



False Cults

An Introduction To The False-Cult Phenomenon

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Dedication:



This Ebook is dedicated by the authors and their families to the loving memory of the Late E. K. George, MTh. Here is what we want to say about him:

“God made only one like him, and there was none like him in his generation. He was a living Encyclopedia of Theology, and stood uncompromisingly till the end of his life for the faith that was handed over to him.”

We miss his him very much, and await the day in Eternity
When we shall surely meet him.

False Cults

An Introduction To The False-Cult Phenomenon

Technical Details

Title of The Book: False Cults, An Introduction To The False-Cult Phenomenon

Edition: 5th, 2007

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Welcome !

False Cults are spreading rapidly at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Unless these movements are opposed, and unless believers are warned, too many people will fall into their clutches. Thus this book.

Further, in the last half of the twentieth century almost all False Cults have adapted very deceptive strategies to infiltrate major world religions as well as the Evangelical Christian groups. These psychology-based strategies cannot be detected or discerned without some sort of background. That is the second reason for this book -- here we aim to provide an insight into the strategies adopted by the Cults.

This is to be considered only as an introductory textbook. Lord willing at least two more textbooks would follow. We are confident that this triad of books would introduce the subject in a comprehensive matter. The actual detail of individual Cults would be taken up only after the three introductory works are finished. (Meanwhile, these three books plus details of individual Cults written by us would be available in one volume in Malayalam language).

We consider it a privilege to dedicate this volume to a Bible-Teacher among us who has never compromised upon the fundamentals presuppositions of the Faith of our Fathers.

May God Help You To Escape The Snare Of Cults,

Dr. Johnson C. Philip
Dr. Saneesh Cherian

The Biblical Position

Sola Scriptura (The Bible Alone)
Sola Gratia (Grace Alone)
Sola Fide (Faith Alone)
Solus Christus (Christ Alone)
Soli Deo Gloria (To God Alone Be The Glory)

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False Cults : An Introduction

Bible-believing Christians have always been weary of teachings, doctrines, movements, and organizations that take people away from the Biblical faith. Thus all conservative and evangelical churches have given unusual attention to false cults and false teachings and also to methods needed to fight these movements. This kept Cults away most Evangelical churches for a long time, but now they have begun to attack the evangelical believers with a renewed zeal.

In the last few decades the false cults have given much attention to fishing or people-trapping. Using the latest psychological information, they have discovered the causes for resistance and also the methods to overcome it. Many of the groups have been producing massive handbooks on people-catching. These books explain religious-salesmanship in the minutes detail. Even the strongest objection that can be raised by an evangelical Christian is mentioned, along with the cultist strategies to nullify this opposition.

Thus the cultist who knocks at our door today is a person vastly different from his predecessors of yesteryears. In the past it was a battle only of doctrines, but today it has turned into a highly sophisticated doctrinal-psychological assault from them. Yet the war can be won, and we can defend our faith (and the spiritual balance of our family-members), provided we are armed with a single weapon: the Sword of the spirit.

Using the Sword of the Spirit requires a bit of preparation on two fronts. First, we should be thoroughly acquainted with the sword itself. Second, we should be knowledgeable about the enemy and his strategies. The first part is done by a thorough study of the major Biblical doctrines, and that is not the aim of this book. The second part is done by studying the cults in some detail, and that is what we propose to do in the coming pages.

What Is A Cult ?

A Cult is a religious group or movement that attacks or questions the major tenets of the historical Christian faith. Many minor subjects are also attacked, but these do not pose as serious a danger as the previous category.

The purpose of such attack is not to expose any genuine errors in our doctrinal understanding, nor to reform any failure, but to destroy the cardinal doctrines. The ultimate aim of this destructive work is to replace Biblically sound doctrines with the petty, erroneous, and even blasphemous doctrines of the false cult.

The Cultic phenomena has today become such a powerful means of gaining power and money that it is now seen even beyond strictly religious circles. Thus though originally cults were mostly of religious origin, today they can be of non religious origin too. Such diverse is the origin of cults today that it has become necessary to classify them into four slightly overlapping groups. The details of this classification are given in another part of this book.

While we are still at the definition stage, it would be good to distinguish between religions and cults lest one wonder why we have included Transcendental Meditation, but not Hinduism, in this book.

Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, etc. are classified as major world religions. These world religions exist by virtue of their independent world-views, and not by denial/building upon the foundation of any other major religion. Cults are smaller groups formed primarily upon denial of some tenets of major religions. The deviating path embraced by the cults and the major religion with which they compete are often very clear. There might be some religions as well as cults that do not fit the above definition. However, there are other factors like historical background and conventions that help us to distinguish even such groups.

