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The rise of a religious cult. (The social history of the all national spiritualist Church of God, Atlanta, Georgia)

Daniel Calbert Thompson

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THE RISE OF A RELIGIOUS CULT.
(THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE ALL NATIONAL
SPIRITUALIST CHURCH OF GOD,
ATLANTA, GEORGIA)

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
DANIEL CALBERT THOMPSON

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
MAY, 1944
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOR AND ORGANIZATION.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior and Organization.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incipient Organization</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency Stage</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formalism.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganization.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorganization</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Progressives</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Conservatives</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Reactionaries</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. CULT BEHAVIOR AND INSTITUTIONS.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE ALL NATIONAL SPIRITUALIST CHURCH OF GOD, ITS STRUCTURE AND SETTING.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Officials and Leader</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE LEADER AND FOUNDER.</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. ITS BELIEFS, RITUALS AND PRACTICES</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rituals.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Passover Service</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holy Service</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Seven Table Feast or Devotion Circle</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. THE MEMBERSHIP.</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bone Fide Devotees</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Casual Devotees.</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Special Interst Devotees.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. ITS SOCIAL ROLE.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Desire for New Experience.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Desire for Security.</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Desire for Response.</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Desire for Recognition</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHOTOGRAPHS.</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have always been intensely interested in the varieties of religious behaviour. Early in life I accompanied my parents to church revivals and camp meetings in rural communities. I would listen to the long, chanted and unintelligible sermons of the ministers. I would watch with interest their acrobatic feats; standing on the pulpit, lying down on the platform, kneeling, running, beating the open Bible and performing a variety of other demonstrations while they exhorted. I would notice also the conduct of the devotees. Some would jump and shout wildly, others would carry on a constant repetition of "Amen." Often it seemed that everyone was stomping his feet or clapping his hands. The singing was lusty and loud. When the atmospheric conditions were favorable it could be heard more than a mile away.

During this same period in my life, I was a member of a small Baptist Church where my family had its membership. The pastor of this church would deliver his sermons in a very enthusiastic but comparatively quiet and dignified manner. There could always be heard a few quiet subdued "Amen," and occasionally there would be two or three shouts or some other form of emotional outburst from the devotees. On a whole, the services at this church were different from the revival and camp meeting services of other experiences.

The difference between the services, as well as the varieties of behavior on the part of individual devotees within the different services puzzled me. If all these people were Christians, then why was their religious behavior so varied?

The answer to this question was partly revealed while living in this small rural community where I was born. I noticed that people of different cultural and economic backgrounds responded differently to the same religious services.

During my college years I was connected with a Baptist church in At-
lanta, Georgia, where I served in such capacities as teacher of Sunday School, program speaker, and preacher. However, I never allowed my activities in any one church to prevent me from continuing my study of the activities and behavior of several church congregations in that city.

In 1941 I became a student at Gammon Theological Seminary. My studies there included four fields: Biblical Interpretation, Theology, Church History and Practical Theology. These studies, together with my special interest in Sociology at Atlanta University afforded me some background in the interpretation of cult behavior undertaken in this study.

The writer wishes to acknowledge the advice and suggestions of Dr. Ira DeA. Reid, Professor of Sociology in Atlanta University in the collection and interpretation of the material included in this study.

The historical suggestions given me on religious organization by Dr. C. A. Talbert, Professor of Church History in Gammon Theological Seminary are appreciated.

For the cooperation and encouragement given me by Bishop E. L. Crockett, founder and leader of the All National Spiritualist Church of God, and the members of that Church, I am deeply grateful.

Daniel C. Thompson
CHAPTER 1

THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOR AND ORGANIZATION

Today there are in the United States 256 religious bodies recognized by the United States Census as distinct religious entities.¹ These denominations are divided into a great number of minor groups called associations.² There are more than 159,000 Church Organizations with a membership of approximately 55,800,000 persons.

Fifty-five per cent of all adults in the United States belong to some religious organization. Church property in the United States is valued at more than three billion dollars. The annual church expenditures total approximately $518,000,000, which is one percent of the national income.³

The role of the church in society is indicated not only by the quantitative data previously given but is made evident through the influence of the institution on the lives of the people. Each of the four major social institutions, familial, economic, political and religious has its peculiar role in society. The religious organization, the church, "is in one fundamental respect different from that of every other institution. Religion implies an attitude of man, not primarily to his fellow man, but to some power beyond his range, a power regarded by every monotheistic religion as supreme."⁴

In other words, the great social institutions, except religion, seek only to prescribe man's relation to his fellow man, where as religious

¹United States Census of Religious Bodies, (1936).
²Ogburn and Nimkoff, Sociology (Boston, Mass., 1940), p. 561.
institutions seek to determine man's relationship to a non human being or beings, as well as his relationship to his fellowmen. Religious institutions are, therefore, elaborations of man's religious spirit. However, it is with the organization rather than the spirit of religion that this study is chiefly concerned, because, "organized religion may be a complex of functions relating to many aspects of social life."?

Let us, therefore, begin the study of that aspect of social behavior as manifested in religious institutions by first determining the basis on which institutionalized behavior is built.

An institution is a complex, integrated organization of collective behavior, established in the social heritage and meeting some persistent need or want. The great institutions are the outcome of that organization which human thought naturally takes on when it is directed for age after age upon a particular subject, and so gradually crystallizes in definite forms, enduring sentiments, beliefs, customs and symbols.3

On the basis of this definition it seems safe to say that the organized life of any people is the crystallization of their social behavior growing out of their attempts to satisfy their particular, persistent needs and wants. The question then arises, will this definition prove valid for all the social institutions in any given society? Let us subject this definition to the test of evidence.

Man's need for food has expressed itself in the economic organization of every society from the food gathering techniques of primitive groups to our own society with its elaborate industrial and financial institutions.

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1Ogburn and Minkoff, Sociology (Boston, 1940), p. 663.
2Ibid.
Likewise, man's need to regulate his sex life has expressed itself in varied types of social organizations, the most universal of which is the family. The pattern of the family has varied from time to time and from place to place. It has revealed endogamous, exogamous, matrilocal, patrilocal and various other patterns of social behavior. Just as the social behavior and structure of the family change, so does its size and function. On the one hand there is the Chinese family consisting of twenty or more members with the father as absolute head. On the other hand there is the modern American family consisting of two or three children with the father and mother sharing equally the responsibilities and governance.

A third need around which institutions cluster is common welfare or protection. In the organization of every society provision has been made to satisfy this need. In primitive societies the small clans and tribes have banded themselves together as a means of protection from wild, ferocious beasts or hostile neighbors. In our modern society great militaristic states have found it expedient to ally themselves in order to better protect themselves from enemy allies who seek commercial, territorial and political expansion. However, the principle is the same, the motive is the same. Man has made provision for common welfare or protection.

The definition of an institution given by Cooley, Angell and Carr, seems to be supported by an analysis of three of the major social institutions: the family, economic organization and the state. Since the religious organization

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3Ibid.
differs in some respects from all other social organizations, the question arises, can there be found in this definition positive evidence to support the definition of an institution as given by Cooley, Angell and Carr?

Durkheim says that the most barbarous and the most fantastic rites and the strangest myths translate some human need, some aspect of life, either individual or social.

If this be true then what are the persistent needs and wants out of which have grown that peculiar aspect of man's social behavior known as religious institutions?

According to Frazer, religion is a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to control the course of nature and human life.

Pratt defines religion as the serious and social attitudes of individuals or communities toward the power or powers which they believe to have ultimate control over their interests and destinies.

Among the forty eight definitions of religion cited by Leuba is included one which might aid in discovering the basic persistent needs or wants which determine the structure of religious institutions. This definition holds that religion is that part of human experience in which man feels himself in relation with powers of psychic nature, usually personal powers, and makes use of them.

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1 Durkheim, Emile, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, p. 2.
Wright defines religion as the endeavor to secure the conservation of socially recognized values through specific actions that are believed to evoke some agency different from the ordinary ego of the individual, or from other merely human beings, and that imply a feeling of dependence upon the agency.

These definitions of religion imply that organized religion may be a complex of functions relating to many aspects of social life. In fact, Durkheim asserts that nearly all the great social institutions have been born in religion. Economic activity is Durkheim's only possible exception because, he states, it has not yet been expressly attached to religion. Therefore, the persistent needs or wants which crystallize man's social behavior into institutionalized patterns are implicitly or explicitly inherent in his religious institutions.

What then, specifically, are these persistent needs or wants? W. I. Thomas summarizes them into four main categories: (1) The desire for new experience; (2) The desire for security; (3) The desire for response; (4) The desire for recognition. With this summary in mind we may ask: what are the various phases of religious organization which lead themselves to the satisfaction of these basic human desires?

Let us consider first the desire for new experience. Many students of religion point to religious experience itself as the essential elements. This element in religion which challenges the basic human desire for new experience has indeed been an essential factor in its recruiting policy.

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2Ibid., pp. 418-419.
3Thomas and Zaramiecki, The Polish Peasant in Europe and America (Boston, 1918), Volume I, pp. 72-74.
4Ogburn and Minkoff, op. cit., p. 666.
From the religious thrill of the primitive religion mentioned by A. A. Goldenweiser, to the invitation of Jesus to his disciples to stop their fishing and follow him and he would make them fishers of men, the call for religious service has been based upon the desire for new experience.

