MANSON FAMILY COERCION

A Study of Religious Rhetoric in Cult Structures and Social Groups

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Overview

The Leader

Systematic Indoctrination of Beliefs

The Recruits: Imperfect Pieces to the Perfect Puzzle

Charlie as Christ Incarnate

The White Album

Assurance of the Apocalypse

Distinguishing Cults from Social Groups
The Leader

• Childhood
  • Born November 12, 1934 Cincinnati, Ohio
  • Born to single 15 year old Kathleen Maddox
    • History of drug abuse, theft, assault
  • Raised by religious Aunt and Uncle

• Patterned Behaviors
  • Craved Center of Attention
  • Lies, deflection, self-preservation, manipulation

• Career Criminal
  • Age 6—caught persuading larger kids to start fights on his behalf
  • Age 19—7 years, 6 different reform schools
The Manson Family Methods

• Systematic indoctrination of beliefs

1—Separation of individual ego
2—Comfort within the community
3—Unprogramming
4—Reprogramming
5—Mirroring Behaviors

Absolute Devotion
Exploitation of Leader’s Needs for Power—Ultimate Control
The Manson Family Methods

- Imperfect Pieces to a Perfect Puzzle
  - Capturing of “in-betweeners”
    - In-between high school or college
    - In-between marriages
    - In-between jobs
  - Young Women as Disciples
    - Runaway Hippies
    - Father Issues
    - Self-esteem Issues
    - Addicts
    - Delinquents
The Manson Family Methods

• Leader as Christ Incarnate
  • Love and *Agape* at the core of his philosophy
    - Love for the individual and for all
    - *Agape*—the act of sacrificing self for the sake of another
  • Surrounded himself with sinners, misfits, and the unpopular
  • “he was a giver and a healer, so in our minds, that was the closest thing to Jesus Christ we had ever heard of”—Catherine Share, former Manson Family member
The Manson Family Methods

• *The White Album* as Biblical Prophecy
  • Piggies
    – Entitlement of the rich and powerful in need of “a damn good whacking”
  • Blackbird
    – The rise of the blacks from civil rights oppression
  • Revolution 1 & Revolution 9
    – Call to arms to change the way of the world
  • Helter Skelter
    – Armageddon as a result of a race war
The Manson Family Methods

• The Assurance of the Apocalypse
  • Book of Revelation
    • 4 Horsemen
      – Red—war and conflict
      – Black—famine and poverty
      – Gray—death and plague
      – White—The Antichrist
The Manson Family Methods

• The Antichrist
  – Paradoxical manifestation of true evil—he is Satan’s human emissary on Earth
  – Come preaching peace
  – Lovable, handsome, well-spoken
  – “there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest” (Rev 6:2)
Distinguishing Cults from Social Groups

Methods Cults Use:
- Coercion
- Intimidation
- Threats
- Physical and Verbal Abuse
- Manipulation
- Dishonesty (by leadership)

Disparity in Outcomes:
- 100% retention rate of fellowship
- Members are left worse off than where they started

Differentiating Characteristics:
- Worship leader/guru rather than the principle
- Systematic indoctrination through self-criticism and confession
Why Does It All Matter?

- Religions, political parties, social groups, interest groups—all follow same pattern of indoctrination with similar persuasion techniques
  - The turn of the violent cult does not happen until it is too late
  - Are we at the mercy of master rhetoricians?
  - Manson is a sample of similar, yet larger phenomena
Why Does It All Matter?

- “Manson became a living metaphor of Abaddon, the God of the Bottomless Pitt” (Williams, 2008)

• Can such manipulative speech be forseen? helped? stopped?

• How might we protect ourselves and our loved ones? Can we protect them?

• At what point do we believe the end is near? How do we know which side we are on when it does?
Thank You
Media Bibliography

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