

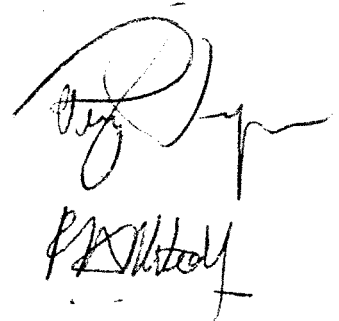
"BECAUSE PEOPLE BUY SOAP":
AMWAY AND THE PRIESTS OF CAPITALISM

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A Thesis Presented to the Graduate
Faculty of the University of Virginia
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Anthropology
University of Virginia
May, 1983

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Nancy Sue Ammerman, the author of the thesis.

Frank H. Baron



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May 1983

TXU 123-831

for Tom, my favorite capitalist

PREFACE

This essay is based on field research conducted largely in the winter and spring of 1982-83 in Charlottesville, Virginia, including attendance at presentations of the Sales and Marketing Plan by two different distributors in spring 1981 and January 1983, participation in a local rally in March 1983, and interviewing and informal conversation with distributors throughout the period. Other sources of information were rally tapes produced both privately and by the corporation, official company literature, and accounts by non-distributor friends and acquaintances, as well as a March 1983 trip to Ada, Michigan for a tour of corporate headquarters and interviews with officials in public relations and distributor relations.

I am indebted to my thesis committee, Fred Damon, Peter Metcalf, and particularly Roy Wagner; to my parents, David and Ruth Ammerman; to friends Chris Taylor, Sam Land, and most especially John Napor and Tom Zacharias. I owe my greatest thanks, however, to Connie and Heidi Crenshaw, Tammy Vanderwier, and all the others associated with Amway who cheerfully answered my questions and infected me with their "think positive" attitude.

The Amway Corporation was founded in 1959 in Ada, Michigan by Jay Van Andel and Richard M. DeVos as a manufacturer and marketer of soap. Still solely owned by its founders, Amway now offers over three hundred and fifty products in the home, personal care and housewares categories. The corporation occupies a three hundred-acre manufacturing, warehousing and office complex in Ada, operates ten distribution centers throughout the United States and Canada, conducts business in fourteen foreign countries, controls several subsidiary companies including the Mutual Broadcasting System, and enjoyed combined corporate revenues in 1982 of \$1.2 billion from \$1.5 billion in retail sales. The company's products are not, however, what is important about Amway. As DeVos once pointed out, "Amway sells soap because people buy soap". The products are a vehicle for the system, rather than the other way around.

Amway employs no sales force to market its products. More than one million persons or partnerships have entered into an agreement with the company whereby they, as independent contractors, buy Amway products at wholesale prices for sale to customers at prices determined by the distributor. According to this system, the Amway Sales and Marketing Plan, distributors gain income from simple profit, i.e. the difference between wholesale and retail prices, and from several types of bonuses paid by the company and based on the individual distributor's sales volume.

There is, however, a second dimension to the business. A copper sculpture by Howard DeMyer in Amway's Center for Free Enterprise (administration and exhibit building) in Ada portrays a boy perched on a pair of stilts, standing solidly on one and reaching for a firmer hold on the other. Its title, "Sponsor and Sell", reflects both dimensions of the Sales and Marketing Plan in order of importance. The most money to be made in Amway is paid to distributors who recruit others to be distributors, who themselves recruit others, and so on. The sponsor is paid his bonus based on what he sells plus on what those below him in the network sell, and may receive special bonuses, titles, and jeweled pins based on the size of and activity in his organization.

The Amway Ideology

Amway is thus a big business of small businesses. The stated main goal of the company, along with production of a high quality product, is to provide the opportunity for individuals to own their own businesses. The company feels that "Free Enterprise is more than economic theory alone. It is an integral part of human freedom; it is the economic dimension of liberty....People should be made aware of the societal bond between personal and economic freedom as the nucleus of any free society" (Amway Fact Sheet 1983, p. 3).

Its Free Enterprise Institute conducts programs and provides educational materials to disseminate this philosophy and serves to illustrate "the commitment of Amway co-founders Jay Van Andel and Rich DeVos to the economic system that offers every member of society the chance for a better life while preserving the personal freedoms that all cherish" (ibid.).

It is a careful balancing act Amway must perform. Its name and reputation are at stake each time a distributor identifies himself as such to the public; Johnny Carson and Columbus, Ohio nightclub comedians dispense Amway-salesman jokes, not John-Doe-who-owns-his-own-business jokes. The Amway Career Manual presented to new distributors contains many pages of policies and regulations which must be followed strictly. Eight to twelve distributors each month step out of line far enough, by making exaggerated claims about the company, being overzealous salesmen to the point of harassment, etc., that they earn a reprimand from corporate headquarters, and about four per year must be referred to the Investigative Board of the Distributors' Association¹ for settlement, often by suspension of the erring distributor.

Distributors could be proclaimed actual employees of the corporation and thus be more firmly under its control. There are many reasons why this is not done, not the least of which being that the company would then be obliged to

include its million-plus distributors under that extensive legal umbrella of unemployment insurance, workmen's compensation, and so on which plagues the management and balance sheets of most large American companies. Most importantly, however, is that the major appeal of Amway for most distributors is that through it they are able to feel that they are actually in business for themselves. They are independent, entrepreneurial, free of what distributors call "the 40-50-65 Plan": working forty hours per week, fifty weeks a year, up to age 65, for someone else. "We were tired of being slaves", one glowing young couple reports on stage at an Amway rally. "You don't work for the Amway Corporation", thunders the speaker at another rally, "the Amway Corporation works for you. There are people inside that eighty-dollar start-up kit you buy -- your upline², the company's advertising department, its research and development department, and so on....You have a support system that'll let you go off and start a million-dollar business in your spare time". Another speaker says confidently, "You're a professional. You're the boss. You've got over seven thousand people working worldwide for you". In order to maintain its credibility, the company is obliged to support free enterprise for its distributors as well as for its founders, for that is the American Way.

Company spokesmen carefully insist that "Amway" is a

coined nonsense word and not a contraction of "American Way", for reasons of legal trademark protection, but some will admit when caught off guard that "American Way" is what the name 'really' means, what Van Andel and DeVos or "Rich and Jay" had in mind when they conceived the company and the name. Free enterprise is probably the most important single facet of the American Way for Amway people, for as one enthusiastic distributor shouted before the Pledge of Allegiance opening one rally, "Free enterprise is where it's at -- without that nothing at all would matter". A corollary of the tenet of free enterprise is demonstrated in a statement from the back cover of the 1982 Annual Report: "The Plan provides an equal opportunity to all people (regardless of background, nationality, or other differences) to further their own well-being through personal effort and initiative. It's an opportunity that is not limited to those who have special skills, education, or large amounts of capital to invest. Success in Amway is possible wherever there are people in free societies who are willing to commit themselves to conscientiously building their businesses". Egalitarianism is explicit. Much is made of the plumber who sponsors his doctor, the beer-truck driver who becomes a millionaire through Amway, the network including blacks and Jews. While distributor ranks consisted largely of lower- and middle-class WASPs for the first several years, encouragement from the company and

distributors' zeal to recruit have made up the deficiency so that, while there is no official data, racial proportions seem to be roughly commensurate with those in the general population. The company's founders are "Rich and Jay" to everyone from distributors to secretaries to machine operators in the factory lines. Workers in the plant are cheerful and seem to enjoy their jobs because, as the chief tour guide explains, they are treated with respect. Anyone at all who is employed by Amway or associated as a distributor may have a private conference with anyone in the management, even Van Andel and DeVos themselves.

