

Pathological Cultism and Public Policy

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MEN AND WOMEN OF UNORTHODOX POLITICAL or religious persuasion and their families and followers or "members" are holed up in an expanded farmhouse. They may be heavily armed and have a food and water supply to last several months, perhaps a year.

One public service agency or another informally reports "concerns." Perhaps "there is reason to believe" that there are illegally obtained or improperly registered firearms on the property. Former members might report that they and others were "brainwashed" or kept on the property against their wishes. And, sooner or later, there are "concerns" that the children in the "compound" may be improperly educated, improperly cared for, possibly even abused.

"Informal concerns" become "official concerns" as an "investigation" is undertaken as "properly" as possible. Charges are filed, and the initiating public service agency allows (or is forced to allow) the cooperative assistance of another agency, and then another. One and then several law enforcement agencies become involved.

In constant quest for just such marketable material, the public news-reporting media keep constant watch on all charges filed with the courts. Journalists with cameras and other equipment appear on the scene.

Soon people return to erstwhile boring news programs to watch the following armies lay siege: the FBI, the highway patrol (usually of two or more states), sheriffs and their deputies of two or more counties, police departments, psychologists and other "experts," S.W.A.T. teams, the National Guard, and of course the heavily-armed agents of the heavily-budgeted U.S. Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), then more media trucks and many other watchers.

Does this sound familiar? Indeed, it seems to happen just about every other year somewhere in the United States and Canada.

On the lips of news reporters and "official spokespersons" are two

words that add measurably to their credibility, or their ability to sell and thus escalate the conflict and justify their budgets: "alleged" and "cult." The only subjects that sell more newspapers, air-time, and law enforcement surveillance and assault equipment than sex, violence, and child abuse are "alleged" sex, "alleged" violence, or "alleged" child abuse in a "cult." Throw in a pinch of "suspected brainwashing" and you have a recipe for the self-righteous arousal of a million brainstems.

In an attempt to keep one step ahead of the next potentially violent siege-worthy encounter, several agencies of the U.S. government are currently keeping careful watch (including documented cases of telephone buggings and other privacy challenging surveillance practices) on several hundred organizations. These include extended families, outdoor-survival clubs, food storage suppliers, and not just "extremist" religious gatherings, but many sports, literary, religious, and political organizations with which many millions of us regularly associate in the daily, weekly, or monthly courses of our lives.

In every age both the firm traditionalists and the innovative nonconformists teach, preach, and gather. As they do so, the orthodox majority always becomes indignant or afraid, and the so-called cultists are invariably excommunicated, incarcerated, or killed. It has happened thousands of times, and it will continue to happen, to artists, church members, microscope users, telescope users, and so-called witches.

These human behaviors—both the gathering of the "odd fellows" and the indignant reaction of the mainstream—are now understandable and predictable and therefore should no longer lead to gearing up for battle.

The "group pride," "cult alert," "we-are-right-they-are-wrong" mentality—on both sides of the conflict—leads to the killing of unconvicted (i.e., innocent) group members, innocent children, and law enforcement officers who are increasingly called upon to dress up in battle gear and make peacetime assaults on the homes of their countrymen.

And even when people do not die, the government agencies are seen as fatuous provocateurs—G.I. Joes needing excuses to show off their sieging skills, weapons and uniforms.

Before another police officer and another child dies we must better understand so-called cult behavior and reevaluate public policy for this archetype scenario.

In the common but contrived law enforcement and media connotation, the term "cult" is used as an arousing or stimulating word by holders of the majority philosophy—or the party in power—to sensationally describe what they consider an "unorthodox" or "deviant" minority.

This nomenclature has found itself into esoteric definitions promulgated by some "anti-cult cults" who describe their own denominations

and interpretations as "orthodox" and selected others as "deviant," "extremist," or "apostate" and therefore "cults."

Here are two dictionary definitions:

cult . . . 1: formal religious veneration : WORSHIP 2: a system of religious beliefs and ritual; also : its body of adherents 3: a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious; also : its body of adherents 4: a system for the cure of disease based on dogma set forth by its promulgator 5a: great devotion to a person, idea, or thing; esp : such devotion regarded as a literary or intellectual fad b: a usu. small circle of persons united by devotion or allegiance to an artistic or intellectual movement or figure—cultic . . . adj . . . cultism . . . n.¹

cult n. System of religious worship; devotion, homage, to person or thing; fad, passing fancy, for some particular thing. cultic adj.²

Thus for most clinical, ecumenical, and public administration purposes, "cult" and "cultism" are terms for categories into which all of us fit, not just at one time or another, but all the time in one context or another.

