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Author(s): Bryan R. Wilson

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AN ANALYSIS OF SECT DEVELOPMENT

BRYAN R. WILSON

The University of Leeds, England

The maintenance of original value orientations and of pristine character is a crucial problem area encountered by institutions, particularly in the face of changing external or internal social circumstances. The tensions engendered in such conditions are clearly evident in sects, which provide a valuable institutional type for analysis, in that they have an explicit value commitment, are clearly circumscribed organizations, and are peculiarly self-conscious of their relations with the wider society. Some sects are markedly successful in the preservation of undiluted values of protest; others, notably those which gradually become denominationalized, are much less so. This paper seeks to distinguish and characterize distinctive types of sect, and to use such characterizations to determine the specific elements, and combinations of elements, which promote or retard such development.

THE tendency for sects to become denominations has frequently been noted, and on the basis of this tendency the generalization has sometimes been made that a sect-type organization can exist for only one generation, that in the second generation the sect (and the cult in Becker's use of the term) becomes a church or a denomination.¹ Yet, if one survey existing religious organizations, it is evident that, in both the sociological and the everyday use of the term, some sects persist as such over several generations. In view of the fact that some sects have undeniably gravitated towards a denominational structure, however, we need to know just what factors in the organization and circumstances of sects promote or retard this development.² Since sects are not all of

a piece, we need to distinguish and delineate certain sub-types which should prove of greater predictive utility than does the grosser concept of the sect, and with which we may pass from crude hypothesis to more fully developed theory. Once these sub-types have been identified we may turn to the elements in sect organization which are focal points of tension. It is here hypothesized that

Durham: Duke University Press, 1946, suggested an alternative development for the sect, into an "established sect." More recently Yinger has suggested that established sects develop because they emphasize the evil nature of society, while denominationalizing sects are those which stress the reduction of individual anxiety and guilt—a conclusion generally consistent with the analysis proposed here; see Yinger's *Religion, Society and the Individual*, New York: Macmillan, 1957, pp. 151-152. Recognition of the limitations of the Niebuhr hypothesis is offered in the context of a discussion somewhat different from the above by Benton Johnson, "A Critical Appraisal of Church-Sect Typology," *American Sociological Review* 22 (February, 1957), pp. 88-92. For another approach to this process, see Harold W. Pfautz, "The Sociology of Secularization: Religious Groups," *American Journal of Sociology* 61 (September, 1955), pp. 121-128.

¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, New York: Holt, 1929, p. 19; Howard Becker, *Systematic Sociology on the Basis of the Beziehungslehre and Gebildelehre of Leopold von Wiese*, New York: Wiley, 1932; Liston Pope, *Millhands and Preachers*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942, pp. 118 ff.

² J. M. Yinger, *Religion in the Struggle for Power*,

sects experience different types of tension which vary according to their own constellation of values, as well as the circumstances of their origin. In response to such tensions, in the attempt at their management, we may expect to find the genesis of processes which cause some sects to develop into denominations, others to wither, some to be exterminated, some to fragment, and some to remain, over several generations, as sects.³ This paper considers the following elements: the circumstances of sect emergence, the internal structure of sect organization, the degree of separateness from the external world, the coherence of sect values, and group commitments and relationships.

CHARACTERIZATION OF SECT AND DENOMINATION

Typically a *sect* may be identified by the following characteristics: it is a voluntary association; membership is by proof to sect authorities of some claim to personal merit—such as knowledge of doctrine, affirmation of a conversion experience, or recommendation of members in good standing; exclusiveness is emphasized, and expulsion exercised against those who contravene doctrinal, moral, or organizational precepts; its self-conception is of an elect, a gathered remnant, possessing special enlightenment; personal perfection is the expected standard of aspiration, in whatever terms this is judged; it accepts, at least as an ideal, the priesthood of all believers; there is a high level of lay participation; there is opportunity for the member spontaneously to express his commitment; the sect is hostile or indifferent to the secular society and to the state.⁴

In elaboration of this general identification of the sect, it might be added that although sects differ among themselves in their charac-

teristic social relationships, the commitment of the sectarian is always more total and more defined than that of the member of other religious organizations. The ideology of the sect is much more clearly crystallized, and the member is much more distinctly characterized than is the adherent of the larger denomination or church. The behavioral correlates of his ideological commitment also serve to set him and keep him apart from "the world." Sects have a totalitarian rather than a segmental hold over their members: they dictate the member's ideological orientation to secular society; or they rigorously specify the necessary standards of moral rectitude; or they compel the member's involvement in group activity. Ideological conformity may be achieved by compulsory participation, but the system of control varies widely.⁵ Not only does the sect discipline or expel the member who entertains heretical opinions, or commits a moral misdemeanor, but it regards such defection as betrayal of the cause, unless confession of fault and appeal for forgiveness is forthcoming.

The *denomination*, in contrast, shows the following features: it is formally a voluntary association; it accepts adherents without imposition of traditional prerequisites of entry, and employs purely formalized procedures of admission; breadth and tolerance are emphasized; since membership is laxly enrolled, expulsion is not a common device for dealing with the apathetic and the wayward; its self-conception is unclear and its doctrinal position unstressed; it is content to be one movement among others, all of which are thought to be acceptable in the sight of God; it accepts the standards and values of the prevailing culture and conventional morality; there is a trained professional ministry; lay participation occurs but is typically restricted to particular sections of the laity and to particular areas of activity; services are formalized and spontaneity is absent; education of the young is of greater concern than the

³ The type of analysis to be followed owes much to the work and the suggestions of Philip Selznick; see especially his book, *The Organizational Weapon*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952.

