

Analysis Of Mind Manipulation

Introduction To The Methods Which The World Uses To Fight Truth

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Chapter - 1 The Race To Control Minds

Mind-control and manipulation is nothing new. It began when Satan induced one third of the angelic host to rebel against a benevolent God. With the superhuman wisdom, understanding and power that the angels have, only an extraordinary blinding of their intelligence could have achieved this feat. Satan did that successfully.

With one success at hand, it was a minor job for Satan to control and manipulate human minds that are no match for angelic intelligence. Yet the checks and balances created by God are so powerful that in spite of six millennia of Satanic distortion, persuasion, and inducement, the humans are not yet fully on his side.

At the same time, the switching of allegiance from God to Satan has assumed alarming proportions in the twentieth century. Not only unbelievers, but even children of God have begun to follow this master-strategist in the twentieth century. Satan has been aided in this task by the modern technological breakthroughs, especially the ones dealing with communication and medicine. So far his inability to be at many places simultaneously has been a hindrance to the execution of his plans, but with modern mass-media communication technology it has now become possible for him to influence large masses in spite of his physical limitations. Thus it is time for concerned Christians to take action.

The subject of Mind Manipulation has a special interest for those who are in the field of apologetics and polemics. This is because today many arguments are won by influencing and controlling the MINDS directly instead of allowing a process of reasoning and sorting out the truth. Reasoning alone does not work directly in such situations, and the apologist would have to use additional tools to unmask error and also to defend truth.

Mind Control And The Bible

Most Christians have heard only about mind control methods used in Communist countries and other similar dictatorships. Thus they consider it only as a subject of political interest. The intimate connection of this subject with the spiritual life is unknown to many of them, yet Mind Control has a deep connection with spiritual life.

When a father chooses a spiritually and morally corrupt but academically excellent school for his children instead of one that has excellent spiritual atmosphere, but which is not the top school in the country, he is exhibiting his naïveté about the power of mind control. He does not realize that soon he will have his son or daughter back with high honours, but totally decadent in mind. Once minds have been captured, and once degenerate passions have been instilled, they will begin practicing it all as soon as they gain their independence. Thus, the human mind is a critical component in the spiritual life of every person.

The human mind is such an important factor in spiritual life that mind-related words are

used hundreds of times in the Bible. Here is a sample list of some of these words:

Mind/Minds 111 Times

Thought/Thoughts 139 Times

Think/Thinks 82 Times

Heart/Hearts 963 Times

There are many more mind-related words, but these statistics are sufficient to alert every thinking person about the importance of this subject. There are many topics in the Bible which are not mentioned even one tenth of this many times, but to which we give great importance. Thus, this subject must also be given the importance due to it.

Some might feel that in spite of the data above, questions still arise as to whether the human mind has such an intimate relationship with spiritual life. Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:3 says, "I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your **MINDS** should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (NASB). Obviously the mind has a direct relationship with one's spiritual choices, and this is why Paul is greatly concerned about their minds.

The same idea is affirmed in Ephesians 4:17-19 which in NASB says, "This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer as the gentiles also walk, in the futility of their MIND, being darkened in their UNDERSTANDING, excluded from the life of God, because of the IGNORANCE that is in them, because of the hardness of their HEART; And they, having become CALLOUS, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness". This passage also makes it clear that once the minds are controlled or influenced, people get into ALL kinds of impurity with GREED. To those who have been observing society in the light of the Scripture for some time, this does not come as a surprise.

Human Mind And Spirituality

All Christians these days are worried about the coldness and degeneration seen in the spiritual world. However, very few of them are able to perceive that part of the reason is our inability to guard our hearts.

We seek the best education, job, housing, and society for us and our children. Many of us prefer to watch the best TV programmes, even if we have to spend money and get a cable connection. Most of us also look for the best church for fellowship. However, in all these the criteria are not how they feed and conserve our minds but rather how good are these from earthly standards. Instead we ought to give priority to how they contribute to a healthy and spiritual mind.

In 1 Peter 3:15, the apostle says that we should "set apart Christ as Lord in our HEARTS". If our obedience has to show in life, it has to originate in our mind. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your HEART with all diligence; for it is the source of all life". The communists have known this and have been recorded as saying that if they can have the first few years to influence a child, they can ensure that the child will always remain loyal to communist ideology.

Consequently, all degenerate movements and bizarre cults aim directly at the human minds. The rest follows automatically. This blinding and controlling of human minds is mentioned by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:4 when he says, "In whose case the god of this world has BLINDED the MINDS of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ...". About believers losing their spiritual balance, the Scripture says even this begins in the mind. In 2 Thessalonians 2:2 he says, "That ye be not soon shaken in MIND, or be troubled ...".

The whole of Psalms 119 is a description of how the Scripture takes control of the human mind to produce a holy life. The same insight is repeated in Proverbs, which also reminds us that a man's character is dictated by what he is in his mind. "As a man thinks, so he is" (Prov. 23:7).

Much is at stake in this battle for minds, and no Christian should remain ignorant about it. Christian apologists have much more to worry about in this realm because in many cases its subtle tactics defy common rules of logic and reason. Only an insight into the workings of the deceptive mind manipulation techniques will help the apologist to win the war to capture minds.

To understand the ways in which mind manipulators can capture people's thinking, it would be helpful first to look at one aspect of the human mind.

Chapter - 2

Human Mind: A Diagrammatic Approach

Humans act through a process of thoughts, words, and deeds. The possible range of these actions is infinite, ranging from the holy to the unholy, mature to immature, wise to stupid, and from the proper to the improper. From a biblical point of view all these possible actions can be divided into at least four main actions: essential actions, desirable actions, tolerable actions, and forbidden actions. Diagrammatically, these can be represented as shown below:



Obviously, the range of all possible actions is vast, and includes actions that are both proper as well as improper. When these actions are separated from each other, we get at least four different categories of human actions.

Essential Actions: The smallest group is made up of all the actions essential for a believer. This would include love for God, commitment, honesty, etc. Every believer is supposed to fulfill these requirements from his own free will.

Desirable Actions: The next larger group would be made up of desirable actions. These are not compulsory, but it is highly desirable to see these in the lives of believers. This would include all those activities and choices that strengthen a believers holy walk and viewpoint.

Tolerable Actions: The next group would include all those thoughts and actions which are not expected in a believer, but at the same time which are not sinful. This is similar to the speech and actions of a baby that are abandoned when he grows up. Parents tolerate many things in a growing child and with the right expectations these things will go away with the eventual arrival of maturity. Though not sinful in themselves, these things can lead a person to sin if he does not abandon them as he matures.

Forbidden Actions: Finally, there is the collection of all those thoughts and actions that are totally forbidden for a believer. This would include all those activities that are sinful, unethical, and which are even on the periphery of sin. There is no way for a believer to justify getting into this region of thoughts and actions.

These four regions are separated from each other by mental (and some social) barriers that must at all times be respected by the believer. The essence of mind-control is to manipulate these barriers, so that the believer is attracted to step out of his boundaries, and therefore it would be helpful to consider at some length the barriers themselves.

The Barriers

Whether a person indulges in a certain thought or action depends very much upon the barriers in his mind. These barriers separating the possible actions from actions to be avoided are neither physical nor visible. They are formed in the human mind as a result of the repetitive instructions and warnings received (Gen.18:19; Deu.4:9 Jos 1:8).

Parents are the first to tell children about these things. The moment parents use the word NO, they are telling their children that there is an invisible barrier that they ought not to cross. Eventually other members of the family, church members, teachers, and even the society will reinforce these boundaries. The ultimate source of these barriers is God himself, who asked man to abstain voluntarily from eating the forbidden fruit. There is a vast range of forbidden things, and the Scripture throws ample light on these matters. Accepting these Scriptural commands results in groundwork for forming the boundaries.

Repetition is a key word here. God-fearing parents consistently and regularly instruct their children about desirable and undesirable behaviour. They train up the child in the way he should walk, which means that they train him to make the right choices (Prov. 22:7). This includes rejecting what is evil and sinful. With long-term repetition, the boundaries become clear and strong. This is emphasized in many places in the Scripture (Ps. 119:23, 48, 99; 1 Tim. 4:15; Rom. 12:3, Phil. 4:8).

Certain properties of these barriers make it easy for dishonest people to manipulate them, and right from the beginning it is essential to understand these properties:

INVISIBLE or NON MATERIAL NATURE: First, these barriers are totally invisible and therefore the work of laying and strengthening them cannot be checked physically or visually. This raises the possibility that damages inflicted to these boundaries, especially in a surreptitious manner, cannot easily be measured. Consequently, one has to follow elaborate (but straightforward) methods to create and sustain them; however it still remains that their invisible nature makes it easy for any determined enemy to attack and damage them, so that it becomes hard to see that an erosion of these barriers is beginning to take place. This gives great strategic advantage to the enemy.

PERISHABLE NATURE: Second, these barriers can be altered and even destroyed. Such a manipulation of the barriers would result in the believer indulging in thoughts and actions improper for him. There is no automatic safeguard against all this.

FORMATION NOT AUTOMATIC: third, these barriers are not formed automatically. Nor are they reinforced unaided. Rather, the fallen human nature only resists them and motivates men to violate them at every possible opportunity. Thus every person has to take initiative in seeing that such barriers exist in his mind and also that they are constantly reinforced.

VOLITIONAL NATURE: fourth, every person has to remain within these boundaries out of his own will. There is no external agency or person that would normally prevent a person from violating these boundaries. True, the social norms, other believers, and one's own family might put some sort of pressure on the individual, but ultimately none of them can continually serve as a watchdog over a free person. Further, none of them can ever exert absolute power of prevention.

Though God is powerful enough to force us to do things, even He does not impose His will upon humans. Instead of making us as machines, that cannot cross their set boundaries, man has been created as a free moral being who must weigh his actions and make decisions out of his own free will. This was made clear in the Garden of Eden, and this is made clear through the Scripture even today (Gal. 6:4, Ro.12:2, 1Cor 3:13).

In essence, the invisible and non material barriers have to be formed by each independent believer with the aid of the family and the Scripture. The three enemies of the believer (the world, the flesh, and the devil) will try to either shift or to totally destroy these barriers. Since the boundaries are invisible, they can do their work largely unnoticed with great efficiency. Since only external factors are there as indicators of whether the barrier is being attacked, a believer should carefully weigh the ultimate impact of all his choices upon these barriers.

Thought Life And The Barriers

Since the human mind is the ultimate seat of all the boundaries observed by a person, the thought life has intimate connection with a person's commitment and purity. This is one reason why the Scripture emphasizes that as a man thinks so he becomes. Holy thoughts lead to sanctity unholy thoughts lead to degeneracy.

The Scripture reminds believers not to desire the company of the evil (Ps. 1:1-2), and not to listen to their suggestions because this deeply influences one's thought life. Jesus took a very serious view of "mental adultery" and placed it at the level of actual adultery because it gradually attacks the boundaries. A person continually indulging in fantasies would eventually lose the resistance to flee from lustful temptations and commit the sin in the physical realm. The thought life is to be guarded carefully (Joshua 1:8; Ps. 119:23, 99; Phil. 4:8; Romans 12:3).

Since the thought life is both invisible as well as non-physical, it is difficult to keep it under lock and key. Furthermore, since the sense organs as well as organs of perception are all connected directly to the human mind, it is never at rest. Thus, the human thoughts can be touched and influenced through the manipulation of human senses. The spirit of the world knows this, and uses many techniques to craftily reach the mind and control it. This is all the more reason for a believer to guard his mind against all unwanted and deceptive influences. "Keep your heart with all vigilance and above all that you guard, for out of it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23, Amplified).

Mind Control For Opposing The Christian Faith

Satan and his hosts have been attacking mankind for the last six thousand years. They have effectively used humans who are loyal to their purposes for attaining this goal. It is these humans who have developed all kinds of deviant philosophies and tactics to attack the Bible and the Christian faith (Mt.13:25-30, 1Tim. 6:3-5).

For almost six millennia their attacks were direct, somewhat like the face-to-face wars of history. But just as the face-to-face combat has been replaced today by strategic war from a distance, the combating forces against the Bible have also adopted the same approach. Thus a good proportion of the attacks targetting the Bible and the Christian faith today are indirect and subtle. Mind-control methods play an important role in this war against Christianity (Gen 3:1).

The rationalists, the atheists, the theological radicals, the humanists, the new-agers, the cultists, the heretics, and the destroyers of Biblical morality, all use these techniques. This indirect war gives them great advantage given the fact that Christians are not able to spot their enemies easily. The present-day tolerance of heretical writers, the tolerance of anti-family movements, prevalence of abortion, divorces, premarital and

postmarital impurity, and the general skepticism about Biblical values can also be attributed to the subtle mind-control methods used by proponents of these movement. This is the reason why the anti-Christian elements have been able to succeed so much in their mission in the twentieth century. Only a good perception of their tactics coupled with keen observation would help Christian apologists to fight back.

With the above things in mind we can now look more specifically into the ways in which the world tries to control human minds. Unless we understand their tactics and unless we fight back, we stand only to lose much more than what we have already lost.

Chapter 3

Principles Of Mind Control -- I

Human behaviour depends very much upon the clarity with which people perceive the boundaries, and the commitment with which they are committed to remain within the limits proper for them.

Since these boundaries exist primarily in human minds, anyone desiring to manipulate humans aims at controlling the mind. By doing this they can control the boundaries within which the person is willing to remain. As we discuss the principles and methods of mind control, it must be kept in mind that there would be some overlap between the different categories that we discuss. This is because man is not a machine with nuts and bolts, but a living creature with a broad spectrum of character individuality in terms of desire, personality, and behaviour.

The results of mind-control methods are seen in different ways in different people. In some the results are achieved only gradually, while in others it is achieved in large leaps or even immediately and totally. This depends upon several factors which will be mentioned in another part of this discussion.

Principles Used In Manipulating Barriers

There are six basic principles which are applied to the manipulation of mental barriers:

- 1-Blinding**
- 2-Imprinting**
- 3-Desensitization**
- 4-Expansion**
- 5-Fear Creation**
- 6-Value Shifting**

The world uses numerous strategies for controlling human minds, but ultimately all of them use one or more of the above six principles. Thus a mastery of the six principles above, coupled with an exposure to some of their strategies would help concerned believers to quickly spot the occasions when mind-control methods are being used. Skillfully using proper leading-questions they can expose these attempts against truth. (Leading questions are a powerful set of tools for unmasking error. They are explained in detail in another place).