The second basic human desire which Thomas mentioned is the desire for security. It is with this desire that Dewey discusses in connection with man's religious urge or proclivity. Dewey pictures man as living in a hazardous world and being compelled to seek security. Man sought this security in two ways. On the one hand he sought to conquer his environment by inventions which enabled him to turn the powers of nature to account; man constructs a fortress out of the very condition and forces which threatened him. This is the method of changing the world through action, while on the other hand man attempted to propitiate the powers which environ him and determine his destiny. The desire for security, then, is basic in all religious organization because man can never find complete security as a result of invention. Dewey continues by saying that the burden of proverbs and sayings is the best laid plans of men as of mice gang agley. Fortune rather than our own intent and acts determined eventual success and failure. The paths of unfulfilled expectation, the tragedy of defeated purpose and ideals, the catastrophes of accident, are the common places of all comment on the human scene. Judging planning, choice, no matter how thoroughly conducted, and action, no matter how prudently executed, never are the sole determinants of any outcome. Hence men have

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3Ibid.
longed to find a realm in which there is an activity which is not overt and which has no external consequences.¹

This desire for security, this quest for certainty, expresses itself in every age, among all peoples, sometimes as magic, sometimes as science and sometimes as religion and often—as a combination of all three. The form it takes, the ritual it espouses or the social pattern it expresses are determined by the cultural backgrounds and the particular environment of a given group. It might be expressed in the emotional implication of Father Divine's, "Peace, it is wonderful."

The third wish that Thomas suggests as a basic human desire is the desire for response. This is perhaps another name for gregariousness. We wish to be in contact with fellow men, but more than that we want our contacts to involve mutual sympathy and understanding.² It is religious organization that man looks for for the gratification of his gregariousness in its fullest sense. Not only does he have the fellowship of fellow worshippers who love and understand him, but he feels also that he is in the presence of that supernatural being, or beings, who guides his destiny.

The element of propitiation or conciliation in all religions verifies the fact that the desire for the response of a supernatural being or beings is basic in all religions. This is the element pointed out earlier in this paper that Durkheim observed as differentiating religious organization from other organizations.

Man has sought to get this response in various ways, and again, the method used, the technique employed, has differed from time to time and from place

²Ibid., p. 7.
to place. At a particular time or place he would this response by offering a sacrifice of his first fruits of harvest. At some other time, perhaps in the same place, he would offer his first born child who would have been heir to the tribal possessions.

Another means of propitiation or conciliation is prayer. It might take the form of the long difficult practices of a primitive-shamanistic performance or the formal prayer which is read in ritualistic churches.

The last basic need delineated by Thomas is the desire for recognition. This desire is synonymous with social approval. Prestige is sought by everybody and we not only want to be thought well of but to be looked up to. We want to achieve recognition and thus enhance our self feeling. We want the respect of others so we can respect ourselves.2

This desire for recognition may manifest itself in various forms of religious organization. Followers of a given religion may express this desire by a distinct mode of dress, by adorning their persons with colors or symbols peculiar to their group, or by having some type of unusual psychic experience or some special opportunity of leadership.

In this way all devotees, no matter how limited in personal talent may get recognition.

**Varieties of Religious Organization**

The importance of any social organization is determined by what it does. On the basis of the analysis above we may conclude that the institutional

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function of the religious phase of social behavior in any group will be determined by the four basic human desires: new experience, security, response, and recognition peculiar to the given group.

Institutions are devices for getting things done. The structure of an institution will be determined by what it seeks to accomplish. The highly developed institution generally comprises relationships covering three types of elements. First the rank and file members of the institution, secondly, there are the leaders and officials, thirdly, the physical plant and equipment.

Cooley, Angell and Carr, in analyzing the different phases of institutional growth found that the structure of an institution does not bear a constant relationship to the needs of the persons participating in it. They distinguish four general periods of institutional development: (1) incipient organization; (2) efficiency; (3) formalism, and; (4) disorganization. The last three of these stages may be looked upon as appearing in a recurrent cycle, once the process has been inaugurated by the first period.

Incipient Organization

This is the first phase of institutional development. It represents little more than felt needs, and is characterized by a tentative seeking for adjustment. After a time a definite social structure will evolve.

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1Ogburn and Niskoff, op. cit., p. 556.
2Katz and Schanck, Social Psychology (Bridgeport, Conn., 1938) p. 169
3Ibid., pp. 406-415.
5Ibid.
According to the previous analysis, when this structure or pattern of collective behavior is able to satisfy the needs which inspired its inception, the institution is considered to be in its efficiency stage of development.

But when the institution in its attempt to accommodate new recruits broadens its program and emphasizes its symbols at the expense of personality expression, the purpose for which it was organized is obscured. Its members can no longer find satisfaction for their basic needs or wants within its structure. The institution is then considered to be in its formal stage of development.

Formalism

When an institution puts too much emphasis upon mechanism and ritualism it is said to be formal. Thus, in religion, it is well that men should adhere to the creeds and ritual worked out in the past for spiritual edification, so long as these do, on the whole, fulfill their function; and it is hard to fix the time, not the same for different churches, classes, or individuals, when they cease to do this.

Since the persistent needs or wants of a people will vary with individuals as well as with groups, an institution may reach the period of formality for some individuals within a homogeneous group before it does for others. In other words, an institution may be meeting the four basic needs of a majority of its constituents and at the same time have too much red tape to satisfy the four basic needs of a small minority. To this minority the institution is disorganized.

Disorganization—Whereas formalism implies a supreme emphasis upon

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1 Cooley, Angell and Carr, op. cit., p. 408.
mechanism, disorganization implies that mechanism has gone to pieces.1

Reorganization. Social institutions seldom disintegrate. Reorganization is generally the path taken. During the period of reorganization, institutions go through a series of readjustments in order again to provide an opportunity for their constituency to satisfy their four basic human desires. This reorganization period is in many respects similar to the period of incipient organization.

Thus, social behavior which has become crystalized into an institution must remain flexible in order that it may continue to meet the persistent needs or wants of its constituency in a changing society.

When this crystalized social behavior takes the form of religious organization, we find that this same law of institutional development appears. When religious institutions emphasize creeds or ritual more than the satisfaction of the four basic human needs or wants, they too must reorganize or disintegrate.

It must be kept in mind, however, that certain phases in the cycle of institutional development will not be reached by all of its constituents at the same time. Therefore in every institution — specifically in the church — there will be three groups of people corresponding to the first three phases of institutional development. These groups are referred to as progressives, conservatives and reactionaries.

The Progressives. — This group of people corresponds to the first phases, the incipient stage, of institutional development. For them the institution has not yet reached the stage of efficiency. It has not developed to the point where they can find within its structure the satisfaction of their basic needs or wants.

1Cooley, Angell and Carr, op. cit., p. 410.
The Conservatives.-- This group corresponds to the efficiency phase of institutional development. These persons find adequate opportunity for the expression of their individual personalities within its structure.

The Reactionaries.-- This group corresponds to the formal stage of institutional development. These people find the institutional forms empty, not satisfying personality needs. To them the stage of efficiency has passed. These reactionaries look back to the "good old days."

The middle group, the conservative element, is the group that makes institutional life stable and permanent. This conservative group is divided within itself, that is, there are three kinds of conservatives: (1) the progressive conservatives; these people do not find their personality needs satisfied by the institutional forms. In the church, this group will insist upon a more educated ministry and finally upon a broadening of church activity. (This broadening of church activity is significant in many of our large cities. Of three hundred and fifty seven protestant churches studied in 1926, thirty one per cent carried on thirty three different activities exclusive of preaching.)

These progressives will continue to support a given church for various reasons, even though they find no opportunity to satisfy their personality needs. Some remain because of business or professional reasons, some because of love for the church, some for tradition or habit.

The next group of conservatives is satisfied with the status quo. For them the institution provides ample opportunity for the satisfaction of personality needs.

The third group of conservatives will be the reactionary conservatives.

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\(^1\) Douglass, H. Paul, 1000 City Churches (New York, 1926) pp. 31-32.
A given church may have too much mechanism and red tape to satisfy their personality needs, yet they remain loyal members for the same reasons given for the progressive conservatives: business or professional interest, love for the church, tradition or habit.

This middle group, the conservative element, preserves the institution. Its ranks are swelled by a small per cent of both the progressive and reactionary elements.

On the other hand a few progressives will refuse to cooperate with the conservatives in promoting an institutional form that does not satisfy their personality needs. These people will break away from a given church or form a given denomination and join another which is more formal. Many join churches in their own original denomination, others, of Methodist, or Baptist faiths will join the Episcopalian, Catholic, Presbyterian or Congregational churches.\(^1\)

The last group, the group of special interest to this discussion is the reactionary element. The reactionaries who refuse to cooperate with the conservatives in promoting an empty institutional form, like the progressives, is a small group. Its members too, break away from established churches. Usually the churches they break away from are among the least formal in our society. Therefore they have no other established church to go to in order to satisfy their personality needs. Some do not connect themselves in an active way to any other church. They do not support their original church, but for the prestige, they will continue to claim membership in the original church.

There is a still smaller group of the reactionaries who will organize churches to meet their own peculiar basic needs or wants. The churches they
organize will be of such reactionary quality that they will not be accepted by any established denomination. These organized religious reactionaries, upon organization, become religious cults. Such groups organize in an effort to set themselves off in contrast with the rest of the world. They often adopt a distinctive dress, symbols, speech, ritual and beliefs.¹ Such is the institutional base for the development of a cult of the pattern we shall study.

CHAPTER II

CULT BEHAVIOR AND INSTITUTIONS

The cult is a form of social movement, an organized action group, generally rather restricted and temporary, in which the individual zealously devotes himself to some leader or ideal. Cults are found among individuals of various colors, nations and classes and are found within almost every society.

About the beginning of the twentieth century, possibly coexistent with the industrial and economic upheaval which was characterizing the same period, new types of Negro churches made their appearance. These splits took such names as "Holiness," "Church of God," "Apostolic," thereby testifying to their essential Christian or Judaic motivation.¹

The observation by Fauset that during the industrial and economic upheaval of the past few decades there could also be noticed in organized religions the same unrest which resulted in splits over doctrinal questions is also made by Sutherland and Woodward.² Religious organization is no exception to the generalization that institutions tend to disintegrate and new social patterns to originate during periods of unrest and social change.