Indeed, if there is any negative bias it is against the conventional professional. One official Amway tape consists of inspirational speeches from doctors, dentists, and lawyers recounting how even they were able to make the long climb down off their pedestals to gradually be proud to admit that they sold soap; some have even given up their professional practices entirely in order to devote their full time to selling soap. "I found I was making more money from my Amway business than from my dental practice", one admitted, "so I'm free now to practice just one day a week and give that money to charity". A local academic who had begun to do very well in the Amway business begun by his wife after some personal difficulty with the "soap salesman" image was asked with a grin by his rally interviewer, "did you have status?", in the tone

used by one attempting to get a close friend to admit something fairly embarrassing to the person asked and humorous to the asker.

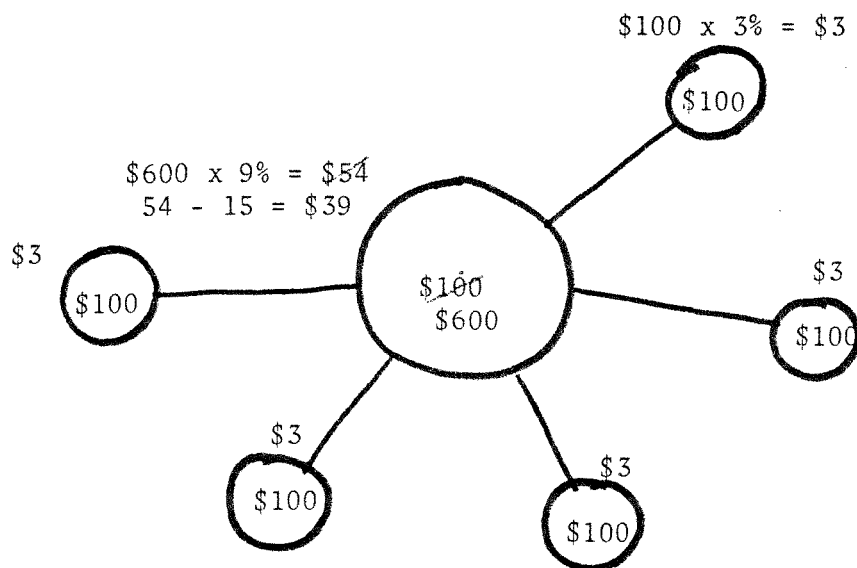
For Amway people status is something which must be achieved within the organization, and anything claimed, ascribed, or achieved elsewhere is either not of interest or may actually be seen as a potential handicap to success in the business. The truck driver who have worked his way up to Double Diamond will be respected and revered above the university professor at Pearl level, and both above the heart surgeon with only thirty dollars per month in Amway sales who has never sponsored anyone into the business. Part of the freedom of the American Way is the freedom to choose or not choose success; people who live in the ghetto, president DeVos insists, are there because they have chosen to be. Amway distributors teach, and are taught, that the individual determines his own destiny. They thus tend to be very confident and positive thinkers, bolstered by such exchanges as "What does the average person do in Amway? Nothing. The average person doesn't get into Amway". Attendees at one rally were told that, since seventy-five percent of all distributors never caught on to the potential of the business and never sponsored anyone, if they sponsored anyone at all -- which almost all had -- they could consider themselves to be in the top twenty-five percent.

The emphasis on the individual is there from the time a new prospect is first shown the Plan. The sponsor's presentation begins with a 'dream session', an elicitation from his audience what sorts of things they would personally like to have, whether new cars, new homes, free time, the chance to travel, the means to contribute to charity, and so on. Experienced recruiters warn others to be sure to tap into what the prospect himself wants -- "If you're dreaming Cadillacs and they want a motorcycle, you're missing them". Distributors are encouraged to set and publicize their own individual goals; one woman explained "I learned through associating with other women in the business that it was not tacky to put pictures of things I wanted up on the refrigerator". Although according to the company a person who wants thirty-five extra dollars a month to complete his car payment and makes that thirty-five dollars is just as successful as a man who wants a new Cadillac every six months and gets it, the emphasis among recruiters is on thinking big -- "I hope all of your sights are set on Diamond"³. The Magic of Thinking Big by David J. Schwartz is a book heavily recommended by some sponsors to their recruits which is not even mentioned in the official Career Manual listing of inspirational books. For, of course, while the corporation expends no more effort on ten thirty-dollar-per-month producers than on one three-hundred-dollar-per-month producer who sponsors

six more, the latter is worth far more to his sponsor in terms of return on time invested.

Having been encouraged to consider the possibility of some of his dreams being fulfilled, the potential recruit is shown just how to do it in a presentation known fondly by distributors as "Drawing the Circles". One circle is drawn in the center of the board to represent the recruit's own business, and it is explained how each distributor receives a bonus of three percent on his volume at \$100, six percent at \$300, nine percent at \$600 and so on, up to a maximum of twenty-five percent on \$7500 and over⁵ in addition to his basic profit. Then, one by one, other circles are drawn around the center circle and connected to it by lines -- these represent distributorships which the center person may sponsor. He includes their business volume in his own and must pay them bonuses based on their individual volume; thus a distributor with \$100 on his own and five sponsored groups who produce \$100 each has a total volume of \$600. He receives a bonus of nine percent, or \$54; he must pay each of his groups at their rate of three percent, or \$3 per group for a total of \$15, and thus may keep \$39 bonus for himself (see Figure 1). It is pointed out to him how quickly this can add up as he sponsors more and more new groups. It is not pointed out that he is not the center of the operation at all but merely a little circle on the fringes himself, producing