Meanwhile, it would be helpful to study the above principles in some detail:

1-Manipulating By Blinding: Mental barriers help people to behave properly, but they need clear perception of these barriers before they can remain within the limits. Continuous instruction by parents, Sunday-school teachers, Bible-teachers, and others who love truth, helps people to perceive the boundaries of life clearly. Just as lovers of truth can help to develop clearer perception of the boundaries, enemies of truth can

blind or dim the perception of people towards these boundaries. Once blinded, they cross the boundaries just as an unaided blind person falls into a pit. A person can be blinded in many ways, some of which are described below.

Every person should look at things objectively and without bias, and only this would ensure proper conclusion. However, if a person can be blinded or prejudice in some way or other, he will evaluate things subjectively and with bias. Thus his conclusions will be wrong, and the actions that follow based upon the deductions will automatically be wrong.

The way in which David dealt with Absalom is a good example. Absalom indulged in many rebellious and disobedient practices. The Old Testament Law prescribed the actions that the father has to take in such situations. Further, David being the king, it was his responsibility to keep his son in control lest it create civil unrest in his kingdom. Yet we see that due to his excess emotional attachment to Absalom he became blind to all these consequences and repeatedly sheltered Absalom.

Finally, he became so biased toward his son that David asked his people not to hurt Absalom while he was engaged in a war. This was contrary to the principle of just warfare, where one enemy's life is not to be esteemed over the life of another. Finally, when Absalom was killed, David mourned for him so openly that everyone became depressed (2 Sam 18 and 19). The day of joy turned into a day of mourning. In the end, Joab had to come and even warn the king to forsake his improper behaviour. All of this was because of his bias towards his son, and David became blind to the boundaries to be observed by a king of Israel.

People can be blinded also with the help of lies and one-sided reports. Many things have a true as well as a false side. For example, when the advertisements ask people to "relax" with a cigarette, it is persuasive because smoking does give some relaxation to some people. At the same time, it is an example of one-sided reporting given the fact that relaxation is not the only thing a person gets through smoking. They also get lung cancer, foul breath, and loss of stamina. But often the power of one-sided reporting is so great, and the words used so charming, that people fall into the trap.

This can be seen in the biblical scenario where Potipher's wife lies to her husband. He immediately imprisons Joseph, without even pausing to consider the past record of Joseph. This is also seen in 1 Kings 13:18 where the false prophet came, claimed that he was a prophet, and that God had spoken to him. These two claims were enough to blind the true prophet to the fact that plenty of people try to beguile God's servants. Being a prophet himself, he should have inquired about these things directly from the Lord.

In our generation proponents of several false teachings have used one-sided reports and even white lies to propagate deceptions. The Prajapati/Christ claim is one of them. Many Sanskrit quotations advanced by these people are outright fraud, but people blindly believe them. The Occult-based healing systems like Pranic Healing is another example. These systems often talk about seeing an aura around the human body with the help of Kirilian photography. This is an outright lie because no one has so far seen a human aura with the help of Kirilian photography. Yet when this falsehood is repeated, people become blind to truth.

Overpowering or wiping the information which a person has is another method of blinding. Thus though everyone knows that an embryo is a human being, many people have fallen into endorsing abortions. This is because they have been overpowered with the statement that an embryo is not a living person and that abortion is just a surgical process similar to removing infected tonsils. The other side is not shown, and blind people cross their boundaries and endorse or even support murder.

Another method for blinding people (or even oneself) is through Emotion-induced blindness. Emotion is a powerful force, and it must always be kept under the control of human reason and wisdom. When this is not done, each dosage of emotion blinds the person further till he is totally blinded. This is how even spiritually mature people fall into lust and sexual impurity, bitterness, anger, malice, and all kinds of spiritual and

moral evils. Each occasion of indulging makes the emotion stronger, and the reason is suppressed. Once a threshold is crossed, people become blinded to truth.

When the Israelites demanded that Aaron make an idol, Aaron agreed with their request, yet all of them knew that the golden calf was not God. They all became blinded to the truth. When Samson continued his involvement with Delilah and finally revealed his secret to her, he willfully ignored the truth. He was playing with fire due to his emotion-induced blindness. When David got involved with Bathsheba, he knew that it was sin. That is why he tried to pass the blame to Uriah. The whole story shows that he knew the truth, yet at the same time he was blind.

Solomon who, contrary to the commands in the Law, multiplied wives unto himself. His emotions had totally blinded him when he offered incense to idols. The Sons Of God marrying the Daughters of Men was a similar case. The Sons Of God were righteous people, but temporarily they became blind to the fact that they should not indulge in unholy alliances.

It takes a lot of wisdom, insight, honesty, and objectivity to distinguish truth from error. But once a person is blinded, he quickly forgets the boundaries and easily steps into error outside the boundaries that are proper for him.

2-Manipulation By Imprinting: The moral boundaries in our mind separate the right from the wrong. Now if a certain idea is taken and imprinted upon our minds as right, or proper, or desirable, then the mental boundaries automatically expand to include it in the category of what is considered as right.

One tried-and-tested method of imprinting a message in human minds is "repetition". When the same idea or practice is repeated to a person or social group, sooner or later it becomes stamped upon their minds as something right. This is one way in which abortion has become common. For years people kept emphasizing that overpopulation was a problem in the world. They continued to emphasize that this would lead to deprivation and a shortage of resources, and that the population would have to be controlled. These messages imprinted so successfully upon people's minds that today when they say that population should be controlled "at any cost", people simply accept it, even if murder is the means for population control.

At the same time, repetition of the right message works in the opposite way. It imprints the message of truth and righteousness upon human minds. This is why parents should train up their children with repeated instruction. This is why family-worship and regular Bible-based discussions are important in families. This is why children should be given the right kind of books for reading. And this is why those who stand for truth should repeatedly proclaim the message, without tiring and without becoming discouraged. Their repetitive proclamation of truth would sprout sooner or later and grow into large trees that will bring forward truth as fruit (1Th. 5:11; Heb. 3:13).

Shock is another method for imprinting an idea in the human mind. When the human mind is given a shock, the message often imprints itself firmly in the subconscious mind. The person might not even be aware of it, but when the right circumstances arise, this message would automatically come into his conscious mind.

Fantasy-creation is another method for imprinting an idea firmly in the human mind. This is the reason why people who spend all their time reading fairy tales, soft romance, pornography, and such stories, lose their resistance to lust. Western movies imported to India, and the dance/song programmes shown in TV programmes similar to Chitramala and Chitrahhar create intense sexual fantasies in people.

The maximum speed with which a person thinks is not more than 250 words per minute. However, when a person indulges in sexual fantasy, his mind races at the speed of 1800

words per minute. Thus a few minutes of sexual fantasy per day is equivalent to hours of vulgar reading per day. Ideas have consequences, and such extended exposure to lust leaves a lasting impact upon the mind. This is why in Matt. 5:28 our Lord placed mental lust on the level of physical defilement. Fantasy eventually motivates the person to act. In Genesis 39 we notice that the invitation from Potiphar's wife was not a sudden development. She had been watching and fantasizing about Joseph for quite some time. Eventually it broke down her boundaries of right and wrong. The same is the case of Amnon and Tamar found in 2 Samuel 13, where Amnon indulged for a prolonged period in fantasy. Thus eventually his mind was so impressed with lust that he did not listen to Tamar who asked him to wait and get her as his married wife.

People indulge in fantasy not only about sex, but also about money, power, position, honour, and a lot of other things. Continuous indulgence gradually weakens their boundaries and when the suitable circumstances arise the person falls into it.

Emotional manipulation which bypasses reason is another method for imprinting an idea in human minds. On receiving any kind of information, the human mind analyzes it using reason, and then takes action. The Information --> Reason --> Action sequence represents the correct order of human experience. Emotions should play only a subordinate role in this. But it is possible to manipulate human emotions in such a way that human reason is totally bypassed. The altered sequence looks like this: Reason --> Emotion (Reason) --> Actions. Here reason is placed in parentheses because when the human emotion is manipulated by a clever person, the reason is either suppressed, or is even totally bypassed.

Thus when the report about loss in war was given to King David, everyone knew that he would get angry. After all, the defeat and deaths were the result of clumsy war strategy. Further, many of the dead were brave and loyal soldiers. Knowing this, the captain of the army told the messenger to just mention Uriah in case the king got angry. No sooner was Uriah's death mentioned that the king's dormant emotions were touched and he lost balance, becoming philosophical. He asked them not to worry on the pretext that death is no respecter of persons. This is not the way a brave commander speaks or thinks. Instead, a commander in his right mind sits and analyzes how he could win next time. David failed to do so because of the emotional bullet that was fired upon him, and that effectively bypassed his reason.

3-Manipulation Through Desensitization: God-fearing people are quite sensitive to good as well as evil. They rejoice on seeing the good, while they feel sad on witnessing evil. Such a person recoils with horror and dismay when he is invited to be part of an evil activity. He is just not willing to step out of the boundaries. This is why children brought up in God-fearing families generally shiver at the thought of stealing, drinking, cursing, using profanity, or indulgence in vulgarity.

Just as people recoil on accidentally touching a hot frying-pan, a sensitive person forcibly removes himself from things that are not right for him. He knows that the issue in question is something outside the boundaries of what is good. This sensitivity is a very important part of godliness and right thinking. However, just as sensitivity to heat can be reduced considerably by continuous and deliberate handling of hot vessels, it is possible to reduce one's mental sensitivity by continuous exposure to sin and evil (1Cor. 15:33).

The company of friends, society with loose moral values, hostels, and TV programmes are some channels that desensitize people. Gossip, juicy stories, and vulgar jokes are another medium. This is how often very sensitive and even touch-me-not Christian young boys and girls can eventually become brazen and shameless beyond anyone's belief. Once the sensitivity is gone, they have nothing to recoil from and nothing to fear about. What was outside the boundary of proper things, and what was seen as improper in the past, has now been incorporated into the boundaries of the acceptable things.

The sequence is something like this:

First Exposure --> Recoil and revulsion

Repeated Exposure In Small Doses --> Removal Of Shock --> Desensitization

--> Overlooking The Evil --> Tolerance Of The Evil --> Condoning The Evil --> Liking The Evil --> Desiring The Evil --> Justifying The Evil --> Eventual Indulgence In Evil --> Further Justification Of The Evil

The secret of desensitization is continuous exposure in SMALL doses. Like a slow poison, small amount of evil often fools people into thinking that nothing is amiss. It gives them a false confidence that they can jump out of it any time that they want, without ever realizing that each occasion of exposure is making them insensitive to yet more evil. Finally a critical stage is reached when their insensitivity makes them to even love evil.

In Genesis we notice the way in which Lot's daughters indulged in incest that was totally repulsive to children of God. They were people who had seen God face to face, and His deliverance with their own eyes. Having known God this intimately, they ought to have trusted in that omnipotent God to solve their problems. It was not difficult for the creator of the entire Universe to grant them a match and a progeny in time. Yet due to the vulgar and oversexed society in which they lived, they took recourse not only to human wisdom, but also to a repulsive activity. The reason is not very far. Their continuous exposure to the degenerate morality of Sodom and Gomorrah from their childhood had made them totally insensitive to what is right and what is wrong !! Such is the result of desensitization.

Some of the practices that have gained popularity at the dawn of the twenty-first century are cadaver-eating by medical students, drinking fetus-soups by medical doctors, eating corpses by Tantriks, thanatophilia by undertakers, and indulgence Sado-Masochism and bestiality by educated people. There is ample documentation to show that these things are taking place from India to America and from Africa to China.

There is even a principle called Mike's Law to express the results of desensitization. According to this law, continuous indulgence in forbidden activities increases one's desire and boldness while it diminishes the thrill. This in turn motivates the person to greater thrill and to increased carelessness. For example, when a person continually indulges in a forbidden activity or in a violation of some kind, the excitement and thrill received from it begins to decrease. This is due to desensitization. Meanwhile this person's desire for this activity increases and he indulges in yet greater violations. Initially the person indulges in violation with fear and trembling. Since most people are not caught in the beginning, they become bolder and gradually abandon their caution. This is the reason why God-fearing young people eventually become brazen and do not care even if their parents, elders, or society watches their misdeeds.

Chapter 4 Principles Of Mind Control -- 2

The remaining three principles that the world uses in mind-control are explained below.

4-Manipulation Through Expansion: There is no boundary for human desires if they are left to themselves. Thus every God-fearing person has to learn to control his desires so that they never cross the boundaries appropriate for a believer. The Ten Commandments and other Biblical commands remind believers not to desire what belongs to others -- neither their wealth nor satisfaction of sexual desire through them.

After ten to twenty years of training in a Christian atmosphere people automatically restrict and control their desires most of the time. However, those who oppose the Christian faith can still attack these people. In ways that look very innocent, these people can induce people to expand their moral boundaries. Thus by cleverly expanding the needs, desires, and expectations that a person has, it is possible to motivate him to desire things that are outside their proper boundaries. Once the desire is kindled, the boundaries automatically enlarge and adjust. As a result the person becomes mentally ready to indulge in things that he actually

ought to avoid.

Fantasies are a powerful tool for expanding the boundaries. Fantasies obey no boundaries, and given an opportunity they would break all barriers of decency. Consequently, continuous exposure to fantasy expands the barriers so much that the distinction between right and wrong is lost. This is one reason why fantasy-provoking novels, stories, TV programmes, and conversation should be avoided by believers.

Acts that are not moral sins in life can be placed into the following categories: Essential Acts, Pleasurable Acts, and Desire for Luxury. A right-thinking person should desire only the essentials of life. He understands that there is nothing wrong if he gets the pleasurable things of life, but he is not supposed to crave them. Further, he should see as sinful all craving for the luxuries of life. This balanced thinking helps a person to remain within his boundaries. However, the balance can be destroyed with the help of contrived desire creation.

Desire creation is another method for expanding the boundaries. The world has numerous methods for creating desires in human hearts, and these are mentioned in the discussion on Propaganda Techniques. For example, if the world can motivate a person to dwell for some time on the joys of luxury, it creates a craving for it in his heart. This breaks down his perception about the distinction between the essentials, the pleasures, and the luxuries of life.

Thus the boundaries of desires are expanded. It works something like the following:

Attraction To Luxuries --> Meditation Upon The Pleasures Of Luxury --> Viewing Luxuries Of Life As Desirables Of Life --> Viewing Them As Essentials Of Life --> Seeking For Forbidden Or Improper Luxuries --> Changed boundaries.