⁴ The characterization of the sect here proposed is in many respects more general than the "type-constructs" offered by Becker, Yinger, and Pope in the works cited above, and by E. D. C. Brewer, "Sect and Church in Methodism," *Social Forces* 30 (May, 1952), pp. 400-408. It omits such characteristics as subjectivism, informality, the expression of fervor, and poverty, since these characteristics appear to belong to certain sub-types only.

⁵ Thus in Christian Science, for example, doctrinal purity is maintained without members being compelled to participate in an intense round of group activity. Illustrative material is largely from the writer's own research into sects and sect literature in England; for these cases and for cases where the facts are widely known or well established, specific citations are omitted.

evangelism of the outsider; additional activities are largely non-religious in character; individual commitment is not very intense; the denomination accepts the values of the secular society and the state; members are drawn from any section of the community, but within one church, or any one region, membership will tend to limit itself to those who are socially compatible.⁶

CHARACTERIZATION OF TYPES OF SECT

Given these general types of organization, we need to distinguish the sub-types of sects.⁷ The basis of the present classification is the characterization of types of mission which might be discerned among sects. Generally these types of mission rest on the ideological and doctrinal character of sects, and serve as useful indicators of the clusters of other characteristics to be found in each type. For our purposes, within the framework of Protestant Christianity, four broad types may be discerned. Such a classification is not necessarily exhaustive, nor necessarily exclusive of alternative types. It rests essentially on the response of the sect to the values and relationships prevailing in society. This response, in the nature of sectarianism as we have already described it, is necessarily one of greater or lesser rejection. The *Conversionist* sects seek to alter men, and thereby to alter the world;

the response is free-will optimism. The *Adventist* sects predict drastic alteration of the world, and seek to prepare for the new dispensation—a pessimistic determinism. The *Introversionists* reject the world's values and replace them with higher inner values, for the realization of which inner resources are cultivated. The *Gnostic* sects accept in large measure the world's goals but seek a new and esoteric means to achieve these ends—a wishful mysticism. This classification is sociological rather than psychological; the responses are built into particular institutions. The implications of these four depictions are elaborated in the following characterizations, and although the empirical correlates of each type are not explored, the implications themselves are not simply logical extensions of the hypothesized types of response. What is here suggested is that, given particular responses *within the context of Christianity*, these further corollaries may be expected.⁸

1. The Conversionist sect is one whose teaching and activity centers on evangelism; in contemporary Christianity it is typically the orthodox fundamentalist or pentecostal sect. It is typified by extreme bibliolatry: the Bible is taken as the only guide to salvation,

⁶ This characterization of the denomination stresses many points similar to those suggested by Pope, *op. cit.*, pp. 120 ff., but avoids making a direct comparison of sect traits and denominational traits, as well as the implication that sect characteristics automatically undergo mutation and become denominational traits.

⁷ An earlier categorization of sects is offered by E. T. Clark in *The Small Sects in America*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1937, which uses rather diverse criteria, including attitudinal, doctrinal, and organizational elements. In the classification offered here the distinction advanced by Howard Becker, *op. cit.*, between sects and cults, and more recently employed by W. E. Mann, *Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955, is abandoned; movements styled as cults by Becker and Mann are here subsumed in a more generalized typification of the sect, and as a sub-type would figure principally among gnostic sects. For an extremely suggestive classification of sects, which has come to my notice since this paper was written, but which shares certain similarities with the categorization here proposed, see Peter L. Berger, "The Sociological Study of Sectarianism," *Social Research* 21 (Winter, 1954), pp. 467-485.

⁸ The basic types of response here proposed may be compared to the typology of modes of individual adaptation in Robert K. Merton's "Social Structure and Anomie" (*Social Theory and Social Structure*, Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957, pp. 131 ff.). There is some correspondence between introversionist sects and the retreatist response, revolutionist sects and the rebellious response, and gnostic sects and the innovative type. Merton's conformist case is clearly not appropriate to sects, nor is the ritualist, unless one admits some schisms of the Catholic church and even then the case is doubtful. See also, Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, New York: Norton, 1937.

It is clear that a given sect may well shift in its response to the external society, and whilst remaining a protest group, alter the terms of its protest. Our analysis here is primarily concerned with the process of accommodation—the conditions under which sects become denominations or fail to do so. A development unexplored here is the sect which, whilst remaining a sect, changes character by changing its response; frequently the shift will be of emphasis rather than of complete transformation. There is some evidence to show that revolutionist sects, under circumstances of external duress, have altered their response to one of introversion. The processes here involved would require further analysis in the light of the sociological variables underlying such changes, both as internal and external factors.

and is accepted as literally true. Conversion experience and the acceptance of Jesus as a personal saviour is the test of admission to the fellowship; extreme emphasis is given to individual guilt for sin and the need to obtain redemption through Christ. Despite the theoretical limit on the number who can gain salvation, the sect precludes no one and revivalist techniques are employed in evangelism. It is distrustful of, or indifferent towards, the denominations and churches which at best have diluted, and at worst betrayed, Christianity; it is hostile to clerical learning and especially to modernism; it is opposed to modern science, particularly to geology and to evolutionary theories; it disdains culture and the artistic values accepted in the wider society. Examples are to be found in the Salvation Army and the Pentecostal sects.