One special aspect of the cults and movements discussed in this book is either their hatred for Christianity or for their competition with the true Christian faith. It is either this spirit of competition or their desire to eliminate the Christian faith that makes it important to study them. It is a battle in which there is no neutral position.

Eternal vigilance is the price to be paid for freedom.

Why Should We Fight The Cults ?

In the past millennia wars were fought and won often on the basis of brute force or larger army. But even during such periods some commanders understood the value of strategy. Thus many of them were able to defeat a more massive and powerful enemy force by sheer strategy. Eventually military-strategy developed into a complex and highly refined science and art, and today no commander ever dares to venture out purely on the basis of his fire-power.

The relationship between true Biblical faith and all kind of error is no different from warfare. Even if Bible believing Christians do not desire to fight, the other side has declared war. Unless we defend our territory, we will end up with a lot of our beloved people in the fold of the cults. Thus for the sake of our children, brothers and sisters, family, and the church members, we are forced to fight back.

In this battle of information the first round was won by the cults. They came silently and stealthily and took away millions of people from among us. After these massive losses the churches awoke and fought back and won during this round. This was a battle of information, and we won by pooling up massive doses of doctrine and systematic theology. However, now we are in the third round of the information-battle.

Raw information related to Bible was the ammunition in the first two rounds. The battle was also direct. Thus we won ultimately because of our more accurate understanding and teaching. However the situation has taken a dramatic turn in the present stage. Information continues to be the ammunition, but the enemy now depends more upon strategy. Instead of a face-to-face war, the cults now depend upon subtle psychological war and also upon reprogramming the minds of people. Only a new strategy that takes these factors into account would help us to hold the ground.

The situation is complicated by the present condition of the church also. Biblical literacy was high among believers of past generations. But in spite of having better tools, today the larger percentage of believers in Bible believing churches suffer from spiritual ignorance as well as lack of commitment. Added to this is the deceptive influence of the present-day atmosphere.

Right from the earliest days of a person's life the education system, the prevailing value system, and the perverted society condition people to reject good and accept that which is evil and wrong. This develops in us a kind of attitude that is very conducive to the infiltration and growth of cults. Thus in every way the present-day Christian community is in a disadvantageous state. Add to this the learned new strategies of the cults, and the time is ripe for the church to be the loser.

This third round is much more deceptive, all-pervasive, and comprehensive compared to the two earlier rounds. Whichever side wins today would remain victor for a long time. This battle cannot be avoided in any way. The challenge and aggression has come from the other side. This if we remain inactive or if we flee, they would

simply come and conquer us and the classic statement would fit them. I Came, I saw, I conquered. There was no resistance.

Eternal vigilance is the cost of freedom. If we do not fight back, very soon many of our children, brothers and sisters, family, and church members would end up as slaves in their camp. This has already been happening. Many of us have already lost many of our beloved one's to many kinds of cults and movements.

For the sake of our dear ones we have to fight back. For the sake of maintaining our freedom we have to fight back.

The Biblical Position:

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Why Should We Know About Them

Almost everyone has seen free-style wrestling at least on TV. There are almost no rules, and the wrestlers try to win by any method that they deem helpful. This often leads to much bloodshed and injury before one of them is declared the victor.

Now let us assume a situation where one person attacks the other without being constrained by any rule. On the other hand, the other party has to fight back but only within rules. Obviously it is an unequal battle in which the 'Free' wrestler has tremendous unfair advantage over his opponent who is rigidly controlled by rules. The first one can fight fair or foul while the second one cannot at any time cross the boundaries. The situation is so heavily loaded in favour of the first person and against the second person that the second wrestler can win only if a miracle takes place.

We Bible-believing Christians are like the wrestler constrained by laws. Our integrity and ethics never permitting us to cross the boundaries of decency and propriety. Yet the cultists are often free to win converts at any cost. And they never spare any efforts to defeat us.

Now consider a situation where the first wrestler (and his weapon) is totally invisible. Now even a miracle cannot conceivable help the second wrestler to win. Yet many times that is our situation.

The cultists are already waging an unjust and unprincipled war against the Bible-believing people. On top of that they would become an "invisible" adversary if we remain ignorant about them and their tactics. Even the cleverest and most experienced war strategist cannot fight a battle when ignorance is coupled with inequality of rules.

There is no question of neutrality here. Either we defend our territory or they come and enslave us. In such a situation, it is a must to know about the enemy. They are not going to play fair, and we cannot force them to change their ways. However, they cannot easily prevent us from knowing about them. So at least in this matter we should not put ourselves in a disadvantageous position.

A committed believer should not only read this book, but should also read every book that he can get about the cultists.

Why Should We Prepare ?

Bible-believing Christians were known for their warrior mentality till a few decades ago. However a subtle change has been taking place since the last generation onwards. With increasing wealth and financial well-being a desire to "mingle" has been replacing the attitude of separation.