FIGURE 1



Total Monthly Point Value

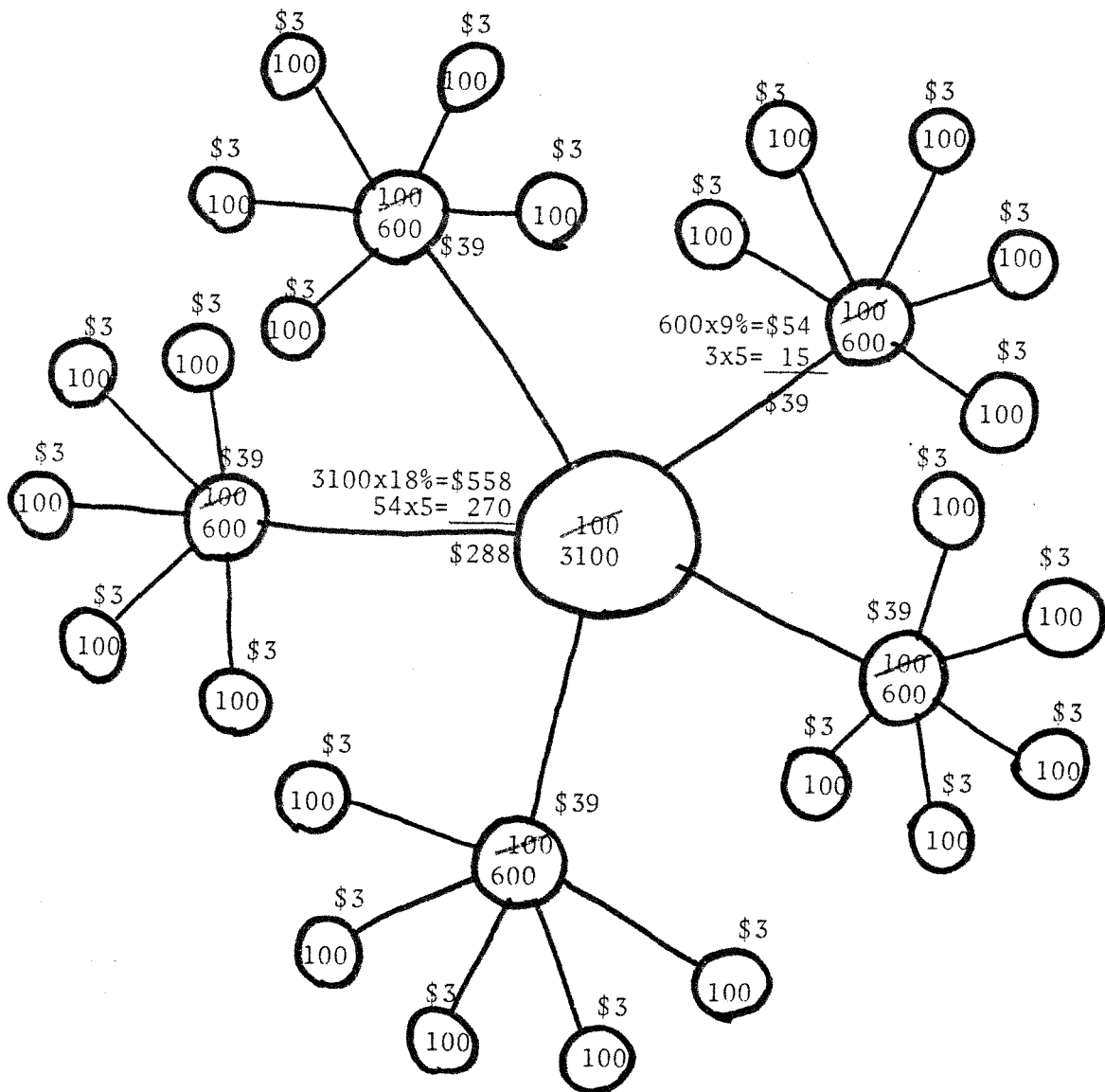
Performance Bonus

7500+	25%
6000	23%
4000	21%
2500	18%
1500	15%
1000	12%
600	9%
300	6%
100	3%

income for his sponsor and all those above him. If his sponsor has four other groups just like his, producing a total of \$600 each, and sells \$100 himself, he has a total of \$3100. This puts him in the eighteen-percent bracket, for a total bonus of \$558. He pays each of his groups its \$54, thus lessening his take by \$270, and gets to keep the remaining \$288 (see Figure 2). Thus if this hypothetical new distributor has 'seven thousand people working world-wide' for him, his sponsor has seven thousand and thirty. Placing the prospective distributor's circle literally at the center of the blackboard and figuratively at the center of the presentation is not meant to mislead but merely to emphasize the individual's owning his own business rather than being part of someone else's.

Another important value in Amway is that of the family business. Children aged sixteen to eighteen must be sponsored in a partnership with their parents rather than separately, if the parents also wish to become distributors. Husband and wife must be sponsored together if both wish to be distributors; even if the two parties were already individual distributors in separate lines of sponsorship prior to their marriage, at that time one must give up his distributorship and become a partner in the other. Close to seventy-five percent of all distributorships, and very nearly all of the most successful ones, are husband-and-wife teams. Among the things most frequent-

FIGURE 2



ly cited as important reasons for being in the business are that it strengthens the marriage by giving husband and wife something to do together and strengthens the whole family who treats it as a family business involving the children. Several parents testified that children once resentful of having them leave for an evening now urge them to go out to sponsoring meetings, enjoy helping with product deliveries, and even play at Drawing Circles themselves.

The family idiom is extended to the close friendships developed among distributors, the "commonality", as one woman expressed it, produced by belonging to a group with such "strong traditions and philosophy". A woman who with her husband reached the Crown Ambassador level⁴ explained that she looked on their own organization with pride in "watching my family grow and develop". One rally speaker gestured at the crowd and said mistily "we're all rich in family love, and this is our family", while others simply said "we love you all".

In this way Amway distributors learn things from each other that don't have a direct bearing on their businesses. At one small rally about fifty couples (and a few singles) were present. The women, with few exceptions, wore skirt suits or tailored dresses in shades of red and pink. The men, with fewer exceptions, wore dark gray or dark blue suits, white shirts, and red-patterned ties. The speaker

himself encouraged men showing the Plan to wear suits and "any color white shirt you want", and one woman queried about the red ties giggled and said "oh, that's Wayne's⁵ idea -- he just thinks it looks nice". The same woman, properly clad in burgundy skirt suit, explained that women could generally wear whatever they wanted but she herself had worn a pants suit to her very first meeting and would never do so again because she had felt so uncomfortable. On tour of the section of the Center for Free Enterprise featuring portraits of Crown Ambassador-level distributors, one gentleman expressed horror that one of the pictured women was wearing pants (a point which rather startled this viewer as well), saying "in my line no woman ever wears pants!"

As might be inferred from the women's unofficial dress code, their unofficial behavior code is also very traditional. At the rally mentioned above, the guest speakers were a couple from another state. The man spoke first and last, giving advice on how to recruit, how to present, and other general tips on making a success of the business. The woman's talk, directed implicitly at the female members of the audience, dwelt on 'the woman's role' in Amway: "Building up your husband is an important part of the business -- you have to do this not only around your children but everybody....He was designed to be the head of the household. I used to criticize him sometimes but I had to

learn to keep those negative thoughts to myself and just build him up....Success in this business isn't only money -- you have to learn to put your marriage together, to put the magic back into it...If you have a communications problem with your husband, the only way to correct it is to read those books, listen to those tapes⁶, and watch the upline women, do like they do...." This philosophy and division of labor were reiterated in numerous other talks, live and on tape. Married women usually give up their other jobs once their Amway businesses get going, even if their husbands have not yet done so, and 'making it so my wife doesn't have to work' is a goal often mentioned by the men. To complete the traditional effect, Amway families with four or five children are common.

Economics and the Winnebago

Amway is first and foremost a business, a very American, capitalistic business; thus it may perhaps be instructive to view it in Marxian terms. Distributors view themselves as having their very own businesses; they may thus be considered to operate in the M-C-M' sphere of exchange (Capital, Chapter 4):

M - C - M'

money inves-
ted to buy
products

products
bought at
wholesale
prices to
be sold
at retail

more money;
clear profit
plus bonuses

This is the retail selling side of the business, and the only one with which seventy-five percent of all distributors concern themselves. People can make some money at it, but it is so small a part of the ambitious distributor's efforts that mention of a consumer's asking one "do you still sell that Amway stuff?" evokes ripples of tolerant laughter from a rally crowd. Because there is more.