Once a person slides into this kind of thinking, the mental boundaries are easily trespassed.

Another method for expanding the boundaries is through lust creation. Lust can be for sexual gratification, for the things of life, or for name, fame, and positions. By creating a lust for any possible combination of sins, believers are motivated to crave for what is not proper for them. This too erodes the boundaries. The examples of Samson, Solomon, and Amnon can help to understand the consequences of lust. Proverbs 5 and 7 also speak in detail on this subject.

The Word of God reminds us that believers should seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first, and then all things shall be added unto a believer (Matt. 6:33). Fantasies, desire creation, and lust creation motivate the believer to reverse the order found in this verse.

5-Manipulation Through Fear-Creation: Making the right decisions and taking right actions often requires a lot of mental alertness. An attitude of combat and self-defense against evil is essential. However, these attitudes can be paralyzed by the creation of fear.

Thieves and robbers depend upon the surprise factor to rob people. Often people can resist and even overpower the robbers, as is seen occasionally, but the sudden shock of seeing a weapon and the consequent fear paralyzes them for few moments. This creates enough time for the robbers to take the loot and flee. This applies in spiritual and moral matters as well; once there is fear in the human heart, people fail to take right and timely actions. Rather, most people just flee from the scene or compromise and conform to the demands.

Usually the intimidation comes from one's own friends or coworkers; therefore fleeing does not usually work. Since they belong to the same school, office, or society, they would have to face the enemies continually. Thus, the path of conformity to their expectations is the most common practice. This is seen most commonly in the results of peer pressure.

No man is an island. Everyone needs the fellowship, acceptance and approval of many others, but often such things come only when this individual fulfills certain stipulations demanded by this group. Often these requirements place tremendous pressure upon individuals. This is called peer pressure. Though the Bible speaks repeatedly about the influence of one's peers, very few people realize that it is one of the strongest social forces. The capacity of peer pressure to intimidate people is unbelievable (Lu. 22:56-57).

Most of the time peer pressure is for doing things outside one's boundaries. It comes when the person is most energetic, most prone to the attractions of sins, and least able to resist others. Great is the fear of rejection by one's peers, thus most people just conform to the demands. The way Peter avoided eating with gentiles because of fear on the arrival of certain Jewish believers from Jerusalem is an example of how even an adult can be pressurized by his peers (Gal. 2:11-14).

Surveys of promiscuous people in many parts of the world have shown that peer pressure plays a great part in breaking down moral restraints. Even in the most promiscuous countries a large number of young people prefer to remain chaste, but are not able to keep their resolve. The reason cited most often is peer pressure. In surveys many of these young people said that they regret having caved in to peer pressure, and that given a second life they would prefer to resist it rather than fall into immorality.

Fear is a paralyzing force, and it can effectively force many people to cross boundaries. Another technique used to create fear is Social Pressure. As said before, every person needs the benefits of social relations. If not, such a person becomes a social outcast. Using this need, the degenerate human society puts considerable pressure upon all people to conform to the norms and standards promoted by that society. These can often be contrary to the will of God, and exist outside the proper boundaries; however, the fear of isolation and rejection forces even adult people to conform.

Social Pressure creates intimidating guidelines for clothing, manners, speech, conduct, and even spiritual activities. This can be seen by observing the effect that TV, video games, and the cinema have on the behaviour of people in general, which is to reduce the commitment and fear they have for things divine. Gradually this fear is replaced with contempt for spiritual things, followed by the adoption of worldly systems within the church of God. Dancing, mimicry, mono acting, women-led church services, etc. are some examples.

Today's mass-media plays a significant part in exerting social pressure. There was no mass-media in past centuries, and thus social pressure was confined to smaller geographical regions; however, the introduction of radio, TV, other audio and video media, cheap paperbacks, computers, and the Internet have now made it possible to reach millions of people very economically. This marriage of technology and economy has made it possible for a few selfish and perverted individuals to control large segments of population.

Worse, social radicals were the first to understand the deep and wide-ranging impact of the mass-media, thus radicals control as much as ninety per cent of this communication conglomerate. As a result, the message which comes out of all this media today is meant to put pressure on the audience and condition them gradually. Not surprisingly, the breakdown of morality, decency, and fear of God has decreased in developed societies in proportion to TV viewing, and divorces, rape, marital infidelity, and sexual impurity has increased in proportion to TV viewing.

Only very knowledgeable or insightful people can escape the consequences of Fear Creation through Peer and Social Pressure.

6-Manipulation Through Value Shifting: A shift in the mental and moral barriers changes the values, and a shift in the values changes the barriers. This is a two-way effect and extreme care is needed to counter the effects of shifts, otherwise this can turn into a vicious cycle with barriers changing the values and values in turn changing the barriers, and

so on.

Consider, for example, the very high value that people place (because of their training) upon protecting the helpless people. People brought up in a Judeo-Christian background consider it a virtue to shelter and protect those who are widows, orphans, destitute, infirm, handicapped, weak, and unborn people; but still, these values can gradually be shifted by continuous exposure to people who do not honour them. This shift can be perceived in the lives of many godly young people after they spend a few years in a hostel, bad company, or with selfish people.

Doubt Creation is one tool for shifting the values cherished by a person. Once a doubt about the things or persons highly esteemed by this person is directly or indirectly planted in the heart of this person, the respect he had is gone. Jesus Christ was the most highly esteemed human in all history for almost two thousand years of history, but then in the later half of the twentieth century many writers, artists, and cinema-makers started portraying Him as an imperfect and lustful man. This very soon destroyed the high esteem that even many Christians had for Lord Jesus Christ.

The same tactic is used to create doubts about the historicity, accuracy, and reliability of Scriptures, and the same tactic is also used for creating doubts about the authority of parents, church, faith, and even the moral values common among middle-class people. This is another reason why Lord Jesus Christ should never be equated with another person in history or in myth. The immediate effect will be that the high esteem in which Jesus is held is reduced to the level at which other people are esteemed.

Subversion is another method used for shifting values. Spiritual and moral values received from parents and from the Bible are a very complex set of interdependent truths. Destroying a seemingly innocent part of this complex system might often do great damage, somewhat like removing a simple, but crucial, part from a complex machine. People experienced in mind-control usually work at changing hidden and seemingly innocent values in a very subtle way so that most people pay little attention; however, the end result is the destruction of many important values.

Consider the example of societies where even the elders join the unruly children in mocking and teasing mad people, and where stoning a helpless dog is considered fun. These acts may seem harmless on the surface, but they are ultimately interconnected with values like mercy, pity, care, and joy and reveal a breakdown in a person's moral barriers. Thus the simple-looking act eventually affects all these major values. It is for the same reason that ragging which is so prevalent in our colleges does not die by itself.

Every student who is the object of ragging should have his or her conscience awakened to this torture. Every victim should be filled with pity for the next generation of victims. Unfortunately, by the time their ragging is over, they have been very negatively influenced by the way in which their seniors seemed to have enjoyed it, and together with their desire for revenge, these students experience an elimination of their own sense of balance and mercy. Thus ragging has become, among other things, an effective method to change the values of young people through subversion.

SUMMARY

Much more could be said about the Six Principles of Mind Control mentioned above, but that is not necessary. Nor is an exhaustive description possible in a book of limited length. Once the reader understands the basic principles, it becomes possible for him to identify these principles at work in any situation, provided he is willing to spend a little time in analysis.



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Appendix I

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Fantasies, Legends, and Heroes What You Know May Not Be So and How To Tell The Difference

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Perhaps the most important tool cult apologists possess is the ability to think critically. Without that ability, we would be overwhelmed by the mass of confusing religious ideas swirling through the worlds of the cults and the occult. If I were speaking before any other professional audience, say of lawyers or doctors, or maybe even of theology professors, I would never attempt a test of critical thinking ability. But since all of you think critically in the course of your ministries, I am sure you will be able to pass my test.

There is a room with no windows and only one door. It is completely empty except for a \$100 bill lying on the floor. A leprechaun, an honest lawyer, and a dishonest lawyer are ushered into the room. The door is sealed. The money disappears.

Now, use your critical thinking apparatus. Which one of the individuals took the money? Think very carefully and I'll give you the answer in a few minutes. Since you are all good critical thinkers you should all get the right answer. After all, we have patterned ourselves after the great apologist, the Apostle Paul, who declared to Festus, "I am not [crazy]...but speak the words of truth and reason."

Why is critical thinking so important in cult apologetics? It is because, as scripture reminds us, "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." We are fighting a spiritual battle with dimensions far beyond what we can test empirically, or with our five senses. Our physical strength or dexterity is not nearly so important as our mental and spiritual strength. Thinking critically is part of our defense against the serpent's deceit and craftiness, which Paul says can corrupt us from the simplicity that is in Christ.

As cult apologists we have a responsibility, an obligation, to equip ourselves to confront the real world with the power of truth. Second Corinthians 10:3-5 warns us, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our

warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Let's go back to our critical thinking test. Whom do you think took the money? The leprechaun, the honest lawyer, or the dishonest lawyer? Of course, it could only have been the dishonest lawyer. Both the leprechaun and the honest lawyer are figments of the imagination, fantasies. (You should hear the applause when lawyers hear the story!) And the subject of fantasies is one of three parts to my message today.

Fantasies, Legends, and Heroes

I have retitled my talk *Fantasies, Legends, and Heroes: What You Know May Not Be So, and How to Tell the Difference* because I want to emphasize that cult apologetics is as vulnerable to mistakes, inadequacies, frauds, and stories as any other field of study. Certainly our goal is both to "rightly divide the word of truth" and "test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." But the road to reaching our goal is full of potholes, cracks, and detours, any of which can sidetrack us from our goal. Most of these problems can be divided into two major categories for which I have made my own labels. First, fantasies are the logical fallacies, wrong assumptions, misunderstandings, and other delusions we often labor under, mistakenly thinking we are practicing apologetics. Second, legends are the personal experience stories we too often substitute for comprehensive research, viable evidence, and critical evaluation. Finally, cult apologists can become "heroes" to those they help if they demonstrate their trustworthiness and integrity by their research, evidence, and critical evaluation. We can tell the difference between fantasies and legends on the one hand, and "heroes" on the other, by being equipped for responsible apologetics research, some of which I will survey here.

What Is at Stake?

Cult apologetics is not a game. It is a very serious calling and ministry predicated on the ability of cult apologists to help those harmed by the cults and the occult. Second Timothy 2:24-26 tells us that "a servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." At stake are the lives, well-being, and souls of those who have been harmed by the cults and the occult.

Second, at stake is our credibility within the Church as Christians who can be trusted to educate and warn about cultism and occultism. Titus 1:9 lists as one of the qualifications and duties of a church leader that he hold "fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict."

Third, at stake is our credibility outside the Church as people who tell the truth, even if the non-believers don't always respond to the truth. I had an agnostic friend and we used to spend hours talking about anthropology, his field of study, and Christianity. Despite the arguments and evidence that I gave him for the truth of Christianity, he didn't become a Christian. However, he respected me as someone who had integrity. When his sister, who was a Christian, became confused because of college classes antagonistic to Christianity, he asked me to talk to her, to, as he put it, "straighten her out so she doesn't lose her faith because of what ignorant philosophy professors say."

Responsible apologetics is one way of speaking to the world. Peter says we are to have "our conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against [us] as evildoers, they may, by [our] good works which they observe, glorify God."

Fourth, at stake is our personal integrity as representatives of Christ's Body. Even if no other Christian knew how we helped someone who was a cult victim, even if no one in the world saw our efforts on behalf of the gospel, we have an obligation before God to act as though we were his representatives to do his will, "in all things showing [ourselves] to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of [us]."

Why Is It Important?

First, the Bible tells us it is the truth (embodied in Christ) that sets us free, and so the best help we can give those harmed by the cults and the occult is truth. I'm sure each of us could think of many cultists who have gone from one cult to another, often through several different cults, searching for truth, but never finding it until they encountered the truth which is in Christ Jesus. We can't give anything more important than truth to those who are seeking. That is why we are in cult apologetics. That is why we care enough to come to a conference like this. We want to help people who are trapped by the cults and the occult.

Second, the Bible gives us standards for those who seek leadership or teaching positions in the Body of Christ. If we attempt to influence or persuade someone else about the gospel and Christian living, then we are teaching and leading, and we need to meet biblical standards. Paul gives us a good summary of those standards:

...if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination....blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Third, responsible cult apologetics is important because the Bible commands us to be without reproach even from the heathen, a testimony to the truthfulness and life-transforming power of the gospel. Peter reminds us, "as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."

Fourth, responsible cult apologetics is an indication of the integrity we have as individual Christians before our Lord and Savior. Personal holiness, made possible by the transforming life of the Holy Spirit within us, and evidenced even in our research and apologetics, reflects our commitment to God. Responsible research and apologetics comes from a life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit.

There is a lot at stake in responsible cult apologetics research, and much to be gained from ministering in truth, both for individuals and the Body of Christ. If we are aware of the pitfalls, and we are committed to responsible ministry, we will fulfill the calling God has given us.

Today we will survey the problems of cult apologetics research and the principles of

responsible research. With a good introduction, we will have a good foundation by which we can test our work and its correspondence to biblical truth.

How This Talk Is Structured

My message is divided into three parts, "Fantasies," "Legends," and "Heroes." Within the first two sections we will survey some of the most prevalent problems in apologetics research, and in the third section we will survey the principles of good research.

Fantasies refers to mistakes in thinking and judgment that do not provide a sound system of discernment. I will discuss first why people accept fantasies and lies, and second, some of the kinds of logical fallacies for which we fall or even which sometimes we use unwittingly.

Here's an example. How many of you have thought about why crime, especially violent crime, increases during a full moon? Of course we reject the superstitious explanation that the full moon is the time of werewolves and vampires, but what reasonable explanations can we come up with? Think about it for a minute.

Here's the fantasy. Careful, multiple statistical studies have shown that there is no significant increase in violent crime during full moons. We don't have to postulate satanic or witchcraft calendars, extra light at night, or other reasonable explanations. There is actually nothing to explain. Careful research avoids the trap of fantasy.

Legends are the stories of what I call "novel people." That is, people and stories that tend to substitute personal experiences, delusions, guesses, fictions, and other "stories" for solid, evidential research.

Here's an example of a legend. How many of you have heard that Darwin repudiated evolution on his deathbed and embraced the gospel? What an argument against evolution! If the father of evolution finally gave it up, then it must not be true, right?