Things have gone so far that many Bible-believing Christians have actively started desiring a union and communion between Christians of all shades right from the most orthodox up to Christians who are totally infidels. In such an atmosphere, ideas like separation and doctrinal purity are in danger of becoming anathema. Unfortunately this change has already swept at least some of the separatist churches into the bosom of the whore called Ecumenism, which is a technical sounding term to denote spiritual compromise. In such an atmosphere many people question the need for fighting back the Cults. After all, are we all not spiritual brothers, they say.

The Other Side Has Declared War

It is a shame that while many spiritually blind people and cowards from the Evangelical churches gush with love for our "brethren" in the Cults, none of those "brethren" feel the same way about us ! Else, they would have put a permanent moratorium on stealing sheep from the Evangelical churches. Instead of doing that, they continue

to view and depict us as people who need to be brought immediately under the bondage of their Cult so that our salvation is ensured. Thus while the naïve emotionalists among us are busy with love gushing out for our little "brethren" in the Cults, the Cultists have declared an open, one-sided, and shameless war against us -- whom they consider as their enemies and totally lost.

Only a fool would overlook this kind of war and its predictable consequences -- if it is not fought back in time. We must therefore take note of the following :

1-It Is A Real War :Evangelical Christians of the present generation are totally reluctant even to think of spiritual warfare. Thus they neither declare war, nor desire to go to war, yet the war from Cults is real, and it is going on every side, every day.

There is also a tendency to believe that it is not a real war if only one side has declared its intention to fight. This is foolish. War is war even if only one side has declared its intention to fight. What is worse, whether our side responds or not, the other side would keep on fighting till the end.

There is no reason for self satisfaction on the basis of one-sidedness. One side or two, it is a real war and the Cultist side is wounding plenty of our people. It is high time to defend our people and territory.

2-Ignoring The War Will Not Do : Cowards often feel that a problem would be solved if they just ignore its existence. Many of them prescribe the same approach for winning the war on Bible-believing Christians declared by the Cults.

No problem has ever been solved by pretending that it does not exist, and no war has been won by ignoring it. The same is the case here. If anyone feels that the Cults would not harm us if we do not react at all, he is just being naïve. The Cultist is a merciless warrior. Winning others to his side is a part of his preparation for salvation. Thus the more that we ignore him, the bolder that he becomes. Mercilessly he would take as many captives from our side as possible. Ignoring him will not solve the problem.

3-Carelessness Has Been Costly : Though Evangelicals generally close their eyes to the threat, this has not resulted in cease-fire. Rather, this has only helped the Cults to take a lot of captives from us.

Except for one or two, most Cults prefer snatching people away from Christian Churches. This is easier for them than getting people from other world religions. Because of our inaction, the number of people lost by us every year is far greater than what any of us can imagine. By now, each one of the largest Cults have taken away millions of people from our churches. The smaller Cults have taken hundreds of thousands. Worse, many of the non-Christian Cults have also taken away millions of people from traditionally Christian societies like U.S.A., Europe, and Scandinavia. The same is beginning to happen in India also.

Silence is golden, but not in this kind of war. Here we have already lost tens of millions to these Cults. further, Hundreds of millions are already under Cultic influence through the New Age Movement and its countless offshoots. If we continue with our inaction, the losses would be far more greater than we can ever imagine -- and at least some of their blood would be upon us.

4-Preparation/Training For War Is A Must : Just as the days of direct warrior-to-warrior combat are gone, in the realm of spiritual war also the situation has changed totally. Today's Cultist is not just any Bible-wielding simpleton, but a highly trained warrior armed with weapons of psychological war.

Just as the strongest human would fail in combat with a Karate Black-belter, even the strongest believer can fail in his opposition to today's Cultist guerrilla. The only answer is preparation. Fortunately, this preparation need not be very difficult. The Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. Thus what we need to learn is how to use this Sword, and it will fight the war for us.

Today we lose millions of people to the false Cults because we are not training ourselves properly. Unless we

reverse this trend, we will never win in this battle.

5-A Warrior Mentality Is Needed: As mentioned previously, Bible-believing Christians have mostly forgotten the warrior mentality of their Fathers. Right from the time of Constantine, compromise has been easier for Christians than holy living. Holiness demands separation, and that is totally contrary to today's spirit of compromise.

The Fathers of every Bible-believing movement were people who emphasized holiness, separation, and non-compromise. An aggressive warrior mentality was required for living and maintaining this holiness. The gradual loss of this warrior mentality has resulted in apathy, which in turn has encouraged Christians to overlook their own training.

Training and Preparation are needed for winning this war. But we do not train ourselves in the art of counterattack because the desire for combat and defending the faith our Fathers is gone. Only a return to the warrior mentality of our Fathers would help us to undergo this training.