2. The Adventist—or revolutionist—sect focuses attention on the coming overturn of the present world order: in contemporary Christianity it is the adventist movement. It is typified by its emphasis on the Bible, and particularly of its exegesis of the allegorical and prophetic books from which the time and circumstances of the second advent of Christ is discerned. The conventional eschatological ideas of heaven and hell are regarded as false, and the resurrection of the dead for judgment is accepted as the principal eschatological event. Christ is regarded as a divine commander, not only as a saviour, and a high moral standard is based on the moral precepts of Jesus. Participation in the new kingdom will be limited and only those who have maintained doctrinal and moral rectitude will be eligible; admission to the fellowship is by thorough understanding of necessary doctrine, and not by affirmation of conversion. Evangelism is undertaken by way of preaching the word but quick conversions are not sought and revivalism is despised as emotional and misguided. The established church is regarded as fulfilling the role of the anti-Christ: clerical learning is despised (but science is depreciated only in so far as its doctrines conflict with adventist biblical exegesis) and the professional ministry is vigorously opposed. Separation from the world is a more crucial interdiction than are restrictions placed upon certain worldly activities. The sect is hostile towards the wider

society and looks forward to its overthrow.⁹ Examples are Jehovah's Witnesses and the Christadelphians.

3. The Introversionist—or pietist—sect directs the attention of its followers away from the world and to the community and more particularly to the members' possession of the Spirit; in recent Christianity it is exemplified in the pietist sect. Such a sect is typified by reliance on inner illumination, whether this be regarded as the voice of conscience or the action of the Holy Ghost. The Bible is a source or stimulant of inner inspiration and ethical insight; doctrine is of lesser importance in that the letter has surrendered to the spirit, the deepening of which is a central preoccupation. The sect develops a particular *Weltanschauung* and considers itself an enlightened elect; inner values may be regarded as incommunicable and eschatological ideas are unarticulated or of little significance. No evangelism is undertaken and a strong ingroup morality is developed; the sect withdraws from the world, or allows its members to be active in the world only for human betterment at the behest of conscience and at the periphery of social concern. It is indifferent to other religious movements. It admits of no spiritual directors or ministers. Examples include some Holiness movements, Quakers, and the Society of the Truly Inspired (Amana Community).

4. The Gnostic sect emphasizes some special body of teaching of an esoteric kind. In contemporary Christianity it is a sect offering a new or revived interpretation of Christian teaching. It accepts the Bible as allegorical and complementary to its own gnosis; conventional Christian eschatology is replaced by a more optimistic and esoteric eschatology; Christ is a wayshower, an exemplar of truth, rather than a saviour. Christian mystical teachings, such as the Trinity, are replaced by other more exclusive mysticism, the significance of which the adherent

⁹ The similarities of the adventist type sect and the revolutionary political movement have been brought out by Donald G. MacRae in "The Bolshevik Ideology," *The Cambridge Journal*, 3 (December, 1954), pp. 164-177, and are also dealt with in Bryan R. Wilson, *Minority Religious Movements in Modern Britain* (forthcoming). See also Werner Cohn, "Jehovah's Witnesses as a Proletarian Movement," *The American Scholar*, 24 (Summer, 1955), pp. 281-298.

can hope only gradually to penetrate; doctrine includes teachings which replace secular scientific explanations, and offer a cosmology, an anthropology, and a psychology of their own. The utility of the gnosis for everyday life is emphasized, particularly in the achievement of worldly success, self-realization, health, material well-being and happiness. Conversion is an alien concept to the Gnostic sect, but instruction and guidance is offered to the outsider or the neophyte; there are stages in understanding: enlightenment "unfolds." There is a charismatic leader (or a succession of such leaders) who pronounces wisdom; ministers are usually styled as teachers or guides, and ministerial functions are subdivided among laity with appropriate qualification. Other churches are regarded with indifference as ignorant or backward; secular knowledge is seen as valid and useful relatively, except where it contravenes sect teaching. The cultural standards of the society are accepted and even utilized: the Gnostic sectarian does not withdraw from the world but seeks to use his special knowledge for his own advancement, or that of the movement, in the world. These traits are found, for example, in Christian Science, New Thought sects, Koreshanity, and the Order of the Cross.¹⁰

CIRCUMSTANCES OF SECT EMERGENCE

The conditions under which sects emerge may, for analytical purposes, be divided into three elements: the method by which the sect comes into being, the specific factors of stimulus, and the external social conditions prevailing.

1. The principal methods of sect emergence are by spontaneous development around a local charismatic leader, by schism,

¹⁰ The types here hypothesized are primarily Christian, and each type finds some support within Christian scriptures. Whether such a classification could be usefully employed for other major religions is doubtful in that, although revolutionist and intraversionist sects appear to be common to many religions, and the gnostic sects occur in some, conversionism is perhaps less widespread. The situation is sometimes confused with regard to the relative positions of orthodoxy and sectarianism, and by the difference between the relationship of religion and the state which prevails in many non-Christian countries and the pattern which has generally obtained in the West.

and by organized revival. In the case of a sect emerging around a leader much will depend on his teaching and his organizational ability. Some such sects disappear when the leader dies or departs. Others, particularly those in which the leader offers a new gnosis which is consonant with the age, spread and retain their identity. The gnosis may be a new combination of ideas or the retailing of older ideas to a new audience.¹¹ Thus the optimism, feminism, and success-orientation of the New Thought sects and of Christian Science fitted well with American ideals at the end of the nineteenth century. If the leader offers a variant of traditional Christianity, however, then such a group is likely to remain local and, if persisting, eventually to make common cause with other fundamentalist movements or with the fundamentalist wing of one of the larger denominations, usually the Baptists. Many independent missions of this type joined with the pentecostal sects in England during the first three decades of this century. But if such sects spread they appear to be particularly likely to become denominationalized, as the distinctive needs of members change—assuming that there is no constant stream of new admissions to keep alive the pristine spirit of the movement.