Wrong. First of all, Darwin could have given it up because he was senile, because he was hedging his bets at the end of his life and wanted eternal "fire insurance," or because he was given some insidious mind-altering drug. His repudiation doesn't say anything about the truthfulness or falsity of evolution. Second, the story itself is a legend. While Darwin appeared to be somewhat religious and referred to the Bible in conversation and correspondence, there is no verified evidence that he rejected his ideas concerning the origin of the species, the theory of evolution.

When I use the term heroes, I am not referring to the somewhat larger-than-life egos some of us get from our much learning. Instead, I am referring to the good, old-fashioned hero of the TV western, the guy with the white hat who saves people from certain death and vanquishes the enemy from the land.

Cult apologetics heroes help victims of the cults and combat evil by (1) thinking critically; (2) preparing research adequately; and (3) conducting responsible research and evaluation. In my last section I will discuss the fundamentals of research, the legitimate role of personal experience, field research, libraries, networking, interviewing, testing, and reporting.

FANTASIES

Why People Accept Fantasies and Lies

One morning my daughter Karen, who has very vivid dreams and even more vivid stories retelling her dreams, was telling me about a dream she had just had. "It was a great dream," she started, "just like real life, but better!"

Following are ten common reasons even cult researchers sometimes accept what's not true instead of what's true. The common thread running through most reasons people accept fantasies or even lies is what Karen said, "just like real life, but better!"

And yet, as cult apologetics researchers we have a serious responsibility to observe, understand, and explain the world as it really is, not "better" than real. We can't treat our ministry like a child treats a dream, or we risk drawing both ourselves and others who trust us into deceit. Paul admonishes,

. . . we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ. . . .

Keep in mind that one of the reasons we can be so susceptible to fantasies is that we sometimes unwittingly suspend our critical thinking ability. After the following survey of common reasons people accept fantasies, I will discuss some of the most common logical fallacies, into which and for which we sometimes fall in our research and evaluation of the cults and the occult.

1. It fits into our world view.

Because something is possible, doesn't mean that it is true; and just because something exists, doesn't mean every report we receive of it must be true.

Let me explain what I mean with an example. As Christians we believe that God specially and directly created life on this planet. Given his attribute of omnipotence and the fact that he is the God of all existence, and not just, like the Mormons would say, of this planet, it is certainly possible that God could have created life somewhere else in the universe. However, we have no biblical or scientific evidence that he did. It is possible, but it is not necessarily true.

Another example will illustrate my second point. How do you explain UFO reports? As "lying signs and wonders in the air"? As demonic apparitions? If you're thinking critically, you won't accept my question in the way it was posed. Instead, you will ask, "Which UFO reports do you want me to explain?" In fact, careful investigation shows that the vast majority of UFO sightings are of natural or manmade phenomena, misidentified by observers.

Second Corinthians 11:4 and 13-15 teach us that Satan and his followers can transform themselves so that they look like "ministers of righteousness." In our biblical world view, we would expect to find instances of demonic evil masquerading as what is good, perhaps as UFO phenomenon. However, we fall for fantasies if we do not discriminate among the reports of evil-in-progress.

We tend to believe what is allowed for and predicted by our world view, but investigation is necessary to determine the explanation for a particular report. This is a vulnerability to which counselors seem especially prone. We tend to believe the personal experiences we're told that correspond to our world view without checking to see whether there is any validity to the report at all.

2. We accept what we're told.

Researchers under time constraints sometimes find themselves accepting what they're told without sufficient testing. It's not that we don't want to be critical, but we don't always have time to check everything we're told. We forget that finding someone willing to tell us what to think about a certain situation is not the same as finding the right person to tell us what can be verified.

How many different applications of the term "brainwashing" can you think of? We're told our kids are brainwashed by television commercials, Christians are brainwashed by televangelists, Moonies are brainwashed by too much rice, Americans are brainwashed by the liberal media, and adult Jews are brainwashed by Jews for Jesus. I'm sure you can think of other examples.

But how many of you have studied classic brainwashing and know its symptoms, how it is accomplished, and how its effects are maintained? I don't mean what you've been told, I mean the reports of clinical studies and military research on, for example, U.S. POWs in North Korea? In fact, most of us are not even aware that out of 4500 American POWs in North Korea, who were exposed to classic, isolationist brainwashing, only twenty-two elected to stay voluntarily in North Korea after the war. All too often we have accepted what we've been told about brainwashing, even when it refers to cultists, without checking it out for ourselves.

3. We base our knowledge on common sense.

Something I said earlier bears repeating here. Sometimes we stumble on the truth even in the midst of our vulnerability. If I were paranoid, I could attribute all sorts of menacing motives to each of you to support my contention that you are all out to get me. But just because I'm paranoid doesn't mean you're not out to get me. Your fiendish plot couldn't be proved by my delusional ravings.

Often common sense parallels the truth. That is, what we commonly think makes sense, and it may even correspond to truth, but common sense is not a trustworthy method to find truth.

Let's take a quick survey. How many of you think college enrollment goes up during a recession? Why do you think so? Maybe because out-of-work people have more time for classes and want to better their job market potential? That's a sensible idea.

Now, how many of you think college enrollment goes down during a recession? Why? Maybe because fewer people have the money to afford college and people don't want to have their time tied up in case they get offered a job? That makes sense, too. Common sense can be used to answer my question either way, but only an actual investigation of college enrollment figures before, during, and after recessions can tell us what the true answer is.

4. We place too much faith in "experts."

This is a tendency I can see in myself when it comes to my children and their welfare. My wife and I may be pretty sure that one of our children has the flu, but I accept the diagnosis a lot better if I pay the pediatrician forty dollars to tell me the same thing. I can help my children with their homework, check their papers, and talk to them about what they're learning in school, but I feel much more assured of their progress at Parent-Teacher Conference time when their teachers agree, "You children are doing fine in school." But because pediatricians and teachers are "experts" doesn't make them infallible. It is possible to place blind faith in experts. What if our pediatrician misdiagnoses my son's illness as flu when it's really meningitis? What if my daughter's teacher has missed a serious learning disability that doesn't show up in standard classroom work?

Even cult apologetics research is susceptible to placing too much faith in experts. This is especially true when there are very few experts in any one area and we are forced to get all or most of our information from one source, or when we trust experts to tell us about something outside their field of expertise. We seem to think that truth gets truer if someone important says it, even if that important person has no particular knowledge of that field. On the contrary, two plus two still equals four, no matter if a mathematician, a zoologist, or our young son says it. Conversely, the popular proposition, "People can achieve anything they want" isn't true whether Shirley MacLaine, Ronald Reagan, or even Mother Theresa says it.

One contemporary book relegating psychology to the world of the cults quotes Nobel prize winner Richard Feynman criticizing psychoanalysis as being unscientific "witch doctoring." Well, that proves it! Psychoanalysis is down the drain! Now, I'm not trying to defend psychoanalysis, and I have other reasons for questioning its validity, but Richard Feynman's opinion and status as a Nobel prize winner isn't sufficient.

Richard Feynman was a brilliant atomic physicist who worked in pioneering atomic energy and weaponry. His Nobel prize was awarded for his work in physics. He was an inspiring scientist, teacher, and innovative researcher. His ability to think creatively in the field of quantum electrodynamics was unsurpassed.

But he was not an expert in psychology, psychotherapy, or the philosophy of science. (In fact, he thought philosophers operated in a state of complete chaos.) He was opinionated and cared little for subjects that didn't interest him. He is entitled to his opinion about psychoanalysis, but he has no special knowledge, experience, or education to give it special weight.

Believing an expert without appropriate authority and without corroborating evidence is not a trustworthy way to discern truth.

5. We think seeing is believing.

Raised in the "scientific" age, we tend to think that whatever we encounter empirically, or with any of our five senses, must be real. We describe something incredible by "You have to see it to believe it!" We express our doubt by "I won't believe it until I see it!" And even the Apostle Thomas affirmed his scientific status by qualifying what it would take for him to believe Jesus' resurrection, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

There's nothing inherently wrong with empirical testing. In fact, some things must be tested empirically. But we need to be careful of two things.

First, not everything is empirically verifiable. What laboratory experiments can you devise to test my assertion that I love Jesus? My ministry? What if I'm doing it for the vast fortune I can amass from cult apologetics? (Ok, maybe that's not a great "what if.") My public profession of faith? What if I was coerced into it by "cultic brainwashing"? My attendance at church? What if I only go because I don't want to listen to my wife nag me? You get the point. Some things are not inherently material and cannot be tested adequately by the senses.

Second, when we test empirically, we cannot always trust our senses. We have to add critical thinking to our sensory experience. If sensory experience were sufficient in itself, we would assume that pencils bend each time we place them in glasses of water because they look bent. Critical thinking reconciles what our eyes tell us with what other tests tell us. That way we can explain the illusion of the bent pencil in terms of light refraction in the two different mediums of air and water.

How does this relate to cult apologetics? As cult apologists, we need to be careful that

we don't fall for misperceptions by our senses. For example, when I was a young Christian, the church I was involved in was really into miraculous healing. They even imported a traveling healing evangelist. Since I was practically blind in my left eye, I got in line that night to have the evangelist pray for my healing. I believed God could do it, and I even activated my faith by my offering. But here's what happened.

Finally I was at the head of the line. The rest of the congregation sat and watched as the evangelist asked me my problem. "I'm practically blind in my left eye," I told him. "Praise God!" the evangelist shouted, "This man is blind in one eye and we're going to pray for his healing right now!" After his very impassioned prayer, he put his hand over my left eye, the nearly blind one, and shouted, "Can you see, brother?" "Yes, but that's not the eye" "Glory be to God, He can see! Hallelujah! Everybody say Amen!"

Well, the entire congregation thought they saw me healed of blindness, but I still have worse than 20/400 vision in that eye. (Maybe it is healed and I just have the symptoms left. That makes as much sense as believing the "healing" I received.)

6. We draw conclusions from faulty evidence.

Here's a common reason we believe fantasies. We do a great job of thinking critically from evidence to conclusion, but we forget to check our evidence. What if the evidence is faulty? All the critical thinking in the world can't change bad evidence into good evidence.

Contemporary cultic and occultic "myths" fall into this category. A caller to our radio program once told us what she had decided to do in light of the evidence that a major luxury hotel in our area was owned by the Church of Satan. She was going to call all of the radio, television, and newspaper offices she could to get the widest possible publicity about this terrible situation, and she was urging all Christians to boycott the hotel as a protest against satanism. There was nothing wrong with her action plan.

Except she hadn't checked her evidence. It is true that the Westin South Coast Plaza Hotel in my city of Costa Mesa is at 666 Anton Way, and it is true that Anton is also the first name of Anton Szandor LaVey, the founder of the Church of Satan. But it's not true that the Church of Satan owns the hotel (it's owned by one of the wealthiest families in Southern California, the Segerstroms); it's not true that the Church of Satan picked the street number 666 (the hotel falls just past half-way through the 600 block square of the Costa Mesa city street number grid); and Anton Way is in honor of two Segerstrom family members, not LaVey. Trusting faulty evidence had sabotaged our caller's entire action plan.

7. We draw faulty conclusions from good evidence.

It's fairly easy to recognize when we draw conclusions from faulty evidence, but it's harder to recognize drawing faulty conclusions from good evidence. Check for this vulnerability the next time you have a conclusion that doesn't seem true, and yet you have checked, double checked, and even triple checked your evidence. Maybe your evidence isn't the problem. Maybe you have drawn a faulty conclusion from your evidence.

For example, we have heard the warning that, since Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, we should devote a large portion of our American cult apologetic ministry to combatting Islam. However, that conclusion doesn't necessarily follow from the evidence. We need to find out why and where Islam is the fastest growing religion before we can justify making it the number one target of American cult apologetics. In fact, Islam's growth is due mostly to Islamic nationalism in the East and to the fact that strict Muslims neither practice birth control nor kill one-third of their unborn children, unlike Americans. I don't mean that we shouldn't care about evangelism to Muslims. My former organization published materials by the noted missionary to the Muslims, William

McElwee Miller; we have had representatives of the Zwemer Institute on our radio show; and we have assisted several Christian missions to Muslims. But one can't jump from an isolated statistic on membership growth to an immediate and close threat.

8. We believe what makes us feel comfortable.

How many calls do you think your ministry receives in any given week from people who want you to come witness to their Jehovah's Witness neighbor, their Mormon co-worker, their New Age relative? How many of those callers make you feel good by commenting something like this, "I just know you can get through to So-and-so. I want so much for him (or her) to know the Lord, but he needs a real professional to talk to him." Well, comments like those make the caller feel even better. Why? Rarely is it because the caller is totally incapable of sharing the gospel with the cultist. Mostly its because the caller wants to be believe only a professional can witness to a cultist. That way the caller can feel comfortable about never witnessing or sticking up for the gospel with the cultist.

9. We see the world as we would like it to be rather than as it really is.

I get upset at injustice. I can't stand to see someone taken advantage of, the victim of a scam. When I get a chain letter in the mail, I turn it over to the Postmaster, fully confident that the perpetrators will be caught. When I see a police officer make an illegal U-turn, I think I should be able to complain to the desk sergeant and have the officer disciplined. When I talk with a cultist, I never give up. I keep thinking that if I can hit upon the perfect combination of arguments, or the exact set of scriptures, any cultist will see the error of his ways and come to Christ.

I also spend time being frustrated. Postmasters don't have time for petty crooks. The desk sergeant makes illegal U-turns too. And some people won't believe no matter what, even if, as Jesus said, someone were to rise from the dead with the truth. I have to keep reminding myself that the world is not really the way I would like it to be. When I forget, I don't make accurate evaluations about the world.

10. We base our beliefs on personal experience.

We have a serious disease in Christian apologetics today. That is, we too often substitute personal stories or experience for comprehensive, accurate research and evaluation. It's so much easier to tell a story or get a guest speaker with a great story than it is to put in good, hard work at apologetics.

Christian bookstores are full of personal stories, testimonies, and experiences on everything from possibility thinking through "I was a baby breeder for Satan." Most of these stories are characterized by subjective emotionalism, undocumented assertions, and little or no biblical or theological evaluation. But that's ok, we're told, because So-and-so really experienced it, so he knows all about it. We don't need doctrine. We don't need theology. We don't need facts. We don't need documentation. Just tell a story. It makes people feel good, and who can argue with a story?