What should matter in daily intercommunication is not what words mean (according to the dictionary) but what people mean. Professional journalists and government spokespersons should refrain from using terminology which, in its colloquial understanding, degrades a particular group. In America today the word "cult" is most frequently used to draw lines of conflict and, albeit subconsciously or unintentionally, to perpetuate bigotry. Today, as in all of history, the frequent result of this fundamental form of bigotry is violence.

By proper and non-discriminatory definition Christianity is a cult. Buddhism is a cult. Catholicism is a cult. Behaviorism is a cult. There is an unofficial but well-respected law-and-order cult. The American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association are, by one definition, "cults." If you have a favorite television series that you watch with any degree of passion or regularity, then you also belong to that cult.

It was largely for this very purpose of protecting minority philosophies that America was founded, not just as a democracy, but as a "Democratic Republic"—a democracy kept in check by written law. America has a "Bill of Rights" and a legacy, albeit imperfect, of statutory and judicial protection for the harmless eccentrics—the benign cultists: "A way of life that is odd or even erratic but interferes with no rights or interests of others is not to be condemned because it is different" (Final judgement,

1. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G.& C. Merriam Co., 1977), sv. "cult."

2. *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* (Oxford, Eng.: Clarendon/Dorset Press, 1985), sv. "cult."

U.S. Supreme Court, *Wisconsin v. Yoder* 1972). By any fair-minded operational definition, being a cultist in a cult cannot of itself be considered a threat to the stability of society.

For the purposes of this essay I shall differentiate between the everyday benign "cult" (and its "cultism") on one hand and the "pathological cult" (or "pathological cultism") on the other.

Let's say there are two groups who are storing guns, storing food, and seem to have a "radical" political or religious agenda. Which group is probably harmless and which may become a threat to the stability of a peaceful society?

At this point it is important to acknowledge the difficulty in placing a given group clearly and cleanly into one of two categories. Just as all of us at any given time are somewhere between totally healthy and totally sick (mentally, emotionally, and physically), a given social group falls (and can move up or down) on a gradient of organizational pathology.

But the following six-point lists are the start of a professional protocol for social scientists, political leaders, judicial officers, and law enforcement agencies to save expenses and prevent siege/violence-related disasters by better predicting the danger of a given group and later by honestly describing that danger to the public while defending its operations.

The six points in each of these lists include categories commonly associated with groups which are frequently labeled "cults." I shall first describe how these typical cult characteristics manifest themselves in sane, non-threatening organizations.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BENIGN, PROBABLY HARMLESS, PATRIOTIC, RELIGIOUS, OR SURVIVAL/PREPAREDNESS CULT

1. The harmless preparedness cult (for example) may have a mandated centralized leadership or a charismatic one-man leadership which:
 - a. makes no claims to unwavering divine guidance; or
 - b. makes no claims to personal infallibility; or
 - c. makes no claims to irrevocable decision-making power concerning the internal political workings of the group; or
 - d. poses no "clear and present" threat to intra-community respect or the life or health of persons in or out of the group.

Rather, this leadership—as with leadership in any healthy, freedom-preserving organization—will be intelligent, cool-headed, and humble and can be counted on for mercy and forgiveness. It will demonstrate tolerance for a broad spectrum of alternative ideas and interpretations.

2. The harmless preparedness cult might keep and practice with firearms including so-called "assault" weapons and high tech security and military equipment.

Many healthy, "well-balanced" people believe that keeping and bearing arms and plenty of ammunition, including so-called "assault" weapons and survival supplies, is not just the constitutional right of every citizen, it is a factor in the prevention (as well as commission) of both criminal and (especially) political tyranny; they believe, logically, that this is a factor in preventing our governments from becoming pathological cults.

3. Wise preparedness and safety-conscious groups store basic supplies including warm clothing, food, and water to last several months, perhaps even a year or more, for all members of the group and for philanthropic and barter purposes.

4. The harmless preparedness cult may have what is construed to be "a way of life that seems odd, erratic or perverse" according to "traditional" or "mainstream" society but which: involves fully sober and consenting participants, poses no clear and present physical or mental harm to its members or outsiders, especially children, and respects the safety and property of others; does not prohibit or restrict the regular coming and going of members and visitations by relatives and independent, unbiased health-care professionals; and does not keep its children and members blinded to alternative ideas and lifestyles. The group's lifestyles may or may not include unusual marriage or (in rare cases) slightly unusual but healthy sexual practices for their consenting adults. No matter how strongly we believe in our mainstream, traditional, always-religious mores, we have no right to force them on others.

