

POST-GRADUATE RELIGIOUS MAINTENANCE

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The purpose of this study will be to examine the change in the level of religious commitment of members of the Campus Crusade for Christ after graduation from college, and to assess whether or not they are meeting their "win, build, send" goal. This will be done by testing two hypotheses: 1) the higher the level of commitment in Campus Crusade for Christ in college, the higher the present level of religious commitment, and 2) the higher the level of commitment in Campus Crusade for Christ in college, the higher the level of activity within the specific present church.

According to Wuthnow (1978) the college years seem to be a time of "making up one's mind about religion." In many cases the students are no longer under the direct supervision of their parents and therefore are free to decide on their own that their level of religious commitment will be. Although there is research to indicate that switching away from the parent's religious teaching is a form of rebellion (Caplovitz and Sherrow, 1977). Hunsberger (1983), however, found that the apparent change in religiosity of many college students was due more to a "cognitive process of doubt and disagreement" with what they had been taught at home.

But now we must ask the question; once they have "made up their mind" about religion how long does it stay "made up?" For many of those students who become apostate during their college years there is research to indicate that this apostacy is not a permanent state, and in fact, the twenties (especially the late twenties) is the age at which there is the highest rate of apostate return to the church [Rozen,

1979]. This paper, however, is not so concerned with the trends of the general population (as was Roozen), but will focus of the religious commitment and maintenance of a much more specialized group; the parachurch. And so, this research asks the question are the members of a parachurch organization equally as likely to change their level of religious commitment as their apostate comrades?

First, before we can proceed any further, a working definition of a parachurch is needed. For our purposes here we will use the definition that Jerry White offers in his book The Church & The Parachurch: an Uneasy Marriage [19] which is: "any spiritual ministry whose organization is not under the control of a local congregation." However, for our purposes here we will limit the definition to any "Christian" spiritual ministry since our group of focus is deeply fundamentalist Christian.

At Texas A&M, probably because of the conservativeness of the campus, there are many different Christian student groups which attract a large number of students. These groups are generally quite visible and the attitude of the student body toward them is, by and large, if not positive, then at least accommodating. It is not unusual for a student to become involved in one of the many religious organizations, and then to develop this involvement into a serious commitment even beyond the point where their parents feel comfortable. Yet, what happens to this high level of commitment after the students leaves the college environment? Does the student's level of commitment rise steadily for the rest of his or her life (as is the goal of the various Parachurch organizations)? Or, does the student simply slip into whatever level of commitment seems to be the most appropriate for his or

her environment?

The goal of this study will be to assess the effectiveness of one of these parachurch organizations, and to ascertain whether or not involvement in this parachurch during college does in fact have a significant affect on the person's level of religious commitment and activity after college.

The unit of focus in this study, the Campus Crusade for Christ, was chosen for several reasons. First, the Campus Crusade is an international organization that has a very clear and very fundamental set of beliefs which all members are expected to know and, at least outwardly, adhere. This will help not only in generalizing the results of the study (which is a problem because of the small sample size), but will also aid in determining just how much the student's beliefs have changed. (Since it would be difficult to get an accurate picture of what a person's beliefs were several years ago it will be easier to compare the person's standards of belief now against that of the organization and note any variations.) Second, the Campus Crusade has a large membership at Texas A&M and keeps records on all of its previous members. A sample of Campus Crusade members is both easily available and reliable. Finally, the Campus Crusade is an ideal unit of focus because of their "win, build, send" goal. That is, the Campus Crusade is concerned with first sharing their faith with nonbelievers and acquiring converts (win), then equipping their members with ministry skills and motivating them toward a deeper level of religious commitment (build), and finally, sending members out from the organization to repeat the process in the lives of others (send). So, ideally, when the previous members of Campus Crusade graduate from college and become

involved in the institutionalized church they should be equipped with ministry and leadership skills so as to renew the zeal of a sometimes rather lackadaisical church.

This research will assess whether the Campus Crusade for Christ is in fact accomplishing their goal by testing two hypotheses: 1) the higher the level of commitment in Campus Crusade for Christ in college, the higher the present level of religious commitment, and 2) the higher the level of commitment in Campus Crusade for Christ in college, the higher the level of activity within the specific present church.