Amway distributors, asked for their reasons for first becoming interested in the business, give answers that fall into two basic categories, and many will give one from each. The most obvious is money and the things it buys -- the new car, the fur coat, the larger house -- many will admit to being at least partially motivated by greed. The second category has to do with the 40-50-65 plan Circle Drawers confront their audiences with: the other and more important thing Amway converts are looking for is time. They want time to spend with their families, time to travel, the simple joys of not having to be at work every weekday

morning at eight-thirty. Many distributors were professionals, doctors and lawyers earning very comfortable incomes, who complained of having no time to watch their children grow up or enjoy the wealth they were amassing because of the necessity for working long, hard hours. Amway people do not subscribe to the solid Protestant work-ethic philosophy outlined in Weber's celebrated book (1958) which expounds the virtue of work from dawn to dusk purely for the sake of work. They would sympathize more with "Fiddler on the Roof"'s Tevye, for whom the greatest benefit of wealth would be the free time to spend in the temple studying the holy books. One hero is the millionaire who didn't have to go to work every day; in search of a golf partner one Tuesday morning he phoned all his friends, to be turned down by each in turn because all had to go to work. Whether driven by compassionate altruism or a more basic selfish desire for golfing companions, the story has it that he got into the Amway business in order to sponsor his friends, that they might soon have the free time he already enjoyed himself.

The likelihood of any one individual or couple being able to single-handedly sell enough products to become wealthy through the retail profits alone is very small, yet thousands have been able to quit their regular jobs and live very comfortably on their Amway incomes alone. These are the wise ones who have entered the sponsoring

sphere of exchange, which is powered by -- and produces -- another sort of capital: Time. The process of "duplication of time", which is explicit in the Amway recruitment spiel and a basic principle of all franchising, may be pictured as follows for Amway:

T - P - T'

time invested in holding meetings, talking to prospective recruits

people brought into the organization to duplicate the sponsor-and-sell process themselves

more time, both that of people sponsored who are in effect working partially for the sponsor, and that gained by the sponsor who has reached the point of independence from his regular job

Now, recalling the little boy on his stilts, the two parts must be put together:

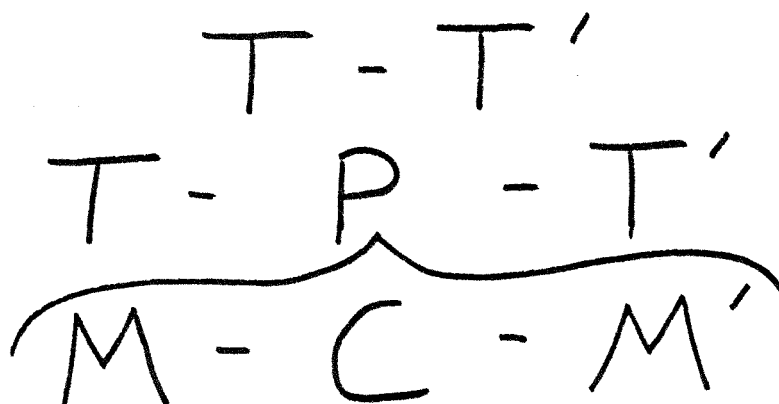
sponsoring

T - P - T'

selling

M - C - M'

The leader in the Amway system, recognizable by his jeweled pins which may be won only by active sponsoring, provides initial T and M and gains M' from his own efforts plus M' and T' from those he has sponsored. The progression is geometric, for each new person sponsored is encouraged to himself sponsor as many people as possible; thus the time invested by our hypothetical original sponsor may be multiplied to an infinite degree⁷. Thus at the highest levels the process may be diagrammed simply T-T', for time invested in sponsoring at an early point pays off in more returned from recruits of recruits of recruits, etc., with no further effort on the part of the original sponsor. It is compounded interest. An interesting expression of this occurs when the original sponsor dies: even though he is investing no further capital of any kind, as long as those he has sponsored continue to work they are generating T' and M'. A check for his share will be sent each month to his heirs and to their heirs and to their heirs, infinitely, as long as that network is still active.⁸



An answer may now be given to the question of why successful Amway people seem to spend so much money on material things. Two kinds of capital accrue from the process described above. Time may be easily reinvested into the business, for if there is no market saturation there can be no lack of new prospects to sponsor. A distributor may thus reinvest as much of his time as he wishes. Money is more of a problem. There is a limit on how much product volume can be sold by a single distributor; even a Triple Diamond may still be personally selling only one hundred dollars' worth per month, which at an average markup of thirty percent means he can only profitably invest seventy-seven dollars per month through that channel. So what else can he do?

Spend it, of course! As some distributors themselves will explain, displaying their wealth in the form of Ferraris, palatial estates, fur coats and Learjets is a far more effective demonstration that the Plan actually works than any safe-deposit box full of mutual fund certificates. A baldness cure peddled by a man with a thick head of hair is likely to sell better than one offered by a William Frawley or a Yul Brynner. Distributors spending their M' in this way, besides making a gesture of support for the American capitalistic free enterprise system they profess to love so well, are thus indirectly reinvesting it into their businesses. And as a direct form of reinvestment,

it is no accident that many distributors of means put their money into expensive motor vehicles, for their time investment often requires that they do great amounts of traveling to visit and counsel people in their networks. The Winnebago-style motorhome very often appears in the 'dreaming sessions' at Plan presentations, on the refrigerator doors of ambitious up-and-coming distributors, and in the driveways of the role models, the success stories. Its ubiquity almost qualifies it as an Amway core symbol, and a fine one it would be: designed for families, usually with room to sleep two adults and several children, it represents the security of the home plus the freedom of mobility. It demonstrates the free time available to its driver, for it is obviously constructed for trips that take longer than overnight or even a weekend; it also demonstrates his affluence, for besides being extremely expensive to buy, it, like Wayne's Ferraris, uses every bit of gas put into it. And as suggested above it is a channel for direct reinvestment of money into the business by providing transportation, which then facilitates the reinvestment of time.

The Sacrament and the L.O.C. Bottle

Terence Deal and Allan Kennedy put forth the hypothe-

sis in their book Corporate Cultures (1982) that the companies most likely to succeed are not necessarily those with the most scientific and rational management techniques or the most lavish capital investments. They suggest a better guarantee of great success -- such as Amway has attained -- to be the strength of the corporate 'culture', the philosophy, heroes, rituals, simply "the way we do things around here" as expressed by one manager (p. 4). Deal and Kennedy write that through companies' rituals, "they teach people how to behave, not just in their corridors of power but in the world at large....these elements of culture get transmitted, reinforced and blended into an overall corporate culture...through the workings of the cultural network"; or, more importantly, "Strong cultures create meaning for people" (pp. 83-84).

