Session #2

How Do Destructive Groups Manipulate Faith?

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Fellowship of Former Christian Scientists

General Reasons:

- There are no Schools that teach how to be a cult leader
- "True Believer," are God's Prophet
- Narcissistic Personality Disorder;

"To Be Like God"

- Issue is **Power and Control**
- Rarely Money



Why Does Someone Start A Cult?

For most SGAs leaving their cult is like moving to another country. The SGA may be fluent in the language of the natives, giving the appearance of being "normal". However, the SGA does not understand the social conventions (expectations), common shared experiences of the locals (music, media, traditions, etc.), or history of the country. Attempting to "appear" normal and trying to integrate into this new society is a daunting task.

Second Generation Adults	Multi-Generational Adults
May have some knowledge of outside world	**Likely to have little knowledge of outside world**
May have noncultic conversations with the family	**Less likely to have had noncultic conversations**
Likely to have family stories that do not include the cult	**Likely to have family stories that go back generations in cult**
Likely to have relatives outside the group	**Much less likely to have relatives outside the group**
Family many not be deeply enmeshed in the cult	**Family more likely to be deeply enmeshed in the cult**
May lack life skills for world, but parents may have shared some	**Likely to have greater lack of life skills**

There Are Two Critical Principles:

1. ***There is nothing wrong <u>with</u> you; something was done <u>to</u> you.***

2. ***You cannot change what you don't understand.***

While the MGA Ex-CS experience may have many of the same struggles as an SGA, this is NOT like moving to another country. At a deeper and more fundamental level this is like moving to <u>another planet</u> where they may speak the same language, but words and concepts don't mean the same thing, the laws of physics don't apply, and two plus two equals five, etc. This is not just daunting; it is terrifying, very disorienting, and overwhelming.

Introduction

There are eight general distinctives that are frequently found in aberrational "Christian" group and high control heretical cults. Not all of these groups will necessarily exhibit every one of these distinctives, but most do, and some will evidence one or more with greater intensity and scope.

A rule of thumb in identifying an aberrational Christian group versus a heretical group, for our purposes, the difference is this.

A heretical group takes something major in Christianity (who Jesus is, salvation, the Trinity, etc.) and makes it minor. An aberration, on the other hand, takes something minor in Christianity and makes it major (baptism, worldliness, holiness, discipleship, shepherding, obedience, etc.). This is potentially a thought-reform group.

Thought Reform: How Faith Is Manipulated
"The Eight Characteristics"

I. Scripture Twisting

This is the most important distinctive from which all other distinctives flow. Usually there is a deficient concept of Church history or theological categories. Consequently, Scripture is not contextual, misapplied, and used to justify wrong conclusions (proof texting).

A. Doctrine developed from historical books of the Bible. Here, the historical books of the Old and New Testaments (Exodus, Kings, Samuel, parts of Gospels, Acts, etc.) are used to derive authoritative doctrine for the Church today.

B. Contextual Chaos. Verses are pasted together to prove a doctrine.

C. Mystical Mush. Taking verses intended to be literal or are idiomatic and giving them a "spiritual" interpretation.

D. Scripture Selectivity. Only select verses are utilized to support a doctrine while neglecting the whole counsel of God.

Examples of Aberrational Groups: *Victory Chapel; International Churches of Christ; Greater Grace World Outreach; Community of Jesus; Alamo Christian Foundation; Church of Bible Understanding; Two by Two's; Greater Grace World Outreach; Faith Assembly; etc.,* and numerous independent churches.

Examples of Heretical Groups: ***Christian Science****, Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints; The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society; Unity School of Christianity; Unification Church; Nation of Islam; etc.*

"The steward in Luke 16:9 cut the bills of his Master's debtors in half in order to have somewhere to live. He acted shrewdly. Our Master said, 'therefore' make friends for yourself with all the money you have made in the world so that when it fails you may have an eternal dwelling. If you give it away to your parents or your ungodly friends, you are making homes for yourself with them. Submit it to the apostle's feet who would do, with mercy and compassion, the righteous thing with that money."

