h.   Summary:

We cannot cover all the religious bodies and so
have tried to show the development of a few. You
will observe the important role of immigration with
most of these and the ability to be flexible in the
face of the changes necessitated by the new world.

Particular denominationaly histories will be supplied
in report form and the more modern denominations
(particularly the separatist bodies) are treated in
another course (Modern Ecumenism). This material
(just presented) should give you a feel for the devel-
opement of the bodies.

IV. EXPRESSIONS OF AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL THINKING

In this section of our material we will cover some of the ideals and
growth movements in the American church picture. In some ways our treatment
of material is almost topological...though not technically arranged this
way. We will cover a lot of ground under this heading and hopefully you
will be able to work it together with the other things that are important
to us.

A. Freedom of Religions and the Proliferation of Cults

One may not like to face it but the obvious end of liberty of
conscience is the end that men may use their exercised liberty for
the development of things that are not so plainly given to others.
In other words...freedom may move one to a position not liked by the
very givers of freedom. Yet it is true that if one seeks freedom and
seeks to act on freedom, the risk that is involved is worth the price
of the outcome. For the opposite to freedom of conscience and the
exercise of religious faith is a mandated, state-controlled, and
individual exercise curbing sort of tyranny. So freedom runs the very
risk of allowing to grow underneath its banners the very forces that
may destroy or harm it. Our intent is to track out the battle of
freedom of conscience in religious affairs and then to note the
development of sects and cults that sprung from this sort of foundation
in this sort of culture.

1. Some preliminary notes

a. The diversity of religious bodies in this hemisphere...

b. The idea of a theocracy