One important Amway ritual cluster has been mentioned already, the conferral of special pins to mark a distributor's place and achievement in the hierarchy. There are pins for Sales Consistency, Producer's Pins to commemorate the attainment of certain percentage bonus levels, plaques for personal sales achievements, and Inner Circle Award pins for new distributors who sponsor five or more others during their first three months in business. But the largest single milestone is attainment of the Direct Distributorship level. Up to this point, a distributor does not buy his products directly from the company but from the Direct Dis-

tributor most immediately above him in the line of sponsorship (who does not add a markup on sales to lower level distributors but sells to them for the price he has paid to the company himself). When he has reached certain high levels of sales and sponsoring (see Appendix 2 for exact requirements for all pins), he "breaks off Direct". This means that he will now deal directly with the company for products, stressing further the 'own-business' concept, receive an extra bonus, and earn an extra bonus for his sponsor whether or not his sponsor is a Direct himself. His status is commemorated by the gift of a gold pin etched with 'DD' and the Amway logo⁹, his name engraved on a brass plate displayed in the Hall of Achievement in The Center of Free Enterprise, and an all-expense-paid three-day trip to Ada corporate headquarters for a New Direct Distributor Seminar with approximately one hundred other individuals or partnerships who have reached Direct at about the same time.

The trip to Ada is a pilgrimage, and those who have been there even at their own expense are held somewhat in awe. One rally speaker, a Direct Distributor, was of the opinion that the start-up fee for new distributors, instead of being simply eighty dollars for a product starter kit, should be one thousand and eighty dollars and include a trip to headquarters "so they could really understand what it's all about". Some three thousand new Direct Distribu-

tors and partnerships each year are flown to Michigan and lodged in Amway's own Grand Plaza Hotel, the most luxurious in nearby downtown Grand Rapids. They attend meetings with company officials, hear addresses by "Rich and Jay" and guest star distributors, have their pictures taken for publication in the monthly distributor magazine "Amagram" immediately and each time a new level is achieved, tour the research and manufacturing facilities, executive offices, and displays in the Center of Free Enterprise, and enjoy a formal Recognition Banquet in their honor; all in all, "a gala kaleidoscope of sights, sounds, and intense activity" -- "more like a homecoming than just another business meeting" (Amagram 23(12):9).

Having reached Direct, the distributor may work toward the remaining pins: Ruby, Pearl, Emerald, Diamond, Double Diamond, Triple Diamond, Crown and Crown Ambassador (the latter two pins are gold, crown-shaped with four and five diamonds respectively; all bear the Amway logo and 'DD' for Direct Distributor). At Diamond level he becomes a member of Diamond Club, which meets periodically in exotic locations at company expense. At Double Diamond a day is chosen by the company to be the honored distributor's special day. He -- or most likely 'they', married couples dominating even more at the upper levels than elsewhere -- is flown again to Ada, this time on an Amway corporate jet, lodged in a suite at the Grand Plaza, and generally treated

as royalty with an audience with Van Andel and De Vos and a special tour of the Amway complex, draped with banners in their honor, where all employees wear badges proclaiming it to be "Durgavitch Day" (or whatever the new Double Diamond's family name).

While perhaps less colorful, ritual is no less a part of more mundane Amway activities. Even Product Pickup Night, the one night each week when product shipments arrive at the Direct Distributor's home for pickup by his downline, usually includes a film, a presentation, or program of some sort, which ambitious distributors are expected to attend. Presentation of the Plan, or 'Showing the Plan', or 'Drawing Circles', is recognized to be the single act which leads to sponsoring and jewels, and is thus fraught with more particular guidelines. "If you do it exactly right", one speaker assured, "and you show it to ten people, you won't get ten 'no's"¹⁰. The same speaker then went on to prescribe that the person making the presentation be exactly on time if showing the Plan to just one person, and exactly ten minutes late if doing an 'open' or group presentation, wear a two-piece dark suit with a long-sleeved white shirt and a tie with a bit of red if talking to just one person, adding the suit vest if it is a group. The speaker stressed the need for setting up a special time to be devoted entirely to showing the Plan, befitting its seriousness and importance -- no "I'll come by sometime

and I can tell you about it while we watch TV or hit golf balls around" allowed. It is imperative that the standard order of topics in the presentation be followed exactly and that actual circles be drawn on an actual blackboard, legal pad, tablecloth, or other such medium, rather than being simply talked into existence. Most importantly, many distributors say, the name Amway must never be mentioned until the very end of the session, for prospects must be given a complete and accurate picture of the business without interference from any inaccurate information or ideas they may already have. This has often led to ludicrous situations such as couples arriving, bottle of wine in hand, for what they believed to be a dinner party, only to find a man in front of a blackboard drawing chalk circles (Campbell, The Washington Post Sep. 9 1982), amused young businessmen being taken to lunch several days in a row by a presumably new distributor apparently too nervous to get to the point (personal communication), and distributors trying to keep to the script denying their affiliation outright or avoiding the question when asked directly if they were with Amway (Wald, The New York Times May 31 1981)¹¹. Logical reasons can be given for each detail prescribed for showing the Plan, but together they create a special effect for presenters and hopefully prospects which is nevertheless comparable to a liturgy, conducted with an attitude of reverence at special times by a priest

in special vestments, culminating in the appearance and ideally the sharing of the Eucharist.¹² Like a sacrament, the proper presentation of the Amway Sales and Marketing Plan is designed to, through an outward procedure, produce an inner grace.

In order to be effective priests, however, potential sponsors must first themselves be 'filled with the spirit', and that is the function of the rally. "Dave was man enough to see that I got to the functions even when I was negative about the business", the woman speaker cited above said with gratitude. Organized by Diamonds or by their down-line at the Diamonds' instigation, rallies generally feature one or more guest speakers from another area who are particularly active and at least at the Direct level. Crowds may vary in size from a few dozen couples to thousands, depending on the size of the city where the function is held, the activity of the organization there, and the fame of the guest speaker(s), but in any case the key word is excitement. As each speaker is introduced the emcee will urge the audience to "help me bring up (name)", which produces a standing ovation to warm the speaker's way to the microphone. At rallies musical groups may perform, banners and posters may decorate the arena, and the audience may become a giant cheerleading squad led by an emcee, one half standing and chorusing "I'm excited, how about you?" to the other, which responds in kind as the first half sits, which then repeats

its challenge, and so on. The session may be opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and a prayer (for "the One who backs us in this business the most is invisible") and ended with the audience holding hands, swaying, and singing "God Bless America". What seems to be a necessary part of the ceremonies, however, is the institution of The L.O.C. Bottle.

L.O.C. or Liquid Organic Cleanser was Amway's very first product and is still one of its most popular; its application to a rally, however, requires only the empty bottle. It is placed on a corner of the registration table or in some other discreet spot, and as distributors register or are otherwise noticed by their sponsors, the latter write the individuals' or couples' names on slips of paper and place them in The L.O.C. Bottle.¹³ When the proceedings begin, after some preliminary excitement-builders, one of the emcees will reach into The Bottle and draw a name. After some clowning to delay matters and heighten the suspense, for most people hope not to be chosen and may indeed go to some slight effort not to be seen early by their sponsors so as to avoid having their names placed into The Bottle at all, the emcee will read the name. That person or couple must then go up on stage where they are introduced to the audience and queried, "What excites you most about this business?"

With varying degrees of shyness and mumbling, for many

are not yet used to speaking in front of a group and will admit to being terrified, the person thus spotlighted will mention 'the chance to stop being a slave', 'helping and meeting people', 'having something my husband and I can do together', 'getting out of the rut', or something in that vein; some will actually weep with emotion and talk about 'the true friendships', 'the love of the people', or how 'it changed my life'. The always-supportive audience will nod knowingly, murmur approval, clap enthusiastically and thus do its part in ensuring that one obvious function of The L.O.C. Bottle is successful, that of giving people positive experience in public speaking so that they might feel more comfortable showing the Plan to large groups.