The schismatic sect tends to be vigorous as long as its protest against the parent body remains significant, and as long as the rival group exists as a challenge; in this period it is likely to grow only by accretions from the parent body. Subsequently, as the issue of disagreement wanes in importance, such a schismatic group may adjust to continuance as a sect, may decay in the absence of opposition, or may partially and gradually rejoin the parent body. Illustrations of such processes are afforded in the history of the Plymouth Brethren in England, and of the Christadelphians in England, the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Organized revival is the method of development most usual to fundamentalist sects, and may well begin in a non-denominational spirit. Success, however, tends to

¹¹ This syncretistic approach is typical of gnostic sects: many such movements have drawn on diverse sources for their teachings. See, for example, Bryan R. Wilson, "The Origins of Christian Science," *The Hibbert Journal*, forthcoming.

impose organizational responsibilities and, if there are distinctive teachings, sects tend to emerge. The Full Gospel Testimony and the Elim Foursquare Gospel Church in England are examples of this development, the teachings being pentecostal. Such groups usually experience rapid growth and high turnover of personnel; since they rely on revivalists for stability and permanence there is, in the nature of the case, an acceptance of trained functionaries, and in this respect a tendency towards denominational development.

2. The specific factors of stimulus of sect emergence are usually found in the stresses and tensions differentially experienced within the total society. Change in the economic position of a particular group (which may be a change only in relative position); disturbance of normal social relations, for instance in the circumstances of industrialization and urbanization; the failure of the social system to accommodate particular age, sex, and status groups—all of these are possible stimuli in the emergence of sects. These are the needs to which sects, to some extent, respond. Particular groups are rendered marginal by some process of social change; there is a sudden need for a new interpretation of their social position or for a transvaluation of their experience. Insecurity, differential status anxiety, cultural neglect, prompt a need for readjustment which sects may, for some, provide. The maladjusted may be communities, or occupational groups, or dispersed individuals in similar marginal positions. The former cases are more typical for the emergence of Conversionist, Adventist, and Introversionist groups, the latter for the Gnostic sects. Sudden social dislocation, as experienced in urbanization and industrialization, appears to be a frequent circumstance in which Conversionist sects emerge, while Adventists and Introversionists have arisen in the midst of longer persisting deprivation.

3. The external social conditions are not easily distinguished from the stimulus factors considered above, but taken in their widest sense it is evident that there are different consequences for sects according to the political and moral character of the society in which they emerge. In feudal, authoritarian, or totalitarian societies, the sect is persecuted; if it persists it will do

so only as a clandestine organization. It will tend to be hostile to the world (whether or not this was its original orientation) and may, in reality or in fantasy, project this hostility upon society. The very early Quakers, the Fifth Monarchy Men, and the numerous pietist and millennial movements in Europe from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries, illustrate this reaction.¹² An alternative development in the past has been for the sect to migrate and seek an environment where it could live according to its own standards. The achievement of such isolation has, in itself, consequences for sect organization and promotes communistic arrangements. Examples here are the Rappites, Amana Society, and other movements flourishing in eighteenth and nineteenth century America after migrating from Germany.¹³ In such circumstances, to which more specific reference is made below, the sect is unlikely to show marked denominational tendencies.

In democratic or pluralist societies the sect is not pushed into the search for isolation, and although revolutionary type movements (Adventist) may emerge, they are likely to maintain their separation from the world by other methods. Clearly, during rapid social change the various stimulus factors discussed above are more likely to become operative, and it is empirically well established that sects proliferate in periods of social unrest. In this connection, some very general propositions have been offered on the basis of data drawn from the United States in the period from 1800 to the present time. This was a society undergoing almost uninterrupted expansion, rapid social change, high mobility, intense urbanization, and successive waves of immigration (from which its proletariat was continually re-recruited). In face of these developments the original social values were undergoing constant modification through differential acceptance by diverse ethnic and religious groups. In short, this was a highly atypical context from which to make

¹² On European millennial movements see Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1957.

¹³ For a recent brief account of such movements, see Henri Desroche, "Micromillénarismes et Communautarismes Utopique en Amérique du Nord du XVII^e au XIX^e Siècle," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions*, 4 (Juillet-Décembre, 1957), pp. 57-92.

generalizations concerning the development of sects. The absence of tradition and of stable class differences, the promotion of denominational competition, and the expectation of growth and development resulted in extreme accommodation which helped sects rapidly to evolve into denominations—almost as part of a “success-pattern.” In this situation even the Quakers could develop a schism which accepted a ministry and became virtually a denomination. The external social circumstances, rather than the intrinsic nature of the sect as such, must here be invoked to explain why sects become denominations.¹⁴

THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF SECT ORGANIZATION

A feature of sects in contemporary society is that they tend to develop some sort of centralized organization, however minimal. This development has been prompted by the need for communication between dispersed communities, the increase in mobility, and the growing impact of legislation on sects, particularly in wartime. Central organization in itself, however, is not to be equated with a denominational tendency, since central control may be effectively employed to prevent such trends, as with Jehovah's Witnesses.¹⁵ On the other hand, such agencies may be a departure from the original sect ideal—their development may be a response to some external threat to the sect's values, but they also imply the surrender of other values. The most significant question about this development would seem to be whether or not those who acquire responsibilities in the central agencies of the sect become professional *public* functionaries—where functions become institutionally differentiated and specialization of roles occurs.

