

"Human rights, not religious freedom is the issue"

U of S Chaplain warns against cult dangers

by Gilbert Bouchard and Ray Warnatsch

Rev. Colin Clay at a Students' Union sponsored forum on cultism Jan. 9, said, "We're not dealing with the issue of religious freedom, but with the issue of human rights when we talk about cults."

Clay spoke alongside members of the Society Against Mind Control, and former cult members who recalled their lives as cult members, and detailed their escapes. Clay is the ecumenical chaplain on campus at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and is the author of *Destructive Cults: a Canadian Perspective*.

"There are four basic types of cults and people have different names for these categories. I refer to the four as: youth cults, therapeutic cults, extremist fundamentalist cults, and Satanism."

"Youth cults are the best known of the four types," said Clay. "They attract people from 18 to 25, and include cults like the Unification Church, Hari Krishnas, and the Divine Light Mission. These are the cults we associate with young people."

Clay said that youth cults don't attract older followers because they are very physically taxing. Often such cults allow only three to four hours of sleep at night, and restrict the diets of their followers to small rations of low protein foods.

"Therapeutic cults on the other hand have no age division," said Clay. "Therapeutic cults are usually pseudo-respectable, and will often take over a respectable hotel for the weekend to put on pseudo-psychological seminars." The church of Scientology is an example of a therapeutic cult said Clay.

"Therapeutic cults appeal to troubled people by offering to help their lives," said Clay. "What is dangerous about these cults is that they are often lead by people who know nothing about psychology."

"The third category is the extremist fundamentalist groups," said Clay. "They are particularly insidious because they use Christian buzz words and all the right language, but use the same pressures as the other cult groups."

"Its leaders often have very little theological knowledge," said Clay.

"The fourth category is Satanism," said Clay. "This is the category to which we have the least knowledge, but people are being manipulated and exploited in the same ways as the other cults."

Clay also discussed the difference between cults and religion, and called the issue a red herring. "It focuses the attention away from the dangers of the cults."

"We are not dealing with the issue of freedom of religion, but with a human rights issue," said Clay. "I don't question what the cult believes in, I question what it does to people."

If you are thinking of joining a group, Clay suggests "you ask yourself if you can use your freedom of mind to challenge the beliefs of the group, and if you can leave the group without harassment." If not, Clay suggests you avoid the group.

As for the length of time a person remains in the cult, Clay says "I have known people who've been in cults for eight or nine years and who I don't think will ever get out."

Clay also said many cultists burn out, and are dumped by their cults. "It's still too early to tell how long

people will stay in cults since most cults have only been in operation for 10 or 20 years," said Clay. "People who make it into leadership roles in cults can last for years and will probably be cult members until their 60's and 70's."

People who do leave cults are divided into three categories by Clay, "those who walk out of cults, those who are persuaded to leave the group, and those who are kidnapped."

"Walkouts are people who leave of their own volition, sometimes after only a few hours or days of being in the cult," said Clay. A large number abandon the cult within a few days. "However, few people will leave of their own initiative after three months in the cult."

"Some people are also persuaded

to leave the cult, and the success rate of persuasion like the walkouts is very high," said Clay.

Clay also discussed kidnapping cultists, and mentioned that while he did not approve of kidnapping, and was not involved in any way with the kidnapping and deprogramming of cultists, and mentioned that while he did not approve of kidnapping and deprogramming of cultists, he has "a lot of respect for deprogrammers."

"Kidnapping is the least desirable method of removing a person from a cult, and it is also illegal in Canada if your son or daughter is over 18, but some times it is the only way to do it," said Clay.

Clay says, "even those who walk away from a cult need some form of rehabilitation because they will

be unused to thinking for themselves. "Without rehabilitation they may float back to the cult because life in the cult was easier than life in the real world."

Clay cautions people against accepting freebies from cult members. "Avoid offers of free meals and weekend seminars," said Clay. "Don't think you can outwit the cult, they can be clever indeed."

"The cultist will act loving," said Clay. "They will seem very attractive and they won't resemble the mindless zombies that the anti-cultists want us to believe that cultists are."

"Your first reaction will be that they aren't like the stereotype said Clay. "There is no chance that you'll ever deprogram that person while you talk to him — limit yourself to being kind to that person."

Yard Apes



by Hans Beckers

"Cults" at U of A

by Neal Watson

An Edmonton woman who believes her son is involved with a local cult says university campuses are prime targets for recruitment by cult groups.

Blanche Martin would like to have a chapter of the group Society Against Mind Abuse (SAMA) on campus. The SU sponsored a forum on cultism last week that was organized by SAMA.

"The cult representatives are recruiting, they are very active on campus," she said. "They go where the young people are."

"I would very much want to start an organization here," she said.

Martin said her son, a former student at the U of A, was very involved in religion and the Abundant Life Ministry. "There was a complete and utter change in him" she said.

At first the attraction is in a "hypnotic situation," said Martin "But

they are indoctrinated later."

"There is no question in my mind about brainwashing," she said. "After a while there was no way I could reach him. They're never the same again."

Reverend Steve Larsen of the U of A Lutheran church agreed with Martin that students may be susceptible to the influence of cults. But he said he had not seen any evidence of an increase in activity of the cults this year on campus nor had students approached him for counselling.

Larsen said the recruiting was "more subtle and low-key."

"The answer," he said, "is strong, clear education and neutral information about these organizations." "I think it can be helpful if there is purpose in education."

Martin said her organization was looking for office space on campus and was planning more seminars for the future.

Festival of faith

by Elaine Palmer

World Religion Day, an annual event, is held in hope of promoting unity in world religions by showing the similarities rather than the differences between them.

The U of A Baha'i club sponsored a forum last Sunday with a panel of six speakers representing the Islamic, Baha'i, Zoroastrian, Christian, Sikh, and Hindu faiths.

The speakers discussed the topic, "Youth Can Move the World" within the context of their particular faith.

Most of the speakers stressed the importance of early socialization and education of youth regarding the values and principles of their

faith.

Because of their energy and enthusiasm, youth who are taught properly can be the means for growth and advancement of the society, and the building of a better world.

The Christian and Zoroastrian representatives emphasized the role of religion in providing answers to questioning and idealistic youth.

Each speaker also incorporated some basic tenets of their faith into the discussion.

The questions raised by the audience related to specific aspects of particular faiths, and there was also discussion on the reasons for disharmony between religions.

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