But personal experience doesn't always tell the truth. Think about "personal experience" and cult apologetics. How many Jehovah's Witnesses have you had tell you that they used to be "born- againers" before they joined the Watchtower, and they used to believe Jesus was the Father, so they know that's what the deity of Christ means." Or Mormons who say that they won't argue about the Book of Mormon because they've prayed about it and they testify to you that they know the Book of Mormon is the Word of God and Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. Personal experience can be deceiving.

Have a healthy skepticism toward Christian "stories," too. If the book you're reading on satanism, for example, has no dates, no places, no names, no events -- is completely undatable and untestable, how can we know it is true? And even if the events recorded happened, how do we know they are interpreted properly by the story teller? No matter

how tempting and easy, don't substitute stories for responsible research and evaluation.

Summary

These are ten of the most common reasons people -- sometimes even cult apologists -- fall for fantasies instead of truth. Closely related to, and often overlapping, these vulnerabilities are the logical fallacies that scatter the landscape of cult apologetics. Sometimes we fall for logical fallacies when they are used by cultists or occultists, and sometimes we fall into using logical fallacies ourselves.

In common language, a logical fallacy is a false idea or notion, something that appears to make perfect sense, and yet doesn't. A lack of critical thinking ability creates two kinds of Christians: (1) those who don't think at all and who consequently don't worship and serve God with their minds; and (2) those who attempt to use their minds, but who end up making mistakes that could be avoided by learning to think straight.

Mistakes in thinking and reasoning, or logical fallacies, make up the largest group of discernment faults. If an argument or accusation cannot stand the test of logic, is inconsistent, and fails to prove its point, then it loses all rational force. However, it can be used destructively to obscure the truth, mislead people, or even harm the very cultists and occultists who need our help. These problems become even more pronounced and have even greater consequences when they are picked up by novice readers or listeners and are misused even more.

There are many logical fallacies, some with long fancy Latin names and some with ordinary folk names. This talk is not the forum for a lengthy listing or discussion of logical fallacies, but I refer you to my recommended reading list for several good books on logical fallacies.

My survey today will cover a few of the fallacies that I have seen frequently in cult apologetics. Remember, logical fallacies are very user-friendly. The same ones can be used both by cultists (to mislead us), and by us (as mistaken substitutes for critical thinking).

1. Unfalsifiability

This is the favorite fallacy of the conspiracist. How does Satan-battler Rebecca Brown explain the devastating medical and legal documentation of the loss of her medical license for mental instability and drug abuse? Easy -- the satanists and witches' conspiracy manufactured false records. When every piece of even hypothetical evidence that could be proposed to falsify a claim is twisted to be an evidence for the claim, then the claim is unfalsifiable and useless.

In one movie, a client at a mental institution claimed that he saw a man sitting in a cypress tree, talking to an owl. When the medic pointed out that there were no cypress trees on the grounds, the client responded, "Anyone with money can dig up a tree. And after that it's a simple matter to fill in the hole." Because his story was unfalsifiable, it was unbelievable. But you don't have to go to a mental institution to find instances of unfalsifiability. Cult apologetics abounds with unfalsifiable conspiracies. I was even accused of being part of a conspiracy.

Several years ago I received a letter from someone I'll call Roscoe. He said he had ordered materials from us for witnessing to the cults but had not received them. I wrote back that we had no record of his order or payment, but that if he would re-order and send a copy of his canceled check, we would be happy to replace his order and reimburse him for the extra postage and the copying cost of his check.

I didn't hear from Roscoe, but we did hear from our local Postal Inspector. Roscoe had lodged a formal complaint against us for mail fraud. Two reasons were listed on the complaint form. First, he repeated his claim that he had ordered materials and not received them. Second, he accused us of misrepresentation since we called ourselves a "counter-cult ministry" and yet we had no publications against what he termed "the biggest cult of all, the Great Whore of Babylon, the Roman Catholic Church."

It was easy to provide the Postal Inspector with copies of our correspondence asking for verification that his check had cleared, and we went ahead and sent his order without proof of payment (which we never did receive) to go the extra mile.

Fortunately, the Postal Inspector didn't require us to respond to him concerning Roscoe's second charge. He said that if he got involved in that, he'd be violating separation of church and state and free speech. But we wanted to respond to Roscoe anyway.

I got his phone number from directory assistance and called him one evening. Our conversation quickly degenerated into Roscoe shouting epithets at me about my conspiracy with Roman Catholicism. I tried in vain to reason with him. Then Roscoe's real argument came out. He was convinced that I was on a secret mission of the Roman Catholic Church, commissioned by the Jesuits to masquerade as a non-Catholic cult apologist. In fact, Roscoe announced, he was convinced that I was a Jesuit myself!

I tried to reason with him. "Look, Roscoe, how can I be a Jesuit?"

"That's easy," Roscoe cut in, "Look at your last name -- Passantino -- that's Italian Catholic if I ever heard it!"

"But Roscoe," I answered, "you can talk to my mother. She'll tell you I haven't practiced Catholicism since I made my first communion. Talk to my pastor. He'll tell you I'm not Catholic. And because we don't have a tract against them, and I don't think they're the Great Whore of Babylon, doesn't prove I'm their secret agent, much less a Jesuit. Come on, Roscoe, Jesuits spend half their lives in Catholic schools and seminaries. They've taken vows of celibacy. Roscoe, I have a wife and children. I can't be a Jesuit!"

"Only a Jesuit would have such a clever disguise!" Roscoe hung up.

2. Accident

The accident fallacy does not mean a fallacy you made by mistake, although I hope all of you don't make fallacies on purpose. The accident fallacy is a useful (but not valid) way of getting out of responsibility for a general principle you don't like. For example, a general principle is that we should obey speed laws. But how many of us rationalize to ourselves, "Well, if I had a medical emergency instead of being late to work, it would be all right to speed. So I don't really have to obey the speed law." That's the accident fallacy at work: you overturn the trustworthiness of a general principle on the basis of an extreme case, the extremity of which has nothing to do with your general principle. The extremity is an "accident" of the principle.

Plato brought up an accident fallacy. Is it really good to repay what you borrow? What if you borrowed weapons from a man who since has gone crazy? Surely you would not put human life in danger by repaying what you borrowed! In fact, it can be dangerous to believe that principle! (Plato's example omits the fact that the man's mental instability is incidental, or accidental, to the general moral.)

Here's another one. Someone might tell you that cult apologetics can't possibly be biblical because he knows someone in a cult who was so depressed after a Christian witnessed to him that he went out and got drunk. Cult apologetics can't be of God if it gets people drunk! (The critic has failed to notice that the cultist's drunkenness was not caused by the witnessing, but was accidental to it.)

3. Affirming the Consequent

You "affirm the consequent" when you have an "if....then" argument, but you put things backwards, affirming your "then," or "consequent," before you affirm your "if," or the antecedent which rightfully proves the consequent. This is kind of complicated, so let me quote an example from *The Book of the Fallacy*:

'If he had wanted to cut up the body, he would have needed a big saw. Such a saw was found in his toolshed. [Therefore, we can assume he is the murderer.]'

(There could be alternative explanations, innocent ones, for all of these actions. It would be fallacious to say that any of them proved him guilty. But as they mount up, it becomes progressively easier for [juries] to eliminate reasonable doubts about coincidence. No doubt they are sometimes wrong and thereby hangs many a tale, together with the occasional innocent man.)

We find this fallacy in cult apologetics when a cultist's "if" doesn't have only one "then," but the cultist wants you to believe there's only one "then." This is a handy fallacy for someone whose story of cultic involvement isn't credible and is being questioned. The person can respond to all inquiries for documentation with, "You wouldn't be asking me these questions unless you were out to get me. You must be out to get me!"

Whitley Strieber, horror novelist, talk show gadfly, and, he would have you believe, UFO abductee, uses this fallacy well. So does fellow UFO enthusiast and author Budd Hopkins. Without going into their whole stories, here's how they use "affirming the consequent" as one way to prove that hundreds, maybe thousands of people have been abducted by UFO entities.

Now, as we all know, UFO entities don't want anyone to know they're here. But they also have to do their specimen studies on us humans. So after they're done abducting us and studying us, they erase that portion of our memory so we don't know we were abducted. We are left with a "time gap," or "missing time," a period of time for which we cannot account.

This is Strieber and Hopkin's use of "affirming the consequence." They say that they have been contacted by hundreds of people who have "time gaps," evidence that they are abductees. Strieber and Hopkins conclude that the time gaps themselves provide one of the proofs of UFO abductions. While it is possible that the time gaps are the result of UFO abductions (whatever those are), they could be due to daydreaming, inattention, forgetfulness, mind-altering drugs -- a variety of options.

4. Argumentum ad Baculum

Behind the Latin phraseology is a very persuasive fallacy: believe (or do) what I say, or I'll smash your face! This is an appeal to force. Kruschew put it this way, "When Stalin says dance, the wise man dances!"

Sometimes cult apologists find themselves hard pressed to reject this fallacy, especially when it is used against them. How many of you have written books on Scientology or Witness Lee's Local Church? "Oh," but you respond, "those groups (we won't call them cults -- that might be misconstrued as libelous) have a reputation for suing their detractors!" But does that have anything to do with whether or not their doctrines are biblical? Where is the liberal press and the ACLU when we need them to help us with

prior restraint problems?

5. Blinding with science

This is one of my favorite fallacies. There's such a solid sound to an argument that's filled with scientific jargon and fifty dollar words. One is "blinded with science" when an argument consists of complicated, technical vocabulary or allusions to sophisticated scientific reports, charts, or (best of all) statistics. You don't understand a word of the argument, but you're not about to let anyone know, or argue with it when you don't know what you're talking about. Your opponent has won by default. Pirie notes the rules for using this fallacy:

The first rule for using this fallacy is to remember to use long words
Never use a four-letter word, especially if you can think of a twenty-four lettered word to take its place. The jargon itself is harder to master
Remember that the basic function of words is to transform what is banal, trivial and easily refuted into something profound, impressive and hard to deny

The fallacy of blinding with science is well worth the time and trouble required to master it. The years of work at it will repay you not only with a doctorate in the social sciences, but with the ability to deceive an audience utterly into believing that you know what you are talking about.

Think about your work with the cults. Which cult used to be known as a religion (old Beatle fans don't get to vote), but now bills itself as a scientific method of relaxation? Which cult has voluminous appendices "explaining" its aberrant translations of the Bible?

Do you ever use "blinding with science?" Do you explain clearly and simply what you mean by "an anarthrous predicate nominative"? Do you report to your supporters about witnessing to people, or "handling cases"?

6. Arguing in a circle

This is one of the most common fallacies. This fallacy occurs when you try to prove one point by another point that is in turn proved by the first point. It's kind of like the Three Stooges vouching for each other's intelligence. Larry says Moe is smart, Moe says Curly Joe is brilliant, and Curly Joe returns the compliment to Larry. Does such circular endorsement prove anything about the IQ's of the Three Stooges?

Circular arguing is encountered frequently in cult apologetics. I have noticed what appears to be a particularly disturbing use of it recently in attempts to document individuals' involvement in satanism and witchcraft. We might get a phone call from someone who tells us he used to be a satanist. In an attempt to determine the caller's credibility, we might ask him to describe the satanism he was involved in. But we ask him leading questions which actually reveal to him some of our own knowledge. By the end of the conversation, our caller could acquire a credible amount of knowledge about satanism just from what we said, and yet because he echoes it back to us, we believe him, and, to complete the circle, add his "testimony" to our list of people "confirming" what we know about satanism! This circular arguing is even more easy to fall for when we expand our circle to include other cult apologists. Let's say my hypothetical caller has also called four other ministries to cults and got even a little bit of information from each one. Then he calls five more after me. By the time he has finished ten phone calls, he's mixed all the information together, passed it off as his own experience, and added it in bits and pieces to every other ministry's accumulation of information. We have helped to

create a phantom data base and to elevate someone's dubious testimony to legendary status! We don't really know any more than when we started, but the real danger is that we think our knowledge has multiplied abundantly.

7. Complex question

This is another of the most common fallacies. A "complex question" is formed when your proposition affirms more than one thing, but your question allows for an answer to only one thing. The standard example is the question, "When did you stop beating your wife?" Two things are affirmed: First, that you beat your wife, and second, that you stopped. Once the two affirmations are made, then the question remains, "When?" The respondent has no opportunity to deny the first affirmation. He is stuck with providing information just about the second affirmation.

"Is your stupidity inborn?" is another complex question. It assumes that you are stupid, and then asks you to explain the source of your stupidity.

Cultists often use complex questions when they ask, "Why are you persecuting us?" They haven't established that we are persecuting them, but they're already demanding to know why.

8. Emotional appeals

How many of you have given a talk on satanism? How many of you have given a talk on satanism accompanied by pictures of bloody cauldrons, skulls with wax dripped on them, and church windows with satanic graffiti? What is the difference in your audience's reactions?

If your experience is like mine, I think you will agree that talks with graphic slides generate more response than those without. Why? Because of emotional appeal. Facts and figures can communicate truth, but, as the saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words." This is because of emotional appeal. Satanism isn't really any better or worse with or without pictures, but when our emotions are engaged, we tend to take things more seriously.

Appeal to emotion can be an effective tool of cult apologetics, but it should never be confused with proof or valid argumentation. For another example, abortion is as bad whether you give a dry and boring lecture on it or show a picture of a bloody, dismembered victim of abortion. But the picture catches our emotions.

9. Equivocation

Equivocation is the skill of being able to use one word or idea with varying meanings depending on what you want your hearer to think you mean. Those of you who are parents know the most equivocal word in our parental vocabulary: "Maybe." It serves as the universal answer to any request from any or all of our children. "Dad, can I have ice cream for dinner tonight?" I answer, "Maybe. Leave me alone. I'm working." At that moment I want my child to understand "maybe" as "Sure -- as long as you let me work in peace." But at dinner time, when the broccoli and cod stare up from his plate, I want him to understand "maybe" as "I said maybe, not yes, now eat your dinner! It's good for you!"

Jehovah's Witnesses are good at equivocation. "Greek scholars support our translation," they'll say. They want us to believe their translation is reliable and approved by Greek scholars. But when they're pressed, we find out they really mean that they have quoted Greek scholars out of context and to "prove" things the scholars' statements were never meant to prove.

Mormons equivocate on the "miraculous" birth of Christ, hoping Christians (and even many of their unsuspecting members) will (mistakenly) think that "miraculous birth"

means the same thing as "virgin birth." They also say they only believe in "one God." Of course, they want you to think that means they believe only one God exists, but they know it means they worship only the one God of this planet.