In a study made in 1935, Jones observed thirteen religious cults in some of our cities. Among these cults he found five distinct classes: (1) Faith Healing Cults; (2) Holiness Cults; (3) Islamic Cults; (4) Pentecostal; (5) Spiritualist.³

Jones found that the personality of the leader was the core of cult

¹Fauset, A. F., Black Gods of the Metropolis (Pennsylvania, 1944), pp 8. 5.
religion both in primitive and modern societies. The personalities of these leaders were said to be strong and magnetic. By force of their personalities they were able to make the people believe the unbelievable. Jones points out the personality of Father Divine, as described by E.L. Moon, "Thank you Father, So Sweet," (New Republic, September, 1936), as a typical example of cult leaders:

The man is an utterly unimpressive figure. He is dull brown in color, undersized and stockily built. There is nothing of grandeur about him. The back of his head is scarred with some long standing wound. In his eyes, there is no divine fire and his countenance is undistinguished. Always conventionally attired, he has none of the impressiveness of Prophet Martin, Harlem's towering bare-foot street corner preacher, with his great mane of white hair. On the platform, he is an uninspired speaker, lacks eloquence and violates every canon of oratory. His formless speeches consist of incoherent rhetoric, words, words, words. Strange meaningless, unheard of words, punctuated with "peace," "now isn't that wonderful?" He also does frenzied acrobatics and jumps up and down. The effect is magical. His followers respond with ecstatic "hosannas."

Jones calls this crowd hypnotism or religious magic.

Aside from the personalities of the leaders, Jones observed that they all used common techniques. A common feature absolutely basic for cult control is the dominantly aggressive authority of the cult leader, reinforced by peculiar practices, special powers, and singular prerogatives, to clinch in the mind of the devotee the supernatural character of the source of power.2

The cult leader uses all the techniques at his disposal to attract and hold people of various interests. He seeks to have a program of such variety that for one or more reasons he will keep a following.

Among the most effective techniques used by the leader is to create

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1Jones, R. J., op. cit., p. 9.
2Ibid. p. 17.
what Jones calls a cult consciousness within his following. This is done by
the mode of dress which is often distinctly different from that of any other
group or of society in general. There is also something distinctly different
about the ritual when it is compared with that of an established church. The
mode of address is different among its members from that of more formal chur-
or "Father" are useful techniques of suggestions. They can be used to em-
phasize one's worth or to stimulate the feeling of group consciousness.

Of the five distinct classes of cults suggested by Jones, Fauset discussed all except the Spiritualist cult. He gave as his reason for not
discussing this cult the following: "Not primarily characteristic of, or es-
specially significant among the religious practices of the Negro people of
the United States."2

Fauset's statement was based upon the findings of the Negro Year Book,
which reported less than one thousand members in Spiritualist Cults in the
United States.

Although there is no statistical proof, there is other factual evidence
that there are many more Spiritualist devoted in the United States now than
were reported in 1930-38.

Any one passing through the Negro sections of Atlanta, Georgia can no-
tice a large number of "Store Front" churches. Many of these churches have been
opened in recent months. There can be seen signs, some neatly printed, some

1Fauset, A. F., op. cit., p. 9.

2Ibid.

There can be distinctly heard on the streets outside of these churches the sound of singing and shouting to the music of pianos and tambourines.

These churches are usually crowded. Some who attend are merely seeking adventure, others are ardent devotees. One church studied, "The All National Spiritualist Church of God," has had more than six hundred members on its rolls at different times in its history.
CHAPTER III

THE ALL NATIONAL SPIRITUALIST CHURCH OF GOD, ITS STRUCTURE AND SETTING

The All National Spiritualist Church of God is located on the corner of Maple and Hunter Streets. The building was once a two-room dwelling. The partition has been torn from between the rooms making one large room. This building is simply furnished. There are several rows of benches, and a dozen or more chairs providing seating space for approximately 175 people. Although there are usually two hundred or more people at the Sunday night service, some will stand and others will sit around on the platform.

Besides the benches and chairs there are a table, a piano and a pulpit. The building is lighted by four large electric bulbs.

On certain occasions, Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving and Mother's Day, the building is specially decorated. In addition to the floral decorations at the regular Sunday service, there are other colored cloths and more flowers.

For about four years the members of this church have been collecting money to build a "rock" church on Richardson Street. The leader of the Church, the Bishop, often says that to build that church is his greatest desire. "When it is finished," he says, "no church in Atlanta will be as beautiful." The blueprint has already been drawn. The members, after four years of planning are still enthusiastic about giving money for its construction. At present nothing has been done in the way of building, except selecting and making a down payment on the lot.

The Officials and Leader

All of the members of this church have a role in the running of the church, according to a statement made by the Bishop.

There is a group of women called "Mothers." These women are not necessarily older than the other women. They gained this title as an honorary
recognition. "When one has been loyal in helping out in the Church programs, and shows signs of a willingness to cooperate, I will make her a Mother," the Bishop explained.

These mothers have the responsibility of carrying on the activities of the Church during the Bishop's absence. (The Bishop travels often, and is usually away for two or more weeks at a time). They cooperate with the pastor in whatever program decided upon. In other words, they are general assistants. A few of them participate in the healing and reading services, but their work in the Church is usually restricted to the worship service and to the general program. They see that prayer meeting, song service, and testimonial services are carried out before the regular services.

There are other groups of officials called "Stewards" and "Stewardesses." The only duty of this group is to see that the place is kept tidy. When a window needs fixing, a chair needs replacing, or when general repairs are necessary these officials will do it.

There are a few, perhaps six women in the Church called "Madams." These women have been distinguished because of special gifts, usually gifts of healing, or have been able to learn whatever skills are taught in the Tuesday or Thursday night spiritualist classes. When there is a large number of people to be "read" or when many are to be healed these "Madams" assist the Bishop.

There is an usher board composed of six women. These women assist in seating the members and visitors who come to the Church. This is often a difficult job because they must be sure that every available space is taken. They even go to their own homes nearby when special guests are present in order to get chairs to seat them. The ushers seem always happy to welcome visitors in the small, usually crowded church. The members often stand in order to provide seats for visitors.
The ushers are also responsible for the care of those who shout. They remove the women's hats, take off their glasses and hold them to prevent them from falling or striking some one as they jump and wave their arms. There are often more people with the "spirit" than the ushers can care for. Any member present will assume the responsibility of helping the ushers.

The ushers help with the collection of money also. In the regular collection they will pass around the plate. Of course the Steward or Stewardesses are primarily responsible for the collection, but the ushers usually wait on the people.

The pianist is not responsible for the selection of music because anyone who feels like it may sing whatever song pleases him. After a song is begun the pianist will take the pitch and tempo set by the leader. (A difference will be noted here in the use of the musical instrument in this Church and in a more formal Church where the instrument sets the pitch and the tempo).

Where the leader sets the pitch and the tempo for himself he has more freedom of expression because the pitch and the tempo will be more nearly natural for him. Whereas, when the pitch and tempo are set by the instrument the leader must often follow a tune too high, too low, or too fast or slow for his mood or even for his range of voice.

There is no choir in this Church. The leader said, "Everyone of my members belongs to the Choir," meaning, of course, that he expected them all to sing whenever they wanted to or whenever he requested them to do so.

The next important element in this social structure is the assistant pastor. The assistant Pastor is paid a salary. The amount was not mentioned.

The Pastor of this Church is Elder Cox. Elder Cox is now in the armed services. The Draft Board did not recognize his ministerial office as making him eligible for the 4D classification accorded ministers in established churches.
Elder Cox lived in the house with Bishop Crockett before joining the Army. His name is still on the door plate with the name of the Bishop.

Since Elder Cox has been in the services, the Church has been pastored by the Bishop, who has an assistant pastor in the person of Madam Davis. Madam Davis' duties are to preach when the Bishop requests her to do so. She also presides over meetings and leads in the general program of the Church when the Bishop is absent.

Madam Davis is recognized by the members as a good healer and reader.

The next and most important element in the social structure of this Church is the leader and founder, Bishop E. D. Crockett.
CHAPTER IV

THE LEADER AND FOUNDER

Eddie Lee Crockett was born in Henry County about two miles from Rex, Georgia, in August, 1906. He was the first of six children. His father, Edward Crockett, was a farmer.

His family was very poor. His father was never able to earn or save much money. Although his father had farmed all of his life he was never able to buy livestock or a farm. He was always a share-cropper. Eddie Lee Crockett was born in a three-room hut.

When Eddie Lee was ten years of age he became a regular field hand. However, he had helped out in the fields since he was seven. He recalls how hot the sun was and how terribly long the days seemed.

His favorite playmate was his sister, Mary Lou, who was next in age to him. They seemed to understand each other better than they did the other brothers and sisters or even the other children in the community. They liked to play the same games.

One of their favorite games was "Church Meeting." They would go some distance from the house, clear off some spot in the woods and have church. He would act as preacher, his sister would respond as an imaginary audience. He would imitate some emotional preacher, or preacher, he had heard and she would jump and shout. They would have a great time at this game which was always played alone.

He believes that at this early age God had "set him aside to do a great work."

Another game his sister played with him was " undertaker." He once saw an undertaker embalm a body. He was completely fascinated. Thereafter if any cat, dog or other animal died in the community, he and his sister would play undertaker to the carcass. He took a rubber hose from a hot water
bottle, attached it to some air pump he found and used it to draw blood from the
escaes of dead animals. He then would pump out the blood and force some kind
of fluid into the body.

Because of his strange questions and acts, his mother often referred
to him as a strange child. "I grew up," he said, "believing that I was differ-
ent from other children."

While still a child he dreamed of becoming wealthy. He wanted a house
exactly like the landlord's, on whose plantation he lived. "The big house
was beautiful and I wanted one just like it," he said. There was a large
arbor of vines near the little house in which he lived. In the spring
when the vines were in full foliage he would take some sharp instrument and
put out a hollow in the vines and trim the top as nearly like the shape of
the "big house" as possible.