The initial position of the sect, where there is no local charismatic leader, is the occupa-

tion of offices by members in rotation, by lot, or by seniority, and subsequently to institute the lay leader, usually chosen by the group for his particular abilities. Once the concept of special training of such leaders is admitted, then a step to denominationalism has been taken. Training implies lack of parity between leaders and members, it compromises the radical democracy of the sect and the ideal of the priesthood of all believers. Spontaneity disappears, and leaders employ the status symbols of their profession, seeking equal esteem with the pastors of other movements.¹⁶

Such a radical departure from sect values does not normally occur abruptly, nor does denominational character rest on this one factor alone. Obviously, different types of sect show a different proclivity to this development. We can fully expect sects highly concerned with evangelism and revivalism to be most prone to evolve in this way. If missionaries and revivalists are being supported by the group, the value of special training is likely to be accepted and will probably be provided within and by the organization itself. The economies of scale may well induce the movement to train more people than can readily be absorbed in the mission field, or than can be supported there, whilst there is also a limit to the number of active revivalists who can operate on behalf of a particular movement. The replacement of local lay pastors by trained ministers is then a likely consequence. Something like this sequence can be seen in the development of pentecostal sects in Britain. Of other groups, the sect known as the Church of God in the British Isles and Overseas has full-time itinerant revivalists who preach in the meeting houses in place of local lay leaders. This development may be regarded as a stage in the same general process, retarded in this instance by the sect's strong anti-ministerial ideology.

This type of development is most probable in the Conversionist sects. The orthodox fundamentalist sect stands nearest to traditional Christianity and may have had its own

¹⁴ For a discussion of internal and external factors in a clinical, as distinct from a typological, examination of sect development, see Bryan R. Wilson, “Apparition et Persistance des Sectes dans un Milieu Social en évolution,” *Archives de Sociologie des Religions*, 5 (Janvier-Juin, 1958), pp. 140–150.

¹⁵ See H. H. Stroup, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1945; also E. Royston Pike, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, London: Watts, 1954; Werner Cohn, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ The equivocal position of the ministry emerging within a sect which is undergoing transformation to a denomination, is discussed in Bryan R. Wilson, “Role Conflicts and Status Contradictions of the Pentecostal Minister,” *American Journal of Sociology* (forthcoming).

origins in some larger movement with a ministry, whose organization might be accepted even if its teachings are rejected. The Adventist sect resists organizational change in its confident expectation of an early end to the present dispensation and is, in any case, hostile to any institution associated with the established order. Similarly, the pietist (Introversionist) sect is ideologically resistant to the development of a ministry and, moreover, is not concerned with evangelism. In that the adventists evangelize they do so without the use of revivalist techniques. The Gnostic sect, while usually instituting a system of special instruction, does so for the private and personal benefit of the member and not as a qualification for any particular office in the movement, even though in practice the more highly taught are likely to gain easier admission to leadership positions. Worship is not usually of major importance to the Gnostic sect and when professional functionaries do arise they are more likely to be private counsellors than public ministers.

Elites emerge in sects both at the local level and, once centralized agencies have arisen, also at the center. They may be elected by the generality, but they tend to become self-recruiting both locally and at the center. Central control of local leaders may also occur, and when it does the local elite will be the group which interprets, explains, and rationalizes the activity of the central group. In such movements there is a distinct centripetal tendency of responsibility: allegiance is to "headquarters," "the central board," "the executive." Christian Science and Jehovah's Witnesses both typify this organizational structure. The existence of such elites has no specific implication for the development of the sect into a denomination for the crucial matters are whether the elite is specially trained and whether its function becomes that of a professional ministry. What may be noted, however, is that centralized movements appear to be better able to prevent schism than movements in which the central agencies are less well articulated and in which centripetal responsibility has not developed.

Schism is a feature of sects and of churches more than of denominations (except in the early period of denominational development).

(This is partly because sects and churches tend to possess a much more clearly articulated structure of doctrine and organization than do denominations.) Otherwise, schism usually centers on the question of purity of doctrine, and successful schism usually finds its leader in the very inner elite of the movement.¹⁷ Schism of this kind serves to preserve the distinctive sectarian character of the organization since the schismatic groups tend to become the keepers of each other's consciences in relation to the maintenance of traditional values. The two groups compete for the same public, and frequently appeal to the same sources and authorities in legitimation of their position, thus engendering a competitive struggle to prove the purity of their doctrine and social practice. The Plymouth Brethren, the Mennonites, and the Christadelphians provide illustrations of this development.

DEGREE OF SEPARATENESS FROM THE WORLD

The relationship which a sect permits itself and its members to the external world is of vital importance to the nature of its continuance. In some measure, and by some methods, the sect is committed to keeping itself "unspotted from the world": its distinctness must be evident both to its own members and to others. To this end there are two principal types of mechanism, *isolation* and *insulation*. Isolation may be consciously designed, or unconsciously accepted. It may be vicinal isolation in which social isolation is necessarily implied, but this is readily achieved only by groups which accept a communistic type of organization; such organization, in turn, acts as a further isolating device. Sects which have aspired to be self-contained in this way, and have sought to avoid the "alien" even in those spheres where most sects are prepared to treat with him, have usually been of the Introversionist type. Clearly, such a radical mechanism for the achievement of self-maintenance would mean too profound a change in sect character for Conversionist

¹⁷ For an excellent illustration of this point, see A. K. Swihart, *Since Mrs. Eddy*, New York: Holt, 1931; for further examples in Christian Science and other movements, see Wilson, "Minority Religious Movements . . ." *op. cit.*

sects, while the expectation of an early overturn of normal social relations makes such action premature for Adventists. Gnostic sects usually lack the community basis for such a venture and seek their separateness from the world in different ways. Isolation may also be linguistic, a condition illustrated by the various bodies of Mennonites, Hutterites, and Doukhobors. Finally, isolation may be simply the injunction to maintain social separateness from the alien; this is urged by most sects, even the evangelical.