Elbert Spriggs, **The Twelve Tribes**

"In the words of St. John: 'He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.' This Comforter I understand to be Divine Science."

Mary Baker Eddy, **Science and Health**

II. Controlling Leader/Leadership

Frequently, near to total submission is implicitly or explicitly demanded by the leader/leadership. This is because they have "the mind of Christ," special revelation, are "God's anointed," etc.

A. The leader/leadership has a special pipeline to God with no actual accountability. This gives to them a special authority and weightiness in their pronouncements, even in non-essentials.

B. Scriptures like Hebrews 13:17; Psalm 105:15, etc. are used to manipulate the member and justify the leader's position. These verses are taken out of context and were never intended for leaders who are not accountable.

C. The leader/leadership often determines the areas of your life that are important for you to submit in. Refusing their counsel is to be rebellious.

D. The problem is that members of these destructive groups tend to abdicate their decision making power to the group or leader.

"The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, I am here to declare, is risen. The Jesus you have been seeking and waiting for His return has been in your midst for 40 years, 'but you knew not who He was.' A Holy One was working among us, and it is only now, after He is gone, that we realize who He was." Louis Farrakhan, **Nation Of Islam**

"For example, if I said tonight that the ministry here in South Berwick needs $30,000, I want six of you to raise it, that have got it, to bring it in to lay it at our feet, I want you to do it; you shouldn't even have to pray about that. I am here in Jesus Christ's place." Carl Stevens, **The Bible Speaks**

"'Experience, and above all, obedience, are the tests of growth and understanding in Science,' Mrs. Eddy wrote to her students in the Journal. …Mrs. Eddy's direct personal control of the Boston church soon meant the direct personal control of the membership reaching from Maine to California." Annie Knox, quoted in **The Religion That Kills**, L. Kramer

"Never mind about God. Salvation is by grace only. (Daddy) Grace has given God a vacation, and since God is on His vacation, don't worry about Him… If you sin against God, (Daddy) grace can save you, but if you sin against (Daddy) Grace, God cannot save you." **Big Daddy Grace**

"Life in the Kingdom is life under authority. If you have a problem with authority you have a problem with God." Elbert Spriggs, **Twelve Tribes**

"Always stand on the side of authority. If we divorce ourselves from authority in order to be safe, we have violated our Father's heart."
Elbert Spriggs, **Twelve Tribes**

"Science speaks when the senses are silent. …Christian Science and the senses are at war. …He who turns to the body for evidence, bases his conclusions on mortality, on imperfection…" Miscellaneous Writings, quoted in **The Religion That Kills**, L. Kramer

"Jacques was led to leave working for money. Banking system... the leading seems to be to get out of the system. ...(Get rid of) Books — The reason is because He wants us to be separate. ...Left all stuff — Separate from family — unequally yoked with unbelievers." **The Body**

III. Separation/Isolation Of The Membership

Members are separated from the "world" in a variety of ways in order to protect them from "harmful" influences.

A. This is couched in spiritual language and is usually sincerely believed by the leader/leadership as an appropriate and necessary step for them to take. ***"We want to help you to become the best in Christ that you can possibly be. It has been our experience that you can be harmed by living with..., getting involved in..., reading..., associating with..., etc. This certainly wouldn't please Jesus, and you might even fall away from the Truth. It has happened in the past."***

B. This separation is often from other Christian groups, other Christians, and Christian writings.

"Acts 2 (living in community-rp) is not a lifestyle, it is the fruit of the Great Commission, of hearing and obeying all that Yahshua taught them."