6-Fighting is Needed to Minimize Losses: As long as Bible-believing Christians would continue in their pacifism and escapism, there will be plenty of casualties. But once they begin to fight back, the losses would reduce to minimum levels.

At present our unwillingness to fight, or the lethargy to defend our territory, makes the Cultists unnecessarily bold in their tactics. At the same time this coldness clouds the vision of our believers about the serious dangers, making them complacent and unguarded.

Once we recapture the warrior mentality of our Fathers, others would greatly hesitate to steal sheep from our fold. Our believers would also become aware and alert about dangers. All this would reduce the number of casualties.

7-Preparation Helps In Offence As Well As Defense: Once we re-discover the warrior mentality of our Fathers, we would be able to invest in preparation. Once such a preparation is made, we would become competent in offence as well as in defense. And once that happens, the deposit of our Fathers is better protected.

In essence, instead of continuing as cowardly spectators, we must get down to offence as well as defense. We lose if we do not fight back. We gain not only people but a deep commitment to our Faith if we fight back.

How Are Cults Growing So Fast

Many sincere Christians are surprised and even shocked at the high rate at which False Cults are proliferating and growing everywhere. These believers feel that it is Bible-believing Churches that should grow so fast seeing that it is these Churches that teach and preach the Scriptures faithfully. However, numerical growth does not result automatically.

People are not automatically attracted to the group or movement that teaches truth. Rather, Evangelical

Christians ought to go out and draw people's attention to divine truths. Unfortunately most of us are very lax in this matter while most of the Cults consider this as the area that needs the greatest attention. Thus while most of the custodians and stewards of Truth continue in a state of coldness, the peddlers of error keep trapping people through their strategies. Many of these Cult strategies are unethical and unacceptable to Bible-believing people and we cannot use them. At the same time, plenty of acceptable strategies are still left.

An investigation into the growth strategies of the Cults would help us not only to become better witnesses of Truth, but would also help us to avoid the pitfalls in our Churches that are exploited by the Cultists.

1-They Exploit Spiritual Vacuum: Every Church passes consecutively through periods of revival and lethargy. During the latter stage the Church is not in a position to serve hope and joy to the struggling masses.

As population increases, the number of people looking for joy and peace also increases. But when the Church fails to rise to the occasion, False Cults exploit this vacuum. What they offer is often worse than what these lonely people have been facing, but the Cults package their message so attractively that these victims are unable to realize it till it is too late.

Mental, Spiritual, and social vacuums exist in all societies at all times. Cults have a mastery in detecting these needs, and soon they tailor their message to suit the prevailing need of their audience. Using this strategy, they have been able to steal people even from Bible-believing Churches and families.

A greater sensitivity to the needs of people around us and a willingness to pay the cost to help these people would surely help us in arresting Cultistic advances. Further, it is us the Evangelical Christians who ought to be identifying the spiritual and mental vacuum in society for offering Christ as the ultimate solution.

2-They Offer Friendship And Fellowship: People struggling for answers need help not only orally but also practically. The Cults know this very well and they offer a good deal of personal attention to prospective members and also to the new converts. By the time these converts mature, they would change from care-receivers to care-givers, maintaining a continuity of personal relationship. Almost all False Cults exhibit this close-knit family relationship, making them very attractive.

Personal attention given by Cultists can take many forms, including individual friendship, family-friendship, peer-support, prayer groups and home Bible classes. The forms might vary but what makes them effective is the personal relationship which makes the clients feel wanted, loved, and important. All this gives them a sense of belonging.

This feature of the False Cults is to be highly appreciated. In fact this is a behaviour that is a must for Bible-believing people. Yet many of us often become so self-satisfied with our "secure" life in Christ that we hesitate to pay the cost that is involved in caring for people. Unless we translate our theoretical answers into practical demonstration, False Cults will continue to trap people looking for family and social relationships.

3- They Are Sensitive To Needs: Every person has needs, and more so when he is passing through the "struggle" stage of life. Further, the range and intensity of such needs have become great today because of the changing society and breaking families. Cults are quite sensitive to these needs of people and offer many kinds of helps.

Most Christians become quite sensitive to the needs of others when these Christians themselves pass through periods of needs. Some of them might even become socially active during this stage of their lives. Yet once they settle in life, most Christians have a tendency to totally forget their period of struggle. With that forgetfulness goes away another opportunity to minister in the lives of those who are struggling.

On the other hand, most Cults know that pains and problems are a definite entry point deep into people's lives. There are always drug addicts, frustrated and lonely people, runaways, students, the sick, and the heartbroken. There are people struggling with family problems, loneliness, fears. The problems are as numerous as people

themselves, yet certain universal needs and many common strands among the struggling mankind can definitely be identified. The Cults not only make such identifications, but also develop strategies to meet these needs and solve the problems.