Insulation consists of behavioral rules calculated to protect sect values by reducing the influence of the external world when contact necessarily occurs. Of course, insulation may be a latent function of the moral demands of sect teaching, the justification for which is biblical or revealed prescription; the sect leaders and the members themselves, however, often become aware of the real value of such precepts. Distinctive dress is such an insulating device, characteristic of some Mennonites, early Quakers, and Hutterites. Group endogamy is a more widely used method of insulation and is the rule for most Adventist and Introversionist sects, the expectation in many Conversionist sects, and the preferred form, if marriage is approved at all, in Gnostic sects.

THE COHERENCE OF SECT VALUES

Separateness from the world is clearly a part of the general constellation of values embraced by sects. The coherence of such values and the tensions which their acceptance involves are discussed below. However, it is analytically possible to distinguish between tensions arising from the conflict of this particular value and others embraced by the sect and the tensions resulting from the conflict between sect ideals and the ideals of the wider society, and ultimately with those of the state.

The principal tension between the demand for separateness and other sect values arises in the injunction, accepted by many sects, to go out and preach the gospel. Evangelism means exposure to the world and the risk of alienation of the evangelizing agents. It means also the willingness to accept into the sect new members. This throws a particular weight on the standards of admission if, through the impact of recruitment, the sect

itself is not to feel the effect of members who are incompletely socialized from the sect's point of view. The more distinctive are sect doctrines and the more emphatic the insistence on strict standards of doctrinal understanding, the less likely it is that the sect will suffer from its evangelism. The Introversionist and Gnostic sects do not experience this type of tension since they do not evangelize the alien, or seek to do so only by formalized procedures. The Adventist sect regards it as one of its responsibilities to preach the kingdom, to forewarn the world of events portending, and to gather a remnant, but it sends its evangelizing agents into the world only after their doctrinal understanding has been thoroughly tested and their allegiance well tried. Equally it does not expect rapid returns, but subjects those who wish to join the movement to examination of their doctrinal knowledge. The Conversionist sects, which are fundamentalists, experience this tension most fully and have evolved least protection for themselves on these vulnerable points. Their agents are young, their doctrine often less sharply distinguished from that of the denominations, and their tests of good faith inadequate, subordinate to conversionist enthusiasm, and easily, if unwittingly, counterfeited by the emotionally overwrought in the revivalist situation.

The recruitment of the second generation is also an aspect of evangelism. There are similar problems of the tests of admission and the process of socializing the in-comers. Niebuhr, and subsequently Pope, pin-pointed a key tension for sect organization in recognizing the significance of accepting the second generation.¹⁸ It is an oversimplification to say, however, that the second generation makes the sect into a denomination. As indicated above, such development depends on the standards of admission imposed by the sect, the previous rigor with which children have been kept separate from the world, and on the point at which a balance is struck between the natural desire of parents to have their children included in salvation and their awareness of the community view that any sort of salvation depends on the maintenance of doctrinal and moral standards. Obviously, whether the sect tends to

¹⁸ Niebuhr, *op. cit.*; Pope, *op. cit.*

embrace whole families or simply individuals is a significant matter. In general, Gnostic sects, which tend to have an individualistic appeal and do not emphasize the normal type of separation from the world, have more difficulty in winning the allegiance of the second generation than have other sects. Pietistic and Adventist sects, enjoying both doctrinal distinctiveness and the allegiance of whole families (supported by endogamous injunctions) and also tending to have exacting standards for would-be joiners, are apt to hold their second generation without damage to sect identity. The fundamentalist Conversionist groups—who often appeal to individuals, have a less clearly articulated difference of doctrine from the denominations, and whose standards of admission are simple acceptance of a Saviour—are most likely to be affected by the degree of adherence of the second generation.¹⁹

The sect's desire to be separate from the world and its concerns—and the values which express that separateness—results in certain distinct tensions for the organization and for its members. For each sect there must be a position of optimal tension, where any greater degree of hostility against the world portends direct conflict, and any less suggests accommodation to worldly values. The typical issues of this conflict of values include: divergence of sect and external society on what constitutes true knowledge (which leads to conflict concerning education); the refusal of sects to recognize the legitimacy of society's legal arrangements and the refusal to accept conventionalized sacred practices such as oath-swearing; withdrawal of the sect from the political arrangements of society, refusal to vote, to salute national emblems, and the like; conscientious objection to participation in military activities of the state; the refusal to recognize the marital and familial regulations imposed by the state; objection to state medical regulations; disregard of economic institutions of society, as in the refusal to register land ownership or to join labor unions.

The means used by the sect to cope with these particular tensions is crucial for the

persistence of sect organization. The sect may depart from the accepted moral rules of the wider society, but beyond a certain point the sect comes into conflict with even the democratic state in the pluralist society. The state does not always win in such conflicts, as the exemptions from oath-swearing, flag-saluting, military service, and medical regulation, all illustrate. But the sect itself, in pursuit of its values, in its search for exemption, may experience change of character. It must, for instance, develop agencies to treat with the state; to preserve its values it may be thrust into new types of social action, new contact with worldly organization—perhaps even fighting its case in the law courts of “the world,” although this conflicts with the desire of most sects to be a law unto themselves. Action to reduce external tensions may in this way generate new internal tensions as the sect departs from older practices and values.