Elbert Spriggs, **Twelve Tribes**

"My dear children, if you had not seen it, I should have had to teach you this. I could not have avoided telling you that when my students become blinded to me as the one through whom Truth has come in this age, they miss the path." Sue Mims, quoted in **The Religion That Kills**, L. Kramer

"Moses gave the moral law. …Christ Jesus demonstrated the divine law in the destruction of sin, disease, and death. Mrs. Eddy gave us the Science of Christianity which forever reveals to all mankind…"

Clara McGee, quoted in **The Religion That Kills**, L. Kramer

"We are the one and only absolute and total real, genuine revolution in the whole world! We are it! We are God's Children! We are the real Jesus People!" David "Moses" Berg, **Children of God**

IV. The Chosen Few

Spiritual elitism is often rampant in these aberrational and heretical groups. All other Christians outside your group are either lukewarm or not true believers at all.

A. Consequently, salvation is not found outside the walls of the group and other Christians are "fair game" for proselytizing (conversion to a group, tradition or belief system, and not to Christ).

B. Aberrational "Christian" groups and heretical groups rarely, if ever, cooperate with other Christian groups not associated with them.

"This is the true movement of God. There's no other group, no other church, that can touch this. The Boston Church is not any church, it is the Jerusalem of God's modern day movement. I challenge you to say I love Boston. Secondly, I challenge you to be able to say I love the Boston Church,...but if you can't say the first two, then you'll never be able to say the third thing, I love God."

Kip McKean, **Boston Church of Christ**

"Christian Science captures the mind and produces smiling, optimistic people who hide their problems and usually do not admit their spiritual failures. That is why it is so difficult for outsiders to identify this religion's controlling and damaging nature. Most of it is subtle, secret, and hidden behind the smiles and open optimism."

Linda Kramer, **The Religion That Kills**, p.150.

V. Uniformity Of Lifestyle

This uniformity of lifestyle may be manifested in beliefs, dress, language, and living conditions.

A. The desire is to create a true disciple of Jesus Christ. However, the issue is what makes a disciple and how one is identified.

B. This uniformity can intrude in all the private areas of an individual's life where the Scriptures are silent.

"How does our King want us to look? Like a bunch of hippies, or a bunch of white-collar crooks and Baptists, or would he rather want us to look like the priest (sic) that we are, after the One who is over the household of Yahweh?"

Twelve Tribes, Elbert Spriggs



Life In Christian Science!!

VI. No Dissent

Because the leadership is authoritarian it follows that there can be no questioning of God's anointed or prophet.

A. In non-coercive groups and churches differences on lesser points of doctrine are tolerated. It is the unity of the Spirit that is essential. Minor differences of doctrine are generally not tolerated in aberrational and heretical groups.

B. To speak out or to question is to have a rebellious spirit and to possibly fall under God's wrath.

"The Lord does not see us as individuals but as one. The Body is one unit in Him."

The Body

"To grumble against God's leadership is to grumble against God himself."

Kip McKean, **Boston Church of Christ**

"She made known to her students the needs of the hour and the snares and pitfals that lay in our path in our warfare against error and how to avoid them. Happy was the student who obeyed her instruction, for in obedience to her teachings was his salvation, and through disobedience many lost their way."

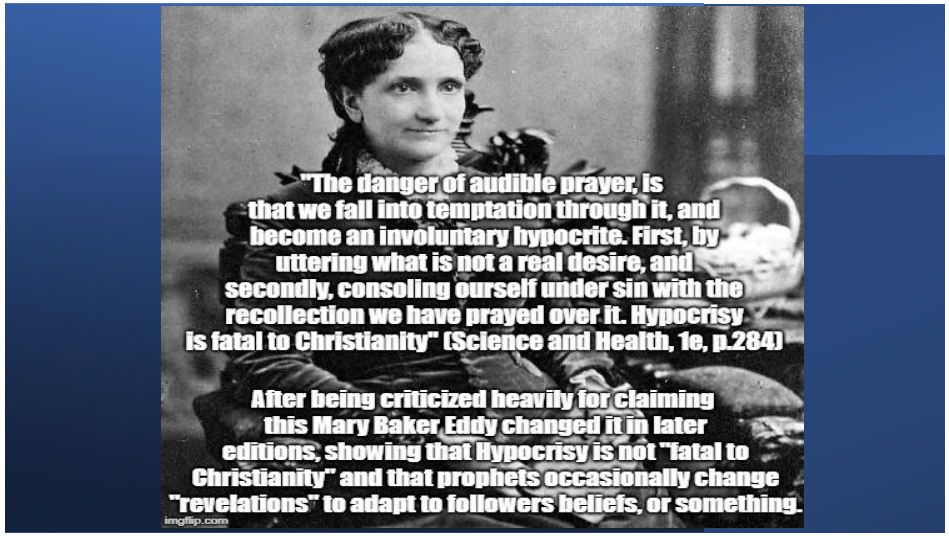
J. Bartlett, quoted in **The Religion That Kills**, L. Kramer