10. Secundum Quid

My final fallacy for consideration today is better known by its common name, "hasty generalization." That is, you make a general conclusion based on insufficient evidence. We in cult apologetics can slide into this fallacy easily because we never have enough time, money, staff, or resources to do the exhaustive research projects we would like. How much easier, quicker, and less expensive it is to make a general conclusion about a cult based on two or three brief encounters with its members than to do a full-scale research project! Unfortunately, our brief encounters are not always representative of the cult as a whole.

How many cultists have you talked to who have made eternal decisions based on a hasty generalization like, "I've known three so-called Christian pastors, and all three were dishonest. That proves Christianity is a lie! I'm so thankful I left it for my cult!"

Summary

By now you have a good idea of why we tend to fall for fantasies instead of truth. It should be no wonder, then, that the religious world is full of "legends," people, stories, and ideas that are poor substitutes for real apologetics. Now, armed with our critical thinking, we can take a brief look at some of these legends before we move to the last portion of our study, the right way to accomplish religious research.

LEGENDS

The People

Keep in mind the reasons people fall for fantasies. Keep in mind the logical fallacies I've mentioned, and others you may be familiar with already, as we look at just two of the people whose legends have fooled a lot of people -- sometimes even cult apologists -- at least some of the time. The legend people are the Joe Isuzus of religious research.

Let me first make an important distinction here. Although I will be referring to people whose stories have been shown to be false, there are actually two kinds of legends. The first is what we commonly think of as legend, that is, a story that purports to represent personal experience but doesn't. It's "made up." Obviously, this kind of legend should never be trusted as part of cult apologetics research.

The second kind of legend is a story that really is someone's personal experience, but which cannot be verified or falsified. For example, one of my first encounters with witches happened almost twenty years ago, before I began in cult apologetics. I was backpacking on Mt. San Gorgonio, near Palm Springs, and night had fallen. As I crested a ridge, I saw robed figures with candles moving through the trees toward a ritual site. The witches never saw me as I hid and watched. That's my personal experience that really happened to me.

But if there hadn't been two people with me to confirm my experience, it would have been this second kind of legend, true but not verifiable or falsifiable and therefore not trustworthy as research.

So, there are two kinds of legends, neither of which is trustworthy as research: people's stories that never happened, and people's stories that (may) have happened, but which are unverifiable and unfalsifiable. For stories to be useful for research, they must have some verifiability and falsifiability. In other words, research stories at least must have explanatory power and empirical adequacy.

John Todd

How many of you remember John Todd, who claimed to have been a "Grand Druid" of witchcraft and a member of the secret high council of the "Illuminati"? Todd claimed that there was a secret conspiracy to take over the world and destroy Christianity. He had his time in the limelight as a traveling speaker in churches and as one of the people promoted through Jack Chick Publications. Todd implicated Christian leaders such as Walter Martin and Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel. For example, he claimed that, as a courier he delivered \$8 million worth of checks to Chuck Smith to start Maranatha! Music as a satanic plot to deceive Christians. He made outrageous claims based on what he claimed was his "personal experience," but could provide no objective or empirical documentation for his claims. In fact, any evidence that was adduced to disprove his claims, he said were manufactured by the conspiracy. His story was neither verifiable nor falsifiable, and was thus untrustworthy for research.

In fact, his story fit the first kind of legend: Investigation showed that the story was false. Listen, for example, to the contrast between Todd's unprovable allegations and Pastor Chuck Smith's response:

Maranatha Music was actually started with my own personal investment of \$3,000.00. The first album was made on a 4-trac[k] tape recorder. The first distribution was out of the trunk of the car to the local bookstores. If we had a \$1 million budget, or \$4 million, or \$8 million budget, you can believe we would have started out fancier than we did Even to the present date [October 5, 1978], Maranatha Music has not done a total of \$8 million in business, and this also can be easily verified and confirmed, and any reputable person is welcome to look at the books of both Calvary Chapel and Maranatha Music in order to prove the statements I make are correct.

Pastor Smith's "story" can be checked out -- it has both explanatory power and empirical adequacy, and is therefore trustworthy for research.

Carlos Castaneda

Christians aren't the only ones who accept legends substituted for real research. Those of you who are around my age and who remember (or were even part of) the 1960s age of "drug enlightenment" probably remember Carlos Castaneda as the anthropologist who discovered that hallucinatory drugs bring spiritual enlightenment. He didn't do it the way many of my generation did, by dropping acid, staring into a flower, and suddenly realizing that everything is "God." He did it by spending portions of several years in the American Southwest and Mexican deserts as apprentice to an Indian shaman.

UCLA awarded Castaneda a Ph.D. in anthropology in 1973 for his field work and

ethnography dissertation on Native American shamanism. *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yacqi Way of Knowledge* represents that work and is known worldwide for its vivid portrayal of Castaneda's apprenticeship to the shaman, Don Juan.

However, practically nothing about Castaneda, including his name, birth date, and original nationality is what it appears to be. In fact, careful investigation and analysis shows that his books represent more of the Castaneda his college friend described as "witty, imaginative, cheerful -- a big liar and a real friend" than they do Castaneda as the serious anthropologist and reporter who sacrifices himself for scientific ethnographic research.

Like most legends, the Castaneda legend is missing dates, times, people, places and documents. Careful research and investigation uncovered gaping holes, inconsistencies, and outright fabrications in the convoluted stories Castaneda told in his four books.

But the reason I mention the Castaneda legend particularly is that I never would have expected the professional reaction to the expos. Rather than relegating his books to the legend shelf, some professionals still depend on them for ethnographic information, and still herald him as the father of the ethnographic "revolution" in anthropology!

What is most interesting is the response that has greeted the revelation that Castaneda's works are fictional. First, there has been no real attempt to revoke his Ph.D., based as it is on fraudulent "research." Secondly, as de Mille . . . documents, the response among many anthropologists and others who share the Don Juan type of philosophical outlook has been neutral. In other words, it doesn't matter if the works are fictional because the underlying philosophy is, in some vague sense, true. An excellent example of this approach is Shelburne's (1987) article titled "Carlos Castaneda: If It Didn't Happen, What Does It Matter?" Shelburne argues that "the issue of whether it [Castaneda's experience] literally happened or not makes no fundamental difference to the truth of the account" (p. 217). Such excuses are little more than intellectual used-car salesmanship.

Let's relate this back to our legend/research paradigm. Castaneda based his "revolutionary" cultural anthropological ideas on fiction. That's like building a house on sinking sand instead of solid rock. Now Shelburne and other professionals like him say it doesn't matter, because the "truth" is the same. That's like saying your sinking sand house is fine where it is -- the house itself is well- built. But, no matter how well-built the house is, it will fall apart since it's built on sand instead of solid ground. You need both a well-built house and solid ground if you expect to live in the house.

This is very different from using personal stories as illustrations or examples of what your research and evaluation have already determined. I collect stories on the cults and the occult like any other cult apologist. But I don't base my argument on stories. I heard an excellent story during our summer speaking tour this year about the emotional bondage someone can be under for going to a psychic and getting a scary prediction. It makes a good illustration when I'm talking about the subject. But hypothetically one of you could come up to me today and tell me the story isn't true. You've checked it out and the guy who told it to me made it up. That wouldn't change my basic talk on the power of suggestion in psychic predictions at all. I just wouldn't use that anymore as an example.

When Christian leaders like cult apologists substitute legends for critical thinking, evidence, and comprehensive evaluation, we lose the trust of those who have believed us, we participate (even unknowingly) in promoting what is not true, and we fail to give

the trustworthy help those harmed by the cults and the occult really need.

The Stories

Stories that are not necessarily autobiographies can also be legends. Many of you may be familiar with the term "urban myth," which refers to stories everybody hears about and everybody believes, nobody knows the source of, and nobody can prove. You've probably heard about the alligators in the sewers of New York. Or the young person who had been stalling about making a commitment to Christ, showed up at church one night for a service without knowing it had been canceled, assumed the empty church meant the rapture had happened but he had been left behind, and so he repented, sure he would have to suffer through the Tribulation. Or even the one about George Washington chopping down the cherry tree and then confessing. Each of these are legends.

Legendary stories appeal especially to the vulnerabilities I mentioned at the beginning of my talk such as "It fits into my world view," "I accept what I'm told," or "I base my knowledge on common sense." Legendary stories impact cult apologetics, too. Four examples will show you what I mean.

We still get questions from people who want to know how to protest and boycott Proctor and Gamble products because "if you buy any products with this symbol, you will be taking part in supporting the Church of Satan." The legend achieved its first popularity in 1982. It includes the story that the president of Proctor and Gamble confessed that company profits go to the Church of Satan on the Phil Donahue Show and the story that the familiar P&G symbol of the man in the crescent moon with thirteen stars was a satanic symbol. Of course, like all good myths, none of this is true, and Proctor and Gamble has spent hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars combatting the rumor.

The story I recounted earlier in my talk about Darwin's deathbed repentance is another legend. This legend fits especially well the ninth reason I gave for why people fall for fantasy -- it confirms the world as I would like it to be rather than as it really is. Wouldn't it be nice if Darwin repented? Wouldn't that strike a blow at evolution and warm our hearts? It ought to be true. There's one short step from "it ought to be true" to a legendary story.

And if Madayln Murray O'Hair isn't given enough credit for waging battle against Christianity through her American Atheists Association, Christians are happy to give her more by creating their own legends for her. They spun stories about her petitioning NASA to forbid astronauts to read the Bible out loud during their space flights, about her suing to have all of the United States place names with religious elements changed, and the most popular O'Hair legend to date, that she is petitioning the FCC to ban all religious broadcasting. One typical legend- repeating petition reads, "Madalyn Murray O'Hair...has been granted a Federal hearing in Washington, D. C. on the subject (F.C.C., THE PETITION, R.M. 2493) which would ultimately pave the way to stop the reading of the Gospel on the airways of America. She took her petition with 27,000 signatures to back her stand." However, there is no truth to the legend at all. The FCC statement reads, "the Commission isn't considering taking religious programming off the air, nor has a petition making such a suggestion ever been filed with the Agency." Propagation of such a rumor costs our tax dollars to cope with. At the end of 1985, the FCC averaged 100,000 letters per month protesting this non-existent petition.

Worst of all about this particular legend is that we are being duped by the atheists, from whose ranks this "rumor" evidently first started. Christians are called foolish for perpetuating a myth, and doubly foolish for perpetuating a myth started by atheists!

Our last legend story concerns the Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR), the sponsors of this conference. Have you heard the story that EMNR banned Constance

Cumbey from its last conference (in Denver in 1985) and even hired security guards to keep her out? Here's what Cumbey said,

Walter Martin and a number of others got together and organized a conference in Denver in 1985. I was the only person in the country who was not invited. They hired security guards to keep me away.

We carefully investigated Cumbey's charges. We talked independently with several of the people who organized the conference, and with several people who attended. No one with direct knowledge backed up Cumbey's claims. Dr. Gordon Lewis, who hosted the conference at Denver Seminary, confirmed that Cumbey was not asked to be a speaker or make a presentation at the conference, but that she was welcome to attend like anyone else. There were many professional cult apologists who attended without being speakers. They didn't feel discriminated against. It was not a closed meeting, and those who attended without receiving personal invitations didn't feel slighted, either. Elliot Miller of the Christian Research Institute noted,

Dr. Martin was a speaker there, but . . . he was not involved in the conference's planning and organization It's true that Mrs. Cumbey was not invited to speak (which is no more strange than Walter Martin's not being invited to speak at certain end-time prophecy conferences where Cumbey is a featured attraction). However, she was more than welcome to attend. The claim that there were security guards hired to keep her out is both false (this writer was there) and preposterous.

Legendary stories may intrigue and entertain, but they do not educate and protect people from the real dangers of the world.

Characteristics of a Legend

Now, think about some stories you know. Could any of them be legendary stories? Be extra cautious if the story fits any of the following characteristics.

1. There's no evidence to back it up.

Sometimes there is no evidence because of the very nature of the story, like if I had been alone when I saw the witches while I was backpacking. That doesn't mean such a story can't be true, it just means that it's not a story that can be considered trustworthy research. At most it's an illustration or example.

2. Its strongest commendation is that it ought to be true.

Be careful that you are not persuaded to believe a particular story simply because you wish it to be true. This can be a strong temptation, but don't give in to it. God won't excuse us for supporting made up stories because they serve a useful purpose.

3. It's so detailed or bizarre that we can't believe someone could make it up.

When I was in the National Guard (like my buddy Dan Quayle) I sold a car stereo to

another guardsman. He still owed me ten dollars. At every monthly drill I would remind him about the ten dollars. Each time he had a different elaborate story about how he had saved the money for me, but somehow something always happened and he didn't have it with him. Finally, after months, I told him to forget the money. It wasn't worth having to put up with all of his stories. "Wait," he said, "I can't let you do that! Tell you what I'm gonna do. I raise and breed champion dogs and I'll give you a puppy for free instead." I was skeptical at first, until he told me all about his house, his dogs, his kennels, his horses, his tenants quarters, and his machine shop. What a spread! He couldn't make up something like this!

Well, the months went on and he always had some reason that a puppy wasn't available that month, but for sure would be the next month. Finally I wormed his address out of him and told him I would come to his house the next evening to pick up my dog. By this time I didn't really believe his story, but he would never admit he was lying. If he had told me the truth, I would have said, "forget it." But when he gave me his address, and agreed to meet me there to give me the puppy, I had second thoughts. Maybe he was telling the truth. Who would make all that up and then give me his address?

The next night I showed up at the address the guardsman had given me. No mansion, no kennel, no stable, no tenant's quarters, no dogs. Just a run down little California bungalow with some tools in the garage. Of course, no one was home. But I couldn't resist going next door and asking the neighbor who lived there. The name and description matched the guardsman, but the neighbor said he was a backyard mechanic with no steady employment.

At the next Guard drill, I walked up to the guardsman. "What happened to you? I went to your house, but you weren't there."

"Yeah, one of my dogs got sick and I had to go to this special vet across town. He only treats show dogs."

"But what happened to your other dogs? There weren't any dogs there at all."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. They're at my parents' house while I'm getting the kennel remodeled."

"But there wasn't any kennel. There wasn't any mansion or stable, either."

"Oh, you must have gone to my tenant's quarters instead. You got it mixed up. My house is way in the back of the lot. You can hardly see it from the street. You must have been confused."