5. The harmless preparedness cult might have a semi-closed society for its members. They may own an unusually large home or enclosed tract of homes. They might raise much of their own food or provide on-site "parochial" or "home-schooling" for their children. They may conduct little commerce with the rest of society.

But the non-threatening, mentally and socially healthy religion or quasi-political organization is confident in the long-term value and appeal of its philosophy in the universal marketplace of ideas and thus has nothing to fear by giving its children (and other members of the group) full access to alternative interpretations, arts, and lifestyles. This is a key factor in identifying a healthy organization of any kind. They are happy to let their children spend generous periods of time in the homes and communities of relatives and friends outside the group and, for example, would willingly turn them loose in non-censored public, private, and university libraries and bookstores with encouragement to peruse, read, and borrow any book they find.

They do not totally forbid access to styles of music, film, and other mediums which preserve and share the rich variety of ideas and cultures on our planet or which depict truth about healthy sexual and social behavior. This openmindedness fosters mental health, cultural interaction, and understanding and promotes peace by preventing bigoted thinking.

6. The harmless organization will have an absence of paranoid secrecy. I do not use the term "paranoid" in its clinical sense, but in a rather common (but potentially pathological) sense of extreme self-conscious fears especially over such matters as loss of authority or control over others. The socially healthy group and the mentally healthy and peace-respecting group leadership does not serve for or feed upon continual and increasing influence and power over others. They do not keep secret (or "confidential"), inaccessible files on their members and other persons, and they do not repeatedly and secretly probe into private, bedroom matters.

The group or "cult" which observes any or even all of the above practices does not, with any or all of these reasons, pose a threat to a stable society. These are the practices of many individuals and organizations who simply might, for example, have stronger initiative and beliefs concerning "being prepared." Many highly qualified, well-respected scientists and several religions totalling memberships of literally a billion people teach the coming, sooner or later, of "the end" of civilization as we know it. And a solid, peace-loving, society-contributing portion of these memberships can be counted on from time to time to exercise an active "faith" in those teachings to the point of preparing themselves concerning what they sincerely and sanely believe history, a legacy of calculated prophecy, canonized scripture, and/or geophysical data is warning them.

Governmental legislation or enforcement which attempts to discourage or punish people for doing any of the above six things not only contradicts universal natural law (the inalienable civil rights) but is considered by many to be "kicking against the pricks," ignoring the laws of science, the lessons of history, or "fighting against God," not just by a few extremist groups, but by many millions of otherwise law-abiding, stability-promoting citizens.

In addition to the millions of religion-based survivalists and so-called "extremists" are tens of thousands of persons with other consistent philosophies of history and current affairs who are reading "the signs of the times" from a strictly secular and scientific point of view. These people may cite Nostradamus, the daily newspapers, or a dozen widely read scientific and political journals to make a solid case for the decline of civilization or forthcoming natural disaster. Recent political, weather, and tectonic plate studies may convince some intelligent persons that it is

very wise to maintain long term supplies of rotatable foods, medications, warm clothing, blankets, and some equipment and training for self defense.

To pass draconian laws against such preparations and against certain types of weapons is blatantly counterproductive, arguably unconstitutional, and, in its own way, fanatic and thus "pathologically cultish." It alerts and activates millions more otherwise passive "believers" to the point of justifiably construing that its heretofore sane government is becoming an increasingly unstable or uncontrollable power.

The greater wisdom of non-violent response notwithstanding, *millions of people* believe that when a government spies on its constitution-abiding citizens and increasingly arms itself against even the sane and peace-loving population, then that population has every right to be alarmed and take defensive measures. They believe that to do otherwise is to ignore the lessons of history and human nature.

Many Americans have a strong atavistic memory of having built their country on the blood of immigrant and patriotic forefathers who left the religion-squelching monarchies or dictatorships of their homelands, fought and died for their rights and freedoms against tyrannical governments, then fought and died again for the cause of freedom in two world wars, and stood firm under the threat of thermonuclear war against strong regimes that openly threatened to replace the American Republic with the tyranny of rights-threatening, police-state government. Granted that all of the above can be academically interpreted in vastly different ways, but this, as stated, is the clear understanding—the fabric, or "heartbeat"—of American free agency and patriotism.