VII. In Transition

Doctrines and practices tend to mutate further and further from orthodox belief and expressions.

A. Aberrational groups, and many heretical groups, are never static but tend to devolve theologically. Many begin fairly orthodox, but over time become heretical in major doctrines.

B. The practices and rituals of aberrational and heretical groups also tend to take on divine authority. Practices that were optional or conditional in the beginning become absolute standards whereby commitment and spirituality are measured.



"If you have a close friend that evaluates anybody in delegated authority I'll guarantee you that if it's done with any consistency you'll be weak and sick and die in the future months… don't you say a sentence, not a sentence, not a line, don't presume or you'll die in the future months." Carl Stevens, **The Bible Speaks**

"…it seems that the changing of her mind was a privilege that our Leader reserved for herself, and she exercised it without any regard whatever for what had gone before. … (She said) but when I do it, it is always God that changes me. …it is part of working out the problem." A. Dickey, quoted in **The Religion That Kills**, L. Kramer

"I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call it Scripture."
Brigham Young, **Mormonism**

"You see some classes of the human family that are black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable and low in their habits, wild and seemingly without the blessings of intelligence that is generally bestowed upon mankind… Cain killed his brother Abel. Cain might have been killed… This was not to be, and the Lord put a mark on him, which is the flat nose and black skin." Brigham Young, **Mormonism**

"Have no connection with Carol Balizet...We had changes after reading her book. Where we were then it was exciting and new. Now it would seem very babyish to us." **The Body**

VIII. Traumatic Departure

Leaving an aberrational "Christian" group, or heretical one, is always extremely traumatic.

A. If a member plans on leaving and the leadership finds out there may be a painful confrontation with the leadership who seek to talk the "rebellious" member out of leaving.

B. Frequently, the person may be told, ***"If you leave bad things will happen to you. Maybe you will get cancer..., get hit by a car..., lose everything..., go insane..., and even die."***

C. Leaving is also very traumatic because even though the member no longer believes in the group, they have been indoctrinated to believe that salvation does not exist outside their walls. Thus, where can the departing member go?

The Consequence of Having Faith Manipulated

"In my case, I led a contented childhood and then experienced tremendous emotional fallout after I left the religion and began to examine my past without any metaphysical filters. I had to sort through a lifetime of confused and angry emotions, dealing with events that ranged from minor inconveniences to major traumas. I was truly surprised at the intensity of my anger over certain events." Linda Kramer, **The Religion That Kills**

"If you walk away from the Church, you're leaving Jesus, and you absolutely lose your salvation." Al Baird, **Boston Church**

"Alas for those who break faith with divine Science and fail to strangle the serpent of sin as well as of sickness! They are dwellers still in the deep darkness of belief. …What must be the end? They must eventually expiate their sin through suffering… but how many periods of torture it may take to remove all sin, must depend upon sin's obduracy."

Mary Baker Eddy, **Science and Health**

"I had been told (mostly by Carl Stevens himself) that every single person that I've talked to who has left ***The Bible Speaks*** *is either a whoremonger, has a drinking problem, or is selling hot dogs, and so forth."*

Carl Stevens, **The Bible Speaks**

*"If someone has made a decision to leave **The Body**, we should not go to talk to them. At that point their minds and attitudes are poison until they repent."* **The Body**