The Crockett family moved to Atlanta when Eddie Lee was about twelve
years old. Even at that early age Eddie Lee began to earn his own living.
His first job in Atlanta was as handy-man in a lunch stand. He swept floors,
washed dishes, crated bottles, and ran errands. He worked often from about
nine o'clock in the morning until eleven o'clock or after at night. He
did his work well and without complaint. His employer liked him and took
a special interest in him. This employer taught Eddie Lee to read the Bible
and some simple literature.

He stayed on this job for several years.

At one time Eddie Lee desired to attend school. One fellow who worked
not far from where Crockett was employed asked Crockett to go with him to Crow-
man Night School. Crockett went and registered in the fourth grade but did not
like the subjects which were taught him and after attending one or two sessions
he withdrew.

When Crockett was living in the rural districts he went to school
for two or three years. He only got as far as the fourth grade, although he could get his lessons easily.

Crockett worked in some type of eating establishment as long as he worked for wages in Atlanta, Georgia. For several years he worked in a short order cafe on Decatur Street. This cafe served whites on one side and Negroes on the other side of the room. The service counter was located between the races.

While working on Decatur Street, Crockett had very little time or money for himself. Most of his time was spent on the job and all of his money went for the necessities of the home his mother kept for him, and a few clothes for himself. Crockett became very lonesome for friends. He had made the acquaintance of a beautiful girl during these lonely months. She openly scorned him in his attempts to make love to her. This hurt him very deeply. He thought, however that she did not like him because he was shabbily dressed. He tried, therefore to find some way whereby he could purchase the clothes he wanted.

He could not do this on the seven dollars per week he was earning. Crockett was very unhappy. He never complained about supporting his mother because he felt that he was performing an honorable duty in caring for her since the other children had virtually neglected her.

During these years of poverty and unhappiness Crockett could always depend upon his mother for comfort and understanding. He continued to share his fortunes as well as his disappointments with her. He still dreamed of buying a large beautiful house and furnishing it with the best of everything.

He tried to make friends in various ways. He would say nice things to people he met and do small favors for them in order to obtain their friendship. He came to know a few of the young men who ate in the cafe where he was working. He would often give them extra portions of meat, bread, or dessert. He would
treat them extra nice. "But even they did not appreciate my friendship," he recalls.

Crockett had a younger brother who was frequently in trouble. (The kind of trouble was not explained to the writer). Once when Crockett and his mother had saved up money with which to pay their monthly bills, they had to use it to get this brother out of jail. It availed them little for the brother was later sentenced to pay a fine of three hundred dollars or spend twelve months in prison.

Crockett relates that as he was going to work one morning, "I saw my sister, Mary Lou." (She was his favorite playmate in childhood.) "She had been dead for several years, but she did not frighten me at all. She told me that a certain number would fall that day and advised me to play it." Though Crockett did not have any money, he knew his sister was trying to help him get his brother out of prison. He, therefore, borrowed a dollar and a half and played it all on the number the sister had given him. He did not tell any one that day about his meeting his sister.

That evening the number came out. Crockett had "hit" for seven hundred dollars. With this money he bought his brother out of prison, bought some things for his mother and some clothes for himself.

Most of the people Crockett knew, even his employer, played the numbers. When they learned that Crockett had "hit" for so much money, they were surprised that he, who had been playing only a few pennies on a number, had suddenly played a dollar and a half on one number. He therefore explained his experience with the spirit of his sister.

Crockett became very popular. Each day people would ask him for the number. He would advise them what to play. "Often they would hit." When some would "hit" on a number Crockett suggested that they, in turn, tell others about his insight. "They too would come to me for the number," Crockett
said. At first he would ask them to give him a portion of the winnings, but so many of the numbers he suggested failed that he began charging a fee for his advice.

Crockett continued to work on Decatur Street and people would come to his home at night for the number.

One day Crockett’s sister, Mary Lou, appeared to him again. Again she gave him the number. This time he "hit" for about nine hundred dollars. With his winnings he bought several complete changes of clothes for himself and other things his mother needed and spent several-dollars entertaining his friends.

By now Crockett had become very fond of another girl. She was nice to him, went out with him for a few weeks and finally married him.

Crockett will not discuss any significant details about this marriage. However they lived together only a few weeks.

After a marital experience which Crockett describes as unhappy he had a vision. He states that even though he was in bed, he was not asleep. He saw a large ball of fire enter his room. The ball of fire came over his bed and stopped. A voice spoke out of the fire and said to him, "Crockett, you will never do well with women because you are too brilliant for them. Your mind is too keen." This voice told him to make friends with men — many men — and teach them the way of life.

During this period in Crockett’s life he was, he says, a good Christian. He had joined the A. M. E. Church in Rex, Georgia when a youngster. When he came to Atlanta he joined the C. M. E. Church on Frazier Street. He and his mother worked there in the Sunday School and league for the young people. He wanted to preach but saw that he would have too much difficulty in the C. M. E. Church. He, therefore, joined a small Baptist Church in North East Atlanta.
This pastor licensed him but never gave him a chance to preach because he was jealous of Crockett.

Since Crockett did not have a chance to preach in a church, he would put a row of chairs around the front porch of his house and preach emotional sermons to them as if they were people. His mother would listen to him with great interest. Other people passing by would stop and listen. "They thought I was crazy," Crockett said. Others, including his mother, thought that he had been possessed by the Holy Spirit. Crockett continued this kind of preaching for several months. His relatives thought he was insane. Crockett said that they were jealous of him because he was getting along so well.

One incident that stands out in Crockett's memory concerns his previously mentioned brother. This brother got into trouble again. He was arrested, and since his brother's wife had no money, Crockett visited her in order to give her a number so that she might "hit" and pay his brother out of prison. Some of the neighbors told Crockett's brother that Crockett was visiting his wife while he was in prison. When the brother was released from prison he wanted to kill Crockett but was restrained from doing so by a friend.

Soon after Crockett became so popular he went to work as cook for a construction company in Miami, Florida. This company traveled throughout the Southeast. Crockett worked for them for about three or four years during which time his salary ranged from twelve dollars to fifteen dollars weekly.

When he stopped working for this company he came back to Atlanta, a better cook than before. He refused to work for the low wages of former years. He had made friends with a man who worked at a hotel in Miami. Through this friend he secured a job cooking at the hotel where his friend worked.

Crockett describes this man as of average height, very light, lovely
hair, and very beautiful. Crockett was quite impressed with the personality and appearance of his friend.

While cooking in Miami Crockett won fifteen hundred dollars on some kind of lottery. Again he dressed himself up. He also dressed his friend. He bought several bottles of costly perfume and used it daily. He even rubbed it into his body.

Crockett and his friend quit work and went on a vacation. They started back to Atlanta but stopped for a few days in Jacksonville, Florida. While there he met a spiritualist medium. This woman was impressed by Crockett. She told Crockett that he was destined to become the greatest man of his day. She told him that he was a reincarnation of the spirit of Mary Pickford, the movie actress. His mind, said the medium, was too keen even for her and advised him to see a male medium in St. Louis, Missouri. This man, she said, would give him the information he needed to make him the man he was destined to become.

On the way to St. Louis, Crockett and his friend stopped in Atlanta. They went to several parties together. Crockett said that they had so much fun together that all the other fellows were jealous. He said that both men and women like his friend. Crockett was getting the chance he had long wanted to show off before the people who had scorned him.

When Crockett left Atlanta for St. Louis his friend went back to Miami. In St. Louis, this medium confirmed the statement of the medium in Jacksonville about Crockett's future. He also told Crockett that it was true that he was the reincarnation of some great spirit. This medium taught Crockett some elements about spiritualism. Crockett came back to Atlanta determined to begin the practice of spiritualism as a profession.

Crockett went back to work at his former cafe. People would come to
his home at night or he would visit any who needed his help. He gave several people numbers and they gave him some of the winnings. (He still has a book with several names of people who paid him after they collected from the number lottery.)

Crockett finally developed into a good reader. He would go to some of the small churches during the week, or on Sundays and give readings. He would charge the patrons ten and twenty-five cents for a reading and give them a candle or incense to burn. He would divide half of his receipts with the pastor of the church in which he performed.

Each Sunday his following increased. Some of his devotees followed him wherever he went in the city. He organized these devotees into a "prayer band." The name of the prayer band was "Wisdom, Willing of Divine Spirit." He calls it the W. W. D. S.

These people assisted him in the programs he gave at the various churches. They would sing, pray and testify in connection with his reading service.

He caused so much concern until the pastors of the various churches would not permit him to render more programs at their churches. They even denounced him openly as a fake.

One Sunday afternoon, he was performing at Lindsay Street Baptist Church. The pastor openly defied him, calling Crockett a fake and stating that he could not actually read. Accepting this challenge Crockett asked the two ministers to let him leave the room and he would return and tell them what they said during his absence. They agreed. Crockett left the room and upon his return told them their conversation during his absence. From then on, Crockett states, people regarded him with awe, even fear. They were convinced that he could get messages from the spirit world.

"The ministers who heard about my popularity would not allow me in
their churches anymore," Crockett said. Crockett, therefore rented the two room house on Maple and Hunter Streets, mentioned previously.

Even after Crockett had organized his own church the ministers in the city continued to criticize him. They even denounced him from their pulpits.

Despite opposition Crockett prospered. He was no longer called Eddie Lee Crockett, but Bishop Crockett. By now he had an office in his home. Many people came to him for advice, readings, and healing.

One day a woman came to him who had been ordered to move out of her home for failure to pay rent. She brought the court order with her. She explained to the Bishop that she had no money and had no where she could get it. Bishop Crockett took the court order from her and placed it upon his desk. He then advised her to return home assuring her that everything would be all right. She returned home and soon afterwards some white people came by and not only paid her rent, but also gave her a job.

Bishop Crockett said that during that week twenty-two such summonses were laid on his table. "Not one of those people had to move," he said. "One thing or another happened," he continued, "but no one had to move."

The Bishop did not explain just what happened in all cases.