I never did tell him I had talked to his neighbor. But I figure I got my ten dollars worth anyway. The story makes a great illustration! Be skeptical of a story that seems too detailed or too bizarre to be made up.

Summary

Legends are poor substitutes for adequately researched evaluations. "Novel people" do not make trustworthy experts, and legendary stories don't equip us to deal with the real threats of the cults and the occult.

Whether or not the people of legends know their stories aren't true, are simply delusional, or even if their stories are true but unverifiable and unfalsifiable, they should never be used as the basis for research evaluation. Bad testimonies hurt real victims and hurt our credibility, too. When we trust people who aren't telling the truth we trust a lie. When we trust people who are delusional we exploit people who need Christian

counseling and discipleship. When we trust people whose stories can be neither proven nor disproved we are substituting vicarious experience for evidence.

HEROES

Now that we've cleared away the dross of cult apologetics research, we can talk about how to do responsible religious research. This last portion of my talk is divided into three sections: (1) Critical Thinking; (2) Preparation for Research; (3) and How to Do Research.

1. Critical Thinking

Here are some considerations to help you think critically as a researcher. Of course, steering clear of the pitfalls and fallacies we have already surveyed is one important way to think critically.

Objectivity in research

You may think this principle goes without saying. After all, no researcher plans to be subjective. But you would be surprised how many times subjectivity creeps in without you even being aware of it. Subjectivity keeps us from looking at all sides of an issue and from understanding alternate perspectives. This does not mean that we should believe all sides, or that we don't have a particular, Christian point of view. But it means that we are capable of accurately understanding and representing what we don't agree with and answering it on those terms rather than terms manufactured out of our own subjectivity.

Subjectivity fails to take into account even major differences among world religions and world views. This is especially easy to do when one does not have a solid background of study and education in biblical doctrine. It is easy to confuse Mormonism and Hinduism, thinking that they have the same religious ideas, simply because both believe in more than one god (polytheism), even though the way they explain and understand their respective beliefs about god are very different. In the same way, many people don't realize that Hinayanic Buddhism, while incorporating religious practices and traditions, is actually atheistic. Others lump Satanism and witchcraft together, failing to understand that their beliefs are as divergent from each other as are the views of the Way International cult from those of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Failing to understand someone's beliefs and world view harms our credibility, both among Christians and in the world. It also makes people think you don't care enough to find out what they really believe -- you just want to ridicule them. Subjective understanding or presentation of contrary beliefs sabotages one's apologetic against those beliefs. It is impossible to be persuasive in your refutation of a position if you can't even articulate or properly present that position. We cannot afford to be subjective in our research.

One step toward objectivity is to use primary sources in your research. Don't take someone else's word for what happened, or why a cult has a particular practice, or what someone believes. Check it out with the cult, or the cultic literature, or the cultist.

Another principle of objectivity is to try to understand your research from the perspective of its source. If you were a Mormon, how would you think about this doctrine? If you were a satanist, what would you mean by this phrase?

A third step in objectivity is checking your research with others. Let someone you trust see your research and check your conclusions. Try your ideas on someone with knowledge in the field. Try your new apologetic argument on several cultists before you put it in your new book.

When to believe or reject a story

Here's a brief checklist that can give you a good general indication of whether or not you should tend to believe a story you hear:

1. Is the story documentable? Does it have names, dates, locations, facts that can be checked? Be especially wary of the story that has what I call "phantom documentation." That is, the story teller may say, "I would give you the documentation, but the satanists said they'd kill me if I tell anyone," or, "There used to be records that I graduated from that seminary, but the New Agers sneaked in and changed the records." Phantom documentation is no more trustworthy or useful for research than is no documentation.
2. Is the source for the story reliable? Is the main figure in the story someone whose credibility, integrity, and honesty are well-known or can be checked? If not, you need to find out why not, and reconsider trusting that story.
3. Does the story fit the biblical world view? Does anything in it contradict the Bible or Christianity? Someone may tell a very convincing story about remembering past lives, but reincarnation contradicts what we know from the Bible to be true. No story that contradicts biblical truth can be trustworthy.
4. Is there reliable, appropriate data supporting the major quantifiable statements in the story? For example, if a story says there were 1500 satanists following one leader in a rural area, but the population and crime data for that area makes such a claim incredible, then it should not be trusted. A story whose claims are completely unsupported by available data is not trustworthy as research.
5. Does the story teller seem to aggrandize his role in the story, artificially inflating his importance, power, or victimization? Although this question is sometimes very difficult to answer, in clear-cut cases such myopic subjectivism lessens the credibility of the story.

These are a few principles that will help you to decide which stories to reject outright, and which ones merit further investigation and perhaps inclusion in your research.

Different tests for different cases

Critical thinking recognizes that different kinds of situations need different kinds of proof. Empirical information, involving the senses and the material world, need to be tested empirically. Spiritual propositions need to be tested by spiritual values. And philosophical arguments need to be tested by philosophical means.

The story teller who tells you he can heal broken limbs through crystal power needs to provide empirical verification -- x-rays, scientifically repeatable tests, etc. The story teller who tells you he loves God should provide spiritual verification -- he should live morally, attend church regularly, express his love for other Christians, preach the gospel, etc.

Use your critical thinking ability to figure out what kinds of claims your story makes, and which tests are appropriate for such claims.

The Golden Rule Apologetic

We're all familiar with the Golden Rule, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you," but unless you know me, you probably haven't heard of the Golden Rule Apologetic. This is my way of saying that whatever you require of another, you should be willing to provide of yourself. For example, if you reject someone's argument about New Testament Greek because he doesn't understand enough Greek to present his argument, but you expect him to believe your argument even though you don't know enough Greek to understand the argument you photocopied from a Greek scholar, then you are not practicing the Golden Rule Apologetic. In addition, if you wouldn't be persuaded by an argument too complicated for you to understand, don't condemn the cultist you argue with if he won't give in because he doesn't understand your argument. Conversely, if a cultist rejects your witness by saying you're judging him and Christians aren't supposed to judge, the Golden Rule Apologetic gives you every right to ask him if he is judging you.

The Golden Rule Apologetic says that your test should be fair enough that you would be willing to be judged by it as well as those you are investigating. If you practice the Golden Rule Apologetic, your research will be fair and objective.

These four principles can help us start to think critically in all of the cult apologetics research we undertake. With proper preparation and procedures, we should produce quality, trustworthy research.

2. Preparation for Research

Some preliminary remarks are in order concerning preparation for research. First, we need to remember that cult apologetics research necessarily requires discernment and judgment. It cannot be avoided. The Bible does not forbid us to judge, it demands that we judge with biblical standards, and that we remember that we are judged by those same standards. If we judge with biblical standards, our research will preserve truth, reject falsehoods, protect integrity, expose duplicity, uphold the innocent, and judge the guilty. Don't discontinue your research because someone accuses you of judging and tells you to "just leave it in God's hands, brother." If you are in cult apologetics, you should be here because God has called you to this ministry and he will use you as his hands in this area.

Second, we need to remember that simply because a person or story does not meet the special demands of cult apologetics research does not mean necessarily that it is untrue or fraudulent. The principle that a man is presumed innocent until proven guilty should govern our heart attitude, even though we rightly reject it from our research pool. My story about the witches on the mountainside, if it were not corroborated by my friends, would not be adequate as research information. But I've never made that story the basis for my knowledge about and evaluation of witchcraft. Standards for stories as illustrations, anecdotes, or examples are much less rigorous than are the standards for stories as research. When a person bases his authority in a particular field (say, for example, satanism) on his personal experience in satanism, then we can and must demand much more verifiability and falsifiability from him than from someone who bases his authority on comprehensive research, and uses his previous experiences in satanism as merely illustrative of his research findings.

Ethics of research

Some general principles concerning the ethics of research are (1) be honest; (2) don't betray a confidence; (3) don't reveal your suspicions or hopes until they are fully verified; (4) don't steal any other researcher's work or ideas, or usurp his report; (5) don't withhold vital information from someone who needs to know; and (6) don't fabricate research or documentation.

Being honest doesn't mean that you have to tell your whole life story and the five year goals of your ministry every time you ask a research question. But it does mean that you conduct your research with a strong commitment to truth. You should remember the Golden Rule Apologetic and treat the subject of your investigation in exactly the same way you would want to be treated if it were your story.

A Christian researcher must be trusted to keep his word regarding what is told him confidentially. No Christian researcher should find himself in a position where he has to betray a confidence. If you are asked to keep a confidence, weigh the matter carefully before you agree. Make it a personal research practice not to agree to confidences unless you are certain there would not be any occasion when you would feel compelled to break that confidence. You should maintain this trustworthiness with your fellow researchers, too. For example, if you receive confidential information about an ongoing research project another researcher is doing, you have an obligation to keep that confidential. If you don't, you may compromise the rest of his research, needlessly hurt people, spread information that is ultimately unproven, and destroy any trust the researcher may have had for you.

Leaking information from your research before it is completed is a dishonest way of promoting your opinions without having to prove them. Telling stories you haven't verified about a group or individual is gossip, not research. You can misrepresent, slander, libel, and cause serious harm by declaring your conclusions before you do enough research to prove your conclusions true. In addition, even if you are on the right track, your precipitous report gives the target of your research the information it needs to cover its tracks or otherwise countermove.

Stealing research is as wrong (and often illegal) as stealing a watch or money from a bank. There is not enough power, fame, or fortune in the business of cult apologetics for any of us to be able to afford having our research stolen. Often the article, speaking engagement, or book resulting from our research is the only source of reimbursement we get for our hours of research and hundreds of dollars of research expenses. More often, the monetary return on our research is nowhere near enough to cover our research expenses, and the recognition or acknowledgment we get from our work is the only "profit" involved. The researcher who steals research or scoops another researcher's story works against all the rest of us. The principle some try to use, "it's all for the Lord anyway," is a perversion of biblical truth. "He who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope."

There's not really a contradiction between "don't break a confidence" and "don't withhold information from someone who needs to know." You should never, for example, agree to keep a confidence that involves covering up about a criminal act that has been or is likely to be committed. You should never agree to keep a confidence if doing so gives someone the direct opportunity to harm someone physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

There are many ways to fabricate research or documentation. The obvious way is to make up research or documentation without any regard for the facts. Most fabrication in cult apologetics research is less deliberate.

Quoting from a secondary source as though it were a primary source is one form of

fabrication. This is how we create "bibliographical ghosts." Let's say I write an article and within my article I quote the Book of Mormon. But I accidentally transpose two words and the quote ends up being inaccurate, but not noticeably so. Now let's say one of you decides to give a talk on Mormonism. You read my article, like the quote I use from the Book of Mormon, and decide to use it in your talk. But you don't actually check the Book of Mormon to make sure the quote is accurate, and when you give your talk you say, "the Book of Mormon says..." instead of "Bob Passantino says the Book of Mormon says..." You have created a bibliographical ghost. Another common form of fabrication occurs when you quote or cite incorrectly from memory. Sometimes your data isn't quite what you wish it were, and you inflate it just a bit so it looks better, or you embellish a quote from someone you interviewed because it would make your case stronger if he actually said what he only implied. Even though it takes a lot of work and patience, be scrupulous about not fabricating. If those who trust you find out your ministry produces fabrications, you will lose their trust and hurt the very people you are trying to help. We can't serve in the name of the God of truth with fabrications.

Personal integrity

Cult apologetics is by nature a profession where individual integrity is often questioned and challenged. You cannot afford to be slain by the same sword you wield against the cult leaders and occultists.

Nobody is perfect, and most people have a few skeletons in their closets. But you must be honest and above board where your personal integrity is concerned or you will have none. If you don't have advanced degrees, don't let people think you do. If you don't have experience, don't pretend you do.

Maintain scrupulous finances for your organization. Handle all financial matters openly, honestly, and in compliance with the law.

Think about your life before you were a Christian. What are the worst things about your life before you became a Christian that someone could reveal and criticize you for? Now think about your life after you became a Christian. What are the worst things about your Christian life someone could reveal and criticize you for? Now think about your organization. What are its most vulnerable points regarding its professional and organizational integrity?

Carefully weigh the consequences and take the most appropriate steps necessary to ensure your personal, professional, and organizational integrity. You don't have to publish your own edition of True Confession, but you do have to be able to live with what your previous actions or associations may cost you. Maybe an appropriate step to take is to reconcile with someone you wronged years ago. Maybe you need to pay back a loan you received when you first started your ministry. Maybe you need to revise your printed biography so it doesn't give a false impression anymore. Maybe you need to disincorporate your organization and start over with a new Board of Directors. Maybe you need to print a retraction or apology for something you published that wasn't true.

There is a high cost for integrity. But there is also nothing more valuable. Be someone hurting people can trust.

3. How to do research

In this section I will survey research fundamentals; field research; library research; interviewing; networking; and reporting your research. While the scope of this talk cannot include detail on any of these areas, the following principles and the recommended reading will introduce you to comprehensive research.

Research fundamentals

Since we've come this far together, I assume that you agree with me that fantasies and legends are no substitutes for good research. Good research takes a lot of time and many people consider it boring, but it is essential to responsible cult apologetics.

Five Ws and One H

When I begin a new research project, I turn first to what are known as the journalists' six friends: "The Five Ws and One H." These provide the framework into which I plug the information I gather during my research. I know that when I have enough information to answer Who?, What?, Why?, Where?, When?, and How?, I will have the results of a well-rounded research project.

Answering the "Who" question identifies the players. Who founded the cult? Who is attracted to the cult? Who are its members? Who is its current leader? Who is critical of it? Who left it? Who knows more about it?

Answering the "What" question identifies the problem. What does the cult believe? What happens to its members? What attracts people to it? What makes people stay? What makes them leave? What do outsiders say about it? What do critics say about it? What kind of world view does it promote? What does the cult teach about God, Jesus Christ, man, sin and salvation, and scripture? What do its leaders say? What do its members say? What are its primary sources for revelation, doctrine, and rules of conduct?

Answering the "Why" question gets behind the actions or events to the causes or motives. Why do members believe the cult teachings? Why does the cult leader think he's the Messiah? Why did all the members move to Tibet? Why do the members believe God is impersonal? Why are certain beliefs ridiculed by this cult? Why is this cult so antagonistic to Christianity? Why do the members have to follow certain dietary restrictions? Why are members told not to talk to outsiders? Why are ex-members shunned?

Answering the "Where" question situates the problem within its geographical and cultural setting. Where is the cult leader from? Where did the cult start? Where do most of its converts come from? Where is its headquarters? Where does its leader travel? Where is its literature distributed? Where can I find more information on it?