Therefore, laws against survival storage, group and personal arms, together with increased budgets for stronger, better-equipped, faster-responding FBI, a department of ATF, local S.W.A.T. teams, and so on are not only not part of a viable solution, they are part of the problem. Such government trends tend to constrict, threaten, and punish not the criminals of America, but its strongest patriots.

What then is the difference between the non-threatening, sane survivalist cult and the potentially dangerous pathological cult? Or, for that matter, between the armed religious cult and the armed government cult? And what steps can public policy-makers take to ameliorate the arms race between the government and its own people?

In clinical and medical work we use the term "pathology" (or "pathological") to describe sickness—that "path" away from nominal health to malignant disease.

Behavioral scientists also examine the group- or social-health of a community or society. I have coined the terms "pathological cult" and "pathological cultism" to differentiate between the generally non-threat-

ening survivalist with his family and friends on one hand and, on the other, the probably dangerous fanatic group who is typically lead by a strong, charismatic, but somewhat mentally unstable leader or small group of leaders.

We say, for example, that many generally healthy people tell lies, but that a "pathological liar" is a person who is both mentally and socially unhealthy and is potentially hurtful to self and others. Likewise in studying group behavior, we note that organizations often have secrets: sacred rituals or matters of group privacy. In the healthy group, such matters are accessible, understood, and appreciated. But the pathological cult will have unhealthy secrets and covert acts that cannot be reviewed or checked. They typically keep secret files (usually termed "confidential files" in the typical double-speak of an increasingly pathological institution) about their members—files which the members themselves may not see or correct.

Here is a more complete checklist to help identify an extremist religious, political, or survival group which is likely to pose a threat to a stable, freedom-respecting society.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PATHOLOGICAL CULT

1. The pathological cult has a mandated, centralized leadership or a charismatic one-man leadership which:

- a. claims to have unwavering divine guidance; or
- b. claims to have personal infallibility; or
- c. claims irrevocable, unappealable decision-making power concerning the intra-political workings of the group; or
- d. shows clear and present threat to the life or health of persons in or out of the group—not to mention exclusive sub-groups and/or threats of discontinued fellowship for those who do not acquiesce to the gradually more restrictive mandates from the group leadership.

This leadership may be intelligent in several areas but will be either ill-tempered or un-merciful or both. It is invariably obsessed with self-importance and is typified by gradually increasing narrowmindedness and intolerance for alternative interpretations of policy or doctrine.

2. The pathological group may or may not have large or small amounts of firearms, ammunition, and other defensive or so-called "assault" equipment.

Using intelligent, coordinated non-violent action is better than using weapons, but despite the frequently mentioned discomforts and dangers of the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, it remains necessary so that the mili-

tia of the people may reform in case of any of a variety of potential disasters where a stable government and its sane enforcement vehicles may become destroyed, inaccessible, or deteriorate into something of a tyrannical (i.e., socially pathological) police state, which is by definition the situation when the arms and powers of government exceed the arms and powers of the people.

3. They may or may not store food and other supplies. The pathological group might even take a self-righteous stand against serious storage of food and other supplies, or it may wait until stable government protection becomes inaccessible or deteriorates and then becomes one of the inevitable mobs roaming the streets to take what it claims to need for supplies and power.

(Last-minute, panic-based hoarding is not itself pathological but is unwise and unfair; it is an inevitable result of a certain artificial "group security"—that of assuming that our club, community, or government agencies can wisely handle any problem that may come up. Panic results when the illusion is broken; when it becomes apparent that the government or church cannot actually or fairly take care of basic needs.)

4. The pathological cult may have a lifestyle that is not only odd, erratic, or perverse but

- a. involves mentally unstable or partially non-consenting participants; and/or
- b. destroys personal property and threatens the health of innocent persons; and/or
- c. involves demonstrable "probable cause" (it will be clinically and legally provable as causing clear and present physical or mental harm to any of the participants, especially the children); and/or
- d. prohibits the regular coming and going of members and visitation with and by relatives and independent, unbiased health-care professionals; and/or
- e. keeps children blinded to alternative ideas and lifestyles.

5. The pathological cult will probably have an excessively closed society for members. It is not identifiable by the size, shape, or security of its compound (it can be one small farmhouse or the largest church or hegemony in the world) and certainly not by their refusal to participate in the public or traditional school system. But there are clear symptoms.