Psychological/Sociological and medical help provide the Cults the universal tools needed to face these universal problems. They might offer such help through pastoral, institutional, or print-media counselling. They might also help through relief and medical ministries. Ultimately they are able to minister to most common needs, pains, and aspirations of people, and this helps them to consolidate their hold upon their converts.

Individual believers involved in helping others on their own might eventually become insensitive to the needs of others, as most lamps eventually fade out. On the other hand, an organized Cult-based ministry can always keep the fire burning. The spirit of the organization and the sensitivity to the needs of people can be kept alive through training and also through recruiting new manpower. This way the Cults are able to be sensitive to the needs and pains of others, and are also able to win plenty of converts through this legitimate concern.

4-Every Member Is A Missionary: Almost all Bible-believing Churches stress the need for believers to share the gospel with others. This motivates many new believers to win others for Christ, but eventually most believers drop out of such practices. However, Cults ensure that all their members remain missionaries till the end of their lives.

All Evangelical Churches preach the gospel of grace where the "works" of a person do not contribute to his salvation. In these churches many post-salvation activities are expected from believers, but since salvation does not depend upon these activities, these activities are seen viewed by believers as "optional". The Cults, however, proclaim many of these activities as a "must" for salvation, and this ensures life-long compliance from their sheep.

Most Cults emphasize that working as a missionary is an essential and compulsory part of the individual Cultist's salvation. Thus once a person is trapped by a Cult, for the sake of his own salvation he is forced to trap others for the Cult all his life. This strategy turns almost the entire population of the Cult into missionaries, a manpower which none can match. Eventually this manpower takes the Cult to a point from where it starts enjoying sudden and very large (geometrical) growth. This is one way in which many Cults are growing very rapidly today.

Hiding the gospel of Grace and substituting the gospel of grace with a system of work-based salvation is deplorable and even heretical. No Evangelical Christian can endorse this strategy. At the same time, the missionary commitment (out of compulsion) of Cults should motivate each one of us to renew our own missionary commitment (out of concern for lost souls, and based upon Grace).

5-Sacrificial Giving Is Mandatory: While almost all Bible-believing groups encourage giving, very few of them have made it mandatory. Even in those Evangelical groups where systematic collection of gifts takes place, most of the moneys thus collected are spent only for the needs of the collecting local Church. Thus no central pool with large resources is built up. Cults have just the opposite practice.

First of all, they connect sacrificial giving with the eventual salvation of the giver. Second, they have effective setups both for motivating and also for collecting money. Over the years this coercive mechanism builds up huge financial reserves. This vast central pool is then strategically invested for the Cult's growth and welfare.

While Evangelical churches perpetually struggle to raise money even for day-to-day operations, the centralized money-pool built by using inducement and coercive tactics give the Cults a lot of economic, social, and even political power to attain the desired growth. What's more many discerning Cults have invested substantial capital (billions of rupees) into successful business corporations that help them in turn to further support their goals. For example the Roman Catholic Church is the largest Multi-National business corporation today, having business wealth that goes into trillions of rupees.

Imposing compulsive tithing and a developing a massive centralized pool of money is neither easy for Bible-believing Churches, nor is this practice Biblical. Thus Evangelical churches cannot compete with Cults in this matter. However, the minimum that we can do is to learn to give more sacrificially for the Lord, which

should in turn be used more faithfully.

6-They Have A Massive Literature Ministry: We all talk much about literature as an important component of Christian ministry, but it is the Cults who exploit this tool to maximum benefit.

The ultimate method to control a person is to control his mind. Grown-up human minds can be controlled only by employing much persuasion, manipulation, and constant pressurization. While all of this can be done orally, through audiovisuals, and through social interaction, none of these devices is convenient or economical for capturing the masses. On the other hand, books and magazines can help attain all these goals -- and much more -- economically, silently, and conveniently. Further, the approach is very efficient because even today people have a special awe and reverence for anything that they see in print. Thus any false message circulated in print can have great impact upon people.

Cults exploit these psychological and economical facts to their advantage by investing billions in producing the most attractive, illustrated, and cheaply priced literature. These materials, written by the most outstanding professionals, deal with all conceivable subjects. Thus even the least interested person gets some material that is attractive to him.

Cultist literature includes books, magazines, textbooks, Bible-study books and even encyclopedias. Often the subject is non-religious, and their doctrinal errors are hidden deep inside such material. Once such publications reach a person, he reads them often for the non-spiritual content like political analysis, but the spiritual leaven inherent in all these seemingly technical articles eventually poisons his mind.