Answering the "When" question gives a chronology or history of the problem. When was it founded? When did other historical events happen in relation to its founding and other significant developments? When was its leader born? When did the leader first reveal himself as a spiritual leader? When does the cult see the fulfillment of certain prophecies taking place? When did the first critics respond? When are potential converts pressured to join? When are troublesome members excommunicated?

Answering the "How" question facilitates understanding the dynamics of the group or event and its relative strength. How is the cult financed? How is evangelism conducted? How does the group promote itself and its teachings? How does the power structure within the organization operate? How can I persuade members to talk to me? How can I get copies of primary source documents? How does the leader persuade members to believe him? How many people are involved?

As you can see from this short example, by asking enough Five W and One H questions, and then searching for the answers to those questions, you can develop a good base of research categories from which you can develop your evaluation. These questions can be adapted for other kinds of research, too.

Twenty Questions of Research

Remember the game "Twenty Questions?" That game is really a critical thinking exercise by which research is evaluated to give a conclusion that reaches its goal. It's a very simplified form of research method. By asking the right questions you can know what it is you need to find out in your research. Asking the right questions saves you from having to master all of the knowledge in the universe in an effort to ensure you have done enough research. The important questions you ask in your research will change somewhat from one project to another, but here are twenty that I find generally helpful in most of the research I do:

1. What is my quantifiable goal for this project?
2. Does this project involve mostly field research, interviewing, library research, statistical sampling, or what other kind of research?
3. Will I be likely to find most of my information in contemporary sources or historical sources?
4. In what geographical area(s) will I be likely to find most of the information I need?
5. Which people do I need to contact who have secondary information?
6. Which people do I need to contact who have primary information?
7. Do I know anyone who has special access to information I need?
8. What other research has already been done on this problem?
9. Which public or government agencies, directories, documents, or data bases might have information I need?
10. Which other cult apologetics ministries might have information I need?
11. Are there photographs, pictures, maps, or drawings that will help me?
12. What ideas does the reference librarian have for getting this kind of information?
13. What general information sources are available (atlases, history books, encyclopedias, almanacs, etc.)?
14. How much time can I devote to this project?
15. When does this project need to be completed?
16. What will this research be used for?
17. How will the target of my research respond to my evaluation?
18. Who will criticize my research, why, and how?
19. What do I think is the most important piece of research to find?
20. What am I going to do with this research?

Don't forget that creative thinking is one of the most important aspects of good research. Don't think that not working if you're not pounding on a keyboard or conducting an interview on the phone. Sitting and thinking through your research project, organizing your thoughts and goals, and creating a workable action plan is essential for good research.

Errors corrected by research

Good research can check your critical thinking and ensure a reliable evaluation of your problem. The following summary of errors corrected by research is prepared from Arnold Binder and Gilbert Geis' *Methods of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice*:

1. Errors of observation. Humans not only fail to see important features in a given scene but often invent false observations. Good research can reconcile conflicts in observation and confirm accurate observation.
2. Selective observation. Different people viewing the same event or phenomenon will notice different things according to their interests and biases. Good research identifies those interests and biases and reconciles those with the recorded observations and the actual concrete evidences of the event.
3. Errors of interpretation. Our personal biases, fears, and inclinations determine how we will interpret what we observe. Good research will investigate the situation from all perspectives, enabling us to sort the misperceptions and affirm the accurate perceptions.
4. Incorrect generalization. This error results largely from a failure to distinguish between what actually is the case and the general principles we infer from the case. Good research ensures that no generalizations are accepted without abundant justification.
5. Dependence on authority. Many people's beliefs are based on the statements of people they consider to be authorities. Those statements may or may not be valid. Good research sorts opinion from fact and points us toward the evidence rather than the theories.
6. Inappropriate use of evidence. Data may be based on accurate observation and seem like good evidence for a certain conclusion. But that data might not be the right data or give us the answers we need for the situation we face. Good research distinguishes between adequate and inadequate data and tells us when we have the right data and when we need different data.

Developing a research pool

Those of you who have unlimited budgets, plenty of extra time, and are wondering how to keep your staffs busy don't have to listen to this part. You can afford to start each research project from scratch. The rest of us need to develop research pools into which we can put research as we find it, even if it doesn't pertain to our current project; and from which we can then retrieve it when we need it.

A research pool includes your research files, your ministry phone directory, your list of colleagues and their specialties, your ministry library, your collections of cassette tapes and videos, your periodicals collection, your computer data base, etc. It's everything you can get your hands on that contributes to your researching ability.

The more organized and detailed your research pool is, the more accessible its information base is, and the more helpful it will be to you. This is one part of research where you are very vulnerable. The best book in the world is no good to you if you can't remember where you put it. The greatest photocopy won't do you any good if it's misfiled and you can't find it. The world's leading authority is no help if you lost his phone number and address.

The basic principle behind a workable, useful research pool is organization. Keep what will be useful. Throw out what isn't. Carefully label what you keep, put it in the right place, and keep your index up to date and handy. In a remarkably short time you will be amazed at how much research you can do in your own office.

Summary

The fundamentals of research, built on top of your critical thinking bedrock, constitute the foundation of your research apparatus. You can add to good fundamentals, good field research, library research, interviewing, and networking and be able to meet almost any research challenge.

Field research

Field research is varied and complex, so I will only comment briefly on some of its most common aspects. Field research means any research you can't do within your own office or library. It includes going to a physical site, telephoning someone for information, checking public records, etc.

Often cult apologetics researchers forget about field research because the library research is so easily accessible and usually also so overwhelming. But field research can add invaluable information to your research, and in some instances it is the only source of information you have.

If you go to a physical site for research, plan ahead. Know what you are looking for. Write down the questions you hope the on-site investigation will answer. Under each question, list the kinds of things you should look for that will provide the information you need to answer the question. Be sure you bring your notes, blank paper and pen, and, if appropriate, a tape recorder (with batteries and blank tapes) and camera (with film). Once you are at the site, survey the area in a general way before you concentrate on the particular things you came to investigate. Make notes of things you will need to remember later, or things to follow up on at a later time. Write down everything of significance. Record or photograph as necessary. When you are ready to leave the site, review your investigation. Look over your notes. Correct any errors you notice immediately, before you forget. Check to be sure you haven't overlooked anything before you leave. While the scene is still fresh in your mind, write down leads you would like to follow at a later time. Make a list of the information you were able to obtain, a list of what you couldn't find, and a list of what you still need to locate or check.

Telephone field research overlaps interviewing, so I will just mention it here. Before you jump into your car and rush over to the local cult headquarters for some information, think about whether you could accomplish what you need to better by phone. In fact, sometimes people are more apt to give you the information you ask for on the phone than they are if you show up in person. Maybe they assume phone calls are harmless. Here are some good contacts by telephone: reference librarians, personnel offices, authorities in the field, public officials, statistical offices like the Centers for Disease Control or the U. S. Weather Service, 800 information lines, etc.

Public records are a big part of the field research domain. There are public records on births, deaths, marriages, adoptions, wills, passport applications, educational enrollment and graduation, employment history, name changes, home addresses and phone numbers, articles of incorporation, boards of director, non-profit organization tax information reports, civil and criminal complaints, real estate transactions, address changes, etc. If you are diligent at using public records, you can find a wealth of information before you even contact the person or organization you are investigating.

How to discover a credible chronology

Let's say you wanted to research the founder of a new cult. You know that the cult was founded in 1987 in Kansas City, and the founder mentioned in a speech that he was four years old in 1940. You want to learn everything you can about the founder. So far all

you have is that he was born in 1936 and has lived in Kansas City at least since 1987. That accounts for three of his fifty- three years. Start with his recent history and work your way back. Listen to his speeches. Read his books. Maybe in one speech he mentions he came to Kansas City right after he returned from his pilgrimage from San Francisco to Tibet, and in another speech he says he spent two years in Tibet, beginning in 1983. Now you know that he was born in 1936, he was in Tibet from 1983 through 1985, and he has been in Kansas City since 1986. You check with the county recorder in San Francisco and find out he applied for his passport in 1982 and listed his address as San Francisco. Now you know that he lived in San Francisco at least in 1982. And you know he hadn't been out of the country legally before 1982. Check with the reference librarian at the San Francisco Central Library and see if his phone number is listed in the phone book for 1982. It is. Have the librarian check further back. His number is also listed in 1981, 1980, and 1979. It's not listed in 1978. You now know he lived in San Francisco from at least 1978 through 1982, in Tibet from 1982-1985, and in Kansas City from 1986 through the present. By using your public document access and critical thinking, you can build a chronology for the vast majority of people you need to research. Sometimes there's no substitute for field research.

Libraries

Each of you probably has your own cult apologetics library, whether it consists of less than one hundred books or of close to 10,000 books. And it's probably divided into at least two categories: primary sources and secondary sources. But there are other libraries that can be invaluable sources of research information.

Start with your local college or university library. Visit the library and ask the reference librarian to give you a tour of the reference section. You won't believe the hundreds of different kinds of reference books available in the reference section of the average university library. There are books listing every accredited doctorate degree granted in the United States; all the religious denominations, sects, and cults with their reported memberships; every major United States corporation, its officers and boards; all of the major periodicals, with separate books for each type (sociology, religious, engineering, etc.); dictionaries tracing the historical developments of a particular language, etc. After you feel comfortable with the reference section, tackle the main part of the library.

Find out what special libraries there are in your area. If you have legitimate research needs, most special libraries will let you use them, although they may restrict you from checking books out. Many major corporations have specialized libraries dealing with their field of commerce. Hospitals have medical libraries. Courts have law libraries. Museums have historical libraries.

Find out if any of the libraries you are interested in have computer modem accessible catalogs. If you have a computer with a modem, you can access these libraries from your own computer and save a lot of time looking for the resources you need. We access the University of California library system by modem. We do our catalog search (for books and periodicals) by modem, print out the titles we want, and then run over to the university to pick them up. We know exactly what we want and where to get it.

Interviewing

As more and more cultic and occultic phenomena proliferate, cult apologists are going to spend more time interviewing. Sometimes interviewing is the only way to get information about a new cult which has produced no literature yet and about which nothing of significance has been written. Interviewing is also important for

understanding exactly what someone means by what he says. In fact, often we misunderstand and even misrepresent someone's beliefs or arguments because his written words are ambiguous and we didn't interview him to allow him to explain what he meant. Interviewing could be one paper topic in itself, but a few considerations should be mentioned here.

The purpose of an interview is to get information from someone else. The information may or may not be reliable, but someone else has it and you need it. A good interviewer sets his subject at ease, moves from general questions to specific requests, doesn't respond emotionally to his subject's answers, reveals as little of his own information as possible, doesn't ask leading questions that can obscure his subject's intended answers, learns to distinguish between his subject's opinions and the facts he knows, recognizes information he wasn't expecting and follows up on it, and leaves his subject willing to talk more at a later time.

It is well worth the time to study a few good resources on interviewing, and then to practice interviewing until you begin to understand how to implement these different techniques. I especially recommend Robert F. Royal and Steven R. Schutt's *The Gentle Art of Interviewing and Investigation*, Jacob Fisher's *Faces of Deceit*, and Horgan's *Criminal Investigation*.

Networking

I have seen a serious and growing lack in cult apologetics over the last few years. We have all become so busy and there are so many more of us now that we don't communicate with each other as we ought. Conferences like this are essential for us to maintain good working relationships with each other. We can all help each other. We can share information, resources, ideas, and research. This is not supposed to be a competitive field. We have a unity of purpose, a unity of the Spirit, and a unity of faith that should bind us in close association, with helping those hurt by the cults and the occult as our mutual goal.

If we remember to work with integrity, respect each other's projects, communicate clearly and frequently, and share what the Lord has given us, we will multiply our research efforts almost exponentially.

Reporting

Once we have finished our research project, we need to report on it. The form of our reports will vary considerably. We might write an article, publish a newsletter, give a television interview, prepare a new speech, or contribute to someone else's project. But all good research reports contain some key common elements.

First, good reports are complete. Partial facts can distort the picture. Incomplete information can prevent us from drawing valid conclusions from our research. Be sure your report contains the negative as well as the positive. Sometimes what you don't find is as important as what you do. Consider what your report does not cover. What work would need to be done to answer some questions your report doesn't answer? Be sure your report has complete documentation and footnotes.

Second, good reports are concise. Don't take three sentences to say what can be said in one sentence. Long, repetitive, boring reports lose your reader's interest and encourage him to draw faulty conclusions because he has forgotten what you said in the beginning. Eliminate unnecessary words, technical phrases, and parentheticals. Say what you need

to say and then stop.

Third, good reports are clear. Short, clear sentences written with unambiguous vocabulary communicate effectively and accurately. Never leave your reader in doubt about what you mean. Avoid generalities when being specific is more clear and accurate.

Fourth, good reports are accurate. Accuracy is essential to your trustworthiness as a researcher. Restrict your report to facts or what you can prove. Don't mix speculation or guesses in with what you know for sure. Errors or omissions in reports raise doubts about the accuracy, reliability, and ability of the reporter.

These are essential characteristics of any good report. When you couple sound, comprehensive research with good reporting, you are able to communicate effectively and accurately.

There are three other considerations to keep in mind. First, don't let exclusivism prevent those who need to know from receiving the results of your research. It is reasonable for you to want the right to report on your research before anyone else does. But if one stall after another happens and you don't report in a timely fashion, have the grace to let someone else make your report (with due credit to you for the research, of course). Did you know that at least 400 documents of the Dead Sea Scrolls have never been publicly translated and published, more than forty years after their discovery? The scholars with proprietary rights to them have not yet found the time.

Second, it is a good idea to submit your research and reports to your peers for evaluation, suggestions, and criticism. This cooperative effort ensures quality, tested research and reporting. Better to have your colleague find out your argument is flawed than to wait till it's published and the cultist finds the flaw!

Third, be mature enough to recognize when you don't have adequate research from which to make an adequate report. Sometimes it's impossible to come up with a sufficient amount of the right kind of research, and we have to realize that we can't make a definitive statement on the subject as we had hoped. Don't publish an inadequate report. It doesn't meet the need, and it can mislead people.

CONCLUSION

In this far-reaching survey we have seen the good and the bad of religious research theory, techniques, and application. We've learned how to tell the fantasies and the legends from the truth, and we have established some basic guidelines for responsible religious research.

I leave you with the challenge to follow in the footsteps of the early Christian research reporter, Luke:

Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account,...that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.