Every day people crowded into his office for all kinds of advice. He helped a large number of young men get out of prison. In fact, he is well known at the parole board. Many ex-prisoners have been paroled to him personally. He would guarantee to find them jobs and help them until they were able to assume full responsibility as citizens.

A white man visited the Bishop during the time that this writer was present. This white man had some property he had tried in vain to sell. The Bishop had sold it for him and he was paying the Bishop thirty-five dollars. He asked the Bishop to help him get the love of a woman whose husband was
away. He promised to pay well. The Bishop promised to help.

The proprietor of a popular Negro hotel in this city had been arrested for operating a disorderly house. She came to the Bishop for help. He gave her a statue of a black cat with yellow eyes. She went to trial and her case was dismissed. For these services she paid the Bishop seventy-five dollars.

People who are ill come to the Bishop to get relief. There are many who seem to be convinced of Crockett's power to heal. Crockett explained that he would speak words of comfort to some and try to make them courageous, for others he would pray, and to those who did not have much faith, he gave medicine. "If they have enough faith," he said, "I don’t need to give them medicine. If I think that they doubt me in any way, I give them medicine."

During his career, Bishop Crockett has sponsored four radio programs. Three of the four programs were quartets. The other was a choir composed of members of his church.

The All National Spiritualist Quartet has become well known through the South. It has given programs in some of the best known churches. It has sung regularly at Wheat Street Baptist Church and once at Friendship Baptist Church, Allen Temple A. M. E. Church and many other churches in and about Atlanta and Florida. "The churches are usually crowded," the Bishop said, "wherever they sing." The Bishop usually appears on the program, giving a few remarks.

A complaint was made in one of the local minister's meetings alleging that the singers were not even members of a church. Some minister proposed that all of the churches ban them. No one else was willing to support this move. Many of the churches had found them quite profitable, since each church receives forty per cent of all revenue from admission fees. The tickets often sell for as much as fifty cents.

Instead of giving Wheat Street Baptist Church a per cent of all money
taken in for seats as he does most of the other churches, he pays
fifty or sixty-five dollars as rent for the Church. He does this because the
auditorium is large enough to insure a large audience. In addition, many
people will attend Wheat Street Church who will not go to any other place
to hear the quartet sing.

Some of the personality traits of Bishop E. L. Crockett: He is about
five feet eleven inches tall. He weighs about 180 pounds. Reddish brown
is his complexion. He is thirty-five years of age. He is friendly and easy
to approach. His telephone conversations are always pleasant and enthusiastic.
He calls his members "darling," "honey," and often "madam" or "mother." He
desires social recognition from the leading Negroes of Atlanta. He often com-
plains because the pastors of some of the large churches do not recognize him
as a member of their social class. He likes publicity and he likes having
people dine with him. He likes to wear well tailored, attractive clothes. He
has an extensive wardrobe of suits of various materials and textures. He
wears robes in the pulpit of white satin, blue satin, or black silk with a
cape to match each.

The cultural background of Bishop Crockett together with his knowledge
of the common problems faced by a people who are society's disinherit, qual-
ifies him to say as truly as Napoleon or Hitler, "I am the voice or tool of
my people."

He does not have to pretend that he is one of the outcasts of society,
he knows that he is. This fact makes him draw closer to his members who respect
and believe in him.

"We are making him great," one member said, "because other people are
down on us and him too." In other words, the hostility of society toward this
cult, gives the leader a big chance to develop a cult consciousness.
CHAPTER V

ITS BELIEFS, RITUALS, AND PRACTICES

The devotees of this cult believe that there is no death. They believe that when a person dies his spirit leaves the body but goes to a spirit world where it is still conscious of what is transpiring in this world. This spirit is still interested in the welfare of friends and loved ones left behind and ever strives to guide and order the lives of those who need assistance.

They believe that there are always spirits with messages for their earth-bound friends or relatives. These spirits can not convey this message in ordinary fashion, but one who has special gifts can be made to understand the peculiar technique of communing with the departed.

The Church's Spiritualist Classes are conducted by Bishop Crockett in order to teach certain individuals with this gift to commune with departed spirits.

Some people have a keener insight into the spirit world than others, the Bishop teaches, but anyone can be taught enough to get certain, special messages. Even he must concentrate for some indefinite length of time before he can clearly understand certain messages from the spirit world.

The longer one is able to concentrate upon the spirit world the more information he can get. Anything that keeps the individual from quiet concentration will, therefore, prevent the spirit from communing with man.

The Bishop has certain hours when he will shut himself in his room and commune with the spirits. However, the most certain method of uninterrupted concentration is to be put into a casket.

About once each year the Bishop will call an undertaker to send a hearse and casket to his home. He will then dress in a white robe and the undertaker will put him into the casket as if he were dead. The casket will not be closed.
Instead a heavy veil of crepe will cover the face of the Bishop. The casket is then put into the hearse and transported to the church followed by numerous cars of mourners.

The Bishop is put into the casket about midday. He lies in state at his church until twelve o'clock midnight. During that time his members and visitors will file by to see him at certain times. The Mothers always stand watch over the casket. They have certain times when the people are allowed to see the Bishop.

The Bishop will not be asleep but in a trance. While in that trance he is absolutely unconscious of the singing, praying, preaching, shouting, testifying and all other conceivable forms of emotional incitements that continue at regular intervals throughout the afternoon and night.

At twelve o'clock the Bishop will rise. He sits up in the casket and begins to testify about his experience in the spiritual world. This testimony is delivered as if it were a sermon. While he is talking he will be taken out of the casket by the Mothers and probably a male assistant. After this testimony or sermon he gives readings.

In describing his experience in the spirit world, the Bishop said that he was met by good spirits. Some he knew and some he did not know but they made him welcome. Not only did they welcome him but they also protected him from evil spirits.

Since he gets special messages in this spirit world (that is, he gets the number, sees incidents in his future and gets advice as to how to handle his and other people's affairs), he was asked if he went into the casket demonstration for any special purpose or for communion with spirits in general. He answered this question with two illustrations: "When you go to a circus," he said, "you don't go to see one thing in particular. In fact, you don't know
exactly what you will see. Many things you see will not interest you and you
soon forget them. If you see other things of interest to you you will re-
member them. So it is in the spirit world. I go there expecting to learn some-
thing to help me and my people. Those things I see that will not help me or
my people, I forget. Things that can help us I bring back." His second illus-
tration is: "The spirits are like mice. If you sit real quiet in a room one
mouse will come out of a corner or hole and come close to you. If you don't move
he will come closer. If after several moments you do not frighten him he will
seem to invite others out. Finally they will play all around you without any
fear at all. So it is when we concentrate. One spirit will finally come
close enough to give you a message. That message may not be what you need.
If you continue to concentrate another and still another spirit will come
out and give you messages, until finally you will have the message you need as
well as many others you did not think of but which are certain to be useful
at sometime."

Sometimes when he gets in the spirit world he does not want to return
to the natural life. The spirits will persuade him to return so that others
might get their messages.

The members of the All National Spiritualist Church of God believe in
the literal interpretation of the Bible.

They believe that God is in three characters; God, Son, and Holy Spirit.

To them all people are reincarnated spirits. To be able to commune
with spirits who do not have a body is the highest hope of the true believer.

The members believe that dreams are messages from the spiritual world.
Many of them have several accounts of messages they have received from the
spirit world in dreams that actually materialized.

The members of this cult believe that the Bishop is the reincarnation
of some great deceased person and who is destined to become famous throughout
the world. No member mentioned Mary Pickford as meaning anything to the
Bishop, however he says that he is a reincarnation of her spirit.

Ritual

Like the religious cults studied by Fauset and Jones,¹ the entire
organization of the All National Spiritualist Church of God is centered about
the leader, who makes the rules, selects the ritual and plans the services.

The services at this church are somewhat similar to the plantation
revivals in the deep South, except for the reading and healing services, and
the elaborate ritual.

The meetings are opened by one of the Mothers. She will announce
sometimes quite abruptly, "The meeting will open by a song from Mother X."
The song will be some old familiar spiritual or hymn. If a hymn is used, it
will first be worded, that is, two lines will be read in a rhythmical manner.
The hymn will be raised by some voluntary participant in the same tempo in
which it was ended. If the first song is a spiritual the Mother in charge of
the service will suggest the person herself to lead the singing, or she might
sing it.

The singing and praying will alternate, one song and then one prayer.
Quite often after one person has finished a prayer, another will say "Continue
in prayer."

After the singing and praying have continued for several minutes some
one will stand up and testify. The testimony will include statements of how
God has blessed her during the past week and how wonderful it is to be able

¹Fauset, A. F., op. cit., pp. 8, 9; Jones, Raymond Julius, op. cit.
to meet again with God's people. These testimonies usually include some statement on the sweetness, sympathy, and goodness of the Bishop. There will then be a continuous chanting of "Amen" "Blessed" "Jesus" "Savior" or "Hallelujah."

After this service has continued for approximately one hour, and "When everything is good and hot," says the Bishop, "I walk in."

The Bishop will appear walking into the church and up the aisle surrounded by white robed attendants. He himself will be dressed in a white satin, a blue, or black silk robe.

Immediately upon observing the Bishop entering the devotees will sing with even greater zest than before.

The attendants will march up in front of the pulpit and the Bishop will proceed to the platform. Perhaps one more song and one prayer will be offered and then the leader will announce, "We now turn the service into the hands of the Bishop."

The pianist will then take her seat at the piano ready to play.

The Bishop might rise up singing some spiritual or he might make a few statements about how wonderful God is and how happy it makes him to be able to see his members again.

When he begins singing, after a few notes are sung the music will begin. Then the congregation will join in with the Bishop and the music. It should be noted here that in these services the piano generally follows the pitch and tempo set by the leader, whereas in a more formal church it is the piano or some other instrument that sets the pitch and the tempo.