While most Evangelical churches produce literature without sufficient planning or mutual coordination, the Cults do it in a systematic and centralized manner. Their large pool of money often goes to subsidize the final cost of this material.

Once the Cultistic literature enters a house, it wins their hearts silently, gradually, and stealthily. Consequently, Christians should be taught to refuse all such literature, even if these are given free of cost. Else, a little fascination today can turn into a deep slavery tomorrow.

7-The Strategic Correspondence Courses: As mentioned in a previous point, to control a person it is necessary to control his mind first. Books, magazines and other publications are very effective for mind-control, but correspondence-courses have many advantages over them.

Once a person enrolls in a course, he is forced to study the content in a systematic manner from beginning to end. Thus an expert Cultist can design the course in such a subtle way that the student's mental resistance is broken down gradually and in an imperceptible way. By the time the student reaches the last stages of the course (10 to 50 lessons later), mentally most of them are totally in the clutches of the Cult.

As mentioned before, most Cults have a centralized pool of money and experts. This combination is very effective for developing courses for mind-control. Thus correspondence courses offered by Cults are far more destructive than what anyone can imagine. What's more, most courses pretended to be something other than doctrinal material, throwing the students off guard.

For example, a common strategy is to offer courses on health, personality development, or any other seemingly non-religious subject. Once the student begins to enjoy the course, and once his mental defenses are down to minimum, their perverted doctrine is sneaked in. By that time the student is totally in their clutches, and he is not able to discern the leaven polluting his mind.

Though Evangelical Christians also offer correspondence courses, the lack of coordination and planning makes most of them very shabby in comparison to what the Cults offer. The only solution is to make our courses better, and also from discouraging Evangelical Christians from enrolling in Cultistic courses.

8-They Effectively Use Mass Media: Though Mass Media can never take the place of personal contact, it can create a vast pool of faithful listeners: This in turn provides a very large number of people ready

for personal contact and eventual absorption into the Cult. Thus almost all False Cults exploit Mass Media to the maximum.

Mass Media requires substantial resources. The centralized pool of money, experts, and management of the Cults makes it relatively easy for them to make a permanent presence on the best of Mass Media. It also helps them to hire the most experienced hands, establish the most professional studios, and produce the most attractive programmes.

In comparison to the above, Evangelical Christians face a tough task even to make their presence felt in media. However, due to the increasing threat from Cults they must try to do the best that is possible. Also we all must discourage our people from getting exposed to Cultistic media and propaganda.

9-They Have Numerous Institutions: Academic and social service institutions offer great opportunities for Cults to grow and multiply. Both of the above types of establishments can help them to brainwash people, and also to offer jobs to converts.

The centralized administration ensures the availability of resources, technical guidance, and all needed legal help. Thus Cult-based educational and social service institutions tend to offer the best and most professional service, attracting hosts of people to the Cult.

Further almost all Cult-run institutions pay only a below-normal salary, all the while extracting an above average service (in the name of God). Thus the Cults are able to build up vast institutional empires using this totally willing and committed slave-labour. Obviously it is impossible for Evangelical Christians to match all this, yet we can definitely do a better job in this field than what we have been doing so far.

At the same time, we should repeatedly caution believers against the ways in which students and others coming in contact with these institutions can be brainwashed. Many people thoughtless send their children to study in these institutions. It is better to avoid indoctrination rather than trying to repair after damage takes place by studying in these institutions.

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Basic Characteristics of Cults

Every false Cult is a distinct group with a personality of its own. There is a wide diversity among these groups. Yet it is possible to discern many points of similarity among them. A knowledge of these basic characteristics can help one to recognize a Cult quickly.

It must be noted that not all Cults have all these characteristics, and that also not in the same proportion. For example the morally degenerate Cult known as the Children of God taught salvation by grace through faith aggressively. This is contrary to the practice of most Cults, yet the Children of God happens to be not more than a Cult because of other characteristics.

Thus no group should hastily be labelled as a Cult because of a single Cultistic characteristic. Similarly, no Cult should hastily be pronounced as harmless because it has a few similarities with evangelical Christianity. Many small evangelical groups exhibit Cultistic characteristics, and many shrewd Cults exhibit characteristics of evangelical groups. Thus only careful evaluation of these groups would reveal their true identity.

Believers should definitely be weary of evangelical groups that manifest one or more Cultistic characteristic. At the same time, they should be very cautious about Cults that camouflage their true identity by adapting some characteristics of evangelical churches. The totality of the symptoms should be taken into consideration before a group is identified as a Cult or as Cultistic. The following are some of the major characteristics of False Cults.

1-Mixture of Truth And Error: Since most Cults multiply by catching people from outside, they need to hide their false teachings somehow lest people be alarmed before falling into their clutches. They do so by teaching a mixture of error with known truth.