The level of religious commitment of the student will be measured by using Glock and Stark's five dimensional measure of religiosity [Glock and Stark, 1965, 20]. These five different dimensions are the ideological or belief dimension, the ritualistic or practice dimension, the intellectual or knowledge dimension, the experiential or experience dimension, and the consequential dimension. For this study, however, only four of the five dimensions will be used. (It was felt that the intellectual or knowledge dimension would not be needed because the Campus Crusade is generally pretty thorough in teaching its members the basic tenets of the Christian faith.)

METHODOLOGY

The sample consisted of all the members of the Texas A&M Campus Crusade for Christ movement on file over the past eight years (which was 312 people). A questionnaire was handed out to the alumni at a Campus Crusade reunion, and then the questionnaire was sent to those who did not attend.

The sample size was admittedly small, but with the constraints of time, money, and availability of respondents there was really no viable

alternative. There was the option of including respondents from other schools, but Campus Crusade for Christ Inc. is only now compiling a comprehensive list of the past members which will not be out until April of 1986, and the process of finding all this information without the aid of Campus Crusade for Christ Inc. proved to be far too cumbersome for the scope of this paper. Also, the Campus Crusade movement at Texas A&M is one of the few that keeps records of their past members so, as far as mechanics was concerned, it seemed best to limit the focus of the this study to Texas A&M.

Obviously, because of the small sample size and because of the limited focus of this study generalization of the findings is going to be weak at best. The real value of this study will not be the far reaching implications of the findings, but in the point of view of the research. There has been research of the apostacy of people who come to college [Hunsberger, 1983; Caplovitz and Sherrow, 1977], as well as research on the reasons for religiosity in college [O'Hara, 1980; Welch and Barrish, 1982], but there has been incredibly little research on the affects the religious commitment in college has on the rest of a person's life. That is precisely the aim of this research.

RESULTS

Of the 312 questionnaires sent out 131 were returned (42%). The sample consisted of 126 usable responses. (The other 5 respondents were eliminated for various reasons such as non-involvement in Campus Crusade for Christ, had not graduate from college, etc.) The respondents were 57.9% males and 42.1% females, and varied in age from 22 to 33 years old.

The findings of the testing of the first hypothesis were of crucial

importance to this research simply because the findings of the second hypothesis and other research questions of concern here were contingent on obtaining a positive correlation between the level of commitment to Campus Crusade for Christ in college and the present level of religious commitment. (This is clear since the respondent would have to be involved in a church before they could have any kind of measurable level of activity within the church.)

The first hypothesis was tested by noting whether a correlation existed between a variable measuring the level of commitment in Campus Crusade in college and a variable measuring the level of present religious commitment. Although the two indices of religious commitment were originally going to be measured across four of the five variables used by Glock and Stark [1965,20] it became clear that a reliable measure of the respondent's experiential and orthodoxy dimension in college would be impossible to obtain post hoc with simple self reporting. So, to make the measurement of the two variables parallel over time only the ritualistic and consequential dimensions were used as an index of religious commitment. The correlation between these two variables is shown in Table I.

Table One

	COUNT ROW PCT COL PCT	COLLEGE COMMITMENT			ROW TOTAL
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
		PRESENT COMMITMENT	1.00	25 41.7 69.4	
	2.00	11 18.0 30.6	18 29.5 48.6	32 52.5 66.7	61 50.4

	COLUMN	36	37	48	121
	TOTAL	29.8	30.6	39.7	100.0
	<u>CHI-SQUARE</u>	<u>D.F.</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>	<u>MIN E.F.</u>	
	10.79729	2	0.0045	17.851	
	<u>STATISTIC</u>		<u>VALUE</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>	
	KENDALL'S TAU B		0.28167	0.0005	
	PEARSON'S R		0.29872	0.0004	
	GAMMA		0.46819		

There was a significant positive relationship found between the level of commitment in Campus Crusade for Christ in college and the present level of religious commitment ($p < .05$ $r = .299$). This relationship was strong enough to suggest that the members of the Campus Crusade are in fact maintaining their level of religious commitment once they graduate from college. In addition, the level of this commitment based on church attendance is significantly higher than that of the general population. This is illustrated quite clearly by a comparison of the frequency of the general population who attend church services at least once a week (30%) and the frequency of this sample of Campus Crusade members who attend church services at least once a week (88.8%).