Several songs will be sung in succession, accompanied by the piano and the tambourine. The devotees will begin singing slowly, increase their tempo until the words of the song can no longer be pronounced. Sometimes one song
will be sung for ten minutes or even longer. Before it is finished several people will be on the floor jumping, jerking, stomping and uttering some words or sentence too rapidly to be intelligible. The sentence or words, said slowly in the beginning might be something like this: "Lord, have mercy." These words might be repeated in sentence form, or one word might be selected, "Lord" or "Mercy," and be repeated in rapid succession.

During these sessions of shouting and jerking and mad, frantic waving of the arms, a participant will become tired and sit down until she can get her breath. After a few moments she will start all over again. Some will faint and be carried out by the ushers or some men who might be present.

The Bishop will join in with those who carry on these acrobatic performances. The Bishop might stretch out on the pulpit platform as if he were dead.

When this part of the service is finished, the Bishop will preach. The sermon is an attempt to apply a literal interpretation of the Bible to the lives of his devotees. Most of the time the Bible is paraphrased to fit whatever the Bishop has to say.

The sermon is delivered in short, rapid sentences with much repetition. After the sermon, which will last for ten or fifteen minutes, the collection will be taken. This will take about thirty minutes.

In addition to the regular service as described above there are three special services held periodically - the Passover, The Holy Service, and the Seven Table Feast or Devotion Circle.

1. The Passover Service.— The Passover Service is held in commemoration of the Last Supper. This service is opened by the Bishop or an assistant pastor with a group singing. There may also be a few testimonies offered. There are several moments of silent prayer while soft music is being played.
The silence is broken by the reading of the "Twenty-Third Psalm followed by the hymn, "Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross." After these introductory observances "Dove's Blood" instead of wine is poured into one large bowl or pitcher and every one drinks out of the same, or common, bowl.

Instead of unleavened bread, pound cake is used. This cake is served on a large plate from which each communicant takes one slice. "Nearer My God to Thee" is then sung followed by several more songs and prayers.

After this preaching, healing and readings will follow in the order named. An offering is taken following this service.

The Holy Service.—The Holy Service is opened by singing, praying, and testimonies just as in the passover service.

The outstanding features of this service are; anointing of the feet or feet washing, burning of incense, and the serving or passing of the loaf and honey.

The Holy Service is usually held in a candle lighted room. The candles are white. Bible Incense is burned. The room is made stuffy with the strong scented smoke.

After the opening service the anointing of feet is in order. This service is announced at least a day or two before it is observed. It is usually announced on Sunday nights to be observed on Wednesday night. This service must be announced ahead of time because there must be a period of preparation on the part of the members. There must not be a stocking or sock put on the right foot, (the one to be anointed), for at least twelve hours before the service. Therefore the day in which the service is held, all the members go about their daily activities wearing only one stocking or sock. (This of course makes them conspicuous and self conscious).

They take their seats in the Church about 9 o'clock in the evening.
When the preliminaries are over they take off their right shoe leaving the foot and leg exposed. The Bishop will offer a prayer in which he describes the beauty and love of the Holy Spirit. Then soft music will be played on the piano. The Bishop will take the holy oil, which has been poured into some open container, and with a large white towel he will go down from the pulpit to the seats of the members and dipping his fingers into the oil, he will mutter some unintelligible phrases about the spirit while he rubs the oil gently on the feet of the saint. When he touched their feet they often scream and shout. As the music continues the Bishop will go from one devotee to the other, moving between the seats. There will also be singing before the Bishop has finished. A familiar spiritual will be sung slowly at first, then faster and faster until, after several moments of the same tune, the tambourine will be beaten by some member. By the time the foot washing ceremony is complete almost every one is shouting and jumping. A few will not have put back on their right shoes.

When the shouting and praising are done the offering will be taken.

Several songs are sung. Then comes the last phase of this service. The Bishop will offer some type of prayer and the Mothers will bring him a platter containing the loaf which is cut in diamonds, covered with honey. The Bishop passes it out to the members and friends who eat it immediately.

A prayer is then offered by one of the Mothers. After the prayer a hymn will be sung, followed by the benediction.

**The Seven Table Feast or Devotion Circle.**— The Seven Table Feast or Devotion Circle is a type of seance service.

The members meet in a room, or church, lighted dimly by candles. Except for soft music, everyone sits in silence for several moments. Six of the mediums (often students of the Bishop, or some experts from other churches)
are seated in a circle with Bishop Crockett at the head as the seventh member.

After a period of silence, some one in the audience will go to a certain medium for a message. This message may come from a departed friend who is, of course, in the spirit world, or from any spirit speaking through the medium. The searcher may go to all seven of the mediums in turn making the Bishop last - as the ultimate authority. There will be a message from all seven, but they may not get the message they want from the first or the sixth, therefore to assure every one of the message that he wants, Bishop Crockett is always present.

These messages may be assurances that some business deal will go through or that a particular job will be secured. The message may be advice about dealing with members of one's family, persons in the community, one's employer or fellow workers. In fact, anything one is thinking about or puzzled over can be settled by these mediums. When one has received the message he wants, he leaves.

These meetings are always well attended.

Practices.-- In connection with the ritual of this church there are some significant practices.

The most significant practice is connected with fire and the burning of candles. Their use of fire in worship is based upon instructions given in a volume on the use of candles for everyday purposes.\(^1\) This book traces the use of fire in worship from primitive to modern societies.

In these services candles are always burned. The color of the candle will be determined by the Bishop. Candles are burned on the basis of some particular need of his members at a given time. The colors of the candles have

\(^1\)Gamache, H., The Master Book of Candle Burning (New York, 1942)
the following significance for them: Greenish yellow candles are burned to
rid the members of suspicion or mistrust, white candles are burned for
spiritual power, red candles are burned to promote love among the members,
light blue candles are burned to insure the members of protection, red can-
dles may also be burned for health, green candles are burned to give wealth
or prosperity, lavender candles are burned to cause the members to dream
beneficial or lucky dreams, orange candles are burned to bring success in
general, blue candles are burned to promote peace, purple candles are burned
to make one famous, gold candles are burned to invite "Lady Luck," black
candles are burned to dispel evil.

Candles are not only burned in the church but the Bishop blesses them
and sells them to his members or any one who wishes them. They are often sold
for twenty-five cents each. Then these candles are burned according to the
advice of the Bishop they will produce the desired effect, he says. The di-
rections for burning these candles in the home vary. The Bishop advises some
to burn them in the morning before breakfast, and others at night after retur-
ning.

The following is an example of the significance of candle burning.

If a woman has a husband or anyone near her she wants to rid herself
of because he is an obstacle to her progress, candles and oil can produce the
desired effect. Four candles are used: one black candle and three white
candles. All are lighted but care is exercised to light the black one last.
Then the woman prepares a bath into which a bathing oil is placed. The candles
are allowed to burn only during the time of bathing and then are extinguished.
The following is read each day: Job, Chapter 21: 17-18 verses:

How oft is the candle of the wicked put out? and how oft cometh their
destruction upon them. God distributeth sorrows in his anger.
They are as stubble before the wind and as chaff that the storm carrieth away.

Incense is also burned in this church. "The smell of incense is inviting to the spirit," says the Bishop. This incense is also sold to some who need guidance or help in addition to certain readings. For example: a person might be told in a reading that the spirit has an important message for him, but before the spirit can communicate with him he must isolate himself and burn incense. The incense may be burned before retiring at night or before arising in the morning.

Holy oil is sold also. There will be a ritual in connection with it, even as with the candles or incense. The purchaser will get the oil with a reading. If he knows the significance of it, he may purchase it without the advice of the Bishop.

The Bishop advised one woman that if she sprinkled this oil on her head, tossed some over her left shoulder at twelve o'clock the following night, she would get her desire.

As already intimated, the reading service is important in this church. Many visitors remain at this church until after midnight for a reading.

Sometimes the Bishop will stand in the pulpit and ask any one who has bought candles, oil, or incense to hold it up if they want a reading. Whoever holds up the item will be given a free reading. If more than one asks for a reading the Bishop selects the one to whom he will grant it. At other times the Bishop will come down among the audience and select persons to read.

There is no set time to end the services. They usually begin at eight thirty o'clock and are sometimes not completed until one thirty o'clock.

There are no regulations on marriage or sex relations by this church.

There is no restriction on amusement activities. The members may go
to theaters or games if they choose. The Bishop goes to the movies when he has time.

There is no prohibition against the use of alcoholic beverages. One may drink liquor, beer, or wine if he chooses.

The members usually wear a crucifix around their necks. Some of these crucifixes are three or even five inches high. The cord or chain on which they hang is probably three feet long. The crucifix hangs well below the waist. The Bishop wears a large crucifix around his neck. He also has a crucifix over the door of his residence, over his office door and in several conspicuous places in his home.

Many of the members wear long white or black flowing robes and a white or black head band with a tassel that hangs well below the waistline. This dress is worn by all of the Mothers, Madames, and the assistant pastor.

The Sabbath is on Sunday.

Meetings of the cult are held on Fridays, Sundays, and Wednesdays in the evenings. Tuesday night is the night set for the class in spiritualism. Members who wish to become healers or readers must attend this class.

Members are admonished to be humble and pray and to trust the spirit.

Unlike most protestant churches there is only one collection taken in this church. By this is meant, only one collection is taken when any one is asked to give money. The Bishop supervises this collection with much concern. He even assists its operation. He often calls one of the members by name and asks him to pay dues or to give a certain amount. He often teases the members as they scurry about trying to make a good report. He will say some few personal words such as, "I passed your house yesterday and saw that big fat chicken on your table. I know you've got money - don't fool me."

The collection on Sunday nights frequently amounts to more than one
hundred dollars. The first Sunday night I visited the church, the collection was one hundred and sixty-five dollars. The next Sunday night it was one hundred and nineteen dollars.
The All National Spiritualist Church of God admits having more than six hundred members. It was found, however, that these six hundred or more members whose names are on the Church rolls have joined this Church since it was founded about six years ago.

