. We ought, in addition to being their parents, be their good, understanding friends. We can never speak to them in their own language, obviously; that is a privilege always reserved for one's peers. But most of us can be closer to them than we have been.

Our generation did not speak easily of love. Many of today's young people speak very easily of it. In many cases, I believe, they are telling us of their needs rather than of their gifts.

Finally, a last word about parenthood. We must remember, as the Catholic convert Kahlil Gibran wrote,

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.

You may give them your love, but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls.

You may strive to be like them but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

*Mr. Allen describes his discovery years later that he had not, in fact, lost his son at all, as he recalls after a trip to Seattle and a reunion with Brian's brother, Steve.*

## Resolution

I put my head back, closed my eyes and smiled. It was good that my two sons had reestablished contact. Although I am sure he would never express such an opinion, perhaps Steve had felt some degree of shame, years earlier, when he first heard that his dearly loved brother had joined what seemed a far-out, perhaps dangerous religious cult. Now Steve, the responsible, mature physician, had seen that his younger brother had matured, gained more confidence, assumed responsibility for the welfare of other members in the Love Family.

I thought back to an absurd fantasy that I do not believe I have ever mentioned before, except once to a psychologist. There is no dialogue in the scene I envision; it is merely an image of a primitive cave, the floor of which is covered with furs and other animal skins. In the cave I live, surrounded by my loved ones, as men lived hundreds of thousands of years ago. The significant thing about the fantasy is that on the rare occasions when it has crossed my mind I have felt a strange sense of comfort and warmth.

Consequently, when any portion of the vision becomes reality — whenever, for example, I am in the physical presence of my sons and my wife, my grandchildren, when we are all under the same roof — I have a sense of warm contentment.

Now, flying toward Los Angeles at 30,000 feet, my oldest son beside me, I knew that important family connections had been reestablished. We had not lost Brian.

Relationships between fathers and sons are of a special sort. Although the father may not even be conscious of participating in the creation of a new human self, he must consciously provide for, protect, guide and love it. And yet, in the end, he must set it free....

*Since the publication of this book Mr. Allen's son has left the Love Family. He still resides in Seattle, where he works in real estate.* ■