The mentally and socially pathological (and potentially dangerous) religion or quasi-political society is not confident in the long-term appeal of its philosophy if comparable with other ideas or interpretations. This is a key factor in identifying a more or less pathological organization. It tries to control the minds of its children and members by limiting their

access to alternative ideas, images, interpretations, and lifestyles:

- a. they severely limit, restrict, and control visitations to the homes and communities of relatives and friends outside the group and its compound; or
- b. they prohibit their children from having considerable free time in a non-censored public, private, or university library, or full-spectrum bookstore and typically have a very limited scope of permissible literature; or
- c. they take care to restrict access to the music, film, and other mediums of our time which preserve and share the rich variety of ideas and cultures on our planet and which depict truth about natural, healthy sexual and social behavior; censorship causes pathological fear and promotes narrowmindedness, racism, and other bigoted thinking which perpetuate social conflict.

Many wise, mentally healthy organizations might advise general avoidance of certain types of literature in favor of the fine arts and a broad-based study, together with what they consider scripture and doctrine-supporting literature. But when a leader or group flatly forbids any and all exposure to alternative ideas, interpretations, or specific art forms, they lack confidence in their own dogma and foster group and individual paranoia.

6. The pathological cult and especially its leadership tend to be jealous of their influence and control, usually to the point of coldly but gradually craving more influence and control, and they will take covert measures to do so.

The best example of this is the keeping of secret records about members and others. Large, long standing, increasingly pathological organizations keep inaccessible vaults holding group records, diaries, and historical materials—materials to which its citizens or members cannot have access.

Extremely pathological groups may attempt to compromise politicians or innocent persons with terrorism or bribes (direct or indirect).

As another example, a powerful leader with subtle mental problems may use his role as “worthiness interviewer” to “confidentially” discuss private sexual matters in detail with a young parishioner or member.

Again, a given group cannot be simply judged as fitting into one type of group or the other, but somewhere along a continuum. Nor will its position remain static. Any club or denomination will begin as described in the first list but will naturally tend to become more and more closed as its membership and leadership grow in size and group pride. And the

pathological organization will not have all of the characteristics in the second list. It might still have some healthy signs even while developing the seeds of bigotry, secrecy, pride, or violence.

From a historical and sociological perspective, in most of the highly-publicized instances where combined law enforcement agencies have laid siege to the properties of so-called "extremist organizations," especially in those instances where persons have been killed, it is not correct to describe the incident in terms of the stable society and its government versus a "cult." This social phenomenon can be more accurately described as one pride-driven pathological cult versus another pride-driven pathological cult. Too many innocent children and obedient law enforcement personnel have been killed because of the unspoken, narrow-minded assumption—on both sides of the battle line—that "our club is better than yours."

Public policies designed to identify the next potentially dangerous "cult" by defining and restricting different types of weapons, alternative literature, erotic art, or food storage are not only ineffective, they are counter-productive; they are feeding the flames of cult versus cult. Social policy makers need to be more intelligent, more wise, more forgiving, more merciful, and more tolerant (or in other words, less pathological) than other cult leaders.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND GROUP POLICY TO PREVENT CULT SIEGE DISASTER

So far we have only discussed group behavior from a philosophical, social science perspective. For the benefit of persons in survival and philosophical organizations—as well as for public administrators—here are some more practical guidelines:

- A. *Avoid telling lies and stretched truths.* Never lie to yourself, to (other) public officials, to members of your group, or to the media. Court and law officers frequently must temporarily withhold information, but outright lies and locked-away files make it difficult for us to be trusted by the honest people we represent.

Every organization, including all associations, churches, institutions, governments, and each sub-agency therein, is by one legal definition a "cult" and can become pathological. *It is a reliable principle of organizational behavior that a given group or agency will gradually develop little pride-based inaccuracies about its value and importance.* These inaccuracies first lead to tiny cover-ups and then to out-right lies. We avoid the lies by understanding the "cult" nature of our own affiliations and by not over-inflating the importance of the organization above its original charter or the on-going authority of the party in

power above the value of the people it serves. Other words like "compound" instead of "farmhouse" or "group-home" may add unnecessarily to fervor and sensationalism.

Always give all of the genuine reasons for your policies and admit the real hierarchy of importance for each policy or doctrine.

Don't use sensational or slanderous language. Don't use words like "cult" to describe another group (unless you can also and intelligently use such terms for your own institution).