Some of these people joined while in the "spirit" and never returned to the church after the incident. The membership roll includes others who have joined churches of the same cult. One woman who joined the All National Spiritualist Church about five years ago and became a Madam has since joined another spiritualist church in the northeast section of Atlanta which was founded, and is now led, by a Doctor Drummond.

In one instance another spiritualist church was organized primarily by members who were once connected with the All National Spiritualist Church of God.

Others who once belonged to this Church have moved out of Atlanta while others have died. Therefore the actual membership of this Church is far less than six hundred.

The term "membership" used in this study is meant to include not only actual members, but also those persons who are depended upon to support the various activities of the cult and who help to perpetuate its beliefs and practices.

A careful observation of the devotees since June, 1943, permits one to conclude that there are three distinct types of devotees of this cult; the bona fide devotees, the casual devotee, and the special interest devotee.

The Bona Fide Devotees.— There are approximately seventy-five bona-fide devotees of this Church. These are the persons who claim membership in
this church alone. They pay dues, attend business meetings, and serve as officials in one capacity or another in the Church. Among these are the following persons:

Mrs. E. first joined a Baptist church near Columbus, Georgia. She moved to Atlanta about six years ago. She began attending this church about two years ago. Until that time she had not attended any other church in the city regularly because she did not like their services. She liked the services at Bishop Crockett's Church and finally joined. "I love my Bishop," she said, "with all my heart. He is so kind."

One unusual member of this Church is Reverend W. He is unusual because he has had far more formal education and far more opportunities for self development than the other members.

Rev. W. was a student at Clark University, Atlanta, Georgia from 1891-1892, where he completed his high school work. He pastored a Presbyterian church in a small town in South Georgia until about twelve years ago when he decided to settle in Atlanta. He was unable to get the help from his church that he had hoped for and therefore had to get an ordinary job.

About five years ago he became very ill. He spent all of his money for doctor's bills but got no relief. He almost gave up hope of living. Some one told him about Bishop Crockett. He went to visit the Bishop and asked if the Bishop could help him. "The Bishop talked with me for about one hour. Then he told me to go home and go to bed and stay in bed until 10 o'clock in the morning and then get up, eat a big breakfast and come up to see him. I did what he told me to do and I have never been sick a day since. Bishop Crockett truly can perform miracles."

Rev. W. is now a faith healer, medium, and a reader in his own right. He has an office at his home in which he receives his clients.
Madam G. has been living in Atlanta for twenty years. She moved here from Barnesville, Georgia where she was a member in good standing of a Baptist Church. She has been separated from her husband for several years.

About three years ago she became unemployed. She tried everywhere she could to find a job. She was so unsuccessful in finding a job that would support her that she almost gave up trying. "A friend of mine told me about Bishop Crockett. She told me the Bishop had helped her. I went to the Bishop and he told me to go home and within twenty-four hours I would get what I wanted. Sure enough that next morning a white woman sent for me to work in her home. I have been working there ever since. I now make ten dollars a week."

Mrs. M., a widow, was a member of a Methodist Church in this city for several years. She earns eight dollars per week in a private home. Mrs. M. said, "I joined this church because the people at X Methodist Church never knew I was in the Church until a rally was on. Then because I could not give as much money as the others, what I was able to give, they did not appreciate. I got tired of being looked over. I like the meetings they have here and I love the Bishop because he is the cleanest man that I ever saw. I am President of the X Board," she said as she was leaving.

Mrs. M. is a widow. Her husband died about fourteen years ago. She is in ill health. She has two sons and a daughter with whom she lives. Since she is unable to work her children support her. She was a member of a Baptist Church before joining Bishop Crockett's Church five years ago. "I was only a floor member in the X Baptist Church," she said. "They only wanted what little money I could get. They didn't allow me to do anything in the meeting. I like here because I get a chance to help out. The Bishop made me secretary of X"
Mrs. C. has been a widow for twenty years. She first joined a Baptist Church near Elberton, Georgia. She moved to Atlanta about ten years ago to live with her children. She first joined N. Baptist Church "but I did not like the meetings," she said. "They wouldn't give me anything to do, either. I like here. I am a founder. I am president of the E.

Madam B. is about forty years of age. She has never been married. "I've had a lot of sickness," she said. "I first joined N. Baptist Church but the meetings were so cold that I started coming here. I liked it so well until one night when I got in the spirit I joined. I have been living in Atlanta for twelve years. I came from a farm in Alabama."

Madam T. has been separated from her husband for a long time. She came to Atlanta about fifteen years ago from Newnan, Georgia. She belonged to an A. W. E. Church before she came to Atlanta. She joined a church of that denomination when she came to Atlanta. "I quit," she said, "because it was too cold, and the people didn't like me."

Mrs. C. has been a widow for fifteen years. She came from Madison, Georgia in 1917. She was a member of a Baptist Church in Madison but did not join any church after she came to Atlanta until she joined Bishop Crockett's. "I just went from place to place," she said, "trying to find a church I liked. I didn't find one until I visited Bishop Crockett's Church about three years ago.

Bishop Crockett has been good to me. I got sick about a year after I joined this church. I don't have any children and can not depend upon anyone to help me. Bishop paid all of my bills for me and sent me food for almost a year. The Bishop is truly a good man. He are going to push him to the top."

It can be said by way of summary that the devotees of this cult have several characteristics in common; they have a rural background, they have had
little formal education; the majority are widows. Of the twenty-two women
questioned for this study, eighteen were widows; the women who were employed
worked as domestics in private homes, except one who cooked in a cafe; their
personal appearances and their homes attested their poverty; there was unan-
imous agreement that the Bishop, their leader, was a great man.

The Casual Devotees.— The devotees referred to here as casual, hold
a peculiar status. They are not listed on the Church roll as members because
they have not officially joined this Church. However, they contribute money
regularly, and many of them pay dues as regularly as do the bona fide devotees.
They are well known to the members and are encouraged to participate in the
singing, praying, and testimonial services. These people believe in the
 teachings of the cult but still claim membership in the more formal churches.

One of these casual devotees made a very interesting statement con-
cerning the Bishop of this cult. The statement was made to an acquaintance
of the devotees who marveled at the beautiful coat she was wearing. She ex-
plained it this way: "I can tell you how I got this coat, and by the way it
cost three hundred dollars. I was having hard luck sure enough. It seemed
as if the jinx was on me right. My number never fell and I had all kinds of
trouble and sickness. A friend of mine told me to see Bishop Crockett and
he would help me out. One night I went to his Church. After the preaching,
I bought a candle. He told me how to burn it. When I burned it like he said
my luck was good. When I burned the candle up I went to his house. He gave
me some more candles and told me that my luck would be good from then on.
Sure enough, I've been hitting the numbers and getting money from places I
never looked for any before.

"Yes, honey, Bishop Crockett really knows his business. I've never
been broke a day since. That's why you always see his members get along so
well."
Similar statements were made by other casual devotees with whom I talked personally.

It would be almost impossible to determine exactly how many devotees of this type this cult has. But they obviously outnumber the genuine devotees.

The Special Interest Devotees.—The Special Interest Devotees are those persons who are regular attendants of this cult, but who do not assume responsibility for the success of its program. They neither pray nor testify. However they frequently join in the singing or sometimes the shouting.

These devotees do not claim membership in the cult but do express belief in its practices. They come to the Church for various reasons: a large number come to get the number if it is given out. They expect to get the number in Church by suggestion. One woman said that she was at the Church one night and the Bishop was planning a trip for the next day. The Bishop said, "I leave tomorrow morning at 7:55. I will get to Miami at 2:15 and I'll get back to Atlanta at 1:37 on next Sunday."

Since there is no such time as 7:55, the woman decided he was giving out the numbers by using the time to cover up his real purpose. She said that she played these numbers and they all were winners within the week.

There are others who attend this cult primarily for the healing services. (The process of healing is described in Chapter Five entitled, "Ritual, Beliefs, and Practices.")

The largest percentage of these special interest devotees attend because they like the type of singing, praying and preaching, and shouting that is carried on. "I am a member of the X Methodist Church," one said, "but I never really enjoy meetings until I come here."

The three distinct groups of adherents of this cult give permanence to its existence. The cult uses this policy as its main recruiting policy. An example of this fact can be taken from the experience of Mrs. F., who
was a special interest devotee when this study was first begun. I had the
opportunity of talking with her the first night I visited the church. She
had been attending this church for several months, she said because she
liked to hear the singing. She had never participated in any way in the
services.

About two months later she was giving testimony in the prayer service.
She was also singing with much enthusiasm. Before the night's service was
ended she had shouted twice.

About one month later she joined this cult while I was present. She
is now a member in good standing.

It can be concluded, therefore, that many people attend this cult
for various reasons. Some seeking new experiences only, others because they
want economic gain - or security, a smaller number for the response they get
from the devotees who go to definite extremes to make the visitors welcome,
and a few for recognition.

These varied interest groups take on a definite pattern causing a
stratification of three classes; the bona fide devotees, the casual devotees,
and the special interest devotees.
CHAPTER VII

ITS SOCIAL ROLE

In an earlier chapter an institution was defined as the crystallized social behavior growing out of man's attempts to satisfy his particular persistent needs or wants. Therefore this question arises: what is the specific function of the All National Spiritualist Church of God that justifies its claim of being a functional institution? Since the four basic human desires are for new experience, security, response and recognition, the justification for the existence of a social institution will be determined by the extent to which it satisfies these desires.

It must be kept in mind that there are four basic human institutions growing out of man's need for protection, sex regulation, economic pursuits and belief. No one of these institutions can satisfy in a complete manner all of the four basic persistent needs or wants of mankind. But in order for an institution to persist over a considerable length of time it must be bound up with a basic need of the particular group. Certain needs and the means of satisfying them may be local. It is also possible that many relatively short lived institutions have satisfied more or less temporarily, but nevertheless vital needs of a group. In the main, though, most institutions are more or less permanent and universal means of satisfying the common and basic needs of human beings in their respective natural or social environment.¹

On the basis of this theory it seems that the best test of institutional life is its functional efficiency. Let us apply this test to the All National Spiritualist Church of God. To what extent does it satisfy basic human desires?