When a Cultist approaches a victim for winning him, a direct presentation of peculiar and erroneous doctrines would immediately alarm or even repel the prospective prey. Thus they always begin with Scriptural truths, and this veneer of truth continues as long as is needed to trap the prospective candidate. The erroneous doctrines usually surface only after this person is enslaved to a reasonable level.

Though the Cults disguise and hide error behind truth, discerning believers can detect this adulteration with some effort. Since the Cults publish a wide variety of literature, even their confidential publications can often be procured by the diligent student. An analysis of this material would soon reveal the presence of error hidden under the cover of truth. Thus, rather than appreciating a Cult for the minimal Scriptural truths that it holds, believers need to be alarmed by the falsehoods and errors concealed beneath the surface.

2-Extra-Biblical Source of Authority: For a Bible-believing Christian there is only one final source of authority, and that is the Bible. This attitude is expressed through the statement: *Sola Scriptura*, the Bible alone. However, every false Cult rejects this principle and embrace other sources that are either equal to or greater than the Bible in ultimate authority.

The extra-biblical source of authority might be books, present-day revelations, cult-leaders and their teachings, or even their traditions. Thus these groups feel free to devalue or even totally set aside Biblical statements when there is a conflict between the Bible and the Cult's extra-biblical authority. The Roman Catholic Church places traditions on par with the Bible. The Toronto Movement places their (obviously) satanic revelations above the Scriptures. Every false Cult has one or more extra-biblical authority, and no Cult can maintain its growth, uniqueness, and identity without such an authority.

All such extra-biblical authority is ultimately perverted, blasphemous, and even satanic in origin and content. Many of them are even the "doctrines of demons". Consequently, the Cults show great boldness and audacity in making both additions to as well as subtraction from the Holy Scriptures. The net effect is a total negation of the fundamental tenets of the Bible. This is very sophisticated type of blasphemy.

3-Rejection Of Justification By Grace: Justification by grace is that great doctrine that sets aside Biblical Christianity from all other world religions, Cults, and philosophies. It was the rediscovery and renewed teaching of this most fundamental doctrine that freed millions of Christian believers from Roman

Catholic slavery. This is the Doctrine that resulted in the glorious and God-honouring Protestant Reformation. Yet all Cults reject this doctrine, or at least deny and suppress it.

Justification by faith implies that a sinner is declared "not guilty" solely on the basis of his "faith" in Christ, and not on any kind of work or merit. Justification is totally a divine provision, based solely in God's grace and mercy. Cults and erroneous movements reject or suppress this doctrine because it takes away their ability to control and manipulate people. Once they reject or suppress this doctrine, they can convince their sheep that keeping the commandments of the Cults, and remaining in slavish obedience to its dictatorial leadership, is essential for justification.

Almost all false Cults are multi-national spiritual slave-makers. They can do so only by suppressing the biblical message of freedom. Thus almost all Cults reject justification by faith alone, or Sola Fide.

4-Devaluation of Christ: Jesus Christ is not only the central focus of the Christian faith, but also the ultimate authority in all matters of faith and conduct. Further, He being God-man, is the only one person of this kind in the Universe. He demands total submission and obedience by virtue of His position and work. Cultists cannot run their heretical movements as long as Lord Jesus is acknowledged for what He is. They need to dethrone Him or devalue Him in some way or the other before Cult leaders can elevate themselves and their teachings above that of Christ.

All Cults talk about Jesus, even if they are totally non-Christian Cults. Yet this is a devalued or dethroned Jesus. Some do it by denying His deity, others by denying His true humanity. Still others deny even His personhood. The net result is the denial of the Jesus of Bible, who is substituted by a Jesus or Christ who is less than what the Bible portrays Him to be.

Some Cult leaders are so brazen in their attitude that they claim to be giving advises to the Lord Jesus about how to conduct world affairs.

5-Exclusive Claim To Truth: In spite of the claim that salvation can be obtained only through Christ, true Christians recognize that this salvation is available to anyone and anywhere who is willing to accept Christ. Though a born-again person is expected to join a group of believers, this is only a post-salvation activity. Joining a group is not essential for salvation. The Cults deny this great truth.

For their survival and growth it is necessary for the Cults to portray themselves as the exclusive custodians of truth. This automatically leads to the claim that salvation is possible only and only through membership in this group. While true Christians believe that a Hindu, Muslim, or even an atheist can be saved by accepting Christ (say, by hearing a radio message) even before personally meeting any Christian, the Cults deny it. Many of them deny the possibility of salvation even for Christians if they are outside their Cult. Eventually this leads to exclusivism and pride. They begin to claim that only they have the truth, only they are the children of God, and that they are a spiritual elite.