Thus when Christian Scientists joined with other unconventional healing movements to resist state legislation concerning medical care, they appeared, to some members, to compromise their stand that Christian Science alone could really heal. When, in Britain in the first World War, Christadelphians developed an organization to seek exemptions from military service, they allowed the activities of the state to induce them to establish committees at a national level, which conflicted with their ideal of minimal organization and prompted dissension and schism. When the Doukhobors, facing the demand of the state that it regulate its marriages and accept secular schooling, resort to arson and violence, they trespass on their own pacifist ideals.²⁰ Clearly in such cases of challenge and response there may readily be the beginnings of sect change in that the sect develops agencies more like those of denominations, and admits, by the back door, the values prevalent in the wider society.

If the sect is to persist as an organization it must not only separate its members from the world, but must also maintain the dissimilarity of its own values from those of the secular society. Its members must not

¹⁹ Both Niebuhr and Pope base their generalizations on the examination of what we have called Conversionist sects; the present classification has thus prevented or decreased errors in prediction.

²⁰ On the Doukhobors, see H. B. Hawthorn, editor, *The Doukhobors of British Columbia*, University of British Columbia Press, 1955.

normally be allowed to accept the values of the status system of the external world. The sect must see itself as marginal to the wider society, and even when the marginality of extreme poverty, for example, has objectively disappeared, the consciousness of the inapplicability of the standards of the outside world must be retained. Whatever the changes in their material circumstances, the group must persist in the feeling of being a people a part of it is to persist. Status must be status within the sect, and this should be the only group to which the status-conscious individual makes reference. Yet for the proselytizing sect this is often accomplished only with difficulty since the social status of its members may radically affect its prospect of winning recruits. Even the sect of the very poor is usually pleased when a prominent personage is converted and often accords him a place of honor because of his status in the wider society. The classic cases of sects developing into denominations (usually accompanied by schism from the parent body on the part of those poorer members who resist the growth of formality and other denominational characteristics) illustrate just such a conflict of sect values: between genuine separateness from the world and the desire for social respectability.²¹

As we have seen, the Adventist and Introversionist sects are more fully insulated against this type of value conflict. Nor does this type of tension occur in the Gnostic sects which insulate the two areas ideologically by teaching, in many cases, that the material world is less real. Although the member might gain status in the group if improvement in his material circumstances can be attributed to his special sect-inculcated knowledge, still the two levels of experience are clearly distinguished.

Finally, we may note the significance of exclusiveness in the development of sects. The more fully the sect sees itself as a

chosen remnant, the more fully will it offer resistance to the broadening process which is implied in becoming a denomination. Such resistance is more likely to be successful, however, if the sect has an aristocratic ethic concerning salvation—if it sees itself as a chosen elect, limited in size by divine command. Sects which emphasize free-will and the availability of Christ to all (even if they accompany such a teaching with an expectation that not many will in fact avail themselves of the opportunity), and which thus accept a general Arminian position theologically, are much more likely to practice evangelism and to seek rapid growth than are the others.²² The Conversionist sects inherit this theological position and accept this mission, whereas the Adventist sects, who accept the command to preach the truth, nonetheless make truth difficult to obtain. Both Introversionist and Gnostic sects emphasize a gradual unfolding of grace or truth to the individual; although, particularly in the Gnostic groups, there is no sense of absolute exclusiveness, in both types there is an emphasis on an elect.

GROUP COMMITMENTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

At some level the individual member's commitment to the sect must be total. This may mean the acceptance of a leader's commands, or a general ideological commitment, or a more specific doctrinal commitment, or a commitment to regulate all social and moral affairs entirely as the sect directs. In the Gnostic sect commitment tends to be

²² Arminian type theology, as distinct from Calvinism, would appear to be a significant factor in promoting the growth of sect to denomination; Benton Johnson's statement (*op. cit.*), that this development is largely confined to voluntarist Calvinist sects, is in need of clarification. That some Calvinist groups could pass from sect to established church was made possible by the unusual circumstances of the settlement by sectarians of new territories. (It is doubtful whether the establishment of the Calvinist church at Geneva could be described as a sect-to-church process.) Elsewhere the Calvinist sects which developed into denominations did so only as their Calvinism gave way to a more Arminian and less exclusive teaching, as with the Baptists in England. Those groups which have retained Calvinistic teaching in anything like its pristine rigor have not fully experienced denominational development, e.g., the Strict and Particular Baptists whose organization remains essentially sectarian in character.

²¹ The history of Methodism, the Church of the Nazarene, and some Pentecostal groups illustrate this process. See, for example, E. D. C. Brewer, *op. cit.*; W. R. Goldschmidt, "Class Denominationalism in Rural California Churches," *American Journal of Sociology*, 49 (January, 1944), pp. 348-355; Oliver R. Whitley, "The Sect to Denomination Process in an American Religious Movement: The Disciples of Christ," *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 36 (December, 1955), pp. 275-282.

simply to the leader or to the general ideological position of the movement; the member must acquire the *Weltanschauung* of the sect if benefit of its special gnosis is to be gained. There are few moral correlates of this ideological position, and those which do exist are typically personal aids to self-fulfilment, for example, abstinence in matters of diet and in use of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. The Introversionist sects (which may or may not have recognized leaders, and whose leaders may or may not claim distinctive charisma) add to the commitment of the member a distinct moral commitment: certain types of behavior are expected, and there is a strong commitment to the fellowship itself. The Adventist group demands commitment to specific doctrine and specific morality, which further implies commitment to the brethren themselves. The Conversionist sects, while expecting doctrinal and moral rectitude, are less sharply exclusive in demands towards the fellowship as such and are even prepared to extend their general idea of community to embrace "all born-again believers."