Even though a reliable measure of the respondent's experiential and orthodoxy dimensions during college could not be acquired these dimensions were not ignored. A present measure of these dimensions was obtained and then tested for correlations with the respondent's general level of religious commitment. This was done to determine whether the Campus Crusade members were not only maintaining their high level of religious commitment but were keeping their fundamentalist orientation also. All three variables were found to be positively correlated to a significant degree; the experiential measure and the present measure of religiosity were correlated with $p < .05$ and $r = .4588$, and the orthodoxy measure and the present level of religiosity were correlated with $p < .05$

and $r=.3232$. This supported the supposition that the Campus Crusade not only elicits a high level of commitment from its members, but also equips them with a firm base of teaching that serves to keep the members religiously fundamental even after they have graduated.

Several different variables were controlled for: age, length of time out of school, parent's level of religiosity (based of a subjective assessment by the respondents), and the respondent's present level of activity outside the church. The only variable that had any significant relationship to the respondent's present level of religiosity was their present level of secular activities. (A measure of the respondent's level of secular activities was set up using such observations as marriage status, number of children, clubs or other secular organizations, and recreational activities.) Interestingly enough, these two variables were positively related with $p<.05$ and $r=.25$.

The results concerning the second hypothesis were not as immediately clear as those of the first hypothesis. For the second hypothesis a correlation was tested for between the variable measuring the respondent's level of commitment in Campus Crusade in college and the variable measuring the respondent's level of activity within their present church. The church activity variable had originally been ordinally coded into low (having no responsibilities in the church), medium (having one to two separate responsibilities in the church) - which could range from being a deacon to leading a Sunday school class or Bible study to being an usher or working in the church nursery - , and high (having three or more separate responsibilities in the church). When the activity level in the church was coded for in this manner there

was no significant relationship between the two variables. However, when the activity level in the church was coded nominally (that is, people who simply attended services in one category and those who had some kind of responsibility in the church in addition to attending services in the other category) then a significant relationship was found with $p < .05$ and $r = .254$. See Table II. The logic for the change in the method of coding was based on the realization that the scale that was used to measure the level of church activity was not sensitive enough to pick up on the respondent's real level of commitment within the church. The measure that was used simply noted the number of different responsibilities or positions held and did not take into account the level of commitment that each responsibility might entail. For instance, one respondent could have had the responsibility of being an usher on Sunday mornings while yet another respondent could have been both a deacon and a board member of the church, and yet, because they both had from one to two responsibilities in the church they both would

Table Two

COLLEGE COMMITMENT

CHURCH ACTIVITY LEVEL	COUNT		ROW		ROW TOTAL	
	ROW COL	PCT PCT	1.00	2.00		3.00
0			17	13	9	39
			43.6	33.3	23.1	32.2
			47.2	35.1	18.8	
1			19	24	39	82
			23.2	29.3	47.6	67.8
			52.8	64.9	81.3	
COLUMN		36	37	48	121	
TOTAL		29.8	30.6	39.7	100.0	

<u>CHI-SQUARE</u>	<u>D.F.</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>	<u>MIN E.F.</u>
7.84056	2	0.0198	11.603
<u>STATISTIC</u>		<u>VALUE</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>
KENDALL'S TAU B		0.24004	0.0027
PEARSON'S R		0.25368	0.0025
GAMMA		0.42676	

receive the same score for the measure of church activity. So, obviously, since no reliable measure for the depth of the respondent's commitment to their church was used this research cannot speak confidently about the extent of the respondent's church responsibilities, but simply that they HAD these responsibilities (67.8% of the sample were involved in their church beyond simply attending Sunday services).

CONCLUSIONS

The research clearly supported the first hypothesis that the higher the level of commitment in Campus Crusade for Christ in college, the higher the present level of religious commitment. In addition to this, it was found that the members of the Campus Crusade are likely to keep their fundamental Christian orientation. These findings would suggest that the individuals involved in the Campus Crusade movement are actually acquiring a solid fundamental Christian base of belief that extends beyond college environment. The individual's commitment is not merely a "college phase" that they grow out of when faced with the "real" world, but a genuine religious commitment that could very well impact the rest of their lives. In respect to the Campus Crusade for Christ motto, "win, build, send", it would appear that, at least in the Texas A&M Campus Crusade movement, the goal of "building" the individual

in their faith is being accomplished.