The Desire for New Experience.—As mentioned above in connection with the recruiting policy of this cult we found that there were three types of devotees. We found that the usual member of this cult went through three stages of interest before he became a bona fide member. The first stage is when persons are attracted to the Church out of mere curiosity. On almost every meeting night people come to the Church who are members of recognized religious bodies. They visit the cult in response to a desire for adventure or new experience. Far from their minds is any thought of religious benefit. Some are members of local churches where voluntary prayers, spontaneous singing, emotional testimonies and wild shouting are never tolerated. They visit this cult as they would go to see a movie, to be entertained.

Not only the merely curious persons, but also the members, come here for new experiences. This cult is an institution of action. Something is always happening. New faces are in the audience, new people are read or healed and always something new in religious experience. Finally, here is the one place where there is a religious sanction for what most of their neighbors thought was sin, they can play numbers without a feeling of guilt.

The Desire For Security.—The desire for security is mankind's most persistent desire. In all the conversations I had with members of this cult, the desire for one kind of security or another was expressed.

In the first place nearly all of the members of this cult have rural backgrounds. There were two members questioned who were born in this city. But further questioning revealed that even they had lived in communities in this city and attended churches which were predominantly rural in cultural background and practices.

A large number of these people mentioned the fact that the Bishop had secured jobs for them, paid their bills and caused them in unknown
ways to receive and keep money.

It is a well known fact that the numbers racket in Atlanta is enthusiastically supported by a large number of Negros. Passing through any Negro community in late afternoon, one can hear much talk on the streets, in barber shops and in restaurants about some one who hit, the omission of a regular number which was usually played but which appeared the day it was left out, and various other remarks which will reveal the widespread interest in the numbers racket. These people buy dream books, racing forms, number cards, visit fortune tellers, search the bond sections of the newspaper, and use every available aid in trying to guess the one number out of one thousand which will pay on a certain day.

No wonder then that on Sunday Nights many people crowd into this little store from church hoping that something might be said or done to bring them luck with the numbers the following week.

There are others who for years have suffered from some troublesome physical ailments. They have not had money to pay for professional medical care and have had to stand in line on Clinic Day. There was one woman who did not know how to get an examination at the City Hospital until she was assisted by the Bishop. Another woman needed a specialist but had no money to hire one.

These devout, simple people who have heard so many times about Jesus' curing the diseased can easily be convinced that Jesus' spirit of healing is still in the world. To them this cult offers a refuge from the reality of a life of pain and misery. They believe that some time, some super natural being will somehow relieve them of physical pain.

Some of the people who support this cult are people with common problems that come as a result of living in a large urban community. One widow had
a daughter with two small children. The daughter was ill and the children were too small to work. At different times at least five of the present bona fide members had to face the possibility of being evicted from their homes because they had no money to pay rent. These and similar problems face those members who for some reason believe that Bishop Crockett always works things out right. Another special interest member said; "His members always get along well."

The desire for security then is satisfied in a very great measure by the paternalistic attitude of this Bishop toward his members. They feel free to tell him all of their troubles. It does not necessarily matter that he aids them with funds they have given him.

Again, this cult teaches that those who have died are still interested in their loved ones. These spirits of the departed are ever anxious to give those of mortal existence helpful advice and guidance. In a reading given to a young woman the Bishop told her that her mother who had been dead a short time had an important message for her. The Bishop explained how she might get this message if she obeyed the ritual he gave her.

This young woman perhaps having no parents or friends to depend upon, as she said, would no doubt find help in the belief that her mother was still with her.

It is then this security of economic activity, physical health, fatherly advice and spiritual guidance that a large number of the members of this cult seek in this Church.

The Desire for Response.-- The desire for response is another persistent human desire. The members of this cult, coming from simple cultural environments to a large urban community face the challenge of its impersonality. Some of them have been reared in small communities where
they were known by and knew everyone. There were people who were related to
them by blood and also people who were friends of the family. In a large
impersonal environment they find themselves a tool of some industry or home.
They find that they can only get respect by buying it, even in their former
churches. Since they have little money and no prestige they are unable to
expand their sphere of relationships.

The Bishop of this cult is elaborate in the response he gives these
members. He is sympathetic and congenial in his talks with them both on
the telephone and face to face. Too, the response they get from one another
is significant. They usually have the same problems and face the same handi-
caps. When they meet at the church they spend the few moments before the be-
ginning of the service in understanding conversation with each other.

Not only does this cult offer personal and social response to the in-
dividual, but also it provides many means for the believers to get spiritual
response. This is the fact in all religion and religious organizations that
Durkheim observed as differentiating them from all other forms of social
organizations.1 But in this cult there is offered a two fold means of getting
response from the spirit world. The first means is by propitiation or con-
ciliation by prayer, songs, and ritual. In the second place a magical so-
ercion is used. Candles are burned, oil is sprinkled, incantations are
recited and mediums are used.

In this cult the devotees get a satisfactory response from the Bishop p,
from each other and from the spiritual world.

The Desire For Recognition—— The members of this cult are seeking

1Durkheim, op. cit.
among other things recognition. They get this recognition within this cult in various ways.

They are allowed to participate in this cult as leaders. To quote the same woman who obviously found in this cult satisfaction to her desire for response, "I was only a floor member there (X Methodist Church) but I am President of the E. Board here." In this cult she is recognized as a Madam and a leader.

When she gives money here her name is called and the Bishop often refers to her as an example of loyalty. She now feels that she is someone.

Recognition is gained also through the cult's dress. The flowing robe, the head dress and large crucifix give them distinction.

They also find the cult a circle of friends. Each one knows the other, and seems interested in his neighbor. More recognition of this kind is possible among a small common interest group, than would be possible in a more formal church of diverse personality interests.

The desires for new experience, security, response, and recognition are also satisfied to a definite degree in the leader of this cult. He has faced the same problems with the same or similar inadequacies.

The cult offers the leader satisfaction of his desire for new experience. The satisfaction they get out of the services and the people who attend them is also shared by him. In this cult he has the chance to boss instead of being bossed. One day he said that of all the ministers in the city who pastored he was the most fortunate. "No one can tell me what to do or not to do," he said. "I am my own boss."

Being boss also provides the leader with a type of economic security he had never had before. He is paid a definite salary, which he will not discuss. The readings and other things which he gives to those who come to
him provide him with a constant source of revenue. "People wake me up in the morning with money," he said once in explaining his economic security.

His desire for response is met very elaborately by those who support this cult. "All over town," he said, "people are discussing Bishop Crockett. When he talks on the radio hundreds of people call his and tell him how great he is.

When he enters his church at night he can see the change in the attitude of the people, both members and spectators. A new enthusiasm is shown in the singing, praying and testimonies. Some of them, in their prayer or testimonies will express joy at seeing him.

While he is preaching there are always two women to attend him. He is provided clean handkerchiefs every few moments. His hands and face are kept dry of perspiration by one of the women. He is given ice water when he, by some slight gesture, indicates he would like some. In his coming and his going he is circled by a group of members to protect him from those who might unduly detain him.

The Bishop's desire for recognition is satisfied also outside of the church. "I walk down the streets and people will be whispering to one another — 'That's Bishop Crockett!'

This desire for recognition is satisfied by his members in their obvious recognition of his superiority as a preacher, reader, healer, and medium.

"What I want to do," he confided, "is to have all the South to recognize me as do my members." He wants to become as famous in the South, he says, as Father Divine is in the North. In order to make this dream come true he sponsors radio programs, carrying his singers on long trips paying for any publicity he can get.
Fauset says: 1

We are not surprised therefore to observe a diversity of activities in some of the cults which undoubtedly reflects such recognition on the part of the leading members. To express this in more technical terms, it would appear that the normal social needs of the members of some of these groups, and particularly the needs of leadership expression in its various forms by the leaders and the more aggressive members of the cults, become transformed into derived cultural necessities and imperatives.

The religious cults exist in our society for several reasons. In the first place they offer a psychological escape from material hardships. After a day of difficult tasks and disappointments the devotees come to this church and release their suppressed emotions. They forget for an hour or two the insults and scorns of the past day. In their singing, praying, shouting and testifying they have no time to look forward to tomorrow with dread and fear. They have no time to worry over insecurity. Truly Jones was correct when he said that the cults are havens for society's depressed. 2

In the second place the cult provides a meaning for what seems to be a complex, confused, hopeless and purposeless environment. The meaning of both the material and spiritual environment is explained in simple, understandable language. There are no mysteries it cannot explain, there is no law it cannot manipulate. The members believe that all mysteries and laws are governed by the spirit world which is always ready to oblige man if he can only recognize its dictates.

Thirdly, the cult raises the social status of its devotees as well as its leader. It gives them a feeling of belonging and a sense of personal worth.

1 Fauset, A. F. op. cit., p. 12.
2 Jones, Raymond Julius, op. cit.
Therefore the All National Spiritualist Church of God will continue to exist as long as it remains a haven for the dispossessed in our social system. And it will continue to be a haven as long as the dispossessed of society are willing to accept superficial answers in their quest for new experience, security, response and recognition.
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PERIODICALS

The Crockett Family, Eddie Lee, the youngest child, is shown sitting on his father's knee.
A photograph taken of Eddie Lee Crockett when he was ten years old. He is shown in a borrowed suit which is much too large for him. He has a Bible in his hands.
A "Casket Demonstration." Bishop E. D. Crockett is in the casket which is covered with white crepe. The persons shown in the picture are the officials of the Church.
A "Casket Demonstration." This picture shows the Bishop in the casket which is covered with white crepe. The officials and several of the bona fide devotees are also in the picture.