

Apocalypse Child: A Life in End Times

Flor Edwards

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Flor Edwards's *Apocalypse Child* is an engrossing account of growing up within the strangely insular Children of God cult. Followers of the cult, founded in the late 1960s by David Berg, accepted his twisted interpretation of Christianity and viewed their leader as a lion-headed prophet. Born into the cult in 1981, Edwards was essentially sequestered from the outside world and raised to believe that the Children of God's lifestyle was the chosen way.

Edwards recalls a childhood spent mostly overseas, moving often to avoid the Antichrist and "outsiders," or to spread the word of God. Her lucid, almost deceptively serene language describes her parents and extended cult family, along with an ever-growing roster of siblings—her mother gave birth to a new baby each year due to Berg's forbidding contraception.

Beyond the collective family unit, however, lurks an undertone of children observing cult member orgies or being drawn into sexual activity themselves. There is also "flirty fishing," or young cult women being encouraged to act as "hookers for Jesus," seeking out lonely men to seduce and recruit or from whom to solicit a donation for providing intimate companionship. As a girl, Edwards dreaded reaching puberty and having to join this unsettling adult realm, and she lived in further terror of Berg's predicted 1993 apocalypse.

Following Berg's death in 1994—from illness, not the apocalypse—Edwards's family drifted away from the group, which received unfavorable legal and media attention and was reorganizing. Edwards's reentry into society and move to the United States as a teenager was both liberating and traumatic.

With expressive yet measured candor, Edwards conveys her sense of identity confusion and outrage during a time of readjustment, as well as her eventual journey to greater self-acceptance and spiritual peace.

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