The question of whether the individuals were highly religious prior to their involvement in Campus Crusade was beyond the scope of this research. If it could be shown that the members of the Campus Crusade were already highly committed prior to college then an argument could be made that the individuals would have remained highly committed anyway due to their early socialization [Hunsberger, 1983]. While this may or may not be true, because the Campus Crusade is so highly evangelistic it is probably safe to assume that there are at least some of the members who were not converted until college and therefore were not socialized toward any great religious commitment as children. In this sample, 34.7% of the respondents did not become christians until the age of 18 (roughly the age at which a person starts college). So, an assertion that the respondent's continued level of commitment was due primarily to early socialization and not the influence of the Campus Crusade is questionable at best, and in light of the absence of any significant relationship between the respondent's present level of religious commitment and their parent's level of religious commitment it appears that early socialization would not satisfactorily explain the maintenance of the respondent's religious commitment.

Whether or not the second hypothesis was supported is not immediately apparent. This is due to the inadequacy of the measure of one of the variables, specifically the measure of the level of involvement in the respondent's present church. After recording this variable from an ordinal ranking of the data to a nominal ranking of the data (ie. either the respondent did or did not hold a position of responsibility in their present church) the findings become a little

more easily discernable. When the data is ordinally ranked, even though the Pearson's correlation is significant ($p < .05$, $r = .273$) the chi-square statistic is not significant ($p = .0552$, $\chi^2 = 9.24744$, $d.f. = 4$). Yet, when the data is nominally ranked both the Pearson's correlation and the chi-square statistic are significant (see Table II). The reason for this may be more easily seen when the frequencies of the categories of the ordinally ranked data are observed. On the question measuring the level of church involvement 31.7% of the respondents scored low (ie. did not hold any positions of responsibility in the church), 50% had a medium score, and 18.3% scored high. Because fully half of the respondents fell into the middle category, and the high scoring category ranked the lowest of the three it is clear why the chi-square statistic did not find a significant correlation between the two variables. Yet, since over two thirds of the respondents were more than nominally involved (simply attending services being considered nominal) it is not surprising that when the data was recoded the chi-square was found to be significant. As was stated above, to obtain an accurate correlation between the level of activity in church and present level of religious commitment a more sensitive measure of the depth of commitment within the church should be used. So, in drawing conclusions concerning the second hypothesis, though it cannot be conclusively demonstrated by this research that the level of commitment in Campus Crusade in college is positively correlated to a significant degree with the respondent's present level of activity within their church, the research did find that people who were involved in the Campus Crusade for Christ in college were likely to be more than just nominally involved in their

church (that is, they were likely to hold some position of responsibility within the church).

This proclivity towards taking on some type of responsibility in the church could (and probably is to some extent) due to the leadership and ministry skills acquired during the participant's time spent in the Campus Crusade, yet in the absence of an adequate measure of church involvement nothing definitive can be asserted. Though it could be argued that this is simply a result of being a member of the church, since there are not any statistics available of the frequency of the general population's depth of involvement in their churches a comparison between the two groups cannot at this point be safely drawn. It does appear, however, that the Campus Crusade at Texas A&M is successful to some extent in "sending" their members into the institutional church equipped to use their various ministry skills to revitalize the church.

IMPLICATIONS

When doing research on a parachurch organization such as the Campus Crusade, often the standard measures of religiosity are not as accurate as they need be. This is because these measures are formulated to measure the average person's level of religious commitment and can sometimes be insensitive when measuring the very religious. This was found especially when the respondents were asked whether they thought their religious commitment had increased, decreased, or remained constant. Many of the respondents differentiated between their level of commitment (ie. the number of "Christian" activities that they are involved in) and their depth of relationship with God. Many indicated that while their commitment level had remained essentially the same they

had "become more mature spiritually" or "gone deeper" in their relationship with God, thus distinguishing between the objective and subjective parts of their religious commitment. This would indicate a need for a new type of measure of religious commitment for the highly religious because as one respondent put it, "I'm already completely committed, I can't do any more!" There comes a point at which there simply is not any more time to do more Christian "things", and it is at this point that the measure of religious commitment must become completely subjective and begin to measure the interpersonal relationship between the person and God.

Another measure that needs to be more sensitive is the level of church activity variable. The need for this was demonstrated quite clearly in the testing of the second hypothesis. A ranking of positions within the church could be formulated and a measure indicating the level of commitment assigned.

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