The other benefit of the exercise is a direct result of the thoughtful phrasing of the emcee's question; he asks, in effect, how much water is left in the glass rather than how much is gone, and receives the predictably optimistically slanted answer. Distributors who may have been becoming disillusioned with the business -- for it does take hard work to make it a success, as any honest distributor will admit readily -- are reminded of the things that convinced them to get involved in the first place, and if their names are drawn will find themselves searching for something good and proclaiming their optimism in front of the crowd. As Geertz wisely comments, "men attain their faith as they portray it" (1973:114).

"Soap and Hope"

Amway's resemblance to a religious 'cult' has often been noted, to its own corporate horror. Probably the most public occasion for this comparison, reaching about fifty-four million television viewers, was on January 29, 1983 when CBS-TV's "60 Minutes" opened its program with "Soap and Hope". As may be inferred from its title, the segment focused primarily on the para-religious, life-changing aspects of the Amway experience.

Always on the lookout for entertainment value as well as news value, the "60 Minutes" staff began their report with dramatic angled close-ups of Dexter Yager strutting about a stage, microphone in hand, shouting inspirational phrases of the style usually accompanied by pulpit-pounding, with responses chorused enthusiastically by his impassioned audience. Yager is a former beer-truck driver from North Carolina, now a Crown-level Amway millionaire with an organization of over fifteen thousand distributorships below him, seven children, and a devoted wife Birdie who says to "60 Minutes" Mike Wallace "when I look at him, I see Jesus". The Yagers publish a special four-color glossy magazine for their downline, with commercial as well as Amway advertising, featuring business tips, inspirational messages, a column on marriage and family life, and a Bible-study page.

Although obviously very profitable for the company, they and their openly religious evangelistic zeal are also a bit of an embarrassment for a company trying meekly to subdue a 'cult' image.¹⁴

Most of the rest of the show consisted of interviews with several disgruntled couples who had become Amway distributors expecting their lives to be miraculously changed, who quit in disgust when they didn't make the money they had hoped for, their friends made fun of them and began to avoid them to escape their proselytizing, and so on.

The only real complaint the company had about the segment was that it only showed the extremes and none of the more ordinary Amway distributors in the middle of the success scale. Basically it was pleased with the coverage and felt it had produced a positive perception in the audience -- "Viewers identified with the successes shown, not with the failures....54 million people were able to learn a little bit of what Amway is all about....Quite a number of letters came in from viewers wanting to become distributors" (Jay Van Andel, "Amway on '60 Minutes' -- Comments", supplement to Jan. 27 1983 Amway Newsgram). A sampling of illuminating letters received by "60 Minutes" after the broadcast (ibid.):

"If I never make it big in Amway, I will still be ahead. Where else can one meet such positive people, have fun, and mingle with people who have made it?"

"You didn't talk to people who realize the bottom line is Freedom. Freedom to choose the kind of life we want to live and not to be controlled by others because of money.

"I thank God every day for the opportunity to be an Amway Distributor and I know there are many more like me -- I've met them!"

"You virtually ignored the many thousands of distributors who have had their lives positively changed by Amway -- changes both in greater income and personal development. You almost totally overlooked the fact that Amway is an OPPORTUNITY for ANYONE, regardless of education or race, to improve his life....."

"Thank goodness for Amway's efforts and for their contribution to the American way. No, I'm not associated with Amway but you have afforded me the opportunity to know more about them".

"As owner of another business (as well as an Amway distributorship), I can tell you that the Amway business is the best opportunity an American can take advantage of today".

"I didn't know this kind of world existed -- I'm certainly thankful to our sponsors for having the guts to speak to us..."

"If you guys had been around when the colonists were being told about the opportunities for a new life in America,

you probably would have done an expose on their real chances of succeeding. I'm glad you weren't around".

"Your segment on Amway proves that the evangelist who spoke at our church was correct. The government, working through the media, really wants the American people to be unsuccessful like the Communists".

And a few sent directly to Van Andel and DeVos, who were interviewed briefly on the show --

"We saw you on '60 Minutes' and just wanted to let you know that we thought you handled the situation well. We admire, respect, and commend you for all you have done to help countless thousands of people."

"The average person today doesn't know how to dream. If they get nothing else from Amway but the gift of learning how to dream again that would be worth anything they had to do to get it."

"Today I am a Profit-Sharing Direct destined for Diamond....more importantly, I know who I am today and where I'm going -- and I like it!"

"The whole program made us want to go out and work twice as hard -- and I think we will!"

-- all strongly reminiscent of zealots reaffirming their faith twice as emphatically each time it is challenged. What is it that induces so many people to turn this business proposition into something that looks so much like a religious cult?

In Durkheim's (mostly) celebrated treatise on religion, he defines a religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things....beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a Church all those who adhere to them" (1915:62). These elements may be discussed one at a time, beginning with the moral community.

Once a person has begun a distributorship of his own, bolstered by the "own business" talk, his individual-ness is taken for granted. This then transfers the emphasis to the process of collectivization (cf. Wagner 1981). Distributors become aware of their line of sponsorship and will appear at large rallies in groups belonging to the same line, proudly carrying banners and pins bearing the name of their upline Diamond fifty persons removed from them in the hierarchy. Amway distributors are bound together by participating in the same business, attending the same functions, and sharing many of the same concerns. They are often objects of hilarity or scorn for doing things seen to be demeaning, direct sales in general and sales of such plebeian goods as Dish Drops, Glister toothpaste, See

Spray window cleaner, Pursue disinfectant, and Liquid Organic Cleanser in particular. They are often (and perhaps often accurately!) perceived as pushy and obnoxious in their zeal to sponsor and sell. They are sometimes resented for achieving success and Rolls-Royces outside the usual respected pathways for getting rich -- such as starting at the bottom and working up to company president after twenty years, or being left a bank by Daddy -- as Perin writes (1977:52), "The man who wants to be his own boss is getting out of the order in which a hierarchy would locate him: like dirt, he too is matter out of place." They are often accused of being over-materialistic conspicuous consumers if they reach the upper levels; they may conversely be accused of being gullible fools if they do not strike it instantly rich, which most do not. One female rally speaker confessed that she had been completely against the business herself when her husband started it and only began to support it, and him, when she realized how much negative feedback and unkind treatment he had been getting from others.

But most importantly, Amway distributors form a moral community because that is built into the structure of the Plan. They cannot afford to compete with each other, for their own success is based on that of the distributorships they sponsor, and as they do well themselves their own sponsors benefit. In agreeing with the company to sell its

products they also agree to abide by the official Rules of Conduct and Code of Ethics, the first element of which is The Golden Rule.