The claim to exclusiveness leads to bizarre spiritual behaviour. For example the CPM(TPM) and Exclusive Brethren usually do not participate in Lord's Table with other believers. Also, usually they do not allow other believers to participate in Lord's table in their churches. Though CPM (TPM) claims to be a Pentecostal church, these people rebaptize even Pentecostal believers before they accept them into the CPM fold.

6-A Central Role in Eschatology: Eschatology is an inseparable part of theology, and no Bible-believing group can neglect it. Biblically speaking, Christ is the center of eschatology. He is the author and finisher of history, and He does not need the help of humans to fulfill His plans. Nor can any human interfere with His eschatological chronology or time-table. Most Cults deny this central truth of the Bible.

The false Cults need to project themselves as important, and this requires them to suppress the Christ-centered eschatology of Bible. Further, if the group can somehow connect their achievements with the end-time events, this would infuse great expectations and group-loyalty among their people. Consequently many Cults project

themselves as "the" group around which worldwide eschatological events unfold. This takes many forms.

Many Cults present their leaders as the returned Christ. Others claim that with the initiation of their Cult, the millennium is here. Some of them stealthily appropriate the 144,000 mentioned in revelation for their own group and deny this presumed privilege to all outsiders. In some of the worst cases the Cult leaders even claim that they are God's *replacement* for Christ because Jesus failed in His mission. All in all, these false claim reinforces the Cult's vice-like hold upon its members.

7-A God-Like Human Leader: Every Christian knows that only God is God, and no human can, or should, ever attain that position. Even the Cultists know this. In spite of this, all cults glorify certain individuals to such levels, and give them such absolute allegiance and control over members, that eventually these individuals rise even above God in the esteem of the followers.

While few cultists would directly equate these human leaders with God, yet the way in which they treat these leaders is something that ought to be reserved only for God. Thus in many cults the followers indulge in important activities only and only after the leader's approval. This includes permission for taking up a job, marriage, other major decisions, and even the schooling of children. Some cults even required all brides to spend their first night with the leader.

Though cults are quite careful not to directly equate their leader with God, the God-like respect given to the leader amounts to deifying them.

The more dynamic, charismatic, or even demon-possessed that the leader is, the greater seems to be the God-like respect and reverence commanded by him. Some of these people even succeed in eliciting the title "God" from their followers. An interesting variation of the same theme is to claim that God resides in each human irrespective of his religious affiliation. Eventually this claim is interpreted to imply that each person is God. This blasphemy has its origins in the New Age movement and Eastern philosophies, yet these claims are now being heard from Christian pulpits also.

Most notably, radical Christians, Christians, self-help gurus, and some of the extreme faith-healers have readily fallen into this trap. whatever the precise form, any movement that elevates a human and places him on par with the divine is a false cult.

8-Missionary Zeal : Since the time that Jesus gave his Great commission, the children of God have been characterized by their missionary activity. Thus there is a possibility of misunderstanding when missionary zeal is mentioned as a characteristic of cults too.

Though both groups show zeal, their goals are not identical and a recognition of this fact can clear much confusion.

An evangelical Christian exhibits zeal because of his love and obedience to Christ. On the other hand, the cultist exhibits this zeal because of his commitment to the cult, and also for the sake of his own ultimate work-based salvation.

The evangelical Christian shows missionary zeal basically to bring people to salvation. On the other hand, the cultist shows similar zeal basically to strengthen the cult, to solidify his standing with the hierarchy, and also to fulfill a compulsory quota imposed upon him.

A close examination of their methods and motives will reveal that the Cultistic missionary zeal is there because of non-biblical reasons. Thus one should not count them as evangelical Christians merely because of their missionary zeal.

9-Suppression of Freedom: Freedom to know and think is the greatest enemy of all dictators. Consequently all such people deprive others of knowledge and their right to independent thinking. The Roman Catholics forbade reading the Bible and killed tens of thousands for the crime of possessing Bibles. The Children of God do not allow their recruits to ever have free and unsupervised time. The CPM uses peer-pressure to force people to speak in "tongues" and also not to use medicine.

Many Cults allow people to interpret the Bible only according to the dictates of the superiors. Others use powerful brainwashing techniques. Still others use peer-pressure and unending supervision. The sum total result is the suppression of individuality and a zombie-like behaviour.

Conclusion:

Cults are experts in camouflaging their identity, and this is essential for their survival. Yet in this information-rich world none can hide themselves totally. A careful examination would reveal most of the points mentioned above, and many more. All of them take people away from true Christian faith. We must be discerning. We should identify them fast and counter them so that Cultistic leaven does not spread among us.

The Biblical Position:

Sola Scriptura (The Bible Alone)

Sola Gratia (Grace Alone)

Sola Fide (Faith Alone)

Solus Christus (Christ Alone)

Soli Deo Gloria (To God Alone Be The Glory)

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