to advertisers. The stakes are formidable. Ninety-eight percent of U.S. homes have a television set, and the average American spends more than four hours a day watching TV.

For the privilege of addressing their large audiences, the networks charge advertisers hefty fees. In 1979, 60 seconds of prime time (8 to 11 P.M., EST) sells for an average of $100,000. Most commercials are costly—production charges can run up to $50,000. The consumer ends up bearing the brunt of the advertisers' expenses in increased prices for goods, Cook writes. And, in effect, he also willingly gives away his time to the networks, which then sell it to the advertisers "at a huge net profit annually." (The television industry's revenues reached $5.9 billion in 1977.) Drawn by the promise of free entertainment, he concludes, "we are selling off our most precious and nonrenewable resource—the time of our lives—for a handful of electronic gimcracks."

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Why Jonestown?

"Jonestown: The Enduring Questions" by Henry Warner Bowden, in *Theology Today* (Apr. 1979), P.O. Box 29, Princeton, N.J. 08540.

More than 600 religious sects have been established in the United States since 1650. All have suffered from the jibes and hostility of the American public, observes Bowden, a religion professor at Douglass College, Rutgers University.

U.S. religious sects "have exhibited the widest possible range of attitudes regarding private property, sexual relations, [and] governmental theories," Bowden writes. Most have been short-lived; the exceptions—Quakers, Mormons, Black Muslims—have acquired a respectability that their early critics could not have foreseen. Contemporary sects are no easier to fathom. Who could have predicted the grisly evolution of the Reverend Jim Jones' People's Temple?

Individuals who are drawn to religious sects tend to feel isolated from established churches. As members of a sect, their alienation is heightened by the pressure within a small group to conform. Later, public disapproval reinforces their isolation.

Excessive conformity deadens the members' critical sense, Bowden says. Members may "compensate for their inadequacies by projecting religious ideals" onto the group leader. Mass deaths, such as occurred at Jonestown, Guyana, in November 1978, are, Bowden says, "simply the most graphic of the types of suicide possible within isolated, high-pressure sectarian communities."

Yet God "speaks to mankind" in "many different ways." To con-

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demn another religion, Bowden cautions, is to judge the source of spiritual fulfillment; it places "human standards above God's autonomy." Each sect should be judged by its fruits (do its members abide by the spirit of the Old Testament admonition to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with the Lord"?) and by the limits to the power it entrusts to its leader. Human nature's potential for "distortion and misguided self-seeking" must be kept in mind when evaluating claims of personal spirituality made by a Jim Jones or any other religious leader. "Idolizing human patterns," Bowden says, "is not only unwise, it is blasphemy."

Morality and Plea Bargaining

"Freedom, Morality, Plea Bargaining, and the Supreme Court" by Alan Wertheimer, in *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (Spring 1979), Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 08540

To be accepted in courts, a defendant's guilty plea must be entered voluntarily, according to the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure. But thus far, the Supreme Court has failed to give the lower courts a clear definition of "voluntariness," writes Wertheimer, a University of Vermont politicial scientist.

When a prosecutor allows a defendant to plead guilty to a lesser charge, the state saves time and money, and the accused usually wins a lighter sentence. Chief Justice Warren Burger has written that "plea bargaining is an essential component of the administration of justice. Properly administered, it is to be encouraged." But the procedure remains a matter of controversy.

The Supreme Court in 1967 struck down two lower court convictions obtained by self-incrimination. In the first, a New York lawyer was threatened with disbarment if he refused to testify; in the second, a New Jersey police officer incriminated himself after prosecutors told him he could lose his job if he held back information. Yet the Court in 1970 upheld the conviction of a North Carolina man who pleaded guilty to murder (and received the life sentence mandated by state law) rather than go to trial before a jury empowered to impose the death sentence.

In these and other decisions, Wertheimer says, the Court has not fully explained what factors render a defendant's actions involuntary. The Court's rulings do, however, suggest a "two-prong test." Does the prosecution's pressure leave the accused with "no other prudent choice" but to confess? And is the defendant's decision also influenced by threat of a penalty that the state has no right to impose?

In the North Carolina murder case, the defendant, the Court seems to be saying, made a "prudent choice" between two legal consequences—certain life imprisonment or the decision of the jury. As for the lawyer and the policeman, Wertheimer observes, the state threatened them with deprivations it had no right to impose; thus, the accused parties acted involuntarily.