The sense of community present among distributors is fostered by another structural element of the system itself, the need for learning from one's upline and transmitting knowledge to one's downline. There is no official Amway Distributor School, no Soap University, no Owning-Your-Own-Business-in-a-Nutshell course available, and the general nature and status of the business makes new distributors reluctant or unable to get advice elsewhere. So "if someone takes the trouble to show you this opportunity", one Circle Drawer explained, "he commits himself to help you", and the relationship can become very close. Having become convinced that the Amway system can help him fulfill his dreams, the new distributor looks upon his upline as those who are close to achieving theirs -- models to follow. One successful distributor confessed that it was personal admiration for his sponsor that convinced him to put effort into Amway -- "For me to be around my upline and get any of his time, I had to work this business". New and even experienced people are warned that they will need 'counseling' from their upline because they will be too close to their own businesses to recognize if anything is wrong and know how to correct it if it is. They are encouraged to "keep the Plan pure" by duplicating exactly

the style and presentation of their line (after all, it worked on them). Sponsors are trained to recognize their important role and to watch their attitudes, everything they say and do: "Keep it positive or shut up!" one speaker thundered. "To motivate your distributors you need to build them up constantly. You probably mean more to them than their own kin."

The Amway philosophy and attitudes are transmitted from sponsor to recruit down the lines of the distributor network, but their point of origin and source of continuing reinforcement is the "Dutch Twins" (Richard Bode, The Reader's Digest, Apr. 1982), Jay Van Andel and Rich DeVos. When asked what makes Amway special and different from other companies with similar marketing plans, company spokesmen and distributors alike respond unanimously, "Rich and Jay". Van Andel and DeVos were boyhood friends in Grand Rapids who have been together in one business or another since the end of World War II. They are entrepreneurs, patriotic and conservative, active in the Dutch Reformed Church, and generally very visible and charismatic leaders. They own the company jointly, share equal control, and rotated between the offices of President and Chairman of the Board until a division was arrived at based on the preferences and personalities of the men.

Van Andel, the older by two years, now bears the permanent official title of Chairman of the Board and unoffi-

cial title of "Mr. Inside". He is in charge of the internal setup and operations of the company, does or did most of the writing of publications, and is said to be extremely intelligent. "Jay's the one who scares people", one company insider grinned, "because he's quiet". DeVos is President and "Mr. Outside", in charge of representing the company most often to distributors and to the public. He is a popular speaker who, "gregarious and spontaneous, mesmerizes audiences with his voice" (Bode, p. 127). He has won many awards for his patriotic speech "Selling America", and is the author of an inspirational book titled Believe!, in, as its chapter titles list, "Unlimited Potential", "Accountability", "an Upward Look", "Free Enterprise", "Human Dignity", "America", "The Power of Persistence", "God and His Church", and "The Family" (1975). It is easy to see whence the distributors' philosophy comes in articulated form.

Both men are around sixty, although extremely healthy and active, and it would be reasonable cause for concern were succession to their special places not provided for. But fortuitously, each married at about the same time and had four children, the oldest of which are eager to eventually assume their fathers' roles. Nan Van Andel and Dick DeVos, now in their early to mid-twenties, have just completed a training program set up especially for the Van Andel and DeVos children by their parents. They have spent

the past five years learning every aspect of the company's operations 'from the ground up', working in different areas of the factory and in different capacities in the management sphere. They now, like heirs to any sacred throne, spend time making speeches and personal appearances while staying in touch with the affairs of the domain, blessed with an extraordinary physical resemblance to their fathers.¹⁵

For Durkheim the sacred is that which is set apart; there are a multitude of ethnographic examples of people who perform actions which would normally be absolutely taboo in order to set them apart to establish and mark a state of sacredness, e.g. the Kwakiutl Cannibal Dancer, the Bimin-Kuskusmin (New Guinea) male initiates having contact with menstrual blood, an Aranda (Australia) man having sex with his mother-in-law. In modern America there is normally a strict separation between home and work, between pleasure and business; it is usually 'not done' to talk business with friends and especially to use any kind of pressure on them; it is considered imprudent to discuss politics or religion, both of which tend to be more or less implicit in Amway presentations; and direct selling is done only by persons of very low status. Amway distributors transgress all these cultural rules. They are able to step out of themselves and do so only because they act within the sacramental context established by

their rallies and rituals. The worshipful attitude directed toward Diamonds, Crowns, and particularly the Dutch Twins does not arise solely as a matter of respect for success; Amway superstars acquire a real contextual sacredness through their successful forays into the cultural no-man's land.

The noted political-historical scholar Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. recently published an essay in the Wall Street Journal ("Pretension in the Presidential Pulpit", Mar. 17 1983) decrying a speech made by President Reagan to the National Association of Evangelicals in which Mr. Reagan proclaimed the Soviet Union to be "the focus of evil in the modern world" which "we are enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose...with all our might". This, Schlesinger complains, "summons the true believer to a jihad, a crusade of extermination against the infidel.... defining the Cold War as a holy war". He is disturbed by the implication that "God is mit uns. God is a Cold Warrior. God is against the nuclear freeze. God is against abortion and for the squeal rule. God is a Reagan Republican. This confidence reminds one all too much of Mr. Dooley's definition of a fanatic as a man who is sure he is doing what 'th' Lord wud do if He only knew the facts in the 'case'".

The core of Amway's Center for Free Enterprise is an exhibit hall featuring company memorabilia and displays

and, most importantly, the "Freedom Shrine", a collection of twenty-eight "faithful reproductions of historic manuscripts vital to preserving freedom for every American" ("Welcome to Amway Corporation" brochure) including the Constitution, the Gettysburg Address, the Instrument of Surrender in the Pacific from World War II, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence. This is an appropriate 'shrine' for the headquarters of a company with real reason to be glad that, as Calvin Coolidge remarked, "the business of America is business", specifically our system of free enterprise which must be protected if our identity as Americans is to be protected. The front of the Center is graced by a monumental sculpture incorporating "The Ten Pillars of Economic Wisdom" which, in conscious stylistic imitation of The Ten Commandments, articulate the free enterprise credo (for text see Appendix 1).

Schlesinger's mistake is in taking President Reagan's remarks too literally. The name of God is being invoked as the personification of Good, which we have to believe includes us capitalists; of course the Soviets have to be the corresponding focus of evil. That which Mr. Reagan defends with such fervor is that which his office enjoins him to defend, the American system.

For Geertz the religious perspective is that which deals with the "really real", the "wider, nonhypothetical

truths. Rather than detachment its watchword is commitment; rather than analysis, encounter" (1973:112). It is faith which makes the sacred sacred, and Amway people have to believe that others are in the ghetto because they want to be. To admit any other possibility would be to seriously undermine the "really real" "nonhypothetical truth" of "Unlimited Potential", "Accountability", "Free Enterprise", "Human Dignity", "The Family", "God and His Church", and all the other things in which Richard DeVos would like us to Believe! -- the sacredness of America the Idea. And that is the real religion, of which Amway is only an evangelical denomination.

NOTES

1. This consists of Van Andel and DeVos plus distributors elected by their peers. Decisions as to sanctions on distributors or as to fairness of company policies are made by a majority vote, and are binding on company and distributors alike.
2. A distributor's upline consists of all those above him in the network: his sponsor, his sponsor's sponsor, his sponsor's sponsor's sponsor's sponsor, etc. His downline is, correspondingly, all those he has sponsored himself plus any that are recruited as a result of their efforts.
3. One of the highest levels in the Amway hierarchy, reached when a distributor personally sponsors at least six other distributorships who each was responsible for \$7500 or more in monthly sales for at least six of the twelve months in a given fiscal year. Distributors who have earned their Diamond pins are eligible for special trips and seminars sponsored by the company.
4. This is the highest rank in Amway and has been earned by only thirteen distributorships worldwide, all married couples.
5. Wayne is a Diamond of this particular line, a flashy,

congenial and well-liked collector of Ferraris who says cheerfully, "How much gas do they use? Every bit you put in 'em!"