- B. *Always negotiate in good faith.* This requires not only honesty and justice, but the humility, wisdom, and mercy of persons on both sides of the conflict. Don't be governed by pride or the "law-and-orderism" cult tendency to never give an inch.
- C. *Re-examine both the need and the urgency for taking the stand, delivering the writ, making the arrest, or convening a disciplinary body.*

A competent, confident leader or judicial system doesn't have to be right all the time. To admit that is a sign of courage and strength, not a sign of weakness. Let's not hurt people—even their feelings—just "to show who's in charge here."

On the government's part especially, if we have a writ or warrant for a person or persons in a group home pertaining to what they allegedly have done or might do outside of their home don't be too proud to reexamine the need for it. And when it is shown to be just and necessary, there is seldom necessity to enforce it right now: wait.

Wait unobtrusively until the actual suspect leaves the compound. The assumption that they may never leave the compound (because they have enough food and water to last many months) is virtually hypothetical and is always a very weak, pride-motivated, self-righteous excuse for potentially violent action.

Unless you are prepared to prove "probable cause" (for "clear and present danger") that the suspect or suspects are in the act of actually violating the life or immediate health of a child or the life of any person, your writ or warrant can wait, perhaps indefinitely.

- D. *Avoid all siege-related activity except in cases of very clear, immediately present, life-threatening danger.* In other words, do your waiting before the siege—and the siege may become unnecessary.

Armed forces personnel, S.W.A.T. teams, and related equipment were devised to prevent armed invasion from a foreign enemy, for a lunatic *in the act* of using guns to hurt people, for an escaped and armed murderer in hiding, or for genuine criminal terrorists or gangs *in the act* of snuffing out other people's lives. They are counter-productive against philosophical organizations with strange lifestyles who temporarily find themselves on the wrong side of widely challenged laws and public policies. This applies to students who are

peacefully protesting in the public square, to the charismatic group leader with many weapons, and to persons with children who may or may not be as uneducated and un-cared-for as the under-achievers in the public school system.

- E. *Do not underestimate the ability or the resolve of the other organization (the other cult).*

Nowadays it is foolish, for example, for members of an armed compound (albeit the size of a family farm—or the size of Iran) to think they can win against the U.S. government. It is also foolish for leaders, members, and supporters of the obviously superior force to assume that an armed siege or other operation can be undertaken without innocent persons and members of its own attack force being killed. Pathological cults notwithstanding, most sane members of nations or cults have something they are willing to die for, perhaps even kill for. Always take this factor into consideration before you launch an armed operation. Those who live by the gun, die by the gun. *Don't send your subordinates into a conflict with weapons—unless it is for a cause for which you, yourself, are willing to die.*

- F. *Just because we are right about some things—perhaps most things—does not mean we are right about all things.* This applies to all cults including the greatest, most heaven-inspired countries, kingdoms, and institutions today and throughout all history. You may, in fact, have been spoken to by The One True God or an angel therefrom. Perhaps your country, your family, or your church are in fact supported by the preponderance of scripture, prophetic utterance, or majority-supported law. But that does not mean that you yourself are not subject to error.

It is the nature and disposition of almost all individuals, leaders, parents, teachers, ministers, prophets, generals, commissioners, parliaments, quorums, councils, courts, committees, and societies to step innocently but erroneously beyond the limits of their correctness, their jurisdiction, their stewardship, and their purpose to the point where power is exploited, families and lives are damaged, and where children are abused or killed.

Let us all check and recheck ourselves: Does our having been right heretofore mean we have always done, and are about to do, the right thing? Let us ask ourselves: Are we so right and correct that families must be wretched apart, or that soldiers, innocent persons, and perhaps children must die today? Or are we proceeding mainly because of our pride? Because of our own lack of courage, character, or faith? Are we afraid that if we admit our fallibility our people will no longer believe in the righteousness of our mission?

Whether in public administration, church administration, or family

colony, let us make sure the action and policy of our organization is more tolerant, more forgiving, more merciful, and more introspective than that of our antagonists. In terms of human nature and organizational behavior, let us not pretend or assume that our organization or agency is always less "pathological" than the people and the organization on the other side of the fence or the council table. With this self-examination we will usually discover that the reported "concerns" do not justify the proposed level of conflict escalation.

There have been, and will yet be, many "causes" where persons on at least one side of the fence are willing to die and possibly take their children with them. And there are "causes" where leaders are willing to send the obedient and the faithful in to die, sometimes for righteous and life-saving purposes, but usually it happens only for the vanity of pride.