

Ins and outs of 'alternative religions'

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an Oriental and nobody here trusts Orientals. Moon said that if he were white and Presbyterian his word would not be questioned."

Because of the prejudice encountered, the Moonies concealed their identity from the public for many years in an effort to gain social acceptance. Materials distributed in airports and other heavily traveled areas bore the Unification Church's name, but always in very small print. In the summer of 1982, the philosophy changed when Moon staged the largest mass marriage in the history of the world (more than 2,200 couples exchanged vows in Madison Square Garden in New York) in an effort to draw worldwide attention. The same year, Moon was indicted for several million dollars in tax evasion, and he subsequently fled the country.

1982 was full of publicity, good and bad, and this year the group is redoubling its efforts in a worldwide three-year plan to make the movement more visible locally, nationally and internationally.

"Through the use of witness teams we plan to confront the world with three main things: immorality, Christianity and communism," Williams said. "Five teams will blanket the United States, spending about three weeks in each place in an effort to draw attention to the International One World Crusade."

Understandably, Williams neglected to mention another major interest of the Moonies.

Money.

The Unification Church, which was briefly visible in the area several years ago, appears to be financially sound. For years the church has been buying up businesses all over the country both for profit and as an effort to infiltrate communities and gain their trust and respect. One of the group's largest businesses, a catering company, is now vying for some very large corporate accounts, including IBM.

Moonies hope to eventually "inherit" the Earth, and by establishing businesses throughout the world they feel they will be better prepared to assume their "destined" responsibility.

Perhaps the most deceptive practice of all is the Unification Church's methods of indoctrinating members.

New members are allowed only four to five hours of sleep per day and their nutritional needs are often neglected in an effort to make them more open to the idea of joining.

When recruiting, the Moonies tend to focus on potential members that are in stages of transition. College students are prime targets because during the years that they are away at school they are constantly changing emotionally as well as spiritually. Other tar-

gets include people in varying stages of vulnerability. Someone who has recently lost a loved one, been fired from a job, or for whatever reason is depressed is especially vulnerable to groups like the Moonies.

Clay, an ex-Moonie living in Hillsborough, said that "mind control is the big thing with the Moonies. They repeat things over and over until the new member is willing to accept without question the teachings of Moon. New members are made to feel guilty about everything . . . that they are responsible for bad things in their lives, etc." Moonies also encourage dissolution of family and religious ties, and a complete rendering of all financial resources is demanded in the name of the church, Clay said.

Once the Moonies have a new member, a number of things take place to insure that they don't lose him. Members are assigned spiritual parents in an effort to help the new member let go of his natural ones. The natural parents, with the exception of a few extraordinary circumstances, are considered a threat to the security of the movement. In the event that parents wish to see their children, they must come to a Unification encampment. Visitation is limited and a member of the church is assigned to accompany the parents during the visit.

The practice of "love-bombing" (members overwhelm each other with praise, love notes and reassurance) has been found to be very effective in keeping members loyal to the cause.

As soon as new members are considered ready they are sent out to "witness" for the church. These are the people that are seen soliciting money and members for the church.

Maranatha Ministries

An organization often compared to the Unification Church, though significantly different, is Maranatha Christian Ministries

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(MCM), another organization in which money and membership are high priorities.

Maranatha is a nationwide campus organization — evangelical, charismatic and totalistic in nature—but it has been accused of employing destructive cult practices by some ex-members, their parents and numerous campus observers at UNC. According to R.E. Schecter of *The Advisor*, a journal that informs the government and public on cult



Tar Heel/Lori Thomas

Terry McKnight distributes information on the Unification Church to passerbys on Franklin Street.

and family issues, the Spiritual Counterfeits Project (SPC) hosted a meeting to discuss "matters of concern about the teaching and practice of MCM."

"These matters included bitter complaints and accusations about the conversion techniques and maintenance regime developed by MCM, whose goal is to deploy an army of single-minded converts in the task of making America into a theocracy," Schecter said.

At a recent week-long rally on campus,

think about my involvement. In essence what I did was step back and look at the inconsistencies and the problems I had in dealing with them. I came to the conclusion that The Way was not for me."

Acker said that he joined The Way because the people made him feel loved, wanted and important. "People who haven't had this kind of emotional support in their lives are especially attracted to The Way," Acker said. "There is a lot of hugging and affection, and they give a lot of positive reinforcement. As long as you do what is expected things are fine. The Way makes you want to do what they say because of the way they make you feel when you do."

On the other side of the coin, however, The Way uses internal pressure — peer coercion, guilt and other psychological tactics to maintain the ideals of the group. One such tactic is a class called "The Power for Abundant Living." Twelve sessions long, the classes last a minimum of three hours, and, according to Acker, staying awake was a problem. "Being worn down for three hours at a time makes you start accepting ideas that you might not accept under other circumstances."

As with the Unification Church and Maranatha, money is a big part of a member's involvement, Acker said. "In the 2½ years that I was a member I must have invested at least a thousand dollars. The first class costs \$85 and every class and meeting after that costs too. They tell us that it is a slight investment for all that we get in return." Acker said that much of the money is put back into the building and in the general ministry, but The Way has invested in at least two college campuses, airplanes, mobile homes, and a ranch for special retreats and training sessions.

Unlike Maranatha, which is accepting of other churches, The Way denounces the organized church and protests interpretation of the Bible. "Scripture shall not be privately interpreted except by the leader of The Way," Acker said.

"They make it easy for people not to think for themselves. They'll make all the decisions for you if you let them."

Because of the secrecy that many alternative religions employ, it is impossible to know everything that goes on within the groups. "Looking beyond the initial attraction of a particular religious organization is really important because you never know what you might be getting yourself into," Acker said.

Maranatha met for nightly prayer meetings with leader Dennis Darville. Attracting anywhere from 50 to 75 people on a given night, the meetings were designed to increase campus awareness of Maranatha as well as to increase membership. To the typical UNC passerby, the services were generally non-offensive.

In fact, contemporary music pieces were performed by Maranatha musicians as a regular part of the service. Members were seen reaffirming faith in Christ by giving testimonials in front of the group. Several members periodically stood up with their eyes closed and their arms outstretched as their bodies swayed from right to left, while Darville led the group in prayer.

Not to Be Underestimated

The Way has not been as visible on campus as Maranatha, nor has it received worldwide attention like the Unification Church, but its size and influence is not to be underestimated.

According to Norman Acker, an ex-member of the Way, this organization is very powerful. Acker joined the group when he was 15.

"After 2½ years as a student leader I began having doubts about my involvement and certain policies that The Way teaches," Acker said. Like the Unification Church, The Way teaches its followers not to think, but to accept. "I believed in certain things, such as the Trinity, that The Way opposed. I told them I needed a month to pray and



Tar Heel/Joel Katzstein

Unification Church van sits on Franklin Street, people are invited to learn more about Rev. Moon and Unification concepts.