6. 'Positive thinking' books and tapes available through the corporation, heavily used and recommended by distributors.
7. One common misgiving about the Plan involves the fear of saturation: what happens if all 39,804 residents of Charlottesville, Virginia become Amway distributors? Company officials answer that this is not a problem, since there are no assigned territories and a Charlottesville distributor, for example, could sponsor residents of Greene and Fluvanna counties as well as his cousin in Milwaukee, his brother-in-law in Kansas City and the next-door neighbor of his old fraternity buddy in Toronto. Distributors will concur with this answer and add that it would be impossible for saturation to develop because the business is not for everybody; 'the average person doesn't get into Amway'.
8. The person receiving the check must himself be nominally an Amway distributor; that is, he need not sell any products but must have a distributor application on file and pay a \$10.40 registration fee each year.
9. The company logo since 1974 is a stylized globe usually placed on a red, white and blue shield with the company name and the slogan "Shop Without Going Shopping". The

original design featured an outline map of North America instead of the globe.

10. This is of course reminiscent of countless peoples of varying degrees of religious complexity who feel that if a ritual has not had the desired effect, it simply must not have been done right or must have been interfered with by a more powerful shaman.
11. Denying that one is with Amway, asserting that there is no need to do any selling, and misrepresenting potential earnings are all taboo according to company policy, and distributorships persisting in such practices may be suspended or terminated. Official Amway literature must now include actual average earnings at each level instead of solely the optimistic hypothetical figures given in earlier editions, according to a recent FTC ruling.
12. Amway distributors like to serve refreshments of Amway Active-8 fruit drink and Amway Nutrilite Food Bars after the presentation, but this writer hesitates to be excessively blasphemous.
13. The receptacle in question at one small rally was a standard-issue Holiday Inn ice bucket, no one having remembered to bring the correct item; it was referred to nevertheless as The L.O.C. Bottle.

14. The company does not seem to quite understand what it means to be called a cult or what is meant by religion. In its question-and-answer brochure "A Corporate Compendium" it answers its own question "Is Amway a religious or political cult?" in the negative by explaining the the company officially endorses no religious denomination or political party. One woman at corporate headquarters responding to prodding about whether religious piety somehow predisposed distributors possessing it to succeed answered "of course not -- my daughter was sponsored by a Jewish couple".

15. It must be assumed to be pleasant coincidence that De Vos, responsible for the kind of activities at the corporate level traditionally performed by the husband at the couple-distributor level, had a son as his first child, while Van Andel, in charge of the behind-the-scenes nuts and bolts of the corporate operation, the wife's province in a typical distributorship, produced first a daughter.

APPENDIX 1

The Ten Pillars of Economic Wisdom:
A Blueprint for Understanding

Published by the American Economic Foundation and first displayed at the 1965 New York World's Fair, now incorporated into a sculpture in front of The Amway Corporation's Center for Free Enterprise in Ada, Michigan.

1. Nothing in our material world can come from nowhere or go nowhere, nor can it be free; everything in our economic life has a source, a destination and a cost that must be paid.
2. Government is never a source of goods. Everything produced is produced by the people, and everything that government gives to the people, it must first take from the people.
3. The only valuable money that government has to spend is that money taxed or borrowed out of the people's earnings. When government decides to spend more than it has thus received, that extra unearned money is created out of thin air, through the banks, and, when spent, takes on value only by reducing the value of all money, savings and insurance.
4. In our modern exchange economy, all payroll and employment come from customers, and the only worthwhile job security is customer security; if there are no customers, there can be no payroll and no jobs.
5. Customer security can be achieved by the worker only when he cooperates with management in doing the things that win and hold customers. Job security, therefore, is a partnership problem that can be solved only in a spirit of understanding and cooperation.
6. Because wages are the principal cost of everything, widespread wage increases, without corresponding increases in production, simply increase the cost of everybody's living.
7. The greatest good for the greatest number means, in its material sense, the greatest goods for the greatest number

(Appendix 1, continued)

which, in turn, means the greatest productivity per worker.

8. All productivity is based on three factors: 1) natural resources, whose form, place and condition are changed by the expenditure of 2) human energy (both muscular and mental) with the aid of 3) tools.

9. Tools are the only one of these three factors that man can increase without limit, and tools come into being in a free society only when there is a reward for the temporary self-denial that people must practice in order to channel part of their earnings away from purchases that produce immediate comfort and pleasure, and into new tools of production. Proper payment for the use of tools is essential to their creation.

10. The productivity of the tools -- that is, the efficiency of the human energy applied in connection with their use -- has always been highest in a competitive society in which the economic decisions are made by millions of progress-seeking individuals, rather than in a state-planned society in which those decisions are made by a handful of all-powerful people, regardless of how well-meaning, unselfish, sincere and intelligent those people may be.

APPENDIX 2

Requirements for Amway Pin Award Levels*

Producer	15% bonus level - \$1500-2000 monthly sales
Active Producer	\$4000 monthly sales
Silver Producer	\$7500 sales one month or sponsorship of one 25% group (a group at the 25% bonus level, with monthly sales of \$7500+)
Direct Distributor	\$7500 sales for three months; OR \$2500 sales for three months plus sponsorship of a 25% group for three months; OR sponsorship of two 25% groups for three months
Ruby Direct	\$15000 sales in one month
Pearl Direct	sponsorship of three 25% groups in one month
Emerald Direct	sponsorship of three 25% groups who maintained sales at the 25% level for six out of the twelve months of a given fiscal year
Diamond Direct	sponsorship of six 25% groups who maintained sales at the 25% level for six of twelve months
Double Diamond Direct	sponsorship of twelve 25% groups in one month
Triple Diamond Direct	sponsorship of sixteen 25% groups in one month
Crown Direct	sponsorship of twenty 25% groups in one month
Crown Ambassador	sponsorship of twenty-five 25% groups within a fiscal year each of which includes a Profit Sharing Direct Distributor

*For ease of comprehension figures are given as dollars. Awards and bonuses are actually based on PV or Point Value of products sold, which is close enough to dollar value for purposes of demonstration. Source: Amway distributors' manual Your Career With Amway.

APPENDIX 3

AMWAY SALES AND CONSOLIDATED REVENUE

Figures are approximate, drawn from chart "Amway Growth History" in 1982 Amway Annual Report, page 3.

	retail sales	consolidated revenue
1960	\$500,000	\$500,000
1965	\$35 million	\$30 million
1970	\$120 million	\$90 million
1975	\$250 million	\$180 million
1980	\$1 billion	\$790 million
1982	\$1.5 billion	\$1.2 billion

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Supplementary
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The above books are hagiographies on Amway's founders and top distributors and have not been directly cited but are a good source of general, if slanted, information. The author is not himself a distributor but has been quoted as saying "I knew if no one bought it but Amway people it would still make money" (Wald, The New York Times).