Introversionist and Adventist sects are distinctly *Gemeinschaften*. Fellowship is an important value for all members: fellow-members are "brethren;" relationships as far as possible are primary; the local meeting is a face-to-face group. The individual is a sect-member before he is anything else, he is expected to find his friends within the group, group endogamy is the rule, and there is expulsion of the wayward and lax. The membership is a membership of families rather than of individuals and sect values are mediated by the kin-group. The Introversionists are sharers of an inner and unseen truth; the Adventists are participants in revolutionary intrigue. The Conversionist sect shares these general characteristics only partially: its concept of brotherhood extends beyond sect boundaries and its standards are less rigorous. It accepts individuals more lightly, socializes them less intensely, and loses them more easily—all of which disturbs the strong sense of community. Its appeal is to the individual seeking salvation, and consequently it is less typically composed of families. The Gnostic sect is much more frankly a *Gesellschaft*: the individual's relationships to other devotees are secondary

to his commitment to the ideology and the leadership. Brotherhood is an alien concept. Discipline is for disloyalty, not for specific moral misdemeanor. The impersonality of relationships may even be regarded as ideal, since the gnosis, "the principle," is what matters. Since there are fewer behavioral correlates of sect affiliation, the member, socially, may hide his membership and so avoid the disapproval of the outside world.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis has brought out a number of items which are subject to variation as between different types of sect and which help to determine the likely development of such movements. Thus it is clear that sects with a general democratic ethic, which stress simple affirmation of intense subjective experience as a criterion of admission, which stand in the orthodox fundamentalist tradition, which emphasize evangelism and use revivalist techniques, and which seek to accommodate groups dislocated by rapid social change are particularly subject to denominationalizing tendencies. These same tendencies are likely to be intensified if the sect is unclear concerning the boundaries of the saved community and extends its rules of endogamy to include any saved person as an eligible spouse; if its moral injunctions are unclearly distinguished from conventional or traditional morality; and if it accepts simple assertion of remorse for sin as sufficient to re-admit or to retain a backslidden member. Denominationalization is all the more likely when such a sect inherits, or evolves, any type of preaching order, lay pastors, or itinerant ministers; when revivalism leads to special training for the revivalists themselves (and so leads to a class of professionals who cease to rely on "love-offerings" but are granted a fixed stipend); and when the members are ineffectively separated from the world, a condition enhanced by proselytizing activities.

It is clear that the types of sect which we described as Conversionist are most likely to fulfil the conditions which transform sects into denominations and are least likely to enjoy the circumstances preventing this process. The Adventist and the Introversionist types appear to be best protected

from this development, although by different mechanisms: they fulfil few of the conditions supporting this evolution and often enjoy or create the factors which retard it. The Gnostic sect is in some ways less clearly protected, but its distinctive ideology performs in some measure the functions which social insulating mechanisms perform for other types.

In a broad way, we can see why certain earlier studies of sects fell into errors of prediction, since the conclusions rested on the

experience of certain types of sects, sects which existed in very particular social circumstances, and accommodated people whose social marginality and sense of anomie were often temporary and a consequence of inadequate readjustment to rapidly changing social conditions. Of course, to predict the development of any given sect requires examination in close detail of its circumstances. Once these are known, however, the foregoing analysis should provide a guide for the interpretation of these facts.

INFORMATION AND AUTHORITY: THE STRUCTURE OF MILITARY ORGANIZATION

M. D. FELD

Defense Studies Program, Harvard University

Military organizations make a sharp distinction between posts giving the experience and those giving the understanding of combat. The former are at the front, the latter in the rear. The same organizations place a higher value on the exercise of reason than on the acquisition of experience, and endow officers engaged in the first activity with authority over those occupied by the second. The conditions most favorable to rational activity, calm and detachment, stand in direct antithesis to the confusion and involvement of combat. Considerations entering into the drawing up of plans, therefore, are of a different order than those determining their execution, and, in accordance with military status structure have a greater weight in the process of decision making.

I

SELFLESS dedication and inspiring personal example are the polar ideals of the military profession. The trained officer, by selection and indoctrination, is part of an organization that prescribes a rigid model of ends-means calculation and treats human life as simply another material factor. The leader in battle, in contrast, is a member of a caste whose authority is based on the belief that its particular moral qualities dominate environment and that the inspiration of its particular example can overcome the greatest quantitative odds. The officer is totally sheltered by and thoroughly a creature of the system in which he holds his commission, a system to which he has granted an absolute control over his destiny. Yet in situations where fear and indecision represent the common reaction, he is expected to determine the course of events by rising above ordinary behavior and providing a compelling model of resolute and resourceful response.

That military authority has two such aspects is officially recognized. The United States Field Manual on "Leadership" draws a distinction between authority as personally acquired and authority as formally delegated. The former is designated as *leadership*, the latter as *command*.¹ In the interests of the organization it is essential that the two functions be harmonized. The initiative undertaken by individuals must conform to the objectives of the group. The designated pattern of collective action must take into account the circumstances and potentialities of the individuals assigned to carry it out.

Such requirements, if elementary, are not simple. The conduct of war imposes an operational gulf between those who plan and those who execute. The high degree of de-

¹ "Command is the authority that a member of the military profession lawfully exerts over subordinates by virtue of his rank and assignment. Leadership can be exercised by anyone at any time irrespective of the framework of command." *Leadership*, FM 22-10, Washington, D. C.: Department of the Army, March, 1951, pp. 3 ff.